

THE SHAMAN AS THE ZOOMORPHIC HUMAN

[Triinu Ojamaa](#)

In this paper the shaman's transformations into an animal or a bird by means of casting spells and studied with a great importance attached to the question by which means are these transformations made visible and audible. The inspiration for the research is got from the Nganasan foretelling spell in 1990(*1) and that is why the work is that nganasan-centred. The comparative material of the subject both of the northern and the southern regions of Siberia, and of some other regions of the world offers a great deal of parallels. This indicates that the technical skills of the ritual are widespread.

The shaman's transformation into the animal or the bird is connected with his helping spirit and his guardian spirit. The Buryat, for example, name the shaman's guardian spirit 'khubilgan', which could be translated 'metamorphosis' (compare with the verb 'khubilkhu' - 'to change oneself', 'to take another shape' (Eliade 1974)). The presence of the shaman's spirits is considered to be the most essential requirement, as the spirits are that who give the shaman all the information and practical aid on his ecstatic journeys. Majority of the shaman's spirits, especially in Siberian shamanism, have taken the shape of the animal or the bird (Hultkranz 1978). The Nganasan name their shaman's spirits d'a-mad'i (Kortt & Simchenko 1985: d'amáda 'animal' or 'zoomorphic', ie. 'having a throat'), despite of whether the spirit is zoomorphic or antropomorphic. Gracheva (Gracheva 1983) considers the term to be the opposite of the term 'séjmid'a, which is translated by Kortt and Simchenko as "having the eyes", and commented on as a synonym both of a human being and of an animal.

Usually wild game, such as a bear, an elk, a seal, a wolf, a hare, a deer etc. appear as the helping spirits. Among the domestic animals a horse is known as the shaman's spirit for the Yakut, and for the Ostyak and the Vogul who use the horse to go to the Heaven (Karjalainen 1918). Among the ornitomorphic helping spirits a goose and a diver are the most prevalent as being the good divers, as well as a swan, an owl, a crow, and an eagle are widespread. For the Lapps fish may appear as the helping spirits, and for the Tungus people the helping spirits may appear in the shape of snakes.

Usually the shaman's helping spirit makes an animal or a bird without any special characteristic features or originality. The contrary examples are given by the Netsilik Eskimo's comparatively extravagant spirits, where the zoomorphic spirits have it's originality. For example, a very big grampus (Arlu); a black earless dog (Kunnararjuq); a giant bear that especially loves human flesh (Naroluk), and some others (Balicki 1970).

There are three different ways of zoomorphic and ornitomorphic transformation in Siberian shamanism. They are: objective transformations, soundic transformations, and expressive transformations.

The whole shaman's equipment beginning from the costume to finish with the smallest details of it symbolizes a certain animal or a bird. The Nganasan shaman's costume symbolizes an elk. It is sewn of elk hide with a metal figure of a hartshorn on it's back. The Nganasan instepless boots remind of elk feet. Majority of the pendants fastened to the costume represent some

shaman's spirits. Gracheva describes the two bear figures on the Nganasan shaman's costume as symbolizing a she-bear and a he-bear. According to the shaman's explanations, he can team the bears to a sledge, and they take him wherever he wants, and "with that quickly that nothing could be seen but the wind is whistling in the ears". In addition to the bear figures, there are six goose's head figures, and three bird tails. The goose's head figures are needed to move through the air to the upper world. The bird tails help the shaman to dive. The shaman has to dive when healing people, as the Nganasan consider water to be the location of sick spirits. They say that the sick people's spirits are held there. When the shaman finds out the wanted spirit, he seats it on the bird tail, and fastens it to the tail with a chain for it didn't get lost on the way back, and returns it to the sick person.

Whereas the shaman's costume as the whole symbolizes the elk, the fringed sleeves of the costume symbolize the bird wings. Gracheva describes a case that the shaman clasp the patient, and spreads the leather fringe, sewn to his sleeves, over the patient. According to the shaman's comments, he defends the sick person from sick spirits like a bird protects its pinfeathered young (Gracheva 1978).

In Siberian peoples' shamanism a drum symbolizes a draught animal, mainly an elk. Zhornitskaya describes a ride on the drum when the shaman bestrides the drum and bumps himself as when riding the elk. Such practice is spread among Ostyak-Samoyedic shamans and Evenk shamans. Although the Nganasan are not familiar with the practice of riding on elk, still the drum is the symbol of the elk for them. According to Dolgikh's data the Nganasan shaman Kherepte(?) imitated the elk by means of the drum scraping the ground with the drumbuttons(*2) like the elk scrapes the ground with its forelegs (Dolgikh 1978) (*3).

The zoomorphic transformations described above are expressive rather than objective. By expressive transformation we mean imitating of the movements of animals or birds. These transformations could be rhythmless movements, such as the turn of the body, the wave of the hand etc., pantomimes, or dances. Actually, one can't draw the line between the pantomime and the dance. In some researchers the difference is made on the ground of either it is a mere imitating of someone, or some meaningless rhythmical movements are added. The Eskimo's pantomimes imitating the shaman's zoomorphic spirits are distinguished from their ceremonial dances, for example (Driver 1970).

In most cases the imitating of animals is classified as a dance. Zhornitskaya differentiates two subdivisions of a ritual dance, such as imitating ritual dances and ecstatic ritual dances. In case of the imitating ritual dance, there is the transformation into zoomorphic spirits into which the shaman changes himself on his journey. The ecstatic ritual dance is to help the shaman to reach ecstasy. Both these subdivisions are improvisatory, and consist of the widely spread imitating movements without any certain succession. They are considered to be dances because the movements are always carried out with a certain rhythm (Zhornitskaya 1992).

The imitating of behaviour and uttering sounds of animals and birds is a widespread and extremely old practice, as the information of it appears in the travel books written several centuries ago. The earliest data about the Samoyed, the Ostyak, and the Vogul peoples' imitating practices date back to the 18th century (Romenskaya 1986). In the diary of his travels to Siberia in the 1840s Middendorff gives a detailed description of the samoyed roundelay in which the bear movements are imitated, and it is accompanied by grunting coughing, which is obviously the uttering sound of the bear (Middendorff 1987). Thus the practice shouldn't be looked at as a part of shamanism only, but it is also a part of social

entertainment. Both in case of the practice being a social entertainment, and in case of the practice being a shamanistic ritual, the imitating of the movements of animals or birds is accompanied by the imitating of the uttering sounds of animals or birds.

The imitating of the uttering sounds of animals or birds can be either natural or symbolic. In case of natural imitations some one uttering sound, such as a whistle, a cry, a howl, etc. is imitated as alike to the real uttering sound as possible. The natural imitations have of practical importance above all. They are used to decoy the animals, whereas the human voice timbre is completely concealed. The uttering sounds of birds can be imitated by means of different whistling techniques, and by means of decoy whistle. In case of the sounding imitations produced by the human voice the usual vocal-phonetic intonation is not used. The uttering sound of birds are imitated by means of a falsetto. The uttering sounds of animals are produced by means of a nose-throat articulation based on one respiratory cycle, which enables to provide hoarses, grunts, roars, etc (Sheikin 1983; Sheikin 1984; Kim & Sheikin 1986).

The symbolic imitations of uttering sounds are based on the real uttering sounds of animals or birds, whereas the intonation is transformed by man. The result of it is a note pattern which expresses the main characteristic features of the source signal. Less complicated imitations, such as the cuckoo's calling etc., are closer to the source sound, and both the rhythm and the pitches of the signal are quite original. More complicated imitations are man's creation rather than the uttering sounds of birds. To confirm the above-mentioned there is the song of the great northern diver ([sample 1](#)) which differs from the source signal in its substantially slower movement, and also in its varied melody arrangement (compare with the [sample 8](#) where there is the pattern of the uttering sounds of the diver in the shaman's ritual). The using of the falsetto and the syllabled text imitating "the bird's language" emphasize that this concerns the uttering sounds of birds.

The sounding imitations by which the shaman expresses his transformations into the animal or the bird, are substantially closer to the source sounds than the song of the great northern diver mentioned above.

Next, a brief survey of Djulsymjaku Kosterkin's foretelling spell is given. The three travel episodes of the spell contain a great deal of expressive and sounding imitations. The purpose of the spell was to find out how many years would the shaman's patient live. Majority of the spell was carried out singing. The practice lasted 3 hours and 50 minutes, and only 40 minutes of it were occupied by talk.

All the melodies performed during the spell belong to the shaman's helping spirits and guardian spirits. These melodies could be considered to be the personal melodies, as they are named after the spirits' names. In the present time the Nganasan don't associate the genesis of songs with the spirits. The songs are considered to be created by the shamans themselves. The melodies created by the shamans don't have any feature characteristic of that particular genre as compared to the nganasan melodies in general. Although the majority of these melodies belong to the zoomorphic spirits not one of them personates a melodic characteristic of a particular animal or bird.

The same melody may have different functions during the practise. In the exposition of the show the melodies act as call signs, i.e. the singing of these melodies is expected to fetch their owners. According to the nganasan shamanistic ritual, the call signs are syllabilized in a nonsensical way. Some peoples, such as the Ostyak, have the instrumental call signs which

are performed on string instruments named either "nars-juh", or "panan-juh" Alekseyenko, 1988).

Having taken the advices of the fetched spirits the shaman starts his hypothetical journey. The travel episodes are those where the shaman transforms himself into a bird or an animal depending on where he happens to go.

Djulsymjaku's 1st travel episode is accompanied by the song in the melody of the song of nar-ka 'ne-me (the song of the she-bear), which works as the travel song tara-rsa ba-'le (compare with the verb taru-d'a 'to start moving').

The nganasan shamans cast spells in the sitting position. Standing up is the sign that the journey is going to begin. In the 1st travel episode the shaman imitates the elk. The expressive transformation starts with the walk on the spot, that is accompanied by the bows (i.e. the shaman in the shape of the elk tries to find the right path), and by the nods of the head. Next, he turns a semicircular to the sunwise (i.e. like the Heaven revolves), and imitates the grunts of the elk ([sample 2](#)). During the journey the shaman's assistant holds the chain fastened to the back of the shaman's costume (as if people held the chain for nobody didn't miss or get lost. The shaman is the chief elk, that is followed by all the others) ([*4](#)). Next, the shaman imitates the flight of the swan and the uttering sounds of the swan ([sample 3](#)). The whole episode is accompanied by the melody of ka-d'a ko-'pta (i.e. the thundermaid's melody) which doesn't belong to any particular ornitomorphic or teriomorphic helping spirit. Djulsymjaku explains that this melody is chosen because "the clouds are like the birds, as they also travel".

After the travel episode the shaman sits down and starts telling the stories about what he has seen on his journey, and at the same time the spirits repose who helped the shaman on his journey.

In the 2nd travel episode the shaman imitates the bear. The finding of the right path is carried out in the sitting position. The shaman casts an investigating glance to the right and to the left, next he shrugs his shoulders and shakes his head. Then he rises to his feet and moves slowly to the sunwise. His movement is accompanied by the recitative a-nt'ina ma-nt'ina å-ku ai. These are the meaningless words, or the shaman's words as the comment says. However, the nganasan bear dance is accompanied by these words. The recitative syllabled text alternates with the imitations of the grunts of the bear (the ritual episode: [sample 4](#); the dance: [sample 5](#)). After the bear dance the shaman starts imitating the elk. The walk on the spot becomes more energetic, and finally becomes the run on the spot. The crooked arms move from front to back like when increasing the speed. These movements are accompanied by the imitating of the coughs of the elk (waf-waf). The walk becomes slower and unrhythmic. The shaman in the shape of the elk bows and imitates sniffing.

In the following episode the shaman says that he walked along the crooked path, and that he needs flyers, i.e. the birds as the helping spirits who could lead the way when he happens to lose it.

Before starting for his 3rd journey the shaman makes it sure whether he is on the right path or not. It takes place by means of a song which goes like this:

*We lived with the wild elks
There was fish enough
The clothes were made of elk hide*

*I am no more the master of the elks.
The spirits answer by the mouth of the shaman's assistant:
You are correct
You are on the right path
Go forward.*

Next there is the most long-lasting and the most emotional journey which starts with the finding of the right path like the previous episodes did. It goes like this: the shaman bows and straightens his back, and looks around searching with his his arm concealing the eyes. Then he beckons forward with his arm whereas his look is irresolute; next he retreats; then he picks his steps forward again. His movements are unrhythmical, and the practice resembles a pantomime. Then he stops short and hits the ornament worn round his neck (it is the figure of the helping spirit) with the drumstick for he had been shown the way. Then he gives the drum to the assistant and goes down on one knee, rocking his body to and fro; then he stretches his arms out with the palms upward, and starts beckoning.

The practice is accompanied by the song with the following content:

*The path that we rode along before is covered with snow. The path was visible as the elk teams rode along it. Now I can no more find the path as I can see very little. Now there are the roads for tractors and snowmobiles. Now I am in the closed house(*5). If I were in the tent, perhaps it would be easier to find my way. Here I can see nothing. I can but nose my way out. The shamanistic path is completely invisible, as the place is unknown. Some spirits tell me "to be careful; not to stand up! not to fall into the evil spirits' hands; not to hurry; when you hurry, it will drain you. You would walk slower for you could bring your children up to maturity. The evil spirits look out of the Earth. If you hurry, you can't see them, but they have to be driven away.*

When singing the shaman rocks himself unrhythmically. His gestures are hesitant and his glances back are anxious.

Next the shaman sings that he is a bear (to the melody of the song 'na rka ne me, [sample 6](#)) and he imitates the roaring of the bear (to drive away the evil spirits).

Then the shaman in the shape of the bear becomes the shaman in the shape of the goose, and its flight is expressed by the imitating of flaps of the wings, by the sudden lifts of the heels, and by making circles by the hips. The expressive imitations are accompanied by the sounding imitations of the goose. These practices are accompanied by the tinkle of the ornaments fastened to the shaman's costume ([sample 7](#)). Suddenly the goose changes its manner of flying. The shaman moves his stiff arms up and down, and in doing this he makes sudden jolts with his wrists. Then the goose becomes the bear again, and the roars of the bear and the shamanistic words are uttered alternately. The journey is continued along the road.

While the movements of the birds and the animals are imitated only in travel episodes, the sounding imitations appear in some other kinds of episodes, too. For example, Djulsymjaku imitates the uttering sounds of a great northern diver ([sample 8](#)) in the song that comes after the call signs. The song says that all the spirits of importance are present, and the foretelling may begin. The song is to the melody of the song of the great northern diver (the song of o-tare, [sample 6](#)).

For some peoples the sounding imitations act as the call signs. In case of the Orotsh funeral

feasts of the bear, the killed bear is brought up to the house where the majority of the feast is carried out. Inside the house the roaring of the bear is imitated, meaning that the bear is expected to come in (Sheikin 1986). The Nganasan don't use the sounding imitations as call signs. After the show the shaman has to gather all the helping spirits together, and "put them to sleep". Djulsymjaku comments on it: "The Heaven is foursquare, like a sheet of paper is. These four corners are like the four quarters of the horizon. The spirits will sleep under the sheet of paper. You must not wake them up until the next spell."

The spirits are called together by means of the following calls:

Dis

ko-u ko-u ko-u ko-u

In most cases the calls like that appear in the spell, as it is seen in [sample 9](#), which is a fragment of Tubjaku Kosterkin's spell in 1989(*7). Whwn the shaman's assistant gives the call signs to the spirits, the rest of the people participating in the ritual have to support him by calls, for the spirits reacted to them quicker. Such practice is spread among the samoyed peoples living in the northern areas.

Eis

E

E

o-uok o-uk o-uk

Ges

F

u-ok u-ok u-ok u-ok

These calls come from the "vocabulary" of the reindeer breeders. They use the calls like that or similar to that to call the herd of reindeer together. When the reindeers cross the river the Nganasan support them by the calls "he-hei-heh!" ([sample 10](#)). In case of a spell the shaman uses these calls to make his hypothetic draught animal move quicker ([sample 11](#)). Here it follows that the shaman communicates with his zoomorphic helping spirits like people communicate with the real animals.

The calls used by the reindeer breeders are rather melodic, especially the call "he-hei". The Nganasan consider the calls to be "the music created by Man to make the reindeers cross the river quicker, and to prevent them from cold in the cold water."

The movements by which the shaman expresses his transformations are widespread among Siberian peoples, i.e. the different peoples imitate the same objects in the same way. For example, flying of a bird is imitated by moving the arms extended sideways up and down; and the ride on a draught animal is imitated by bumping himself as when riding a real animal.

There are regional differences in sounding imitations but the practice itself is spread all over Siberia. The Ostyak are the exception of it, as they have the songs that represent some animal or bird, but they lack the practice of sounding imitations because they consider it making fools of the birds or the animals. However, the Vogul are familiar with the practice of sounding imitations. Rombandejeva describes the episode of the funeral feast of the bear where the spirit in the shape of the bear named Jalius ojka appears and he makes a circle to the sunwise, and spits every now and then like the bear. Rombandejeva also mentions a human being imitating a sea gull by means of moving his arms extended sideways up and down, like the sea gull flaps its wings, and utters the following sounds: "tjar-tjar-tjar"

(Rombandejeva 1993).

Eliade considers the sounding imitations as a code that the shaman uses to communicate with the spirits. In several Indian tribes both in North America and South America it is compulsory for the shamans to acquire the imitating skills during the initiation period. According to Eliade's data the Lapps, the Chukchi, the Yakut, and the Tungus practiced the code. He objects against the Sienkewicz-Gudkova's statement when saying that the Ostyak also practiced the code (Eliade 1974). It is self-evident that the code is not used beyond the rituals. The taboos forbid the Orotsh to provide some naturalistic sounding imitations (Kim & Sheikin 1986). It is a practical taboo rather than theoretical as the Siberian peoples consider the sounding imitations to be the genre of music that precedes to the song, and they are practiced not only by the shamans but also by other people.

The genres of epic also contain the sounding imitations of animals and birds. It can be exemplified by the fragment of the nganasan song *si tabi* (i.e. the heroic song) where the singer imitates the uttering sounds of an owl and the flaps of its wings that is marked under the staff. The uttering sounds of birds are imitated in children's plays, too.

On the one hand the sounding imitations can be considered to be entertainment, that get their subject from everyday life. On the other hand in some languages the words "magic" and "song" (especially "bird song") are marked by the same word. In germanic languages the word "magic" is marked by the word "galdr" which comes from the verb *galan* 'to sing', especially 'to sing a bird song' (Eliade 1974).

In Nganasan epic a mythical hero is able to understand the sounding imitations of animals and birds, and to act in the way the animals or the birds do (to fly, for example). Both in the old heroic songs and in shamanism Man can have animals and be identified with animals simultaneously. The general idea of the shaman's journey is perhaps the imaginary return to the period of time when the men and the animals were the same?

Commentaries

1. The video signal recording of the ritual is in the collection of the Estonian Literary Museum named after F.R.Kreutzwald.
2. The drumbuttons, or the drumknobs are the parts of the instrument which have an acoustic purpose. They produce an empty space between the drumskin and the frame of the drum which acts as a resonator, as it can be seen in the following figure.
3. In addition to the drum being a draught animal, there are some other objects which can be expressed by means of the drum in Siberian shamanism. For example, it may symbolize a boat, a cloud, etc, but for certain the drum symbolizes the object by means of which one can move forward.
4. In the literature in the field of ethnography the chain has somewhat different purpose. It is fastened to the pole of the tent for the shaman didn't fall into the fire.
5. Djulsymjaku Kosterkin performed the spell in the sound recording studio of Novosibirsk Conservatoire.
6. *xo:tare* is a mythical name for the great northern diver (the general name for the diver is *nuo na*). *O:tare* is the shaman Demnime's (Djulsymjaku's father) helping spirit which is the antro-po-or-ni-to-mor-phic spirit, i.e. the bird that, when coming out of the water, takes the shape of the woman.



7. The video signal recording is made in the village named Ust-Avam, and the recording is in the collection of the Estonian Folklore Archives.

References

- Alekseenko, E. 1988. Muzykalnye instrumenty narodov Severa Zapadnoi Sibiri. *Materialnaya i dukhovnaya kultura narodov Sibiri*. Leningrad.
- Balicki, A. 1970. The Netsilik Eskimos. Illinois.
- Dolgikh, B. 1978. Nganasan Shaman Drums and Costumes. *Shamanism in Siberia*. V. Diószegi, M. Hoppál (eds.). Budapest.
- Driver, H. E. 1970. *Indians of North America*. Chicago and London.
- Eliade, M. 1974. *Shamanism. Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. Bollingen Series LXXVI. Princeton.
- Gracheva, G. 1978. Nganasan Shaman Costume. *Shamanism in Siberia*. V. Diószegi, M. Hoppál (eds.). Budapest.
- Gracheva, G. 1983 *Traditsionnoye mirovozreniye okhotnikov Taimyra*. Leningrad.
- Hultkranz, A. 1978. Etiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Shamanism. *Shamanism in Siberia*. V. Diószegi, M. Hoppál. Budapest.
- Karjalainen, K. F. 1918. *Jugralaisten uskonto. Suomensuvun uskonnot* III. Porvoo.
- Kim, N., Sheikin, Y. 1986. Zhanrovoye tipologia muzykalnogo folklora orochei. *Muzykalnoye tvorchestvo narodov Sibiri i Dalnego Vostoka*. Novosibirsk.
- Kortt, Y., Simtschenko, Y. 1985. *Wörterverzeichnis der Nganasanischen Sprache*. Berlin.
- Middendorff, A. Th. von 1987. *Reis Taimõrile*. Tallinn.
- Rombandeyeva, E. 1993. *Istoria naroda mansi (vogulov) i ego dukhovnaya kultura*. Surgut.
- Romenskaya, T. 1986. Ob istochnikakh izucheniya muzykalnoi kultury narodov Sibiri XVIII - pervoi poloviny XIX vekov. *Muzykalnoye tvortchestvo narodov Sibiri i Dalnego Vostoka*. Novosibirsk.
- Sienkiewicz-Gudkova, V. 1980. Nekotorye muzykalnye i poeticheskie osobennosti saamskikh i hantyiskikh pesen o zveryakh i ptits. Rüütel, I. (sost.) *Finno-ugorskii muzykalnyi folklor i vzaimosvyazi s sosednimi kulturami*. Tallinn.
- Sheikin, Y. 1983. *Problema zhanra v muzykalnom folklоре ude*. Avtoreferat. Leningrad.
- Sheikin, Y. 1984. Intonatsionnyi ideal muzykalnogo folklora ude. *Kultura narodov Dalnego Vostoka*. Vladivostok.
- Zhornitskaya, M. 1978. Yakut Shaman Dances. *Shamanism in Siberia*. V. Diószegi, M. Hoppál (eds.). Budapest.
- Zhornitskaya, M. 1992. Shamanskije plyaski narodov Sibiri. *Ranniye formy religii narodov Sibiri*. Sankt-Peterburg.

[CONTENTS](#)

HEREDITARY TRANSMISSION IN SIBERIAN SHAMANISM AND THE CONCEPT OF THE REALITY OF LEGENDS

[Aado Lintrop](#)

Belief in the hereditary transmission of shaman's gift is common to all Siberian shamanism. One can find corresponding motifs in Nganasan shamanism as well as in Tuvinian one. Often there is impossible to become a shaman without having shamans-ancestors in family.

Sometimes they are namely the spirits of shamans-ancestors, who at first reveal themselves to the devotee and force him to shamanize. More frequently they are supernormal beings, who were in close relations with them - for instance former helping spirits of a shaman-ancestor. The Gilyak researcher Taksami wrote: "The boy named Koinyt, who's father - the shaman - died not long ago, fell asleep after noon and began suddenly to toss about and cry, repeating typical shouts of shamans. After waking he looked pale and tired. In dream he saw two spirits - a man and a woman, who said: "Before we played with your father, now we would play with you." (Taksami 1981, 167) Belief in the hereditary transmission of shaman's gift was firm among several peoples in Siberia. For that very reason children in famous shaman families, who desired not to become shamans, fell ill and lived as mentally or physically diseased persons. For example Nikolai Agitshev, son of the famous Ostyak-Samoyedic shaman, who worked in 1930-is together with linguist G. Prokofyev. Last years of his life Nikolai spent in loneliness, made wooden idols and fed them. (Prokofyeva 1981, 45-46)

In the present paper we attempt to explain some aspects of the belief in the hereditary transmission of shaman's talent. Associating the shaman trance with a hypnotic state, we proceed from the definition and general causes of origin of an altered state of consciousness as formulated by Arnold Ludwig (Ludwig 1968, 69) and the analysis of spirit possession given by Sheila Walker. The latter shows, elaborating on Merton Gill's and Margaret Brenman's psychoanalytical approach to hypnosis (Gill, Brenman 1961), that hypnosis and possession represent different forms of the same phenomenon - regression in the service of the ego (Walker 1972, 26-51). Together with Walker, we can say, that in many cultures the hypnotists need not to be a person. The external pressure that influences the individual and his own conscious and subconscious motives, based on different religious ideas, create a subsystem of the ego, which is the supernatural being that possesses an individual. After that, we shall come from psychoanalysis to psychology and try to explain the process of origin of the shaman's sickness, relying on the notion of the *generalized reality-orientation* borrowed from Roland Shor. He termed so a structured frame of reference that characterizes a normal state of consciousness and supports, interprets and gives meaning to all the experience of an individual. (Shor 1959, 585) Shor stated that hypnosis is a complex of two processes, one of which is the construction of a special, temporary orientation and the other is the relative fading of the generalized reality-orientation into non-functional unawareness. (A.-L. Siikala's resumé of theses of Shor - Siikala 1978, 50) To mark the temporary orientation that enables possession (or, more narrowly, the shaman's sickness), we are using the term *reality of legends*. This is a system which springs from religious images transmitted by tradition and which arises onto generalized reality-orientation in some cases of altered state of consciousness. Applying it, we state that the shaman's sickness common among the Siberian peoples represents an acute manifestation of the shaman's world induced by an activation of the reality of legends and caused by any event or provocation that can be interpreted appropriately. The novice is possessed not only by one particular supernatural being but the whole world beyond with its inhabitants. Although familiar from legends and myths, this unexpectedly visualized world is still strange and frightening. It is split by antagonistic forces - on the one hand the regulating, systematizing and typologizing effect of a cultural tradition, on the other hand the individualizing, scattering forces of the candidate's subconscious desires, fears and impulses. During initiation these are balanced and the visions of the novice become fairly traditional. The candidate adapts himself to the reality of legends - that is becomes a shaman.

The shaman's sickness can be caused by any event that traditionally can be interpreted as a manifestation of the shaman's gift. Very important is the faith in its hereditary character, because it is this feature that disposes the novice and his relatives to look for the corresponding signs. This very feature creates the external pressure that influences the novice and that, together with his subconscious motivation, starts the reality of legends and removes the generalized reality-orientation into relatively non-functional state. By reading the stories about becoming a shaman we can indirectly decide, how strong that external pressure may be. A Kirghiz shaman Suimenbai told: "My grandfather and grandmother were shamans like my father and mother. When father died, spirits (jinn) chose my elder brother Keregebai to be their master. But Keregebai desired not to become a shaman. This cost him dear - his dead body was found behind the winter house. The second brother Sarynzits too did not want to become a shaman. Someday he rode on ambling horse and suddenly cried: "Jinn, jinn!" The horse carried him into steppe. In their way there was a well; brother tumbled off the horse and broke his neck. I was then 30 years old. Someday I went to seek for camels. It was a time of sunset. I went into bushes. Suddenly I saw, that from one side there was coming multitude of mullahs; from other side approached herd of warriors. I was frightened and lost consciousness. It was over midnight when I awoke and went home. My hands trembled and I felt giddy. At home I lied down and heard, how jinn speak: "Let's take Suimenbai to be our master."" (Alektorov 1900, 32)

The experiences of the altered state of consciousness are, for the most part, determined by the knowledge that the candidate acquired by observing the actions and listening to the stories and songs of his parent or grandparent-shaman. As the position of a shaman presupposes very good knowledge of the oral tradition, shamans usually were famous story-tellers and singers. For that very reason shaman's children and grandchildren were more familiar with the descriptions of upper or lower worlds and supernatural beings than other children. How important were descriptions of that kind, we can see from following example: A 15 years old samoyed boy was apprenticed to an old shaman. The learning started from legends. Matias Aleksanteri Castren wrote: "Imagination of the disciple was aroused with various stories about samoyedic world of spirits." Then two experienced shamans blindfolded the boy. They gave him drum and told to beat it. One of them simultaneously cuffed at the back of pupil's head, the other beaten his back. After a little it was getting light before boy's very eyes and he saw, that multitude of little shamans was dancing on his arms and legs. (Mikhaylovskiy 1892, 100)

Analyzing the motifs of the stories about becoming a shaman, one may say that some of these are expressions of the transformation of the personality of the devotee - its adaptation into the frames of tradition. Motifs of that kind are: dissection of the shaman's body; countering over, smithing and hardening his skeleton and muscles; getting the new eyes and boring through the ears; bringing the reborn shaman up in the iron or stone cradle et cetera. Other motifs show how the experiences of the initiation period are subordinated to traditionary control. Such motifs are: learning from supernatural beings; seeking for allies among spirits; getting helping spirits et cetera. According to autobiographies told by the Nganasan shamans, we may admit that the spirit whom candidate meets for the first time during a dream journey of his initiation

period should first be recognized. The recognition, naming or guessing of a supernatural being is one of the examples of traditional control. Also, the devotee has to recognize and name the places visited by him, and objects of importance that he meets. Recognition of a vision equals to framing it into traditional form. The would-be shaman either unriddles the visions of his initiation period and, in this way, gives them a sufficiently traditional form, or eliminates them. About the recognition of the visions we can know more through the medium of the shamans' autobiographies. Semen Momde, a Nganasan shaman, told: "We saw the tent all covered with ice. A man and a woman were sitting there; a naked boy was walking around in the tent. Tent covers were made from snow and ice; fire in the middle of the tent was hardly burning. "Who are you, from what places are you coming?" they asked. I answered: "Two are leading me. They told me to go along the ancient path. Probably you are spirits of sicknesses." There were all kinds of pots and cauldrons in the tent; all filled with pus. They told me to guess - the boy asked: "Who am I?" I answered: "Probably you are headache." Old man and woman asked: "Guess, who are we?" - "The old man is the beginning of tuberculosis. The old woman is the beginning of cough." They said: "You are right. If such a sickness would come to your people, you would call for us and we help you."" (Popov 1984, 102)

However, it is not enough to merely recognize the places and beings of supernatural world. To gain full control over the vision, it must be described in words - to sing or retell it. For singing or retelling one's experiences means giving a more traditional form to an individual experience. Individuals who are acquainted since early childhood with shamanic tradition have naturally more necessary knowledge for expressing in words their visions than other people. It is during the initiation period that the devotee acquires most of his songs - descriptions of helping spirits and journeys. A son often applies the melodies of his father's or grandfather's shaman songs.

An active traditional control over shaman visions continues after the initiation period is over. In case of an experienced shaman, this is expressed by guessing or so-called 'quest for the right path' taking place during rituals. With the help of such guessing untypical or inappropriate elements are eliminated from the shaman actions. Advice sought by the shamans from people who have a good knowledge of the tradition in a difficult situation is also a part of the traditional control. Often, an experienced shaman has to continue recognizing and naming objects and beings of the supernatural world during the rites. For example, Tubyaku Kosterkin, a Nganasan shaman, had three helping spirits called *hoshitele*. They helped him to recognize several places of the upper world and lower world as well as objects met on shaman journeys that 'did not appear to him as they actually were'. (Gratcheva 1984, 91)

References

Alektorov, A. E. Baksa (iz kirgizskikh sueveri). *Izvestiya Obschestva arkheologi, istori i etnografi pri Kazanskom universitete*. T. XVI, vyp. 1. Kazan.

Gill, Merton M., Brenman, M. 1961. *Hypnosis and Related States. Psychoanalytic Studies in Regression*. New York.

Gracheva; G. K etnokulturnym svyazam nganasan. Klassifikacya shamanov. *Etnokulturnye kontakty narodov Sibiri*. Leningrad.

Ludwig, A. M. 1968. Altered States of Consciousness. *Trance and Possession States* (ed. R. Prince). Montreal.

Mikhaylovski V. 1892. Shamanstvo. Sravnitel'no-etnograficheskiye ocherki. Vyp. 1. *Izvestiya Obschestva ljubitelei estestvoznanya, antropologi i etnografi*, t. LXXV. Moscow.

Popov, A. 1984. *Nganasany. Socialnoe ustroistvo i verovania*. Leningrad.

Prokofyeva, E. 1981. Materialy po shamanstvu selkupov. *Problemy istori obschestvennogo soznanya aborigenov Sibiri*. Leningrad.

Shor, R. E. 1959. Hypnosis and the Concept of the Generalized Reality-Oriented. *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 1959 No.13. Lancaster.

Siikala, A. L. 1978. *The Rite Technique of the Siberian Shaman*. FF Communications 220. Helsinki.

Taksami, Ch. 1981. Shamanstvo u nihvov. *Problemy istori obschestvennogo soznania aborigenov Sibiri*. Leningrad.

Walker, S. 1972. *Ceremonial Spirit Possession in Africa and Afro-America. Forms, Meanings and Functional Significance for Individuals and Social Groups*. Leiden.

NATUR WORSHIP IN SIBERIAN SHAMANISM

[Mihaly Hoppal](#)

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

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

Introduction

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

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

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

Another prominent scholar of the studies of comparative religion, from Scandinavia, the Swedish Åke Hultkrantz, treated the subject of the images of the soul in several of his studies. I am going to quote a comprehensive article he wrote about soul-dualism in connection with shamanism: "the cases of soul-dualism were clearer in shamanism, due to the intense observations of shamanistic performances... In the majority of cases the free-soul of the shaman sought the free-soul of his client... It was not always a matter of a regular dualism between free-soul and body-souls, where the free-soul of the shaman left in search of a runaway soul and a body-soul remained to keep his life.

The record of the diffusion of shamanic and soul-dualism make it evident that soul-dualism had its origins in a hunting culture." (Hultkrantz 1984: 31-34).

During the first year on fifties' Mircea Eliade was completing his work, which, up to his day, counts as a fundamental, classic book (on the life-work of Eliade, a scholar of Rumanian origin, Siikala has given a good survey and appreciation in 1989). He was an adherent of the phenomenological approach, therefore he was mostly interested in a phenomena which gave the whole complex of shamanism its distinctive characteristics: initiatory visions, the shamanic journey to the otherworld, shamanic cosmology and, above all, ecstasy. The title of his book reveals his main idea: *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Eliade 1951,

enlarged edition in English 1964). Eliade did not discuss the historical antecedents of shamanism, thus he declines to mention animism, and his characteristic, that certain recent comprehensive works - thought made for the wider public - which introduce shamanism as a world phenomenon in the framework of "Eliadism", also fail to discuss the formation of shamanism (Perrin 1995, Vitebsky 1995).

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

This is one of the reasons why we are planning to prepare a comprehensive work stretching to several volumes entitled *Encyclopaedia of Uralic Mythologies* (Editors-in-chief: V. V. Napolskikh & A. L. Siikala & M. Hoppál; to be published in the *Ethnologica Uralica* book series) in which we describe and compare the soul concepts of all Finno-Ugrian (Uralic) peoples.

Shamans, as it is well known, play several social roles in their respective societies (e.g. curing of the sick, fortune-telling, or conducting sacrifices etc.), but all of them share the common element that the shamans somehow contact the spirits. L. E. Sullivan put it well, when he said: "Shamans are experts in the movements of the human soul, because they not only control the ecstasy of their own souls but specialise in the knowledge and care for others' souls, as well." (Sullivan 1994).

In this study I am not attempting to describe the way shamans keep the human soul in balance, only to illustrate their relationships to the spirit world, with examples from the mythology of shamanism. Naturally, the relationship to spirits helpers, at least Siberian data seem to bear out that conclusion. One interesting aspect of this is that the final aim of communicating with spirits is the calming of the human soul to insure a spiritual as well as physical-biological balance.

Animistic Mythology in Shamanism

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

N. A. Alekseev, a prominent specialist of the folk beliefs of Siberian Turkic peoples published his comprehensive monograph in 1980, describing the early forms of religion of these nations, and one chapter of this work, "The Deification of Nature and Elemental Forces" deals with

animism. In this chapter he writes about the spirit owners of fire, water, mountains and forests, stating that "...in the consciousness of those who believed in them, the majority of spirit owners totally merged with the things they owned". Names (*aazi*, or in Yakut, *icci*) and the respective natural phenomena were completely identical.

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

A. Gogolev mentions them in his work on Yakut mythology thus: "According to Yakut beliefs, the *icci* is a unique category of being, present in certain specific objects and natural phenomena as a mysterious inner force. Among the *icci* there is a higher category equal to the gods. These beings do not belong to the categories of either *ayi* or *abasi*. If certain rules are observed, they can be helpful to human beings in various life situations, people can regard them as protectors... For all the *icci* bloodless sacrifices were made. Among the *icci* a special place was accorded to the spirit of Mother Earth, *Aan Doydu iccite*." (Gogolev 1994: 42).

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

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

"The Shors believe in the existence of mountain spirits (*tag-azi*) and water spirits (*shug-azi*). Every clan had its own clan mountain and its mountain spirit, who protected the members of the clan. Every three years sacrificial ceremonies were held on that mountain. To express their respect, every Shor threw a libation the spirit owner of the mountain or river, when he or she was near the mountain or river... The spirit owner of the waters was imagined as a long-armed naked woman by the Kumandines... The Tuvans used to believe in the spirit owners of the waters. They made an *ovaa* of stones and dry branches for her, too, on the riverbanks, and near the fords. This looked like a hut, and they placed the sacrificial objects in it: stones, rags, horsehair etc. Before crossing the river they usually performed a sacrifice." (Alekseev 1980: 72-73).

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

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

which supposes the powers of nature to be so strong as to control human destiny as well.

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

"Before the start they sometimes hung a sacrifice (*salama*): they stretched a rope between two trees at arm's height, the length of which was "seven little fathoms," on this they hung a hare's pelt, and horsehair taken from the mane of a white horse, and they tied woodpecker feathers on it. This sacrifice was intended for *Bayanay*. They asked for a rich quarry in their prayers performed for the spirit of dark forest. In the old times a white shaman did the ceremony: the shaman of the *ayii* dieted. He poured butter mixed with *q'umis* or sorat on the sacrifice from a *hamiyah* (large wooden ladle). On the occasion of the *alghis* the priest, shouting '*Urui!*', also sprinkled some *q'umis* on the hunter." (Gogolev 1994: 23).

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

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

Uno Harva prepared a comprehensive study of Finno-Ugrian mythology in the first decades of this century, dedicating several chapters of his work to animistic ideas. In some chapters he described forest and water spirits, the spirits of the weather (sky and wind), mother of fire, and the spirit places of plants and of the Earth (Harva 1927: chapters XI-XV.). Among the Selkups, who live among the river Ob, one can still find animistic beliefs, thus S. M. Malinovskaya (1990) recounts that in order to ensure the success of fishing, one should give a gift or a sacrifice to the spirit owner of the water (*utkim-loz*).

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

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

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

The taboos connected with the cult of fire are aimed not to hurt or pollute fire which gives pure warmth and to life property, so that the people are forbidden to pour water on fire hastily, throw any unclean sweepings to the fire, or to spit into the fire. It used to be forbidden to stir

up fire with sharp metal objects, otherwise the hostess of fire might be wounded. Women and girls are forbidden to step over the fire, since they are considered unclean and may pollute the fire." (Barmich 1990: 1-2).

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

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

"For the Yakuts of the old beliefs this god was a grey-haired, loquacious, old man in perpetual motion. What he chatters and twaddle's is intelligible only to the few: shamans understand him, also the tiny babies whose ears are still not used to the comprehension of human speech. The fire, burning in the family heart, however, understands brilliantly what is being said and done around him. Hence the warning that it would be dangerous to insult the fire. It was thought of as a living being, wherefore it was not advisable to poke at fire with iron. Housewives always attempted to keep the fire satisfied, and they gave him a piece of everything they cooked or baked. Similarly he got some from the results of a lucky hunting expedition." (Gogolev 1994: 19).

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

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

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

The Spirit Helpers of the Shaman

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

Two things follow from animism as a world view: one is the ideology of totemism, the other

is the idea of helping spirits. I am not discussing totemism in the present paper, because I have already given analysis of the interface of shamanism and totemism in an earlier one (Hoppal 1975).

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

"...spirit guides are perceived as crucial to the shaman's resolve and power - literal embodiments of his psychic and magical strength.

There are two basic types of spirit guide. Firstly there are spirits which are substantially under the shaman's control and which serve as his familiars. But there are also other spirits - though of more as guardians or helpers - who are available when he needs to call on their aid. These may be minor deities, or the spirits of deceased shamans: entities who maintain a certain independence in their particular realm, and who are not automatically subject to the control of the shaman.

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

The idea of spirit helpers of an animal shape can be supposed to derive from its ancient character, from the age when for human beings animals represented both idols and inscrutable force, which they could only scarcely control, and then only with the help of magic. The era goes back to the Palaeolithic, when animals were generally looked upon as superior and sacred, which is why they were portrayed with preference in ancient petroglyphs, rock art and cave paintings. Human figures - representing the first shaman or magical - appeared only later (see Hoppal 1995: 37; Vitebsky 1955: 28-29). It is therefore perfectly natural that shamans wanted to identify themselves with powerful, strong and intelligent animals.

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

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

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

1. Shamans who directly descend from previous shamans, or shaman ancestors. It is noteworthy that these shamans called upon their ancestors or mentioned their abodes in their abodes in their invocation before their rituals.
2. Shamans who originate themselves from earth and water spirits (in Tuvan: *cher sug öazinden hamnaan hamnar*). The members of this group have obtained their shamanic powers from the host spirits of water and earth. The existence of these is without doubt connected to the animistic beliefs of the local Turkic peoples, since one of the characters of animistic mythology was *Yer-Shub*, the God of Water and Earth.
3. The members of the third group descend from the sky, their name was *tengri boo* (sky shaman). They had a relationship with rainbow: it related powers to them, or it gave a sign for them to perform their shamanic rituals. Shamans in this category chanted in their songs about various natural phenomena - storms, thunder and lightning; what is more, a man struck by lightning was to become a really powerful shaman. We can suppose that through their animistic spirit helpers this group of Tuvian shamans was responsible for the weather.
4. Shamans originating from the evil spirit called *albis* (albistan hamnaan hamnar). This evil spirit, which can manifest either as a man or a woman, steals the soul of the shaman-to-be, who falls ill with a really serious sickness (for example, epilepsy or temporary insanity). If he/she gets cured, such a shaman will be called a "sexless shaman" (*uk chok hamnar*). This category contained some very powerful shamans.
5. The last group also acquired abilities from evil spirits, from a devil-like spirit called *aza*. This kind of shaman always invites his/her spirit helpers to the session to fight sickness (spirits of sickness). It would seem that fighting diseases was the chief function of this group of shamans. (Kenin-Lopsan 1993: 1-5).

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

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

Buryat shamans formed a very intimate relationship with their spirits helpers, as we learn from R. Hamayon's interpretation - they could even enter into sexual relationships. The whole shamanic session, with its increasing speed of drumming, consist of symbolic motions altogether comparable to sex (Hamayton 1995: 454-491).

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

Here we should begin with the well-known fact that in a culture everything can be understood as a sign, according to the theories of ethnosemiotics (Hoppal 1996:). We live in the world of signs and symbols, and this has always been the case with religious phenomena, and Siberian shamanism is no exception to this. We may declare that all the paraphernalia and ceremonies of shamanic rituals have been symbolic. Let us quote first Wilhelm Radloff, the linguist and

traveller of the last century, who visited the lands of the Altaic Turks, and published his travel notes under the title *Aus Siberien*, in which a particularly rich description of shamanic ritual appears, beginning with the human-shaped spirit owner of the drum:

"Inside the drum, on the longitudinal axle of the frame there is a grip shaped like a stick, usually representing a man standing with outstretched hands, who is called the master owner of the drum (*tüingür asi*). A round head is carved onto the inner end of the handle, with button-shaped eyes on the head, with an iron stick symbolising the hands. On this and the handle red or blue ribbons were attached, which symbolised the ancestors of the shaman, recalling their memory." (Radloff 1884: 31).

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

The shaman's costume was in its totality as well as in its details a carrier of symbols throughout Siberia (Hoppal 1995: 108-121). Uno Holmberg-Harva (1922) perfectly summed up the main types, when he stated that types of 'bird', 'reindeer' and 'bear'-costumes could be differentiated. In his opinion all kinds of shamanic costumes in all their constituent parts represented whatever real or imagined animal was regarded as the helper of the shaman, which, through its powers and abilities gave supernatural powers to the shaman who wore the costume. All these ideas gain their explanation from the animistic roots of shamanism (Aleksiev 1984: 275).

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

Less well known is A. M. Zolotarev's monograph (1964) on the dualistic social structure and the similarly dualistic mythological structures of Siberian peoples. He quotes data from Yakut shamanism, where the main accessory of black shamans was the gown, while the symbol of white shamans was the drum. White shamans did their rituals in the daytime, while black ones chose dark nights without the moon for theirs. White shamans served the sky spirits, the black shamans chose dark-coloured animals.

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

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

Beliefs in spirits in animism and in shamanic symbolism mutually suppose each other. I am

going to add a few more examples to the ones we have seen before in order to shed some light on the real message of this ancient way of thinking, because it has a meaning for us as well. Namely, if everything in nature has a spirit (or soul), then we ought to behave in a way so that we avoid hurting, insulting, or polluting them.

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

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

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

"A clear expression of the animistic attitude to nature was the hunting rite whose vestiges still make themselves felt in practically all areas populated by Evenki and Evens. The hunting cult of the Tungus was based on the following premise: to kill animals, birds, fish, and to destroy trees in order to obtain food, clothing, fire, etc. is not contrary to nature and does not hurt it. What is contrary to nature and hunting is useless, senseless waste of natural resources..." (Tugolukov 1987: 420).

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

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

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

It is apparent, then, that an *ethnohermeneutical* (Hoppal 1992) understanding of shamanism

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

The message is: balance has to be maintained in all respects - and this is typically a shaman's task. This is why we agree with Nevill Drury's statement: "Shamanism is really an applied animism." (Drury 1898: 5).

References

- Anisimov, A. F. 1967. *Etapy razvitija pervobytnoi religii. (Stages of Development of Primitive Religion)*. Moscow-Leningrad: Nauka.
- Alekseev, N. A. 1980. *Rannie formy religii tyurkoyazychnykh narodov Sibirii. (The Early Forms of Religion of the Turkic-speaking Nations of Siberia)*. Novosibirsk: Nauka.
- Alekseev, N. A. 1984. Helping Spirits of the Siberian Turks. Hoppal, M. (ed.) *Shamanism in Eurasia*. Göttingen: Herodot, pp. 268-279.
- Barmich, M. Ya. 1990. Nenets Customs, Connected with Animistic Conceptions. *Presentation for the IAHR Regional Conference on Circumpolar and Northern Religion*. Helsinki (MS).
- Bulgakova, T. 1992. Nanai Animism as the Means of Unity between Man and Nature. *Environment - a Challenge for Adult Education*, No. 5. Helsinki.
- Drury, Nevill 1989. *Shamanism*. Longmead: Element Books.
- Eliade, Mircea 1951. *Le Chamanisme et les Techniques archaïques de l'Ecstase*. Paris.
- Eliade, Mircea 1964. *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. London.
- Gemuyev, I. N. & Sagalayev, A. M. & Solovyov, A. I. 1989. *Legendy i byly taezhnogo kraya*. Novosibirsk: Nauka.
- Gogolev, A. I. 1993. *Mitologicheski mir yakutov. (The Mythic World of the Yakuts)*. Yakutsk: State University of Yakutia.
- Hamayon, Roberte 1990. *La chasse a l'ame. Esquisse d'une theorie du chamanisme Sibérien*. Nanterre: Societé d'ethnologie.
- Harper, Martin 1993. *Animism and the Supernatural in Modern-Day Indonesia*. (MS).
- Holmberg (Harva), Uno 1922. *The Shaman Costume and Its Significance*. Turku.
- Holmberg (Harva), Uno 1927. Finno-Ugric (Mythology). Mac Culloch, C. J. A. (ed.) *Mythology of All Races*. IV. Boston, pp. 3-293.
- Hoppal, Mihaly 1980. Les Croyances des peuples ouraliens et la chamanisme. *Les Peuples Ouraliens*. Budapest: Corvina, pp. 241-267.
- Hoppal, Mihaly 1985. Shamanism: an Archaic and/ or Recent System of Beliefs. *Ural-Altaiher Jahrbücher*. 57: 21-140.
- Hoppal, Mihaly 1992. Ethnohermeneutics in theory of tradition. *Folklore Processed*. Helsinki: SKS, pp. 141-152.
- Hoppal, Mihaly 1995. Schamanen und Schamanismus. Augsburg: Pattloch.
- Hoppal, Mihaly 1996. *Ethnosemiotics*. Wien (in print).
- Hultkranz, Åke 1984. Shamanism and Soul Ideology. Hoppal, M. (ed.) *Shamanism in Eurasia*. Göttingen: Herodot.
- Kenin-Lopsan, Mongus 1993. *Magic of Tuvian Shamans*. Kyzyl: Novosty Tuva.
- Kim, Taegon 1979. The Idea of the Soul in Korean Shamanism. *Asian Folklore*. I: 3-9.

- Kraeder, L. 1978. Shamanism: Theory and History in Buryat-Society. Dioszegi, V. & Hoppal, M. (eds.) *Shamanism in Siberia*. Budapest: Akadémiai, pp. 181-236.
- Lehtisalo, T. 1924. *Ajurakszamojed mitologia vazlata*. (ford.) Helsinki: Entwurf.
- Malinovskaya, S. M. 1990. Selkup Animistic Ideas (MS). *Paper for the IAHR Regional Conference on Circumpolar and Northern Religions*.
- Mikhailov, T. M. 1976. Animisticheskie predstavlenia buriat. *Priroda i chelovek v religioitikh predstavleniakh narodov Sibiri i Severa*. Leningrad: Nauka.
- Paulson, Ivar 1963. The Animal Guardian: A Critical Synthetic Review. *History of Religions*. III 2: 202-219.
- Paulson, Ivar 1964. Zur Phänomenologie der Schamanismus. *Zeitschrift für Religions - und Geistesgeschichte*, XVI 2: 124-141. Köln.
- Pentikäinen, Juha 1995. The Revival of Shamanism in the Contemporary North. Kim, T & Hoppal, M. (eds.). *Shamanism in Performing Arts*. Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, pp. 263-272.
- Perrin, Michel 1995. *Le chamanisme*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Radloff, Wilhelm 1884. *Aus Siberien: lose Blätter aus dem Tagebuch eines reisenden Linguisten*. I-II. Leipzig.
- Qui, Pu 1989. Shamans and Shamanism of the Oyoqens. Hoppal, M. & Sadovszky, O. (eds.). *Shamanism: Past and Present*. 2: 253-261. Budapest-Fullerton: ISTOR Books 1-2.
- Serov, S. I. 1988. Guardians and Spirit Masters of Siberia. Fitzhugh, W & Crowell, A. (eds.). *Cross-roads of Continents*. Washington, D. C. Smithsonian Institution Press, pp. 241-255.
- Siikala, Anna-Leena 1989. The Interpretation of Siberian and Central Asian Shamanistic Phenomena. Gnoli, G (ed.) *Mircea Eliade e le religioni asiatiche*. Roma: Serie Orientale Roma sol. LXIV, pp. 103-118.
- Smolyak, A. V. 1974. Novye dannye po shamanizmu i animizmu nanaitzev. (New Data on the shamanism and animism of the Nanai). *Sovietzkaya etnografiya*. No. 23: 106-113.
- Stadling, J 1912. *Shamanismen: i Norra Asien*. Stockholm.
- Sullivan, Lawrence E. 1994. The attributes and power of the shaman: a general description of the ecstatic of the soul. in: Seaman, G & Day, J. S. (eds.). *Ancient Traditions: Shamanism in Central Asia and the Americas*. Denver: Univ. Press of Colorado and Denver Museum of Natural History.
- Tokarev, S. A. 1964. *Rannie formy religii* (Early Forms of Religion). Moscow: Nauka.
- Tugolukov, V. A. 1978. Some Aspects of the Beliefs of the Tungus (Evenki and Evens). Dioszegi, V. & Hoppal, M. (eds.). *Shamanism in Siberia*. Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, pp. 419- 428.
- Tylor, E. B. 1871/2. *Primitive Culture*. London.
- Vitebsky, Piers 1995. *The Shaman*. London: Macmillan.
- Zelenin, D. 1936. Die Animistische Philosophie des sibirischen Schamanismus. *Ethnos*. I 4: 81-45.
- Zhong, Jinwen 1995. Shamanism in Yöghur Folktales. *Shaman* III 1.
- Zolotarev, A. M. 1964. *Rodovoi stroi i pervobytnaya mifologiya*. (The Clan System and Primitive Mythology). Moscow: Nauka.

The traditional worldview of the Nenets is animistic; the environment is believed to be informed by a hierarchy of different spirits, the paramount being *Num'*, a major deity of the heaven. The mediator between the ordinary world and the upper- and underworlds of the spirits is *tádyebya*, a Nenets shaman. The Nenets *tádyebyas* are ranked according to their spiritual attachment and function and according to their experience (see further: Homich 1981).

The songs directly connected with the shamanistic ritual, can be divided into two subtypes. To

the first subtype belong the "magic songs" proper, that the Nenets shaman¹, *tádyebya*, performs during his séance. To the second subtype belong the shamanistic narrative songs, which contain stories about the shamans and mythological entities (cf. Helimski 1989, 26)². Lehtisalo defines the shamanistic songs as "songs sung with the accompaniment of the witch drum and having the content related to the mythical beliefs, where the journeys of the Samoyeds to the spirits or to the deceased are depicted". (Lehtisalo 1922, 89) These songs are referred to with a general, but somewhat obscure appellation *sámbadabts*³. This name is closely related to one of the functional categories of Nenets shamans, the *sámbana*. The *sámbana* shamans were specialized only in escorting the dead to the world of the dead and to the ritual cleaning and protection of the relatives, their dwelling and equipment (cf. Khomich 1981, 16).

Lehtisalo (1956, 187) proposes a Forest Nenets song type name *tachipyá"tma kinawsh*, that is formed out of the general appellation of the shaman, *tádyebya*, and of the song type, *hinabts*. Furthermore, Khomich (1981, 16) assumes the category of the *sámbana* shamans to be of relatively late origin: "...the duties of a shaman specialized in the funeral rites (i.e. *sámbana*) were not considered as indispensable, and besides, there is no information about this kind of shamans in the 18th century sources."

Interestingly, Kupriyanova gives practically no information about the shamanistic songs. She has assigned the shamanistic songs to the category of the shamanistic fairy tales in her typology of the Nenets oral tradition (Kupriyanova 1960, 17). She only states briefly, that "the shamanism had a once certain role in the folk practices and therefore it has been possible to record a corpus of shamanistic songs and tales". (Kupriyanova 1960, 19). Also later she makes only a passing reference to the existence of Lehtisalo's material (cf. Kupriyanova 1965, 20). This is interesting in that she gives much more extensive information about all the other categories of the Nenets songs. This may be partially due to the places she recorded her material, namely among the Malaya Zemlya tundra (actually only the village of Nel'min-Nos at the delta of the Pechora river), having no informants at hand, who would have been able to give information about the Nenets shamanistic practices. More likely, however, is, that at those times discussion of the subject of shamanism was very strictly banned. Thus it is likely, that both the Nenets and Kupriyanova practiced a strong self-censorship with the issue of shamanism.

¹The word *shaman* has spread to international use - via Russian - originally from the Evenki language. The Turkic word *kam* could also have spread elsewhere, but for some reason it didn't, but was left in Russian (*kamlaniye* 'a shamanistic séance'; *kamlat'* 'shamanize').

²Castrén has labelled one song as *tádieibtso* (Castrén-Lehtisalo 1940, 150) and described it as "an epic song with a shaman theme". Simoncsics has also a mention of these songs (*tádebtso*) (1978, 401). However, none of the Nenets that I have asked about the existence of a shaman song *tádebtso*, has recognized such a term. Probably the *tádieibtso/tádebtso* refers to something like *tádyebya' syo* 'shaman's song', pronounced as *tádyebyansyo*. Lehtisalo reports of a word *tadebtsu* as 'the helping spirits of the shaman' (1956, 478).

³Lehtisalo has also translated the corresponding verb through the concept of the *sámbana tádyebya* (1956, 406): "*sámpá* 'to escort the shadow-souls of the dead to the underworld with songs and accompaniment of the magic drum'".

2.3.1. Sámbadabts

In any event, the word *sámbadats* refers to the general category of Nenets shamanistic songs.

The *sámbadabts* were performed by the shaman during the act of a shamanistic séance and they contained expressions about deities and helping spirits of the shaman (cf. Helimski 1989, 25). The shaman also described his journey in the supernatural world in the song.

Simoncsics (1978, 400) has made an interesting analysis of the oldest documented text of a Nenets shaman song. The text was recorded by M. A. Castrén among the Western Nenets in the village of Syomzha in 1842 (Castrén-Lehtisalo 1940, 302). A shamanistic journey is described in it in the course of the depiction of a shaman. The different phases of the journey are described in detail, while the shaman proceeds through the seven spheres of the sky. The spherical scenery and topography are supernatural and strange. The ultimate goal of the journey is the *yesya mya* "iron hut", the dwelling of the paramount god of the skies, the *Num'*. Here the shaman acquires the information, that was the objective of the séance. On the return journey, nothing is same anymore, the fantastic topography has been transformed. (cf. Simoncsics 1978, 400)

Lehtisalo speaks about "witch songs" e.g. thus (1922, 97): "If the singer may be exalted already by singing fable songs, raises his exaltation in witch songs to great primordial force. Surely the wizard has to 'ensavage', strengthen himself in order to present himself favourably to the elves and to make his will known. In important places knocks he his head with the drumstick and may raise up from his seat (...) in the back of the dwelling to take some dance steps (...). Every wizard knows a group of these songs, and chooses a song appropriate to the situation."

Simoncsics maintains that these kind of *sámbadabtses* differ from the more narrative shamanistic songs, especially on the level of their semantic structures, and that they relate to the semantic isomorphism of the "lyric" songs. According to his interpretation, the shaman tries to express something, that has no conceptual or linguistic form; that is "the great mystery of shamanism"..., which is ultimately "the interdependence, the secret connection of life and death". (Simoncsics 1978, 401)

The following is a fragment of Forest Nenets shaman song. The recording has been made for the radio of the Yamal Nenets autonomous district and recorded outside the ritual, however. The text line is octosyllabic, but the singer places lots of supplementary syllables between the text syllables proper. In this example is heard only the initial (octosyllabic) text line of the incantation, following a short intro line (11 sec.), consisting of supplementary syllables. In the transcription a text line encompasses a whole line in the score. The inner structure of the lines is shown with the broken lines. They divide the melodic line into four parts, in the beginning of which are the places for the meaningful syllables (underlined). This shaman song is very illustrative in pointing out the big amount of supplementary syllables in a text line.

Example 8. (313Kb, 28 sec.) *Tachyipyatma kinawsh* "An old drum".

An incantation that is related to a shaman song called "Shye"wyi kingnya'ta pyenshaL 'The seven-ways-sounding drum'.

Performed by [Ohol' Ngäywashyeta](#). Recorded by Yamal Nenets Autonomous District Radio (archive nr. Ya-204/3).

(A recording probably from 1980's.)

Transcription and translation (into Russian) of the text variant of this song by Inna Wello. Unchecked transcription of the text, its translation into English and [transcription](#) of the singing by J. Niemi.

nyiLyinangy shyidyangkat(à)

Worked out by our grandfathers (is the drum),

Due to the extreme rarity of examples of genuine Nenets shaman songs and even other octosyllabic songs, only some fundamentals of their metric construction can be outlined. First, as can be seen from the example of Ngäywashyeta, the meaningful syllables of a text line are scattered among and between the multitude of supplementary, synsemantic syllables. Second, the octosyllabic line can consist of two four-syllable parts, each of which has a default final supplementary syllable. Examining the available shamanistic and octosyllabic songs, some basic types of formation of a text line can be discerned:

1) As in the song of Ngäywashyeta, an octosyllabic text line is formed by certain succession and combination of proper text syllables "S1-8" and supplementary syllables or syllable groups "(S)". In this song their scheme is of the form of

$$S1 + S2 + (S) + S3 + S4 + (S) + S5 + S6 + (S) + S7 + S8 + (S),$$

with some exceptions, probably due to the highly expressive style of performance. Especially the final position (S) contains a group of supplementary syllables (how, kow, ow).

Another example of this type is a sung fairy tale reminding a shamanistic song (*sambadabsraha lahanako*), sung by Paraskov'ya Nikolayevna Maryuyeva in Nel'min-Nos, 1994. It has a simple succession scheme of

$$S1 + S2 + S3 + S4 + (S) + S5 + S6 + S7 + S8 + (S).$$

The analysis of the text lines in this song points to the firm existence of a caesura in an octosyllabic text line, and in this example the crossing of the caesura is marginal, which means, that the major word border groups in this song (and in other songs as well) are paired (SSSS+SSSS, SS+SS+SSSS, SSSS+SS+SS, SS+SS+SS+SS). Especially here, in Maryuyeva's song, the predominance of the SSSS+SSSS-type is obvious (36.6% of all the lines). The majority of the text lines (63.4%) represent the "full" 8-syllable line, while the rest are "incomplete", where either the sixth (23.9%) or second (4.2%) syllable is missing. There are clear traces of hexasyllabic lines among these incomplete lines. The rest of the lines are half lines, mostly sung by mistake (8.5%).

Example 9. *Sambadabsraha lahanako* (A fairy-tale reminding *sámbadabs*).

Performed by Paraskov'ya Nikolayevna Maryuyeva (née Taibarei).

Recorded by J. Niemi, Nel'min-Nos, 11.8.1994.

Transcription and translation (into Russian) of the text by Anastasia Lapsui.

Further transcription of the text, its translation into English and [transcription](#) of the singing by J. Niemi.

It has to be noted also, that there is no need to organize the melodic rhythm according to the word-border and accentuation, like in hexasyllabic songs. Therefore there is only one word-border type in the octosyllabic songs, resulting as uniformity in the melodic rhythm and in the location of the sung syllables. Maryuyeva's song is representative of this also, as a rare case of a long (71 lines) performance of a song in the octosyllabic meter. The sung syllables concentrate quite uniformly to the fourth and eighth syllabic position, but they can occur also in the sixth position.

The strict organization of this type of an octosyllabic line in some of the shamanistic songs led, for example, Lehtisalo to organize his text transcriptions into columns of four syllable lines (1947, 469-546). It is especially interesting to refer here to this kind of shaman song (Lehtisalo 1947, 469), which has been possible to identify with the corresponding phonogram (Ph. 26a-b) (see: Niemi & Lapsui 1995, 147-148). The line scheme of the phonogram here, however, does not even suggest the presence of a two-part octosyllabism:

(S) + S1 + S2 + S3 + S4 + S5 + S6 + S7 + S8.

2) The similar line structure can be echoed, i.e., the some of the proper text syllables may be repeated according to a certain scheme. Examples of this type can be found from the songs recorded by Lehtisalo in 1911 (see: Niemi & Lapsui 1995, 154; 161). The succession scheme in the example 11. (Ph. 32a) can be discerned as

S1 + S2 + S3 + S4 + S5 + S6 + S7 + S8 + S5 + S6 + S7 + S8 + (S),

although because of the bad quality of the recording, it was not possible to transcribe all the words of the song.

The second shamanistic song in the same phonogram (example 26. (Ph.32b)) contains another principles of repetition. It is interesting to notice, that there are alternating schemes in this song. After S1 and S2, there is a place for the optional (S), and after that follows the rest of the text line S3-8. After that follows either echoed S5 and S6, or (S). The line scheme ends with echoed S7 and S8 followed by yet a final (S):

S1 + S2 + (S) + S3 + S4 + S5 + S6 + S7 + S8 + S5 + S6 + S7 + S8 + (S),
 S1 + S2 + S3 + S4 + S5 + S6 + S7 + S8 + S5 + S6 + S7 + S8 + (S),
 S1 + S2 + (S) + S3 + S4 + S5 + S6 + S7 + S8 + (S) + S7 + S8 + (S),
 S1 + S2 + S3 + S4 + S5 + S6 + S7 + S8 + (S) + S7 + S8 + (S),
 S1 + S2 + S3 + S4 + S5 + S6 + S7 + S8 + S7 + S8 + (S).

An example of more uniform echoed line scheme can be found from the shaman song performed by Ngabtiko Lapsui (audio example not available). There are two alternating line schemes in this song:

S1 + S2 + S3 + S4 + S1 + S2 + S3 + S4 + S5 + S6 + S5 + S6 + S7 + S8 + (S)
 S1 + S2 + S3 + S4 + S1 + S2 + S3 + S4 + S7 + S8 + S5 + S6 + S7 + S8 + (S).

Example 10. *Sambadabs* (Shaman song of Ngabtiko Lapsui).

Performed by Valentina Ngabtikovna Salinder. Recorded by Elena Pushkarëva, Nyda 1993.

Transcription and translation (into Russian) of the text by Elena Pushkarëva.

Further transcription of the text, its translation into English and [transcription](#) of the singing by J. Niemi.

It is worth noticing here, that the echoed syllables can also be a part of a word and furthermore, a part from the end of the word.

Helimski (1988, 72-74) has an interesting notion of similar principles in the formation of a text line with the material of the allegoric *keyngeyrsya*-songs of the Nganasan. Although the *keyngeyrsyas* conform to the general rules of the hexasyllabismus of the Northern Samoyed,

the principles of echoing and repeating of syllables of a text line, as well as the reorganizing their succession are strikingly similar. It has to be emphasized, however, that there is no such a thing in Nenets hexasyllabic text lines.

SEVEN VOTYAK CHARMS

[Vladimir Napolskikh](#)

One of the elements of ancient Votyak paganism surviving till now is the traditional healing and sorcery. One may suppose that there is now hardly one living Votyak village without practioners (or, at least, those pretending to be practioners) of this arts. The trust in their power is, as a rule, generally accepted by the local population, especially - by the women and old people - and is continually confirmed by successes of more skilled healers contrasting with the permanent lacks and shortcomings of the official medicine. Many facts seem really to prove the existance of some "power", though the mechanism of its actioning stays to be unclear. Surely, we deal here with a display of extrasensor practice based on so-called "bio-energy", which can be used when the healer is skilled in the art and the patient has enough trust in it.

The common Votyak word for the healer (or witch-doctor) is *emjas'kis'* "healer" - a participle (= nomen agentis) from *emjany*; "to heal" - or *pel'las'kis'* "blower" - a participle from *pel'las'kyny* "to blow"; the last word describes one of the main ways of magic treatment, well-known throughover all the Europe, when the healer blows upon the water with charming and gives it to the patient to drink. This is a good illustration to the fact, that the Votyak notions about healers as well as those about the witchcraft (if not to say - all the so-called Votyak pagan religion) had developed as a part of common-European culture, under the dominating influence of neighbouring peoples, the Tatars and the Russians with their folk religions, formed in frames of official Islam and Christianity.

Though the healers - and it seems to be an old traditional feature - do never use to demonstrate their power in public, they are always highly respected and guarded (especially - during the Soviet age) by the local population because of being regarded as good people who can never make any harm. Thus, they stay in opposite to the witchs or sourcerers (vot. *vedin* /*vegin*< rus. *vedun* "witch, sourcerer (masc.)").

The general opposition between *pel'las'kis'* and *vedin* as between good and evil strengths compiles with a series of concrete. oppositions. While the healer deals only with people of our world and acts only for their purposes and needs, the sourcerer is believed to contact with the dead and to be able to return to this world after her (his) own death, especially - during the Great Thursday night before the Easter. Therefore the sourcerers are called somewhere *shai vyle vetlis'* - lit. "(the one, who) goes to the cemetery, cemetery frequenter". While the healer appears always as a concrete man or woman never changing his (her) image, the sourcerer uses to turn into a bird or an animal (oftener - into a goose or a cat) making her evil business. A healer, being asked by somebody (not a stranger, of course) for his help, would hardly be reticent or deny his ability - while a sourcerer, though her evil activity might be well known to everybody in the village, would never own it up. When somebody wants to become a healer, this may study the art after an old *pel'las'kis'* and succeed after some time: the one should just have some talant, be good-hearted and zealous and find a good teacher, - but nobody is

believed to have become a *vedin* by the one's own will. This evil gift is transmitted from one to another by magic way, very rarely with asking the recipient's agreement. *Vedin* can't die and suffers hard until the gift passes to another person, and this one can do nothing against when obtaining it. Also a good-hearted person after having received the gift has from time to time to harm at the trees if not the people. All the sourcerers I heard about were women (though the people believe that a man is able to be *vedin* too) - and among healers there were some men, and there is no doubt, that some seventy years ago it was possible to find even more men-healers, but the wars of the XX century had greatly reduced the number of old men.

Treating a disease the Votyak healers spell peculiar charms *-pel'as'konjos* - lit. "blowings". These short texts are very interesting for philologists and anthropologists because they presumably can reserve ancient features of traditional poetic system and mythological worldview. Most of the Votyak charms known today in the scientific literature had been written in the end of the XIX - beginning of the XX century. Perhaps, the best collection was presented by Bernat Munkacsi in his "Votjak nepkoltesi hagyományok". Nowadays it is not too easy to collect new charms: for example, in brilliant collection of Votyak texts edited by Dr. V.Kelmakov and collected by himself and his students one can find only five charms among 250 texts. This situation is not explained, as it might be supposed, by degradation of traditional quackery, but by the fact, that the healers have systematically been persecuted by the Soviet and communist functionaries and this have made them to keep their skill in secret, avoiding every stranger and newcomer even more than it was done traditionally. Only during last five-six years the folk medicine became acknowledged by the official medicine and highly esteemed healers have been de facto allowed to practice their art.

Here I am going to present seven Votyak charms collected by me in village Dym-Dym Omga of Vyatskie Polyani district of the Kirov government of Russia in winter 1991.

I came to Dym-Dym Omga for the first time in the frosty February of 1991. It was only a short reconnoitring trip, I planned to collect some materials on the traditional beliefs and calendar rites of local Votyaks, and only pen and paper were my tools.

Dym-Dym Omga is a big village situated not so far from the lower reaches of the great Vyatka river, which, perhaps, gave its name to one of the great Votyak tribes - Votka. The name Dym-Dym Omga means "original, real Omga, Omga of worth", where *Omga* is a clan name. The village was founded, according local legends, about two hundreds years ago by three Votyak families of the Omga clan (I use the word "clan") to translate the Votyak *vorshud*) who came from North-East, down a small Kazan' river, where are situated other villages of the Omga clan - for example, the neighbouring Kazan Omga (Omga -(village) (on the river) Kazan'), Sjöd Oshmes Omga ("Omga (village) (near a) black water-spring"). Though the village was founded by Votyaks, the Russians came to live there very early too and the population had been mixed from the very beginning. However, the two nations lived their own ways and preserved their original spiritual culture - notwithstanding the fact, that the Votyaks had been christianized for at least two hundred years ago. During the Soviet times, when the small villages around became deserted, their Russian and Tatar inhabitants came to live here, and now only less than a half of the villagers here are the Votyaks.

During a week I met old Votyaks and Russians writing stories about their old life and already my trip to be finishing, when a Votyak old lady recommended me to visit *Zinok apai* ("aunt Zinok") who was said to be a good healer and, being very old, could also answer my question

the best.

Zinaida Plotnikova, or, according to Votyak tradition *Zinok apai*, lived with her grandson's family in a new house near the village school. She was really old enough (born in 1907), but when I entered the house and introduced myself, I found a lively, talkative old woman, who cooked for all the family, looked after the children and also found time to spin. We had long and interesting conversation and, step by step, came to the theme of traditional medicine. Greatly surprised was I, when the old healer began to tell me her secrets citing charms without any fear and reserve! On the next day I had to leave and therefore tried to write down as much as possible. I asked her about the ways of studying the art of healing, and she said that she could even teach me - no matter, that young, a man (she was taught by man herself) and a Russian (the knowledge of Votyak language was enough). Unfortunately, we had not so much time to converse, to tell nothing about the teaching: she was very busy about the house. "This summer, - said she, - I am going to live alone in my own small cottage with my geese and sheep - you may come here to follow your work and to study a bit the art, if you want". Certainly, I received the invitation, and we parted till August, when, I hoped, I should collect perhaps my best field materials.

The 19th of August 1991 had been the date when I started to Dym-Dym Omga next time. It was not great pleasure to find myself in a village without any non-official information in the days of communist patch, but this had been the fate. I alighted from the bus in the village square and asked an old woman staying in a long line near the local shop for bread and wine, where is *Zinok apai*'s house. "O, my son, - was the answer, - she died this spring, in April, don't you know?"

Today I think, that already in February she felt her death coming, and this was the reason of her openness. Nevertheless, we failed...

On the 20th of August I heard Yeltsin by radio, realized the truth of Moscow events and took the train to Moscow, but I had been late there too...

Thus, I have nothing but seven charms written by hand. I think, they should be published in memory of a good old woman, Votyak healer Zinaida Plotnikova, *Zinok apai*.

1.

Sometimes a baby may be frightened by a sudden dog's barking or goose's cry and the baby's soul, *urt* goes away, they say. *Urt* is soul-double-ganger, responsible for mental health and consciousness in opposite to *lul* - soul-breathing, responsible for physical life, when the last goes away the person dies. The baby always dreads, can't sleep, has apparently a headache. In this case a cup or a deep plate of water should be taken, holden above the baby's head and melted lead be pured onto the water, saying:

imtid potemed?

nirtid potemed?

šintid potemed?

peľtid potemed?

šerti cirtid potemed?

jirtištid potemed?

ket gogitid potemed?

sifantid potemed?

kizantid potemed?

fju!

Through thy mouth thou went out?

Through thy nose thou went out?

Through thy eyes thou went out?

Through thy ears thou went out?

Through the back of thy neck thou went out?

Through the back of thy head thou went out?

Through thy navel thou went out?

Through thy anus thou went out?

Through thy uretra thou went out?

as like asking the soul. Thereafter the soul comes back.

2.

If there is a rupture of a baby bigger than a hen-egg, it should not be treated by a healer, operation should be done in a hospital. If the rupture is small, a besom from green abies twigs should be made and then, poking with the besom onto the rupture, should be said the next:

badžijn pužimlen uvez šigiz ke,

so intije u potiz na ke

vaňa sokə u med luoz.

badžijn kizlen uvez šigiz ke,

so intije u potiz na ke

vaňa sokə u med luoz.

badžijn niypu uvez šigiz ke,

so intije u potiz na ke

vaňa sokə u med luoz.

fju!

**If a branch of a big pine-tree was torn
and if a rupture appeared on that place
then Vanya's may be a rupture.**

**If a branch of a big fir-tree was torn,
and if a rupture appeared on that place
then Vanya's may be a rupture.**

**If a branch of a big abies-tree was torn
and if a rupture appeared on that place
then Vanya's may be a rupture**

3.

When a baby tears its navel (navel rupture), the next should be said:

in gogi,

mu gogi,

vu gogi-

kuke so virdžiz ke,

sokə andfušalen med virdžoz!

fju!

Navel of heavens,

navel of earth,

navel of water,

if whenever it was torn,

then the Andr'usha's may be torn !

There after, massaging the baby's stomach with hands and with a bottle full of warm water,

the navel rupture should be set right.

4.

When an evil eye was put on a baby, it can't sleep and cries - blowing upon some water the next should be said:

*kuke inmiš kižiljez
kjad bišamed luiz ke,
soka šin med ušoz.
kuke kamjš vuez
pužen vajemed luiz ke,
soka šin med ušoz.
kuke kapka ažiš
punj sifli šin ušiz ke,
soka šin med ušoz.
fju!*

**If whenever the stars from the sky
with thy hands thou could gather,
then may be put the (evil) eye.
If whenever the water from the Kam (river)
with a sieve thou could bring,
then may be put the (evil) eye.
If whenever upon before the gate (lying)
dog sheat the (evil) eye was put,
then may be put the (evil) eye.**

The name *Kam* is used in Votyak for big rivers: *Ted'i Kam* - "white kam", the Kama river and *Vatka Kam* - the Vyatka river. Here *Kam* means "Vyatka".

5.

When a baby's shoulder-blade comes out (dislocation, *vot pín'ili pire* - lit. "spoon-bone comes in"), the next should be said when setting it right:

*kuke gord atas
džardatem iz jiljin
siljini židaz ke,
soka pañili med piroz.*

**If whenever a red cock
on the top of a red-hot stone
could survive staying,
then may the shoulder-blade come out**

*busiš kiibodijez
gošik kiinjid kutisa
jiržukin merttemed luiz ke,
soka pañili med piroz.*

**If a field thistle
taken with thy bare hands
thou could plant its head down,
then may the shoulder-blade come out**

*šuriš koškiš vuez
vallan karemed luiz ke,
soka pañili med piroz.
fju!*

**If flowing water from a river
thou could make to flow upstreams,
then may the shoulder-blade come out**

6.

If a man drinks a lot and uses to beat his wife, a thread from the rag which he used when washing in the sauna should be drawn out and sewn into his shirt, under the armpit, making three stitches without ties and saying the next:

*kulem murtlen kiiz
džutiškiz na ke,
soka džutiškoz žuglškini kiiz!
fju!*

**If a hand of dead man
would ever rise,
then will rise his hand to scuffle!**

7.

If your hand has been burned you may take some coal from the oven and pouring this coal onto your hand around the burned place say thus:

*kuke džadžeg tel puziš
t+l potiz ke,
soka med sutiskod!
fju!*

**If whenever from an empty goose egg
a fire would come,
then thou mayst burn (it) !**

Warning!

Transcription
some words
(technical
reason) in
plain text
differs of
transcription
used by
author. Here
is conversion
table!
Sorry!

*emjaškiš emjani
pellaškiš pellaškini
šai vyle vetliš
pellaškonjos
šed ošmes
teđi kam
pəniłi pire
Dim-Dim Omga*

*emjas'kis' emjany
pel'as'kis' pel'as'k
šai vyle vetlis'
pel'as'konjos
sjöd oshmes
Ted'i Kam
p`in'ili pire
Dym-Dym Omga*

The Clean Tent Rite

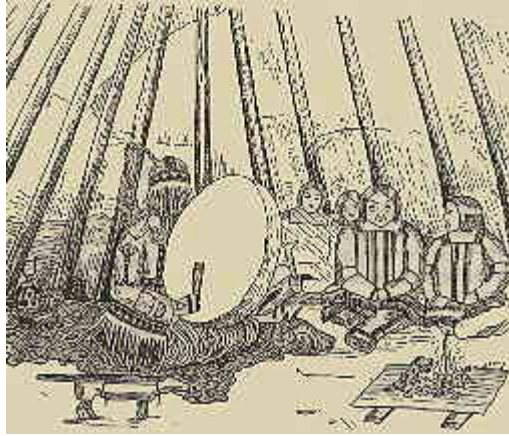
After the end of the polar night the clean tent rite was performed by the Nganasan shamans. Only a great shaman, who has helping spirits enough for the long journey, could accomplish 3, 5, 7 or 9 days lasting ceremony. A special tent was pitched for the rite. New tent poles were made, seven ones for each day of the rite. So if the rite lasted seven days there must have been 49 poles in the framework of the clean

tent. Three dusky reindeer were sacrificed, their heads, legs and hides were hung round the top of the tent. Tent covers were smeared with the blood.



The clean tent. Drawing from A. Popov's book "Tavgitsy" (Moskva-Leningrad 1936).

On January 1931, A. Popov observed seven days lasted clean tent rite organised by Avam river Nganasans. Dyukhade Kosterkin played the leading role in this rite. On the first day the shaman had to attain the clean tent blindfold. He began to shamanise in his own tent, singing the incantation addressed to the Lord of the hearth. Then he was blindfolded with special tie and guided out of the tent where he was turned round several times. Nevertheless, Dyukhade found the right orientation at once and started to go towards the clean tent. Then some attempts to sidetrack the shaman from his way were taken on by onlookers. Two men drew a rope across the way of Dyukhade. The shaman stopped just in front of it and proceeded only after the rope was removed. A man with a club in his hands crept up on shaman and imitated hitting. Dyukhade swerved as to avoid the hit. He reached the clean tent and found the entrance. After Dyukhade all spectators entered the tent. The tie was removed from shaman's eyes. Dyukhade began to sing his incantations, now addressed to his helping spirits. He asked them to protect everyone who was present in the rite. The first day of the rite was the stepping to the clean ground. On that day the shaman did not ascend to the sky, he only travelled in the middle world. The day ended with dance: the shaman began to sing a wordless song, and all stood in circle, holding hands with each other and stamping. While dancing the women imitated sounds of she-reindeer being on heat.



Dyukhade is shamanising in the clean tent. Drawing from A. Popov's book "Tavgitsy".

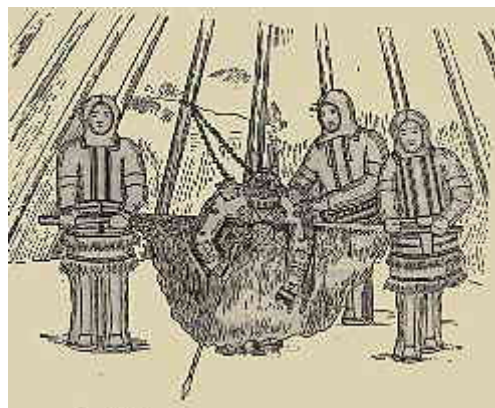
On the next day Dyukhade shamanised in the clean tent. He had a wooden image of ermine on his right hand and a wooden image of a bird on his left hand. Both symbolised his chief helping spirits during that rite. Following them, the shaman ascended to the second level of the heaven where a deity named *Luonkari barba* was living. From *Luonkari barba* Dyukhade asked fortunate next year for everybody and painless childbirth for all women. The deity bade him to show his capability. Dyukhade put his overturned drum in the lap of a spectator. Across the drum he placed a special leather strap with a copper button in its one end (symbol of the umbilical cord), and went out of the tent. An other spectator took the strap, hid it inside his coat, went back and forth in the tent for foiling his tracks, and sat down on his former place. After that the shaman entered. He went directly to his drum, beat it several times, and listened, closing his ear up the drum skin. Then he started to track like the dog, following exactly the trail of the man who had hidden the strap. In front of the latter he stopped, and beat his drum three times.

On the third day Dyukhade ascended to a deity he asked from the year without diseases. The deity bade him look up a cord with four branches. If the shaman is capable of finding the cord, next year will be without serious illnesses. Then Dyukhade took the cord and a small bag, and handed them to the spectators. All went in the other tent, leaving the shaman alone. The small bag was opened. There were five pieces of cloth in the bag: a towel for the Spirit of the tumour, a red shawl for the Spirit of the haemorrhage, a black band for the Spirit of the "black sickness" (smallpox), a gray piece of cloth for the Spirit of the cough, and a white band for the Spirit of the headache. The cord was wrapped in one of these pieces of cloth, all other pieces were also bundled up and put in the bag. Then all went back to the clean tent where the bundles were placed on the drum. Dyukhade did not touch them. he only

smelled the bundles and pointed to one with the cord in it.

On the fourth day Dyukhade proceeded his ascending. He met a deity he asked from sense and truthfulness for children who will born during next year. Another band was hidden and the shaman found it. On the fifth day Dyukhade had to pass the dwelling of the most dreadful deity *Tuyo ngu*. When he was close to the dwelling, he put his drum aside and went out of the tent. A circle was made up by fifteen persons. Together with the shaman they made in silence three turns clockwise. In this manner they protected the shaman and themselves from the evil deity. On the sixth day Dyukhade reached the dwelling of *Tuy koca*, the deity who sends several diseases after the childbirth. While shamanising, five women sat down next to shaman. Dyukhade asked the deity not to torture women, but *Tuy koca* demanded bad childbirth for five women. Dyukhade pointed to the women sitting beside him and said, "What are you going to do? There are only five women among my people. How can people multiply if all women will die?" Then *Tuy koca* bade him look up another cord, and Dyukhade found it without any difficulties.

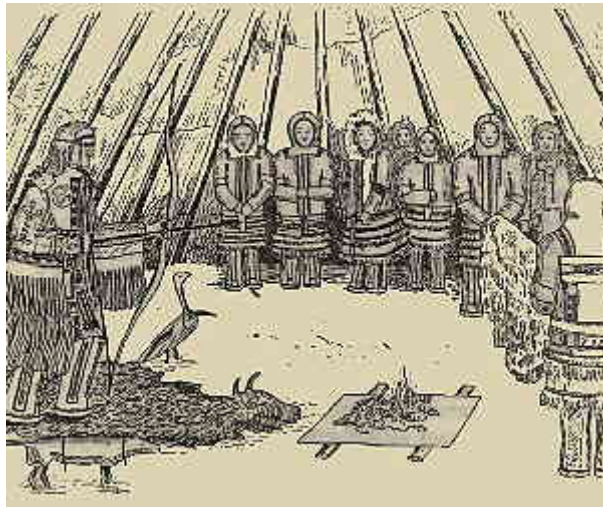
On the seventh day Dyukhade reached the highest level of the sky. A long pole was erected in the middle of the tent. The shaman climbed up and poked his head out of the smoke-vent. The pole symbolised the tree, rising in the centre of the highest sky level. On the top of the tree a spotty face deity was living. The shaman complained him about a multitude of diseases in the human world. "Is all my people doomed or is there any hope for them yet?" he asked. The deity said, "Look round. If a bad year is coming, you can't see the horizon in thick mist. But if a good year is coming, the horizon is perfectly visible and shines in the sunlight." Dyukhade climbed down and said that he had seen the shining horizon.



Dyukhade is swimming across the Sea of the dead. Drawing from A. Popov's book "Tavgitsy".

Then another pole was brought in the tent. On the pole a polar

bear hide was hung. Two men held the pole, and Dyukhade leant on it. He moved his arms like he was swimming, and imitated sounds of the bear. All stood in silence. They knew that the shaman in the shape of the polar bear was swimming across the Sea of the dead, and with him the souls of the spectators like the foam were floating. They also knew that the souls of the people doomed to die during next year could not win the shore. While swimming, Dyukhade said that three souls had left him, and all expressed their sorrow. After swimming lasted an hour, the shaman jumped over the pole and said, "Bad things I had not seen during my successful journey. You have now to strip off the covers of this tent."



*Dyukhade is shooting at the reindeer hide in the clean tent.
Drawing from A. Popov's book "Tavgitsy".*

After that two men stood each on the other side of the entrance. They held a pole with the reindeer hide hanging on it. Before the clean tent rite Dyukhade had told the hunters to kill such-and-such reindeer and give the hide to him. Now the blindfolded shaman took a bow and shot the hide. He hit the hide with his first arrow, showing in this manner that next year would be good for reindeer hunters. Then Dyukhade's wives and daughters brought several bags filled with meat and fat pieces. The shaman divided all the meat except two or three last handfuls between spectators. These last handfuls he threw up, and everybody tried to catch some pieces for good luck. Then Dyukhade went back to his own tent where he thanked the Lord of the hearth for his help and asked him to protect everyone who was present in the rite.

Abbreviatedly from A. Popov, "Tavgitsy". Moskva-Leningrad 1936, pp. 63-79.

Back to the [Shamans from Kosterkin Family](#) page

Dyukhade's initiatory visions

At first he was descending somewhere, then he grasped that there was a sea beneath him. While walking by the sea, he listened the voice of upper disease who told that he would acquire the shaman's gift from the Mistress of water and his shaman name would be *Hotarie*. After that he reached the shore. A naked woman, who was lying there, suckled him. She was the Mistress of water. Her husband Frosty God gave an ermine and a mouse to guide him.

They leaded him to the hill in the lower world where he saw seven tents. Dyukhade entered the second tent. The Smallpox people was living there. They cut out Dyukhade's heart and put it in the cauldron to boil. Afterwards Dyukhade visited other tents and got familiar with the spirits of diseases who lived there. Still preceded by his guides, Dyukhade came to that place of the Shamans Land where his throat and his voice were strengthened.

Then he was carried to the shores of the nine lakes. In the middle of one lake was an island and in the island there was a tree, quite similar to the larch, only its top rose to the sky. It was the tree of the Mistress of earth. Beside it grew seven herbs, the ancestors of all the plants on the earth. In each of the lakes swam a species of bird with its young. There were several kinds of ducks, a swan and a sparrow-hawk. With singing songs and telling incantations, Dyukhade walked round all of the lakes. Some of them were very hot, some were terribly salt. Thereafter Dyukhade raised his head and saw men of various nations in the top of the high tree. There were Nganasans, Russians, Dolgans, Nenetses and Tunguses. He heard voices: "It has been decided that you shall have a drum from the branches of this tree."

Then he grasped he flew with the birds of the lakes. As he left the shore, the Lord of the Tree called to him: "My branch has just fallen. Take it and make a drum of it that will serve you all your life!" The branch had three forks and the Lord of the Tree bade him make three drums from it. "Let you have three wives, who will watch over your drums," he said. "The first drum you have got to use for shamanising women in childbirth, the second for curing the sick and the third for finding men lost in the snowstorm."

Dyukhade took the branch and flew away with the birds. On

his way he met a demiman-demitree creature who told: " If you will be asked to shamanise in the case of serious illness and your heart will not be strong enough, then you will take this," and he gave him seven herbs. "Each of them has its lords. If you will meet an orphan girl or a widow, you will help them."

Then Dyukhade reached the large sea. He saw seven cliffs on the shore. When he got close, one of them opened. There were the teeth like bear's ones inside the cliff. The cliff told: "I am the Heavy Stone. By the use of my weight I held the fertile soil in its place. The wind would carry it away without me." The second cliff opened and said: "Let all men melt iron from me." So Dyukhade learned seven days near the cliffs.

Afterwards the ermine and the mouse leaded him by the marshland. They reached the hill with swampy slopes. There was an opened doorway in the closest slope, and they went in. The interior except ice around looked like the one of the conical tent's. There was the hearth in the middle of the room. On the left side two naked women were sitting. Their bodies were furry and both they had antlers (one of them had green ones). Both of them bore him two reindeer calves destined for sacrificing and nourishment. They gave him some reindeer fur for shaman costume and for good luck with reindeer.

Then Dyukhade came to a desert and saw a distant mountain. After three days' travel he reached it and entered an opening. There was a naked man working a bellows inside the mountain. On the fire was a cauldron as big as half the earth. The naked man saw Dyukhade and caught him with a huge pair of tongs. Dyukhade had only time to think: "I am dead!" The man cut off his head, chopped up his body and put in the cauldron. There he boiled them for three years. There were three anvils on the tundra side of this mountain. The naked man forged Dyukhade's head on the third anvil, which was the one on which the best shamans were forged. Then he chilled his head in the cauldron, in which the water was the coldest (there were three cauldrons with water indeed). He said: "When you will be called to cure someone, you will remember - if the soul of your patient will be warmer then water in the first cauldron, it will be useless to shamanise, for the man is already lost. If the soul will be as warm as water in the second cauldron, your patient is not very seriously ill and you will shamanise to cure him. Water in the third cauldron has the temperature of healthy body." Then the blacksmith poured Dyukhade's bones and muscles out of the cauldron and separated flesh from bones. He said: "As you have three of them too many, you will have three shaman costumes too." Afterwards he said: "Your spinal cord is a river now. look at

your bones floating away!" He fished Dyukhade's bones out of the river and put them together. The bones covered with flesh again. Only skull was still separated. Then the blacksmith told Dyukhade to read the letters inside the skull. And Dyukhade read. Then the blacksmith covered the skull with flesh and put it to its original place again. He changed his eyes and pierced his ears, making him able to understand the language of plants. Then Dyukhade found himself on the summit of a mountain. He entered a tent and waked - in his own tent.

Afterwards he behaved like an insane: daily he sung incantations and frequently swooned away, nightly suffered torments caused by spirits. On seventh year of his illness he went far to the tundra and met there a man who gave him back his heart, cut out at the very beginning of his shaman's sickness.

A. Popov "Tavgitsy" - Trudy Instituta antropologii i etnografii, t. 1. vyp. 5. Moskva-Leningrad 1936, pp 85 - 93.
Abbreviated translation by A. Lintrop.

Back to the [Incantator's page](#)

Back to the [Shamans from Kosterkin Family](#) page

A Great Flood had occurred upon Earth long, long ago. While Earth was still covered with water, there were no living creatures upon the land. Then out of the sky one day glided an enormous Eagle with a black Crow riding upon its back, searching for a place to light.

Around and around Eagle flew until he discovered a projecting tree stump, or what appeared to be a stump, upon which he landed to rest. There was a home at last upon the flat surface, which was amply large enough for Eagle and Crow to roost upon. From here, they surveyed the greenish gray water as far as they could see. The sky was a gorgeous bright blue with a few white drifting clouds, occasionally swirled by a passing breeze. All seemed serene to Eagle and Crow.

Small fish were visible below the water, sometimes leaping out of the sea playfully. Hunger caused Eagle and Crow to swoop down, catching a meal for themselves from time to time. Soon a game developed between the two birds to see which one would be the winner in the fish-catching contest. Upon their return to the stump, however, they always shared the reward.

Because of Eagle's great size and wingspan, he soared to great heights and surveyed widely, as the two birds often flew in opposite directions exploring for land. But no land did they find. No other flying creatures did they see. But they always returned to their home base on the tree stump. Between them, they wondered "How can we possibly think of a way to make land?"

"We know we cannot dive deep enough to find dirt, and the fish are of no help except to provide food." Day after day these scenes were repeated, exploring in search of land or wondering how to create land, only to return to their stump and catch more fish.

One morning soon thereafter and much to their surprise, a Duck was swimming around and around their stump. Occasionally, it dived deep in the water, rose to the surface chewing small fish, twisting its head from side to side trying to swallow its meal. One time, Duck emerged with more mud than fish in its mouth. Eagle and Crow bird-talked excitedly about this! "Can Duck possibly bring up enough mud for us to build land?" they wondered. How could they let Duck know that mud was what they needed most?

An idea occurred to Eagle, which he bird-talked to Crow, "If we supply fish for Duck, maybe he will bring up more mud than fish." By trial and error, the two birds caught fish for Duck, placing them at the edge of the stump, until Duck learned that the fish were for him in exchange for mud!

When Duck appeared on the surface after a deep dive, Eagle and Crow brushed off the mud from Duck's bill and his body with their wings. Progress was slow but steady. Gradually, Eagle had a pile of mud on his side of the stump and Crow had a similar pile on his side. Each placed fish on his own side for Duck, who now responded by carrying more and more mud to Eagle and Crow. This became a great game of fish-and-mud exchange.

Duck worked very hard, consequently he was always hungry. The birds were surprised at how large each one's mud pile grew every day. In bird talk they said, "Duck is helping us to make a new world. This we will share equally."

Occasionally, Eagle and Crow flew toward the horizon, exploring for any new signs of land. But they returned with nothing new to report; however, they noticed a slight lowering of water around the tree stump.

"Surely, the flood must be coming to an end," Crow and Eagle bird-talked. Each day they watched for a change in the waterline. Each day their piles of mud seemed higher and higher. Faithful Duck kept up his good work as Eagle and Crow caught fish for him and scraped off mud from him for each side of the new world.

Another time, Eagle flew high and far in search of dry land, not returning until late. The sun set and darkness enveloped his world on the stump. Next morning, to Eagle's surprise, he saw how much more mud he had acquired, and he was pleased. But after looking across at Crow's mud pile, Eagle was astounded to see that Crow had given himself twice as much mud while Eagle

was away. "Was this Crow's idea of sharing the new world equally?" accused Eagle.

Of course, they quarreled all that day and the next over Crow's unfairness. But the following day, they went back to work making their new land. Eagle decided that he must catch up. He caught two fish for Duck and put them in his usual place. Duck responded by bringing up mud twice to Eagle in exchange for his two fish. All three worked very hard for many, many moons.

Gradually, Eagle's half of the new world became taller and taller than Crow's half, even though Crow seemed to work just as hard as Eagle. Duck was faithful to his task, never tiring in his effort to supply mud. Of course, Duck continued to give Eagle twice as much mud for his two fish. Crow never seemed to notice why Eagle's half became higher and higher than his half.

One morning, as the sun rose brightly, the two birds looked down through the water and saw what appeared to be land!

"So that is where Duck finds the mud," they bird-talked. They were pleased to see that the water was subsiding. How they hoped that soon they would be high and dry on their new world.

But all was not so easy, for that very night lightning flashed across the waters and thunder rolled and rolled from one horizon to the other followed by a heavy, drenching rain. Eagle and Crow sought shelter in holes they dug into the sides of their mud piles. All night long the rain continued to fall, washing away much of the new world into the sea.

As the rain stopped and the sun rose, Eagle and Duck looked out upon the waters and saw an arc of many colors reaching from one edge of the horizon across the sky to the other horizon. This brilliant display held their eyes in wonderment. What did it mean? They marveled at how long the colors lingered in the sky. Eagle flew toward the scene for a closer look, returning when the arc disappeared.

In bird talk, Eagle and Crow decided that the storm of the night before must have been a clearing shower. They began their land-building project again, hoping that Duck would resume his work as mud-carrier. Soon the sun's rays burned strong and hot, packing the mud until it was hard. Duck appeared and the team of three continued to build the two halves of the new world.

Day by day, the waters subsided and new land began to show above the waterline but far, far below the new creation by Eagle and Crow. Eagle's half became taller and taller and hard packed by the hot sun. Crow's share of the new world was still great, but never could become as large as Eagle's half of the new world.

In retelling this creation story, Yokut tribal historians always claim that Eagle's half became the mighty Sierra Nevada Mountains. They also tell how Crow's half became known as the Coast Mountain Range. Yokut historians end their

tale by saying that people everywhere honor the brave and strong Eagle, while Crow is accorded a lesser place because of his unfair disposition displayed during the creation of the new world by Eagle and Crow