

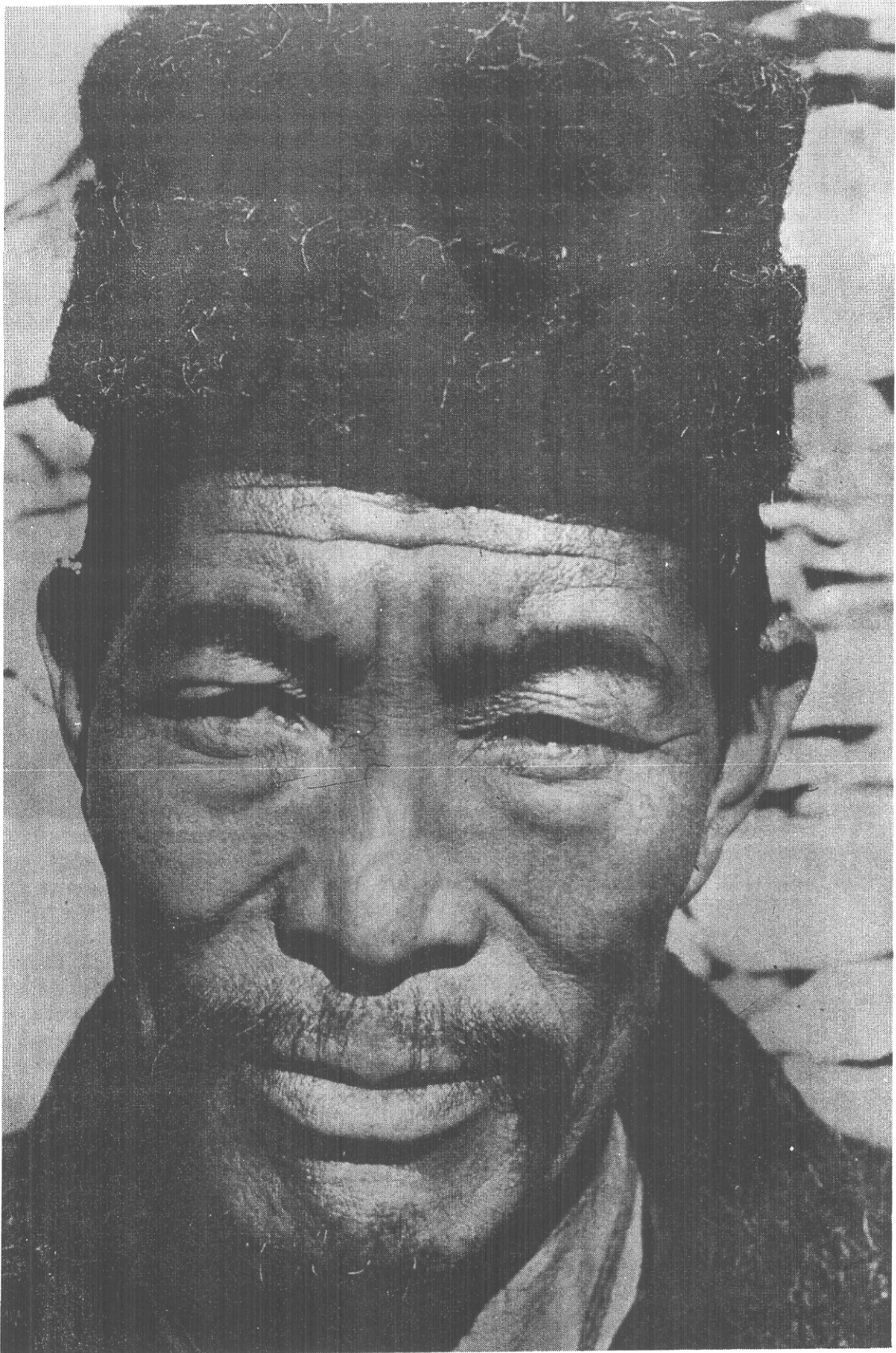
# Siberian Shamanistic Traditions Among the Kham-Magars of Nepal<sup>1</sup>

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The "Kham-Magars" are a people of ancient Mongolian descent inhabiting the upper tributaries of the Sāni Bheri, Bari Gād and Māri Khola on the southwestern flank of the Dhaulagiri massif. (See accompanying map). They constitute a specific ethno-linguistic community within the four northern subtribes of the Magar people--the Bhuda (Bura), Charti, Pun, and Rokha. That is, in the West sector of the Northern Magar homeland (which is separated from the East sector by three days of uninhabited territory), the people have retained an indigenous Tibeto-Burman language known as Kham;<sup>2</sup> and it is these people who are referred to as the "Kham-Magars". (See Watters and Watters, 1973). The great majority of Kham speakers belong to the Bhuda subtribe, but there is some admixture of the other three subtribes as well. Although there is no basis for an accurate estimate of their population, a rough estimate would put their numbers in a possible excess of 30 thousand.

The Kham-Magars follow a transhumant pattern of life, maintaining permanent villages and a few fields for small scale cultivation but traveling extensively most of the year with flocks of sheep and goats. Living relatively isolated from the mainstream of commerce and the influx of Indo-Aryan settlement, they have, as opposed to their kinsmen to the east, been only lightly touched by the influence of Hinduism. Their religious attitude is based primarily on an animistic view of nature--the view that the affairs of men are affected by spirits, and that certain men are capable of entering into communication with these spirits and serve as functionaries between man and the spirit world. Such a view, of course, is very widespread, being found throughout Nepal and in many other parts of the world. I intend to show, however, that the Kham-Magar tradition is a specialized form of this widespread belief; that it is part of an ancient shamanistic tradition which exhibits a history and structure of its own.

Shamanism, as described by most scholars, is pre-eminently a magico-religious phenomenon of Siberia and Central Asia (Eliade 1964:4,5). In fact, the word "shaman" comes originally from the Tungusic word saman meaning 'one who is excited, moved, raised' and was borrowed into English from the Russian. The term is descriptive of the shaman's most basic attribute--shaking, or an "ecstatic trance" (Casanowicz 1924:419). Within this immense ethno-geographic area, there are certain features of shamanism which serve to classify it apart from the magico-religious traditions in other parts of Asia. The shaman's calling, his relation to the spirit world, his initiation and instruction, his magic,



A Kham-Magar of the Bhuda clan, Taka village.

his healing method, and so on, is of a particular type. The Kham-Magar tradition is basically Siberian in its orientation, giving evidence of considerable influence from this so-called "classical" tradition of Inner Asia<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, it exhibits relatively little syncretism of other traditions, and as such may provide anthropologists with a new perspective in their attempts at unraveling the complex interrelations between the various cultural traditions converging in Nepal.

The Kham-Magars call their shamans rmā or armā (ramā by metathesis in some dialects) which may be etymologically related to the Tibetan rma-bya (bya 'bird') meaning 'peacock' or 'mottled bird' (Das 1902:984). Taken as such, the term is suggestive of the Kham-Magar shaman in full ceremonial dress, covered with the feathers of the blue Monal Pheasant. In many areas, the indigenous term rmā has been replaced by the Nepali term jhankri.

#### The Shaman's Call

The shamanic calling is not something which can be actively sought after but is viewed as a gift granted by the spirits themselves, but only to persons of correct lineage. As such, the shaman's calling is, in a very real sense, as much spontaneous as it is hereditary. It is hereditary to the extent that it is granted to a kinsman of the former shaman, but it is spontaneous to the extent that it is not transmitted to a predetermined kinsman, but to one chosen by the spirit of the deceased shaman<sup>4</sup>. This method of election has sometimes been referred to as the "quasi-hereditary" transmission of the calling (Krader 1967:114).

Transmission of the shamanic gift does not take place until after the death of the father shaman. The ancestral spirit, or gel<sup>5</sup> (varying with gyal; cf. Tibetan rgyal-po 'king, chieftain, ruler' [Das 1902:310]), chooses one of his own kinsmen to carry on the profession. Often, the gel examines several young men before making his final choice. Examination takes place in a hierarchical order beginning with the deceased shaman's sons and grandsons. If none of these are suitable, the gel chooses from among the lineage of the deceased shaman's brothers and then finally from among his sisters' sons. He continues his search until he finds a desirable candidate. According to local consensus, one of the chief qualifications for which the gel is searching is a record of religious fidelity, characterized by routine animal sacrifices to local dieties and ancestor spirits. Of very recent innovation is a subsidiary concept of ceremonial purity, especially as regards food, but I have seen only one such case. The son of one of the more powerful shamans in Sera had hopes that his own son (then a child of 3 or 4 years) would carry on the shamanic tradition of his aging grandfather. To insure the transmission of the spirit, he withheld from the child foods which would defile him--chiefly beef and pork. Normally, Kham-Magars do not concern themselves with food restrictions, and even the shamans enjoy beef and pork. Presumably, the father's concern was a recent innovation from Hindu philosophy, and he was exercising caution lest the gel find even the slightest reason for offence.

Ideally, the gel chooses a successor anywhere between 3 and 9 years after the father shaman's decease and begins his examination on the evening of the new or full moon. The young man to whom the spirit comes suddenly begins shaking impulsively, only slightly at first, but becoming more severe on the next occasion. The members of his family, or those who are with him at the time, question him as to his identity. The boy 'prophesies,' the voice of the deceased shaman speaking through him. He answers saying, "I am so-and-so," giving his name. The dead shaman is then questioned as to his purpose in coming, and he may reply, "I have come only to partake of the purification rites common to shamans on the new or full moon". Those who are present respond to his wish. They go out, wash their hands, and come back bearing lādu sī and barma sī, a spice root and leaf which are the chief symbols of purification in shamanic rites. They tie red and white streamers to his queue. This process may be repeated several times in the course of the evening until the gel is satisfied, at which time he leaves the boy.

If the gel approves of the candidate, he will return to him on the next new or full moon. This time he shakes harder than he did the previous time, and after several occurrences he becomes hysterical, babbling incoherently, and sometimes falling unconscious<sup>6</sup>. Kham-Magar shamans state that according to the "ideal", they should fall unconscious and be as dead for at least nine days. During this time they experience terrifying dreams in which they are chased and attacked by wild beasts. These attacking beasts are apparently the helping spirits of the gel attempting to destroy the boy. At first they are dangerous and malevolent. Later, after proper initiation and instruction from the gel himself, the neophyte learns to control them and they become his source of power.

Bal Bahadur Jhankri, a shaman of Taka village, was first visited by the spirit of his dead grandfather when he was 14 years of age, five years after his grandfather's decease. During this time he became very ill, losing his appetite and relish for food. He describes himself as being "like a mad man" for a full year, not knowing where he was, or what he was doing. He withdrew to the mountains and experienced long periods of unconsciousness, during which time his soul wandered in the four directions of the compass. He learned from the gods, and from his ancestor spirit, the nature of diseases and their cure, and also how to fight demons. He had many encounters with evil spirits and demons who attacked him with knives, cutting out his heart and liver. He fought back, poking at them with burning fire brands, but to no avail. His tormentors always won in the end<sup>7</sup>.

Perhaps I should note briefly the obligatory nature of the shamanistic call. It is a vocation which cannot be refused. A young man chosen by the gel must do all in his power to please the spirit and not offend it. An attempt to reject the spirit is an offence of the greatest magnitude and will only guarantee the candidate's misfortune. In texts received from Ram Kumar Bhuda of

Taka village, Ram states that if an attack is not made directly upon the candidate in terms of insanity or suicide, calamity will certainly befall the household. It thus behooves the family to press the boy to carry through with his experience<sup>8</sup>. When the candidate does accept the call of the ancestor shaman, however, his period of danger is by no means over. This is only the beginning of the critical initiatory period.

#### The Shaman's Initiation

The period of initiation is probably one of the most hazardous and critical periods of the shaman's life. The period is marked by a progression in the shaman's condition from an initial state of uncontrolled possession to a state of controlled possession. That is, he learns to control his spirits--to call them when needed and to send them away when not needed. I.M. Lewis points out that "the shaman's vocation is normally announced by an initially uncontrolled state of possession: a traumatic experience associated with hysteroid, ecstatic behaviour... Thus, in the case of those who persist in the shamanistic calling, the uncontrolled, unsolicited, initial possession seizure leads to a state where possession can be controlled and can be turned on and off at will in shamanistic seances. That is the controlled phase of possession, where as the Tungus say, the shaman 'possesses' his spirits" (1971:54,55). Macdonald (1966) remarks concerning the Nepalese jhankri, that "the true jhankri is one who after once having been possessed by a spirit foreign to his everyday life, manages to master it and to regulate it" (translation mine). Sternberg (cited by Eliade, 1964: 28) observes that "the election of a shaman is manifested by a comparatively serious illness, usually coincidental with the onset of sexual maturity. But the future shaman is cured in the end, with the help of the same spirits that will later become his tutelaries and helpers. Sometimes these are ancestors who wish to pass on to him their now unemployed helping spirits. In these cases there is a sort of hereditary transmission; the illness is only a sign of election, and proves to be temporary".

Among the Kham-Magars, there has been a somewhat novel institutionalization of the tragic themes of the initiatory period which have found expression in a public ceremony known as "making a thumbu". The making of a thumbu has three basic themes: 1) a test of the authenticity of the candidate. 2) veneration of the ancestor shaman whose spirit is seeking re-birth, and 3) regulation of the menacing helping spirits so that they are subject to the new shaman's authority. In the Siberian setting, the neophyte is called upon to endure a long and intense ordeal which he has no assurance of triumphing over. In Eliade's words, he must acquire the "ability to bring on his epileptoid trance at will" (1964:29). For the Kham-Magar shaman, this ability is acquired not so much on a personal basis but is collectively negotiated for by the whole community of shamans. The risks of triumph over tragedy are minimized<sup>9</sup>.

After an indefinite period of abnormal or hysteroid behavior (in the case of Bal Bahadur it was one year), the neophyte falls into a trance and begins to 'prophesy'. His gel makes an announcement in the following terms:

"I am so-and-so, the son of so-and-so.  
I have come to be re-born in the body of my son.  
Hurry, make me a thumbu and give me birth.  
You must hurry, lest we (spirits) bring calamity to  
the household.  
We will push him off a cliff; we will push him in the  
river; we will throw him in the fire.  
Hurry, make me a thumbu and give me birth".

The candidate's family appeals to an experienced shaman and arrangements are made for the thumbu and 'birth' ceremonies. Making a thumbu and 'giving birth' are separate ceremonies: the former being conducted on the day of the new moon and the latter on the day of the full moon after some indefinite period. The thumbu ceremony is not done at public expense but must be borne by the candidate's immediate family. As such, its timing is dictated by urgency on the one hand, and by financial expediency on the other. The major part of the expense is to provide plenty of food and liquor for the participating shamans for a day and a night.

The thumbu itself is a container, usually a large gourd, into which lādu s̄ (a symbol of purification) and barley are deposited in any measure of nine--either nine grains, nine fistfuls, or nine cups. It is in this gourd that the savage helping spirits are kept in custody and regulated like a genie in his lamp. (For the word thumbu, cf. Tibetan thum 'anything packed or wrapped up, a parcel' [Das 1902:582]).

The first part of the thumbu ceremony is conducted at the burial cairn of the ancestor shaman. Including the candidate, 9, 7, 5, or 3 shamans are present to test the veracity of his potentially reckless claims that he has been chosen as the father shaman's successor. He must show convincing evidence that the gel is willing to confer to him the assistance and power of his unemployed spirits<sup>10</sup>. After certain preliminaries of purification, in which nine cones of purified water are placed around the cairn, the candidate's master, with the help of an assistant, begins to summon the spirits. Keeping rhythm with the hypnotic beat of their drums, the two chant in antiphony, the master shaman opening the lyric with one line and his assistant responding with the second. The chant is an epic of the first shaman, Puran Tsan, and the origin of various spirits. As the epic comes to its climax, the neophyte, who the whole time has been deeply absorbed in following the rhythm with his own drum, is suddenly thrown into convulsions. His face becomes distorted with terror and pain, suddenly changing to an expression of confused panic<sup>11</sup>. The spirit has come! The shamans leap to their feet and dance a wild dance around the burial cairn until finally they settle again to summon the next spirit.



A young candidate being "attacked" by a spirit in the thumbu ceremony.

If the candidate's claims are true, the ancestor shaman's helping spirits will assemble one by one as they are summoned-- otherwise, the candidate is viewed as an imposter or an eccentric and is denied further training. With the helping spirits assembled, the candidate is sent off to find his father shaman's queue and a piece of his costume which were buried in a secret spot at the time of his death. (Among Kham-Magars further north, the entire costume is hidden at the time of a shaman's death)<sup>12</sup>. Only with the help of the spirits is the novice able to succeed.

The second part of the thumbu ceremony is concerned with the veneration of the ancestor shaman. The acts of veneration are performed by the candidate's immediate family. The fir tree which protrudes out of the crown of the shaman's burial cairn as a symbol of his access to the sky is replaced by a new one. Any damaged parts of the cairn are repaired, new stones being fit into place where the old ones have crumbled. After repair, the cairn is plastered with a fresh mixture of mud and cowdung and then white-washed with a lime paint. Finally, a small fire is kindled at the foot of the burial cairn in which a sweet-smelling mountain incense is burned, and benedictions and promises of re-birth are offered to the ancestor shaman. Assured of re-birth, the ancestor shaman reciprocates by agreeing to help in the regulation of his helping spirits. With the contract ratified, the party of shamans dances back to the village for the final part of the ceremony.

The final act of the ceremony is conducted in the night at the house of the ancestor shaman. With the assistance of the gel, the helping spirits are brought into the thumbu jug. Its neck is plastered shut with a mixture of cowdung and ashes and sprinkled with the blood of a chicken. The jug is put away for safekeeping and not re-opened until the day of the 'birth' ceremony. The novice's hysteroid condition allegedly improves, and it is said that he is no longer attacked or harrassed by the helping spirits on the nights of the new and full moon as he was previously<sup>13</sup>. As the Kham-Magars say, "Their courses have been set". Even after the jug has been re-opened, the spirits come only when called upon.

### The Shaman's Spirits

I shall deal here with the two classes of spirits with which the shaman is most closely associated: 1) the gel, which is the ancestral shaman spirit; and 2) the dohn.wā (cf. Tibetan ston-pa 'a teacher, esp. a religious teacher' Das 1902:555), which are the familiar or helping spirits transmitted to the new shaman by means of the gel<sup>14</sup>. The shaman often invokes the help of other gods and spiritual beings as well, but these gods are more distantly related and not at all considered part of his personal coterie of familiar spirits. These tertiary spirits are generally referred to as bahrān. Among these spirits are gods of the Hindu pantheon, usually Barahā, Siddha, and Bhimsen. The shaman also calls on the "gods of Tibet", the "gods of the plains", and Barma, the fierce god of the



West. He calls on the God of Epilepsy and Insanity, the God of Fierce Anger, and the God with White Feet. He calls on the spirits who reside in the sacred plants barma and lādu, and the spirits of various drug plants<sup>15</sup>.

To my knowledge, all Kham-Magar shamans have the same inventory of helping spirits, which, with the gel, number nine. Five of the dohn.wā are animal spirits--the wild boar, the leopard, the bear, the monkey, and the serpent<sup>16</sup>--and three are not--the lāmā spirit, the lātā or dumb spirit, and an obscure spirit known as the zyāhphi which defies description but which manifests itself by causing the shaman to snatch the red beads from a woman's necklace and eat them.

The helping spirits manifest their presence by producing in the shaman a form of behavior in keeping with their own nature. They give him a new identity so that he acts or flies like an animal or bird. I have seen shamans in a trance very dramatically and realistically slither and squirm across the ground like a snake. Embodying a leopard spirit, the same shaman roars and bares his teeth attacking people. The monkey spirit causes the shaman to leap and spring in the air, swinging from branches or the rafters of a house<sup>17</sup>. On one occasion I watched a shaman lose control of his monkey spirit, and he went bounding and springing through the village with tremendous leaps. The other shamans tried to bring him back but couldn't catch him. After a considerable chase, he was brought back unconscious, and only after a lot of shamanizing and the sacrifice of a chicken were they able to revive him.

An interesting feature of Kham-Magar shamanism is the lāmā spirit which allegedly enables the shaman to speak in Tibetan<sup>18</sup>. I observed the manifestation of this spirit only twice. The first occasion was during a healing seance being conducted by an old master shaman. After a wild and violent dance which was the manifestation of his gel, he invoked the lāmā spirit and suddenly became calm and quiet. He sang a solemn hymn, the words of which sounded to me like a Tibetan mantra, and he danced a very graceful dance. On the second occasion, I watched a neophyte embody the lāmā spirit during the thumbu ceremony. His reaction was to babble incoherently and uncontrollably, presumably because he had not yet learned to 'control' his spirits.

The speaking of Tibetan (though usually limited to a few mantras) is regarded as one of the required manifestations of a true shaman. Such a language may correspond to the so called "secret languages" attested in certain Arctic tribes such as the Ostyak, the Chukchee, the Yakut, and the Tungus. These languages vary in their manifestations from region to region, in some places being equivalent to an "animal language" consisting of the imitation of the cries of animals, and in other places more like a highly elaborated ritual language. In any case, traces of most of the variants can be found to exist among the Kham-Magars. Animal cries

and Tibetan mantras are a part of every healing seance. There is also a ritualized language which includes many terms, phrases, and jingles unintelligible to the layman.

### The Initiation Ceremony

On the day of the full moon, usually six months or so after the thumbu ceremony, the village shamans conduct a public ceremony known as bohsi-nya, that is, 'birth' (from the root boh; cf. Sanskrit bhu 'come into being'). The observance of this ceremony is in compliance with the agreement made at the thumbu ceremony--promising the gel re-birth in exchange for his protection from the helping spirits. Traditionally, the ceremony took place only on the full moon of Baisak (April-May), but nowadays is observed in other months as well (I once attended the ceremony in Kartik [October-November]). As its name implies, the 'birth' ceremony is a formal recognition by the community of the ancestral shaman's re-birth and a commissioning of the candidate of his choice. It is significant to note that at the thumbu ceremony the candidate is not allowed to wear the shamanic costume, whereas at the bohsi-nya ceremony he does wear it, giving evidence of his acceptance. He is invested with the authority of his ancestor and is placed into an apprentice relationship with his master who gives him instruction in shamanic techniques, in the oral mythology, and in the seance proper<sup>19</sup>.

The initiation ceremony of the Kham-Magars recounts various basic themes common in Siberia and Central Asia, the most prominent of them being 1) ascent to the sky, and 2) the birth of the shaman in a tree<sup>20</sup>. The entire ceremony lasts for two nights and a day. That is, the main part of the ceremony takes place in the daytime, but there are related activities on the nights both preceding and following the ceremony proper. On the first night, nine pairs of village shamans meet together in the house of the future shaman where his family hosts the group, providing food and liquor. The firepit is swept, and the nine pairs of shamans sit around it in a circle and carry on a great shamanizing. The incidents of the first night are centered mostly around rites of purification. For three days they have taken no salt or meat. The future shaman's gel is invoked and libations of purified water and liquor are offered to him in the person of his successor<sup>21</sup>. A second major event of the first night is the release of the dohn.wā which have been held in custody since the thumbu ceremony.

Early in the morning on the day of the public ceremony, the new shaman goes into a trance and is taught by his gel the exact location of the ceremonial tree, called a suwā. He 'prophesies' disclosing its location, and sends men to fetch it. The tree cutters are sworn to silence, and should they meet anyone on the trail who asks where they are going, they are required to indicate their intention by showing their axe and a measure of chyonām, specially prepared beer and parched grain which is tossed at the

suwā when cutting it. The inquirer understands from this that he is to ask no further questions.

The suwā is a fir tree, usually about thirty feet in height and about a foot in diameter at the bottom. The pole is stripped of its bark, and the branches are lopped off except for the crown which is preserved<sup>22</sup>. A small platform is constructed about twelve feet from the ground level, large enough and strong enough to support the weight of a man. It is on this platform that the shaman is to be 'born'.

After the suwā has been cut and brought back, the shamans go out in search of the site on which it is to be erected. This is done by a sort of divination. The shamans dance out of the village in a group, some of them beating their drums, and the rest "running" their sahr ('wild goat'), or divination sticks. A master shaman dances in the lead, holding his drum thrust downward. It is said that through his drum he is able to discern the proper site, and he indicates it by crying, "Hap!" The shamans who are following him with their wild-goat sticks, thrust them into the ground in a circle and return to the village, leaving the sticks as a site marker. Later, the suwā is "planted" there with nine wild-goat sticks around its foot to prevent evil spirits from climbing the pole.

The ceremony proper begins with all nine pairs of shamans (the new shaman and his master constituting one pair) dancing from the village out to the site of the suwā--a distance of about half a mile. They dance violently, leaping and bouncing to the magical sound of their drums. The bells and iron pendants hanging from their bodies rattle and jingle at every bounce. It's quite a spectacle, indeed, eighteen dancing shamans wildly dressed in animal skins and great feather bonnets. A crowd of spectators, some from two or three days distance, lines the pathway from the village to the suwā eagerly anticipating the events of the day. Throughout the day, the shamans make a total of nine round trips from the village to the suwā. Upon arrival at the suwā they dance around it three times before returning to the village. On the final trip (the ninth) they dance first to the left, and then to the right, nine times in alternation (a total of 18 rounds). This final bout of dancing is not completed in a single act, but lasts about two hours.

The shamans sit around the pole in pairs facing each other, a master shaman and his assistant striking up a chant in antiphony. The other shamans absorb themselves in the hypnotic beat of their drums, keeping time with the master shaman and his assistant. As in the thumbu ceremony, the chants are myths of the first shaman, Puran Tsan and the various animal spirits. As each story reaches its climax, the new shaman suddenly takes on the personality of the spirit. Sitting crosslegged, his body twitches and bounces from the ground, and the rest of the shamans, seeing the signal,



The suwā- the tree upon which Puran Tsan's descendants are 'born'.

immediately change the beat of their drums to one of throbbing triumph as they leap to their feet and dance around the pole. After a few rounds, they sit down again and call up the next spirit until all have been assembled<sup>23</sup>.

After all the spirits have assembled, the new shaman goes berserk and bursts through the crowd of spectators, leaping onto the back of a large horned ram which has been held at the edge of the site. He rides the animal as a symbolic gesture of his ride to the sky on the back of the sacrificial animal. In some healing seances, the ride is given full expression as the shaman describes his journey to the beyond step by step--but here it is only symbolic. Dismounting, he beheads the ram with a single blow of his knife, and rips out its heart with his teeth. The master shaman takes the severed ram's head in his teeth, and climbs the suwā where he offers his sacrifice to God<sup>24</sup>. From the platform he lets the ram's head drop to the ground, and he shinnies on to the top of the pole. At the top he plucks a few pine needles with his teeth, letting them fall to the ground, and keeping a twig in his mouth he returns to the ground.

Having been preceded by his master with a sacrifice to heaven, it is the new shaman's turn to climb the pole. His master had been given access to heaven and his return with twigs in his mouth is evidence of that access. By giving his pupil a twig, he confers to him the right to ascend the tree and be born. The candidate's eyes are blindfolded with a turban. The leaf of a maya tree is placed over the blindfold and pierced with nine needles, signifying that he is making the journey to heaven with spiritual sight, not physical<sup>25</sup>. Holding in his mouth the ram's heart and a twig from the crown of the tree, the new shaman climbs to the platform, dances around it, and then sits down shaking and trembling uncontrollably from the overwhelming presence of his spirits. The rest of the shamans and all the spectators return to the village, where the shamans enjoy a great feast at the new shaman's expense. Meanwhile, the new shaman remains on the hill alone, shaking and trembling with a bloody heart dangling from his mouth<sup>26</sup>.

After the feast, towards evening, the new shaman's family appeals to the other shamans in their merrymaking and ask if they might ransom him back. After much coaxing, they go up the hill together where they haggle and argue for a suitable price. Finally the price is settled, and the family pays. Before having the new shaman come down, however, the other shamans call to him on his platform and ask him what he "sees". His eyes, of course, are still blindfolded, and he prophesies, telling the things he can see from his vantage point in heaven. He fortells of famine or plenty. He sees the coming weather conditions and whether it will be a good or bad year for the village<sup>27</sup>. When all is over, he descends from the tree and returns to the village with the other shamans. There, during the course of the second night, they

- a. Climbing the suwā with a ram's head as an offering to Bhagwān



- b. A young initiate is 'born'

engage in a long ceremony for "casting off" any magical evils or destructive omens.

#### The Shaman's Costume

The shaman, during his shamanic practice, wears a special costume which in itself provides a number of useful insights into shamanic beliefs. By donning his costume, the shaman transforms himself into an animal or bird spirit. The costume is, in fact, regarded as a source of spiritual power for the shaman, for it represents, and is impregnated by his helping spirits. On several occasions I attempted to buy a costume from shamans in Sera. On the first occasion, a rather powerful shaman, named Deo, warned me that it could not be given to anyone who could not control it. He claimed that it would bring disaster to me and that I would continually have to make blood sacrifices to it. On another occasion, I had almost convinced a lesser shaman to sell his costume, but he finally refused, saying that it was in that costume that he was initiated and he would lose his power if he sold it. He said that he could make a replica, but he could never sell the real costume<sup>28</sup>.

There are three chief types of costume found in Siberia and Central Asia--the bird, the reindeer, and the bear; but the most prevalent of these is the bird. The prevalence of the bird costume is due, no doubt, to the widespread belief that shamans can fly. Lommel suggests that the bird is symbolized because "it carries the shaman to the spirit world" (1969:112). The Kham-Magar costume, too, resembles a bird, and may prove to be the source for the shaman's name rma, which means 'peacock' in Tibetan. The headgear is made of a hundred or so long feathers from the wings of the Monal Pheasant (Nepali, dāphe). They are arranged in such a way as to stand straight out from the head, giving the appearance of a great bird with ruffled feathers.

Bird symbolism is not the only feature of the Kham-Magar shaman's costume. The whole costume is, in fact, quite complex, featuring such things as a bearskin vest upon which are attached cowrie shells and the tusks of a wild boar. From the back of the bearskin vest hang a number of animal and bird skins such as the panda bear, flying squirrel, monkey, weasel, owl, eagle, and pheasant. From the shoulders hang two iron claw-shaped bells, and from the chest hang a great number of brass bells. From the waist hang various iron pendants, the chief being nine iron suns, nine lunar crescents, and nine iron bells<sup>29</sup>. Czaplicka suggests that these iron pendants offer protection to the shaman, with the explanation that spirits fear the noise that was made in the smithy while iron implements were being made (1914:211). Jochelson, too, mentions that the iron pendants of the Yukaghir shaman are said to serve as a kind of armor in the fight with hostile shamans and spirits (1905).



A shaman in full costume, standing with his master.



The Kham-Magars conceive of the whole costume as a kind of protective armor against spirits. According to Kham legend, Puran Tsan the first shaman, fashioned the iron pendants while he was working as a blacksmith in the kingdom of the underworld. Back on earth he was confronted by nine evil spirits in the form of witches, all nieces of a great sorcerer. The contest is as follows:

- "They attacked Uncle, Shaman Tsan from his head.  
 You cannot eat the shaman, you cannot eat the runju.  
 My loving elder sisters, my loving younger sisters,  
 You are evil spirits, you are evil witches.  
 Upon my head are he-serpents, she-serpents, and feathers.  
 They attacked Uncle, Shaman Tsan from his ears.  
 You cannot eat the shaman, you cannot eat the runju.  
 My loving elder sisters, my loving younger sisters,  
 You are evil spirits, you are evil witches.  
 On my ears are the leaves of the syārgwā tree<sup>30</sup>  
 They attacked Uncle, Shaman Tsan from his eyes.  
 You cannot eat the shaman, you cannot eat the runju.  
 My loving elder sisters, my loving younger sisters,  
 You are evil spirits, you are evil witches.  
 Around my eyes is the soot of the forge.  
 They attacked Uncle, Shaman Tsan from his throat.  
 You cannot eat the shaman, you cannot eat the runju.  
 My loving elder sisters, my loving younger sisters,  
 You are evil spirits, you are evil witches.  
 Around my neck is a magic necklace with a he-kucar, a  
 she-kucar<sup>31</sup>.  
 They attacked Uncle, Shaman Tsan from his back.  
 You cannot eat the shaman, you cannot eat the runju.  
 My loving elder sisters, my loving younger sisters,  
 You are evil spirits, you are evil witches.  
 On my back is a pair of iron claw-bells.  
 They attacked Uncle, Shaman Tsan from his chest.  
 You cannot eat the shaman, you cannot eat the runju.  
 My loving elder sisters, my loving younger sisters,  
 You are evil spirits, you are evil witches.  
 On my chest are brass bells and cowrie shells.  
 They attacked Uncle, Shaman Tsan from the center of his back.  
 You cannot eat the shaman, you cannot eat the runju.  
 My loving elder sisters, my loving younger sisters,  
 You are evil spirits, you are evil witches.  
 In the center of my back are gameskins, birdskins, and  
 a yak tail.  
 They attacked Uncle, Shaman Tsan from his waist.  
 You cannot eat the shaman, you cannot eat the runju.  
 My loving elder sisters, my loving younger sisters,  
 You are evil spirits, you are evil witches.  
 Around my waist is a bearskin girdle.

They attacked Uncle, Shaman Tsan from his sides.

You cannot eat the shaman, you cannot eat the runju.

My loving elder sisters, my loving younger sisters,

You are evil spirits, you are evil witches.

On my sides are the tusks of a wild boar, of a savage boar.

They attacked Uncle, Shaman Tsan from his buttocks.

You cannot eat the shaman, you cannot eat the runju.

My loving elder sisters, my loving younger sisters,

You are evil spirits, you are evil witches.

On my buttocks are nine suns, nine moons, and nine bells.

They attacked Uncle, Shaman Tsan from his thighs.

You cannot eat the shaman, you cannot eat the runju.

My loving elder sisters, my loving younger sisters,

You are evil spirits, you are evil witches.

On my thighs are a pair of trousers.

They attacked Uncle, Shaman Tsan from his anus.

You cannot eat the shaman, you cannot eat the runju.

My loving elder sisters, my loving younger sisters,

You are evil spirits, you are evil witches.

I sit on a he-jom stool, a she-jom stool.

They attacked Uncle, Shaman Tsan from his feet.

You cannot eat the shaman, you cannot eat the runju.

My loving elder sisters, my loving younger sisters,

You are evil spirits, you are evil witches.

On my feet are the prints of the he-leopard, the prints  
of the she-leopard.

There is a special ceremony in which the village shamans assemble on the bank of the river to repair their equipment. The ceremony I observed took place on the day of the full moon in Baisak (April-May) in a year when there were no new shamans being initiated. Broken feathers were removed from their headgear and replaced by new ones. New animal skins were added to the backs of their vests, and in some cases, old, ragged ones were cast out. Drums needing repair were stretched with new skins, and repainted with new sketches.

The repair of each piece of equipment was followed by a time of chanting, done in antiphony by pairs of shamans. The theme of each chant is a history on the origin and development of the particular piece of equipment being celebrated. For example, while repairing the drum, the shamans chant histories of the drum hoop, the drum skin, the binding cords, the handles, and the drumsticks. The drum is personified by the personal pronoun 'you', and becomes the addressee of the chant<sup>32</sup>. The resumé of a typical chant for the drumskin is as follows:

"They tried the skins of all the wild animals,  
but the gods weren't pleased, the spirits weren't happy.  
So we went on a hunt, we went on a search.  
Down in the low country, down in the plains,

they used the skin of the buck, they used the skin of the doe.

The gods were pleased, the spirits were happy.

But up in the mountains, high in the crags, what shall we use?

We went on a hunt, we went on a search.

We tried the mountain ram, we tried the mountain ewe.

But the gods wouldn't come, the spirits wouldn't come.

We tried the mountain billy, we tried the mountain nanny,

but the gods wouldn't come, the spirits wouldn't come.

Then we tried the wild he-sahr, we tried the wild she-sahr<sup>33</sup>

You, sahr-pā skin were the one; you, sahr-mā skin rose to the need.

When we beat on the drum, the drum is delighted.

The gods are pleased with you, the spirits are happy with you".

### The Shaman's Drum and Staff

The drum is without doubt the shaman's chief piece of equipment. It is with the drum that the shaman is able to summon his spirits and enter into contact with them. It is the drum that brings on the shaman's trance and enables him to journey to the sky and to the underworld. In short, the drum is indispensable to the primary core of the shamanic practice.

As pointed out by Czaplicka, there is an interesting linguistic correspondence in the word 'drum' all across Siberia and Central Asia. This correspondence is shared by some of the Nepal languages, as well. For example, in most Siberian tribes, the word is either tungur, dungur, or donkur. In Nepali the term is dhaiangro, in Magar dhyagoro, in Sunwar tengro, and in Chepang ringh. Kham has two terms; rehn.gor, which is used by the shamans, and dāhnikur, the laymans term. Both appear to have a common etymology.

The Kham-Magar drum is circular to oval in shape, about 18 to 24 inches in diameter, and covered on one side with the skin of the sahr or 'wild goat'. The skin is bound to the hoop with strips of cowhide, the hoop being made of the wood of the gwi, which is a type of oak. On the back side of the drum is a handle of two cane sticks which slightly cross each other and are attached to the hoop on each of the ends by two rings linked together. When the drum is beat, the loosely bound handle creates a loud clattering noise from inside the hoop<sup>34</sup>. The skin of the drum is sometimes decorated with white sketches of various types, some of which resemble hemispheres of the earth, and the sun, moon, and stars. I will not, however, attempt to interpret the drawings here.

Each shaman is required, sooner or later, to cut the wood for his own drum, and bring down the wild goat from whose skin the drum will be covered. Bal Bahadur cut the wood for his drum seven years after his initiation ceremony. He went into a trance and saw in a vision the exact spot where the tree grew. Taking nine

men with him, he went off in search of the tree and found it in a valley to the north, two days journey away. When he approached the tree, the tree quaked and shook. Bal Bahadur planted nine flags around its base, and sacrificed nine chickens to it. When he layed his axe to the tree, blood flowed from it<sup>35</sup>.

The chief function of the shaman's drum is to summon his spirits, who then carry him away through the sky. The Kham-Magar shaman begins every seance by beating his drum and calling his spirits. I have on tape the recording of a shaman, named Irkha, in "magical flight", in which he describes the mountains and valleys he is crossing over. Periodically, he stops, changes the beat of his drum, and re-calls some of his spirits who are lagging behind<sup>36</sup>.

Drums are also used in certain types of divination, usually to further determine details of an illness<sup>37</sup>. The shaman's assistant cuts a small piece of cloth from the patient's garment, and rolls it into a small ball with a leaf from the sacred barma plant. Then, while the shaman is drumming, the assistant drops the ball onto the edge of the drum. The ball comes to rest either on the cowhide tie strips, or in the triangular spaces between the tie strips. It is also important to distinguish two types of triangles--those whose apex points toward the face of the drum, and those which point to the back, Thus, three positions are distinguished. Cloth is cut from the patient's garment three times, and its resting position on the drum is determined each time. If the position is the same each time, it is supposed that there are no evils or impurities to be cast out of the patient. If, on the other hand, the three positions differ, it is determined that everyone in the household must be rid of evils and impurities, requiring the sacrifice of a chicken for each member.

Drums are sometimes used as shields to ward off the magic of rival shamans or spirits. The story is told of Thap $\ddot{a}$  in the village of Hukam, who had an attack of magical power made upon him by a rival shaman named Kami from Puchar village (about 10 miles distant). Thapi saw a flash coming out of the corner of his eye and managed to stop it with his drum. It caused his drum to split in two, but he was saved. As a counterattack, he took a bushel of beans, turned them into wasps and sent them after Kami. Kami was badly stung and nearly died<sup>38</sup>.

On certain occasions, Kham-Magar shamans make use of a wooden stave known as a sahr, or 'wild goat'. In function, it is analagous to the drum, and, in fact, derives its name from the drum-skin<sup>39</sup>. The stave is about 3 feet long, the upper end of which has an overlay of carved metal. Tied to the stave are various metal trinkets, lunar crescents, tiny bells, and colored ribbons. The stave is "animated" by the spirits, and by clutching to it, the shaman is carried off to the place of a patient's missing soul. (cf. pp. 148).

## The Shaman's Functions

The primary function of the shaman is magical healing. Illness is for the most part attributed to the loss of the human soul, and the shaman's task is to diagnose the cause of the soul's truancy, to capture it, and to re-establish it in the patient's body. There may be various reasons for a soul's absence---it is either stolen away by evil spirits, it forsakes the body on its own, or it is aggravated from its abode by impurities and evil forces<sup>40</sup>. In the latter case, healing comes in two stages--retrieving the soul, and purification of the patient. Often, part of the treatment involves a sacrifice of some sort prescribed by the shaman to appease the evil spirits who have stolen the soul. The shaman himself does not perform the sacrifice, however, except in the case where the sacrifice must be presented to the gods of the sky or the underworld<sup>41</sup>.

The Kham-Magars distinguish three human souls or entities, the loss of any of which is sufficient cause for illness<sup>42</sup>. The first of the three is known as syākwā, which literally means 'flesh-cloth'. Its loss is usually attributed to the work of an evil spirit or witch. Syākwā assumes the form of a small packet consisting of bits of the patient's skin and fingernails, bound in a piece of the patient's garment and tied by several strands of his hair. Apparently, the spirits are able to exercise a magical power over a person if they have in their possession these symbols of the real person. Only the shaman, through the power of his helping spirits is able to retrieve the syākwā.

The second soul, sāto (from the Nepali), often assumes the shape of an insect or beetle and as such abandons the body. To retrieve it, the shaman calls on the help of his snake spirit, and "descends underground" in his search for it. When he finds it, he reintroduces it into the patient's body by calling on him to swallow it<sup>43</sup>.

The third soul, purus (from Sanskrit meaning 'person'), is more closely associated to the real man than are the other two. To lose one's purus is serious indeed, and usually means imminent death unless the shaman is able to retrieve it--a task he often fails in. To retrieve a purus involves a long and arduous journey on the road to the underworld. Often, life and death is a matter of timing; the shaman must overtake the soul before it gets too far down the road to death.

When a person dies, there is always a danger that his purus may return and haunt the village. This haunting spirit is known as a syuryāh or sometimes masān, after the Nepali. The belief is due in part to the frequency of epidemics, which they attribute to the return of the dead. Accidental deaths, such as falling off a cliff, etc., cases of headache and dizziness, and cases of hysteria or madness are often attributed to an attack by a syuryāh. The shaman is called upon in such cases to exorcise the attacking

spirit. If a few simple mantras are not sufficient to expel it, the shaman, through the use of threats, forces the ghost to reveal his identity and purpose in coming. The syuryāh often requires the promise of an appeasement sacrifice and the burning of incense before agreeing to leave<sup>44</sup>.

At the time of a person's burial, precautions are taken to prevent the return of his soul. The mat in which the corpse is buried is filled with corn, known as sān.bal, in the belief that if the soul is well fed in the otherworld, it will be happy. When carrying the body of the deceased out of the village for burial, it is preceded by a length of white cloth (some 50 or 60 feet long) known as a "way cloth" and is supposed to guide the soul from the village to its proper place. In addition, the funeral party, when returning to the village, scatters the trail with sān.bal in hopes that, should the spirit leave his grave, he will become preoccupied with picking up food, and never return<sup>45</sup>. As a final act, a funerary banquet is held a few months after death, known as sī khyānya, or 'casting away the soul'. A sacrificial sheep whose sex corresponds to that of the deceased is decorated and dressed up to represent the deceased. The family assembles, feeds the sheep with the best of food, and with great weeping pronounces their blessings and good wishes upon it. The sheep is then taken away to the bank of the river by the deceased's bāhnja ('sister's son, or son-in-law'), where it is slaughtered and eaten by persons of low caste. The village seer (also a Kham-Magar) is called upon to engrave the name of the deceased on a flat stone tablet, and then by means of mantras, he locks the soul (symbolized by the stone) into a large ancestor stand. As he buries the stone he proclaims,

"Go to the place of your grandfathers, your great-grandfathers.  
Be happy and prosper. Be content where you are.  
Do not come back to haunt us. Do not do us mischief.  
Be happy, be content where you are".

With this benediction, the village is purified of the soul's haunting presence, and the person is thereafter believed to have officially entered the realm of the dead. He is thereafter honored along with the rest of his ancestors in an annual sacrifice in which the bāhnja is the main officiant<sup>46</sup>.

### The Shaman's Seance

Most shamanic seances are performed to diagnose illness and to effect its cure. The healing seance has a great number of variants, and to describe them all would go beyond the scope of this paper. Thus, I will attempt to describe the general pattern with a few examples.

In general, the healing seance comes in two phases, with the possibility of a third in case the patient's soul has been "aggravated" from its place by some sort of evil or impurity. These

phases are 1) the diagnosis and attempt to re-call the soul from nearby, 2) the mystical journey beyond, and 3) expellation of the evil or impurity. As we shall presently see, these three phases get different interpretations depending upon which of the three souls is missing. The whole seance is more "mystical" in case the missing soul is a purus (the purus is invisible); whereas, the same themes have a more "ritualized" interpretation, employing material symbols in case the soul being dealt with is a sāto or syākwā (both are visible entities).

No seance begins without first erecting a suwā. The house suwā is a miniature, and is made by decorating the main pillar of the house (next to the firepit) with the foliage of the syārgwā, the tree from which Puran Tsan the first shaman, was born. The suwā, or "World Tree" is the shaman's point of access both to the sky and to the underworld. The shaman denies access to these regions to the evil spirits by tying his 'wild-goat' stave to the foot of the suwā.

Members of the household and other interested individuals assemble to witness the events of the shaman's seance, known as kī-nya. The shaman, sitting with his celmi or 'assistant' next to the firepit, begins to beat his drum and invoke the various spirits, beginning with his gel or ancestor spirit. Pausing intermittently, the shaman's assistant begins to ask him questions about what he "sees". The questions usually have to do with future events, such as, "How will my trading trip to the south turn out"?, etc. The shaman beats his drum until, overwhelmed by his spirits, his body trembles and he falls into a deep sleep. When he comes to, he answers the question, telling what "appeared" to him<sup>47</sup>.

On one occasion a young man from San Francisco, claiming to be a Hindu sadhu on a pilgrimage, passed through our village. At his request, I took him to watch a shamanic seance. Irkha, the shaman who was performing, "woke" from one of his spells and said to me, "Tell your friend that I see something concerning his pilgrimage. He should discontinue going any further west; otherwise, in one month he will become desperately ill. He will not die, but the hardship will be great. Tell him to turn back and worship the gods at Muktinath (a holy place in north central Nepal). If he obeys, he will not come ill". The man took his advice and started for Muktinath the following day.

The shaman performs other prodigious feats, too, all of which give evidence to his audience that he has transcended the human plane. In every seance he exhibits a special "mastery over fire". When his guardian animal spirits descend upon him, he angrily leaps upon the fire and puts it out with his hands. In the darkness, the cries of animals come from his lips. Taking hot coals from the fire, he eats them. He picks up the hot cooking tripod with his bare hands and places it on the back of his neck. He demonstrates to his audience that he has not been harmed--a feat which greatly astonishes them.

After performing his magical feats, the shaman enters the inner room with the patient to determine the cause of the illness. I have not been able to observe this part of the seance, and therefore know very little of how the diagnosis is performed. The informants' explanations on this point are simply that the shaman, by means of his spirits, is able to "see" the cause in some sort of an all-inclusive vision. He can "see" which soul is missing, who stole it, and so on.

If the missing soul is a purus, the shaman's first task in the process of retrieving it is known as "entering into enlightenment". The shaman invokes his wild boar spirit, and with the patient riding on his back, he crawls around the room on his hands and knees simulating a wild boar running through the forest. The patient, if physically able, kills a chicken on the shaman's back with his teeth. When he dismounts, the shaman lies on the floor enacting a deep sleep. It is supposed that his soul roams around nearby in search of the missing purus. If he finds it, he leaps to his feet and shouts a victorious "Hap!". If not, he sits up, rubs his eyes as if being roused from a deep sleep, and announces that he must search for it on the road to the underworld<sup>48</sup>.

Once the shaman has determined that he must journey on the road to the underworld, he performs a divination with his drum to determine if there is an impurity or evil force which has caused the soul to flee. (This divination is described in more detail on page 142). If it is determined that there are impurities, the shaman is required to make two ecstatic journeys--the first at night to retrieve the soul from its prison, and the second in the morning to get rid of the impurities. The journey to retrieve the soul is performed in its entirety as a kind of chant accompanied by the beat of the drum. The shaman, in a state of ecstasy, "rides" his leopard spirit on the road to the underworld, and as he goes, he gives an account of his journey. Leaving the village he chants:

"I come with my drum, I come with my armor, I come with my gel.  
I am riding nine leopards, and I go with the gods of the north,  
I go with the gods of the south".

The shaman travels east to a high mountain pass, and from there descends into the "underworld". Many of the geographical names used are both real and symbolic<sup>49</sup>. For example, just beyond Dhorpatan is a large stone with a natural groove around its middle. The stone is called "The Tying Place of the Death Sacrifice", and as such is a symbolic road marker for the road to death. The groove is attributed to the wear of the ropes of animals which have been tied there for the "casting-away-the-soul" sacrifice. Further on, at the mountain pass, is a dividing of watersheds. The water which runs toward the village is known as "The Waters of Remembrance", and the water flowing the other way as "The Waters of Forgetfulness". In retrieving the soul, it is said that if the shaman can overtake it while it is still within the Waters of Remembrance, its capture and subsequent re-installation is comparatively easy. If,



on the other hand, the soul has reached The Waters of Forgetfulness, it will forget its home and family and wander on to the underworld. As such, its capture is much more difficult.

At various stages in the journey, the shaman changes the rhythm of his drum, and shifts the meter of his chant in accordance. Periodically, he halts to scold and re-call some of his helping spirits who are lagging behind. This too is accompanied by a change of beat. Finally, he comes to the place of the soul's captivity where he gives a shout of triumph and begins to bargain with the gods of the underworld, imploring them to free the soul. Finally, with the soul in his possession, the shaman returns by the same route. As he approaches the village he cries out, "I've captured the soul and I bring it for you!" whereupon he gives his patient a drink of beer or alcoholic spirits.

The second part of the ceremony is similar to the first in its enactment, except that its purpose is to wash "impurities" and "evil omens" down the great river, the Kali Gandaki. Impurities and evil omens are usually represented in the form of forked stalks of bamboo, barley, or wheat. The shaman watches for these omens and collects them on his night journey to retrieve the soul. This is known as "collecting the evil". In the morning he mounts the sacrificial animal (a sheep or goat) and rides off on his journey to the river. As his soul leaves the village he cries,

"I come with my drum, I come with my sacrifice.  
I have forks of barley, forks of wheat, forks of he-bamboo  
and she-bamboo.  
I come to wash you away, kānul. I come to wash you away,  
bānul".

Finally with his task completed, the shaman journeys home and tells his audience the things he "saw" from his spiritual plane. He may prophesy someone's death, or the coming of bad weather<sup>50</sup>. Soon afterward, he kills the sacrificial goat, cooks its meat, and with his assistants enjoys a feast.

Many villagers are convinced of the reality of the shaman's spiritual journey to the underworld. They claim that on one occasion a shaman from Sera had been to the Kali Gandaki to wash away evil omens and was on his return trip when he met, coming up the trail, a shaman from Hukam (one day north of Sera). The shaman from Hukam was carrying a load of forked bamboo to wash down the river. The shaman from Sera began to shout excitedly, "Clear the road, I'm coming through"! But the other shaman stubbornly refused, and a great collision ensued. The shaman from Sera was thrown completely out of the house in which he was shamanizing, and when the audience picked him up unconscious, he was scratched and bleeding from wounds inflicted by the forked bamboo.

The ceremonies and activities described above are for the purpose of retrieving the purus from the road to the underworld. In the case of a missing sāto or syākwā, the shaman is dealing with visible entities, and as a result, the ceremonies involved are more ritualistic, employing a number of material symbols. A missing sāto is believed to be in the possession of a spirit known as Sepā Serong, and the shaman tries first to retrieve it without leaving the village. A mat is spread in front of the patient's house, and on the mat is a chicken held captive in a basket. Beside the basket is a dish of water, the receptacle for the sāto. The shaman and nine participants dance out of the house, around the basket in the presence of Sepā Serong, and back into the house. This is repeated nine times. One of the dancers is a deaf-mute, who is usually very ugly, having a large, protruding goiter. Painted up in a ludicrous way and wearing only a loincloth, he calls out to Sepā Serong in long shrill cries. This causes Sepā Serong to laugh with great hilarity, giving the soul a chance to escape. Sometimes Sepā Serong is not in a laughing mood, however, and the deaf-mute has to go to extra measures--like the enactment of a copulating dog<sup>51</sup>. After the last round of dancing, the chicken is taken from its basket, mesmerized, and laid across the dish of water. The audience is required to watch from hiding so as not to frighten the sāto and prevent its return. When the sāto arrives, the chicken jumps to its feet and squawks--he is the first to perceive it. One of the assistants rushes to the dish and hopefully pulls out an insect or bug. This is the patient's sāto.

The patient's syākwā is re-called in a similar manner. The shaman's assistant brings water from the spring in a wooden jug. He purifies the jug by rubbing it with the sacred barma plant. A white cloth is tied around the neck of the jug, and another is laid over its mouth. The jug is placed at the edge of the roof where the assistant watches it from hiding. Inside the house, the shaman goes into a trance and roams the countryside for the syākwā. If he finds it, he shouts "Hap!" and the assistant rushes to the jug and covers its mouth with his hand. If he is quick enough, inside the jug will be the syākwā, a small bundle of dry skin and fingernails bound into a piece of the patient's garment, and tied with strands of his hair.

Often the shaman is not able to retrieve the sāto or syākwā in the manner described above. In such case, he is required to search for it with his 'wild-goat stave'--a practice which in symbolic form retains all the traditional themes of a journey beyond. I have watched this practice several times, though I have never seen the preliminary ceremony in which the stick is "animated". Two shamans and one assistant participate. The first shaman, obviously in a state of ecstasy, holds onto the stick with both hands. The stick vibrates violently and seemingly pulls him along. The second shaman, in full costume, follows, throwing chyonām or 'magical seed' at the stick to keep it animated. The



A shaman dancing - recalling the soul.

assistant brings up the rear carrying the seed and other necessary gear. The wild-goat stave continues to vibrate and pull the shaman until it comes to rest at the place of the missing soul, usually a graveyard or swampy area. The second shaman, embodying his snake spirit, "descends into the earth"; wallowing through the mud on his stomach until he finds the soul--a bug if it is a sāto, and a packet of skin and fingernails if it is a syākwā. A fire is kindled, incense is burned, and a chicken is sacrificed to placate the evil spirit who had been in possession of the soul.

If the shaman determines that the soul (sāto or syākwā) has fled because of aggravation, then the evil must be "washed away", as we have seen once in connection with the purus. The figure of a demon on horseback is made of dough and painted yellow to symbolize its evil nature. At night, the shaman's assistant puts the demon in a tiny boat on the river, where it floats away. Meanwhile, the shaman sits in the house beating his drum, and he describes step by step the itinerary of the horse and its rider until it reaches Chumkutya bridge (about ten miles downriver). The evil has been eradicated.

There are some cases of illness which are not attributed to the loss of a soul, but rather to the intrusion of a magical object into the patient's body. This belief has its precedent in one of the myths of Puran Tsan the first shaman. He was very irritated by the poor treatment he had received from the king after curing the king's wife. So, he introduced by magic a piece of lime into the queen's stomach, and a leaf of the syārgwā tree into her heart to insure that she would remain ill until he himself removed the offending objects.

One of the common magical objects which causes illness is the invisible arrow of the ban ngāo or 'woodland fairy'. The woodland fairies are hunting spirits, and it is said that on a quiet night they can be heard calling their hunting dogs, and the bells on their hunting dogs' collars can be heard jingling<sup>52</sup>. When the shaman determines that his patient has been struck by one of their arrows, he prescribes an action which will "reverse" their magic. To reverse the magic, the ceremony must also be in "reverse". A horse and rider is made of dough and painted yellow. The figure is placed on a leaf plate along with an offering of a young chicken and nine lumps of bread. A member of the patient's household is required to make a night-time excursion to a crossroads outside the village where he proceeds to shoot the chicken and the rider three times each. His weapon is a bow and three arrows, all inversely constructed. The bow is strung backwards with its back bent inward. The string is twisted backwards; that is, counter-clockwise. The arrows, too, are made backwards with the point and butt ends reversed. After shooting the chicken and the horseman, the three arrows are shot backwards over the archer's shoulder in three different directions. The bow is broken and laid on the leaf plate with the offering. This is believed to "reverse" the woodland fairies' magic<sup>53</sup>.

Still other cases of illness are attributed to some kind of a "hex" either by an evil spirit or a living person. Care is taken when cooking food out of doors to keep the cooking pot covered lest a passing spirit cast a spell on the food. People are also hesitant to accept or eat food in the presence of certain villagers suspected of being witches lest they incur similar spells. Ill fortune (known as mahn)--most notably in regards to crops, the accumulation of wealth, or in game hunting--is often attributed to the spirit world. To avoid mahn, villagers are burdened with a host of superstitions, the sum of which tend to make them suspicious of their neighbors and very secretive in their own affairs. For example, if a game animal is taken in a hunt, the kill must be kept secret. A single utterance of exclamation or admiration from an outsider, especially a stranger, will cause mahn--the ruination of future hunts. Only the shaman can rid a person of mahn; for no other reason than the fact that he is a psychopomp, capable of leaving his body and traveling great distances. Mahn must be "washed" down the great Bheri River to the west (near Surkhet) and the shaman is called upon in such cases to make an ecstatic journey there and back.

#### Myths of the First Shaman

Most of the Siberian peoples have myths concerning the origin of the first shaman. Although many versions exist, one of the most widespread beliefs is that he was born in a tree of a great eagle. Today, the souls of his descendants are born in the branches of the same tree. We have seen this theme preserved, at least in symbolic form, in the Kham-Magar 'birth' ceremony.

Myths of the first shaman sometimes merge with myths of the first blacksmith. An old Yakut proverb says, "Smiths and shamans are from the same nest" (Czaplicka 1914:211). The first blacksmith was in some cases the chief smith of the underworld. It was on his forge that the shaman's equipment and iron pendants were fashioned.

There are a number of stories of the first, or mythical shaman, in Kham-Magar mythology, only a few of which I have collected. I reproduce the following because it not only speaks of the first shaman, but shows him to be closely associated with Tiku, the first smith of the underworld (in this story he appears to be identical with Tiku). The story was told to me by Tipalkya Bhuda, and is clearly reminiscent of certain Siberian themes; plus a synthesis of other traditions as well.

"Long ago in the North Country at a place called Kāndā Tāli in Syārgwā Meadow, Shaman Puran Tsan was born in a syārgwā tree. Below lived the king of Golkhādā in a place called Rāni Gāon, Māni Gāon. The king's wife, the queen, fell sick one day. The king, in hopes that she could be cured, sent his men to search for sorcerers and shamans. At first they went to the place of Māitya, a sorcerer, to have him "gaze into water". When he gazed into the water, he

could see everything in all four directions, but he would not conjure the evil spirits responsible for the illness—they were his nieces. Finally, the king sent for the shaman, Puran Tsan. When Puran Tsan arrived, he simply blew a magic spell into some water, gave it to the queen to drink, and she was cured.

"The nine sisters, nieces of Maitya the sorcerer, heard of Puran Tsan's deed. They counteracted his magic by making the queen ill again, and then spreading the rumor that Puran Tsan was really an evil wizard. "Look", they said, "when he's here she gets better, and when he leaves she becomes ill again". Finally, the king, convinced that Puran Tsan really must be evil, sent his troops in full armor to drive him from the palace. This greatly embarrassed and irritated Puran Tsan who fled for home. He complained to his two wives, Juhmā and Padmā, saying, "My visit to the king was worse than useless. I have been embarrassed to the limit. I can no longer face the world. Me! One who has come into being on his own! Chased by the king as an evil wizard! It's worse than losing one's caste. It would be better if I just disappeared into the underworld for awhile".

"But before Puran Tsan left for the underworld, he, by magic, introduced a piece of lime into the queen's stomach, and a leaf of the syārgwā tree into her heart to make sure she would not become well until he was called for. He enjoined his two wives to tell no one the secret of where he went; "unless", he said, "they bring you a pot full of gold and a pot full of silver. And when you tell them", he said, "give them this riddle:

The road the shaman took is marked by lime and riri,  
syārgwā and thiri.

The road the evil wizard took is marked by ashes and  
wālwāl, soot and wālwāl".

"Puran Tsan went down, down, down, nine steps down into the underworld. When he got there, the kings of the underworld were in session at a great meeting with nine councils. Puran Tsan presented himself for work, and asked for a place to stay. They asked his occupation, and he replied that he was a blacksmith. So they let him set up a shop in the downstairs floor of the headman's house, where he fashioned knives, sickles, axes, and other implements of iron.

"While Puran Tsan was working as a smith in the underworld, the queen of Golkhādā was growing worse. It was expected that she would die any day. The king, wondering if he hadn't acted unwisely toward Puran Tsan sent for him again. The king's soldiers came to Puran Tsan's two wives, and asked, "Where's Puran Tsan"? "Puran Tsan has not yet returned from the palace", they replied. "What's the meaning of this"? the soldiers wondered, "he should have been home by now"! But his wives insisted that they hadn't seen him.

"Finally, sometime later, the soldiers suspected Tsan's wives of withholding the truth, and they threatened them saying, "If you don't tell us where he went, we'll shove you off a cliff, we'll throw you in the river". So the wives made their bargain, "If you give us a pot of gold and a pot of silver, we'll tell you where he went". The soldiers complied and were given the following directions:

The road the shaman took is marked by lime and riri, syārgwā and thiri.

The road the evil wizard took is marked by ashes and wālwāl, soot and wālwāl.

"The soldiers were smart enough to follow the road marked by lime and syārgwā. As they went, they descended deep into the underworld and came upon another council meeting. They asked the kings if they had seen the shaman Puran Tsan. "No, we haven't seen such a man", they said. "There is only one outsider here, and that's a blacksmith living in the bottom floor of the headman's house. He fashions implements of iron". So the soldiers went there and asked, "Hey, brother Tiku, have you seen the shaman Puran Tsan around"? "No, I haven't seen him", Tsan replied. I've spent all my time right here working at the forge". "Well, then", the soldiers asked, "have you heard any rumors about such a person"? Puran Tsan thought for a moment and replied, "well, I once heard of someone who meets your description over in the East Country. Why don't you go check on him"?

"The soldiers went to the East Country and met up with goblins and ogres. The goblins smelled the flesh of the soldiers and came after them with a terrific clamour and racket. The soldiers fled in terror and barely escaped. Again they came to the place of Puran Tsan. "That's not the place", they complained. "You lied to us and we were nearly killed". "Well", replied Tsan "I heard a very slight rumor that the one you are looking for might be in the West Country".

"The soldiers went to the West Country, where again they met up with ogres and goblins. The goblins again smelled their flesh and came after them in hot pursuit. The soldiers were so terrified they nearly died. When they returned to the forge of Puran Tsan they said, "Brother Tiku, the blacksmith, you are the shaman, you are the healer. On your head is a feather headdress". Puran Tsan denied the charge saying, "I am not the one, sirs. On my head is the tumpline I use to carry coal to the forge".

"Brother Tiku the blacksmith, you are the shaman, you are the healer. Around your eyes is the soot of the forge". Puran Tsan denied it saying, "I am not the one, sirs. On my way to the forge I blacked my eyes so I wouldn't be blinded by the snow".

"Brother Tiku the blacksmith, you are the shaman, you are the healer. On your ears is the leaf of the syārgwā tree". Puran Tsan

denied it saying, "I am not the one, sirs. On my way to the forge I picked a flower and put it in my ear".

"Brother Tiku the blacksmith, you are the shaman, you are the healer. On your back are gameskins, birdskins, and a yak tail". Puran Tsan denied it saying, "I am not the one, sirs. That's a pouch I use to carry coal to the forge".

"Brother Tiku the blacksmith, you are the shaman, you are the healer. Around your waist is a bearskin girdle". Puran Tsan denied it saying, "I am not the one, sirs. When I hammer at the anvil my waist hurts and I gird it up".

"Brother Tiku the blacksmith, you are the shaman, you are the healer. On your left hand is a bracelet of rhododendron wood, and in your right hand is a cane drumstick". Puran Tsan denied it saying, "I am not the one, sirs. When I work at the anvil I have a hammer in one hand and tongs in the other".

"Brother Tiku the blacksmith, you are the shaman, you are the healer. On your thighs are a pair of trousers". Puran Tsan denied it saying, "I am not the one, sirs. I wear trousers to keep from getting burned from the sparks when working at the forge".

"Brother Tiku the blacksmith, you are the shaman, you are the healer. You are sitting on a shaman's stool". Puran Tsan denied it saying, "I am not the one, sirs. I've laid down a wooden plank to keep out of the soot while working at the forge".

"Brother Tiku the blacksmith, you are the shaman, you are the healer. On your feet are the prints of a he-leopard, the prints of a she-leopard". Puran Tsan denied it saying, "I am not the one, sirs. I have sores on my feet from the sparks while working at the forge".

"Puran Tsan outwitted the soldiers every time. The soldiers discussed it among themselves. "We've got to think of something", they said. "He won't let us get him on anything". They brought a piece of the sacred barma plant and dropped it into the firepit. The leaves scorched and the smell permeated the room. The shaman Puran Tsan went berserk and his body began to tremble. Even the forge stood on end and shook. There was no doubt that this was the shaman Puran Tsan. The soldiers had exposed him.

"Puran Tsan ascended up, up, up, nine steps up out of the underworld. The soldiers took him to Rāni Gāon, Māni Gāon in Golkhādā. He was brought before the queen and he magically removed the lime from her stomach, and the syārgwā from her heart. He gave her a drink of water and she became well. He told the king, "Listen, oh King, those who are making your wife ill are evil spirits. How about if I got rid of them"? The king was impressed, and as they discussed the matter, they discovered that the two of them were, in fact, relatives--related through their wives. Now they could speak with unusual candor.



"Listen, Brother King, those who are making the queen ill are evil spirits, and I'm going to get rid of them. But when I do, please don't darken your countenance or become angry". The king replied, "Don't worry, Brother, even if they're my sisters, get rid of them. Even if they're my own children, get rid of them. Even if they're my close friends, get rid of them. When you get rid of those enemies, I won't darken my countenance or become angry". So Puran Tsan told him they were nine sisters, all nieces of the sorcerer. "Go ahead and kill them", the king answered.

"Puran Tsan put on his costume and went out to the village crossroads. He cast a magical spell over the nine sisters, and they came to him. Puran Tsan greeted them by singing.

My loving elder sisters, my loving younger sisters,  
 You are evil spirits, you are evil witches.  
 I'll yank out your hearts, I'll yank out your livers.  
 I'll make them dance in the hoop of my drum".

"Oh please, please, Uncle Shaman Tsan, don't kill us", they begged. "We're in league with you, and you're in league with us". "What agreement could there be between you and I"? Puran Tsan demanded. "Well", they said, "we'll prey on men, steal their souls and make them sick. You can shamanize for them and receive payment of money and grain. Then you in return can give us blood offerings, and we'll live on that". So Puran Tsan, in his greed for money, agreed. He didn't kill them when he had the chance, but let them go in peace. From that day on, shamans and evil spirits have provided each other a living"<sup>54</sup>.

#### CONCLUSIONS

That Kham-Magar shamanism is related to the classical tradition of Siberia and Central Asia is clear. The tradition has been modified, of course--in some areas quite markedly so. Such is the "escort" of the deceased's soul to the otherworld. In still other areas the tradition has been refined through institutionalization. Such is the thumbu ceremony, in which the classic themes of ecstatic initiation are formalized in a ritual ceremony. Many of the themes of classical shamanism can be found with varying degrees of modification in other ethnic groups of Nepal as well, at least in kernel form--for example, the initiation of the Tamang bombo, the trance of the Lepcha mun (Gorer 1967), the ritual journey of the Thulung Rai (Allen 1974), the costume of the Gurung pucu and klihbri (Pignède 1966)-- to name only a few. Does this suggest, perhaps, that there was a proto-tradition of the non-Indic peoples of Nepal which may have very closely resembled the classic Inner Asian tradition? The incidence of Kham-Magar shamanism shows that such a tradition can and does, in fact, exist in Nepal.



## FOOTNOTES

1. (p. 123) Fieldwork for this paper was conducted between the years 1970-73 while doing linguistic research in the Kham language pursuant to an agreement between Tribhuvan University-Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies, and The Summer Institute of Linguistics. I especially want to express my gratitude to Dr. Surya Bahadur Sakya, Vice Chancellor of Tribhuvan University, and to Dr. P.R. Sharma, Dean of the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies, for their active interest in research scholarship. I also wish to thank Dr. A.W. Macdonald for his useful comments on this paper. And to my friends in the villages of Taka and Sera in the Dhaulagiri and Rapti Zones, I wish to express appreciation for sharing their knowledge with me--especially Tipalkya Bhuda, Ram Kumar Bhuda, Hasta Ram Bhuda, Shaman Bal Bahadur Bhuda, Shaman Irkha Bhuda, and Shaman Deo Bhuda.
  
2. (p. 123) Kham words which are underlined follow the transcription rules of Watters and Watters 1973, with the exception that in this paper the high-central vowel is represented by  $\text{ɨ}$ , the mid-central vowel by  $\text{a}$ , and the low-central vowel by  $\text{ã}$  (the latter two in Devanagari are  $\text{ॠ}$  and  $\text{ॡ}$  respectively). The digraph symbol  $\text{n.}$  (as in ban.) represents nasalization of the preceding vowel, and syllable final  $\text{h}$  (as in boh) represents a lax or breathy phonation on the preceding vowel. Works available in the Kham language are:
  - Kham Computer Concordance, David E. Watters. University of Oklahoma. (In the Tribhuvan University library).
  - Kham Phonemic Summary, David E. Watters. S.I.L. mimeo
  - A Guide to Kham Tone, David E. Waters. S.I.L. mimeo
  - Clause Patterns in Kham, David E. Watters, in Clause, Sentence, and Discourse Patterns in Selected Languages of Nepal, ed. Austin Hale. University of Oklahoma.
  - An English-Kham, Kham-English Glossary, David and Nancy Watters. Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur.
  - Speaker-Hearer Involvement in Kham, David E. Watters. SIL mimeo.
  
3. (p. 125) Hitchcock (1967) has already postulated an Inner Asian origin for the shamanistic tradition of Bhujji valley (referred to later by him as Dhaulagiri Shamanism). He shows, however, that in comparing the Dhaulagiri tradition to Eliade's "classical" tradition, there are certain "decadent" aspects, most notably in regards to "magical flight"--the enactment of ascension being almost totally absent. There is no doubt, however, that the tradition described by Hitchcock is closely related to the tradition described in this paper. The Magars of Hitchcock's description are in fact Kham-Magars living on the southeastern fringe of the Kham-Magar territory, but have been in close contact with Nepali speaking peoples

for a long time. Since a number of "classical" features absent in the Bhuji valley are still practiced in the heart of the Kham-Magar territory, I think Hitchcock's use of the term "decadent" is probably correct. A construct of the shamanism practiced throughout the whole of Kham-Magar territory may not differ in many respects from Eliade's construct of North and Central Asia.

4. (p. 125) In Siberia and Central Asia one finds both hereditary and spontaneous election, but usually a combination of the two, as among the Kham-Magars. That is, the gift is transmitted in a family lineage, but only to those whom the spirits choose. Such is the pattern, for example, among the Buryat, the Tungus, and the Yakut (Eliade 1964:13-16). The Altaians believe that no one becomes a shaman of his own free will; rather it comes to him like a "hereditary disease" (Czaplicka 1914:178).
5. (p. 125) Among the Yakut, this spirit or "sign" which is passed on is known as amagat, and corresponds in nearly every respect to the Kham-Magar gel. It is in most cases the soul of a departed shaman. Regarding its transmission, Czaplicka notes that "whenever a family numbers a shaman among its members, it continues to do so, for after his death the amagat seeks to re-embodiment itself in someone belonging to the same clan" (1914:213).
6. (p. 126) Among the Tungus of the Trans-Baikal region, a dead shaman appears to a candidate in a dream and summons him to become his successor. One who is to become a shaman appears shy, distraught, and is in a highly nervous condition (Czaplicka 1914:177). Czaplicka further notes that "to be called to become a shaman is generally equivalent to being afflicted with hysteria (1914:172). Similar instances are found in the records of most Siberian tribes.
7. (p. 126) Among the Chukchee, the novice loses all interest in the ordinary affairs of life. He ceases to work, eats but little and without relishing his food, and ceases to talk to people. The greater part of his time he spends in sleep (Czaplicka 1914:179). Among the Buryat, "before becoming a shaman the candidate must be sick for a long time; his soul is carried off by the spirits, and in the palace of the gods he learns the secrets of the profession. The souls of his shaman ancestors surround him, torture him, strike him, cut his body with knives, and so on. During this operation the future shaman remains inanimate; his face and hands are blue, and his heart scarcely beats" (Eliade 1964:19,43,44).
8. (p. 127) Radloff, cited by Casanowicz (1924:420) observes that by resisting the shamanic call, the candidate is only "exposing himself to terrible tortures, ending either in the entire loss of his mental power, becoming an imbecile, or in stark madness.

which ends in suicide or death in a paroxysm". Among the Chukchee, "the rejection of the spirits is much more dangerous even than the acceptance of their call. A young man thwarted in his call will sicken and shortly die" (Bogoraz 1904).

9. (p. 127) This practice is related in principle to a practice found among the Buryat. The relatives of the novice, during his initiatory period, appeal to an experienced shaman, who makes a sacrifice to propitiate the spirits and induce them to help the young shaman-to-be (Czaplicka 1914:186). The theme has undergone extensive institutionalization among the Kham-Magars.
10. (p. 128) This is an interesting point in view of Eliade's comment that in Siberia the primary role of the spirit of the dead shaman is not to create the shamanic vocation, but to "serve the candidate as a means of entering into contact with divine or semidivine beings" (1964:85).
11. (p. 128) This is in keeping with Rasmussen's observation that when "one is attacked by a helping spirit" he experiences a feeling of "inexplicable terror" (Eliade 1964:91).
12. (p. 130) The Siberian candidate is expected to see in a dream the exact place where he will find his future costume, and he himself goes to look for it (Eliade 1964:147).
13. (p. 130) This is in keeping with Czaplicka's observation that after a period of hysteria, "accepting the call means recovery" (1914:172).
14. (p. 130) The Goldi and other Siberian tribes also distinguish between these two classes of spirits. Among the Goldi, the "tutelary spirit" (corresponding to the gel) is the one which chooses the shaman, and the "helping spirits" (corresponding to the dohn.wā) are subordinate to it and are granted to the shaman by the tutelary spirit itself (Eliade 1964:71).
15. (p. 131) Eliade observes that "any god or spirit invoked during a shamanic seance is not by that fact one of the shaman's 'familiar' or 'helpers'. The great gods are often invoked. This is the case, for example, among the Altaians; before setting out on his ecstatic journey the shaman invites the attendance of Jajyk Kan, Kaira Kan, Bai Ulgan and his daughters, and other mystical figures" (1964:88).
16. (p. 131) In the Siberian region, the majority of helping spirits have animal and bird forms--wolves, bears, boars, stags, hares, eagles, and all kinds of birds (Czaplicka 1914:179). The Samoyeds of the Turukhinsk region allow for a certain amount of variation in the types of helping spirits, but hold that every shaman has a helping spirit in the shape of a wild boar (Casanowicz 1924:423).

17. (p. 131) "The Tungus shaman who has a snake as a helping spirit attempts to imitate the reptile's motions during the seance; another, having the whirlwind as a helping spirit, behaves accordingly" (Eliade 1964:92).
18. (p. 131) Speaking in other languages is attested in Siberia as well. Czaplicka cites the Yakut shaman Tiuspiut as telling Sieroszewski: "When I was travelling in the north, I came upon a heap of wood in the mountains, and as I just wanted to cook some dinner, I set this on fire. Now, under this heap was buried a well known Tungus shaman, and so his amagyat leapt into me" (Czaplicka 1914:184). Eliade reasons that this is why Tiuspiut uttered Tungusic words during seances. He adds that "he received other spirits too--Russians, Mongols, and so on--and spoke their languages" (1964:82).
19. (p. 132) In Siberia, public initiation does not normally occur until after the candidate's full instruction--that is, both from the spirits and also from the master shaman. The Kham-Magar practice, however, is in keeping with Eliade's observation that the public ceremony "only confirms and validates the real ecstatic and secret initiation, which is the work of the spirits, and is completed by apprenticeship to a master shaman" (1964:110).
20. (p. 132) According to Siberian legends (and Kham-Magar legends as well) the first shaman was born in a tree. Of special interest is the Yakut legend that shamans still are born in the branches of a giant fir tree in the north. Eliade shows that the tree symbolizes the mythological World Tree which lies at the center of the world, whose roots extend to the underworld, and whose crown ascends into heaven (Eliade 1964: 269-74). The Tree for the Kham-Magars figures in all shamanistic seances, and adorns the shaman's burial cairn.
21. (p. 132) The Buryat initiation ceremony is preceded by a purification rite which has the following details: water is drawn from a spring and purified by throwing wild thyme, juniper, and pine bark into the pot. They also offer libations of wine and brandy to the candidate's ancestors. These purification rites are obligatory at least once a year, if not every month at the time of the new moon (Eliade 1964: 116).
22. (p. 133) The Tungus in their initiation ceremony use two poles, called turo. A turo is described as a tree "the large branches of which have been cut off, but whose crowns are preserved" (Eliade 1964:111).
23. (p. 135) In the Tungus initiation ceremony, the neophyte and his teacher sit at the foot of the turo (ceremonial pole) and the teacher calls the spirits one by one, and sends them to

- the candidate. When the spirits enter, the elders examine the candidate, who must convince them that he has really received the spirit (Eliade 1964:112).
24. (p. 135) The Altaic tribes practice a ceremony lasting two or three evenings in which the head and bones of a horse are offered to God. It is a long and complex ceremony, very rich and dramatic in its enactment. After killing the animal, the shaman symbolically mounts the animal's soul (as was done in the Kham-Magar ceremony) and describes with great beauty his ascent to heaven to the very throne of God, as he climbs step by step the ceremonial tree which has been erected for the purpose (Czaplicka 1914:298-303).
  25. (p. 135) The Samoyed shaman of Siberia ties a handkerchief over his eyes "so that he can penetrate into the spirit world by his own inner sight" (Czaplicka 1914:203).
  26. (p. 135) After the Tungus performance of summoning the spirits, it is said that the new shaman climbs to the upper beam of the turo and remains there for some time (Eliade 1964:112). Among the Buryat, the "father shaman" ascends to the top of the tree first, and is followed by the candidate (Eliade 1964:119).
  27. (p. 135) The Altaic shaman enjoys a similar clairvoyance. On one of his celestial journeys he is described as halting in the third heaven where he "gives information concerning the coming weather, the epidemics, and misfortunes that threaten" (Eliade 1964:195.196).
  28. (p. 137) Jochelson relates that he once bought a costume from a shaman after much help and persuasion on the part of the chief. The shaman cried because he had been deprived of what he saw as the main source of his shamanistic power (Jochelson 1905:162-5). Eliade relates that among the Birartchen, the costume is not allowed to leave the clan, primarily because it must not be worn by anyone who cannot control the spirits, for the result would be trouble for the whole community (Eliade 1964:147).
  29. (p. 137) Casanowicz notes that "the shaman dons a special coat made of cloth or bearskin, hung with pieces of iron--rattles, rings, and representations of animals" (1924:424). The Altaic costume resembles an owl. On the back of the costume are sewn animal pelts and two copper disks. The Yakut costume imitates a complete bird skeleton in iron, and includes iron disks representing the sun as well as lunar crescents. The Buryat costume includes a coat upon which the figures of snakes, and game skins are fastened. In Western Siberia, the skins of tutelary animals are fastened to the headgear. (Eliade 1964: 149-157).

30. (p. 139) The syārgwā is the tree from which the first shaman, Puran Tsan was born.
31. (p. 139) The kucar is a dried wild root which hangs from a chain around the shaman's neck. There are differences of opinion among my informants as to its function. Some claim that the shaman, by sinking his teeth into it, keeps evil spirits from entering his body while in a trance. Others claim that it has slight hallucinatory properties, and it causes the shaman to experience a "tingling sensation" as he soars through the cool breezes of the sky. All agree, however, on the fact that the shaman doesn't actually eat the root, but only sinks his teeth into it.
32. (p. 140) This ceremony has element in it which resemble an Altaic custom referred to as "animating the drum". Eliade gives the following details: "When the Altaic shaman sprinkles the drum with beer, the shell of the drum 'comes to life' and, through the shaman, relates how the tree of which it was part grew in the forest, how it was cut, brought to the village, and so on. The shaman then sprinkles the skin of the drum and, 'coming to life' it too narrates its past. Through the shaman's voice, the animal whose skin has been used for the drum tells of its birth, its parents, its childhood, and its whole life to the moment when it was brought down by the hunter" (1964:170).
33. (p. 141) The skin of the sahr (Nep. ghoral) is commonly used for drumskins in in the Himalayan region. For example, the Tamang use the ghoral skin on their two-sided drums (Höfer 1974:170), and the Chantel use it on their one-sided drums (Michl 1974:228).
34. (p. 141) The Siberian drum, too, is circular to oval in shape, covered on one side, and appears to be the forerunner of the Kham-Magar drum in several respects. A stick crossing the inside of the drum serves as a handle. Among some tribes, rattles and bits of tinkling metal are attached inside to produce a noise resembling the clattering rings of the Kham-Magar drum. The skin of the drum is in some places the roebuck, in others the reindeer or elk (Czaplicka 1914:207-215).
35. (p. 142) Eliade notes that in Siberia "even the choice of the wood from which the shaman will make the shell of his drum depends entirely on the spirits". For example, among the Altaians, "the spirits themselves tell the shaman of the forest and the exact spot where the tree grows, and he sends his assistants to find it". In some places sacrifices are offered to the tree by daubing it with blood and vodka (1964:169,170). Among the Buryat, nine 'sons' or assistants are chosen by the 'father shaman', and under his direction they cut the trees for the initiation ceremony (Czaplicka 1914:187).



36. (p. 142) The Altaic shaman, before his ecstatic journey to the beyond, invokes the spirits, bidding them to enter his drum. As they appear, they say, "I am here!", and the shaman moves his drum as if he were catching the spirit (Czaplicka 1914:299).
37. (p. 142) Tibetan Bon sorcerers practice drum divination in determining the cause of illness. The drum is marked with intersecting lines, and the sections formed are marked for information regarding causes, prognosis, etc. Wheat or barley grains are then made to dance on the surface of the drum, and their final resting point determines the answer (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:457-460).
38. (p. 142) The Tungus shaman, as he journeys through the sky in a trance is said to ward off the arrows of rival shamans with his drum (Eliade 1964:240). The Yukaghir of Siberia speak of fights between rival shamans in which an invisible war is carried on between them by means of their spirits. The most common strategies are shooting at one another with invisible arrows, or eating one another (Jochelson 1924:212-215).
39. (p. 142) The Buryat of the Baikal region have, for the most part, abandoned the drum and replaced it with a wooden stave, the description of which is similar to that of the Kham-Magar shaman. It is about 30 inches long with a horse head carved at the top of it and horse hooves carved at the lower end. Little bells and conical shaped weights are tied to the stave, along with colored ribbons and strips of ermine and squirrel fur. Significantly, they refer to the stick as their "horse", the animal whose skin covers their drums. The sticks are "animated", after which they are said to turn into real horses (Czaplicka 1914:188,224-5).
40. (p. 143) Eliade describes the shamanic concept of a soul as a "precarious psychic unit inclined to forsake the body and is an easy prey for demons and sorcerers" (1964:182).
41. (p. 143) Eliade shows that the shaman is not a priest, and that he sacrifices in some ceremonies "only because it is his task to conduct the animal's soul on its celestial journey, and not because his function is that of a sacrificial priest" (1964:182).
42. (p. 143) The concept of three souls is common in Siberia. The Buryat distinguish three souls, the first of which is an invisible copy of the skeleton. The second resides in the blood and vital organs, and when leaving the body it assumes the shape of a wasp or bee. The third is like a ghost which appears to others after the person's death (Krader 1967:109).
43. (p. 143) Among the Chukchee (as well as among the Buryat), one of the three souls assumes the shape of a beetle which is then

caught and re-introduced into the patient through the mouth (Bogoraz 1904).

44. (p. 144) The concept of spirits of the dead troubling living persons is common in many parts of Asia--North and South. But actual "possession" by these spirits is allegedly restricted to the traditions of South Asia and India. In the Indian tradition, the medium or sorcerer induces the troubling spirit to possess his client and reveal the cause of his anger and prescribe how he should be appeased. Apparently, (according to Höfer) this type of "induced" possession has not been reported among other indigenous ethnic groups of the Himalayas, such as the Gurung, Magar, Limbu, Rai, Lepcha, etc. (Höfer 1974:159-165). (See also Höfer and Shrestha 1972).
45. (p. 144) Measures for the prevention of the soul's return are common in Siberia as well. In some places the funeral party takes another road back to the village to confuse the dead man. In others, the man's sled or cart is burned at the cemetery to prevent him from leaving (Eliade 1964:207). Czaplicka quotes Mordvinoff as saying (concerning the Tungus), "As they return from the funeral ceremony, the relatives try to obliterate the tracks they have made in the snow, or else cut down trees so that they fall across the way, in order to prevent the return of the dead" (Czaplicka 1914:155,156). The custom of guiding the soul from the village by means of a white cloth can be found among the Bhotias of Taklakot or Purang. They too call the cloth a "way cloth" (Sherring 1906:123, 124).
46. (p. 144) This practice of the Kham-Magars is almost identical to a practice of the non-Buddhist Bhotias in and around Taklakot or Purang (in Tibet near the extreme northwest corner of Nepal). For the final death ceremony, a yak (often replaced by a sheep or goat) which represents the deceased and is of the same sex, is dressed up with the clothes of the deceased and carefully fed by the relatives. An old man well versed in the lore of the otherworld (corresponding to the Kham-Magar seer) instructs the spirit of the deceased as to the paths it should follow, and the dangers it should avoid in reaching its destination. On the fourth (last) day of the ceremony, the son-in-law or sister's son of the deceased leads the animal to a distant spot where it is killed and eaten by low-caste Bhotias (Sherring 1906:123-131). In Siberia, the funerary banquet is very elaborate and employs the shaman in escorting the soul of the dead to the underworld--a practice which has undergone extensive modification, and is only a symbolic gesture in the Kham-Magar tradition.
47. (p. 145) Shirokogoroff observed similar practices among the Manchu of Siberia. At the beginning of a seance, after a particular spirit has entered the shaman, he falls to the floor. His assistants ask him questions and he answers.

Eliade interprets this particular activity as a means of demonstrating that the shaman is already in the nether regions (Eliade 1964:241).

48. (p. 146) The practice of "entering into enlightenment" closely resembles the "preliminary seance" of the Buryat in which the shaman determines whether his patient's soul has simply strayed away, or whether it has been stolen and is captive in the underworld. The preliminary seance consists of searching for the patient's soul in the area near the village, where, if found, its re-installation is easy. If it cannot be found near the village, it is assumed that it has been stolen and taken captive, in which case sacrifices and a trip to the underworld are necessary (Eliade 1964:218). Healing among the Yenisei Ostyak requires two ecstatic journeys. The first is more of a rapid survey, and it is during the second, which ends in a trance, that the shaman enters deep into the beyond (Eliade 1964:223). Among the Tungus of Manchuria the preliminary seance is referred to as a "little shamanizing" and is conducted to determine if the soul is imprisoned in the underworld (Eliade 1964:240).
49. (p. 146) The ritual journeys of the Thulung Rai also employ real geographic names. The journeys, however, are not ecstatic and can be performed by a layman with sufficient knowledge of the chants (Allen 1974:6-11). The Tungus shaman of Manchuria, when making a mystical journey to the otherworld, reaches a mountain pass in the northwest which he descends into the underworld. He meets spirits and other shamans, and wards off their arrows with his drum. He sings of all the difficulties of his journey, so that the audience can follow him step by step. After going through a narrow hole and crossing three streams, he comes to the infernal regions. He finds the patient's soul and after negotiations with the spirits he brings it back to the patient (Eliade 1964:240).
50. (p. 147) Among certain Ostyak peoples, the shaman, after returning from his ecstatic journey prophesies the future for each person in the gathering (Eliade 1964:226).
51. (p. 148) A similar technique is found among the Ostyak-Vasyugan. The shaman, under certain circumstances, sends one of his helping spirits to the underworld to find the patient's soul. When he finds the thief, he suddenly produces from his breast a spirit in the shape of a bear; the thief is frightened and lets the patient's soul escape (Eliade 1964:221).
52. (p. 150) Illness caused by the intrusion of a magical object into the body seems to be related more to a South Asian complex (Eliade 1964:215). "Hunter godlings" have been reported in the tradition of the Southern Magars as well, but their descriptions are somewhat different. They do, however,

use dogs in the chase, and they can cause human illness; though, apparently not by means of magical arrows (Hitchcock 1966:28,29)

53. (p. 150) Eliade notes that the people of North Asia conceive of the otherworld as an inverted image of this world. Thus, when it is day on earth, it is night there, and so on. Objects offered on the grave for the use of the dead are turned upside down (Eliade 1964:205). Among the non-Buddhist Bhotias of Purang, a person at death is placed in a white cotton bag. The bag is sewn with thread spun contrary to the usual way. In the funeral ceremony, the women who carry the "way cloth" walk with their headgear turned inside out (Sherring 1906:123). The Kham-Magars, too, have other customs which suggest the inverted image of the otherworld. In a ceremony for dealing with the spirits which cause accidental death, two drums are used--one with a high pitch and the other with a low pitch. The high pitched drum is referred to as the male, and the low pitched one as the female--the inverse of this world. When the shaman goes into ecstasy and reaches the spiritual plane, he refers to his equipment with the negative prefix ma-. His headdress is not-a-headdress, his animal pelts not-animal pelts, his drum not-a-drum, and so on.
54. (p. 155) Certain elements in the story of Puran Tsan bear resemblance to accounts of Padma-Sambhava, the famous guru who introduced Lamaism into Tibet. His name means 'The Lotus Self-Born', a designation not altogether inappropriate for Puran Tsan as well. Like Puran Tsan, Padma-Sambhava is often portrayed with two wives. He was a native of Udyana, a country northwest of Kashmir famous for its wizards and exorcists, and was called into Tibet by the reigning monarch of that time. He was noted for his proficiency in black art and magic, and upon entering Tibet he proceeded to vanquish all the Bon devils by means of his magic. They cried to him for mercy, and he allowed them to remain on the condition that they should be subject to his power. They in turn were to be properly fed and propitiated. Padma-Sambhava's reputation, like that of Puran Tsan, was slurred by evil accusations in official quarters. History states that "the Ponist ministers 'poisoned' the ears of the king in connection with his miracles. Consequently the king sent Padma-Sambhava back to India" (Bell 1931:29-46; Sherring 1906:81).

According to Kham-Magar mythology, Puran Tsan entered the "Blind Country" at a time when all religious conventions were in terms of nine. He defeated the nine devils or evil spirits, and introduced social changes in favor of economy--nine assistants were reduced to one, nine deaf-mutes (to dance before Sepā Serong) were reduced to one, and nine sacrificial animals were reduced to one. Mythology claims that the shaman descendants of Puran Tsan are shamans of Pon, and belong to an enlightened order.

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