SHAMANISM AND VIOLENCE
Power, Repression and Suffering in Indigenous Religious Conflicts

Edited by
Diana Riboli and
Davide Torri

Routledge

SHAMANISM AND VIOLENCE

Proposing a new theoretical framework, this book explores shamanism's links with violence from a global perspective. Contributors, renowned anthropologists and authorities in the field, draw on their research in Mongolia, China, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, India, Siberia, America, Papua New Guinea, Taiwan to investigate how indigenous shamanic cultures dealt, and are still dealing, with varying degrees of internal and external violence.

During ceremonies, shamans act like hunters and warriors, dealing with many states related to violence, such as collective and individual suffering, attack, conflict and antagonism. Indigenous religious complexes are often called to respond to direct and indirect competition with more established cultural and religious traditions which undermine the sociocultural structure, the sense of identity and the state of well-being of many indigenous groups. This book explores a more sensitive vision of shamanism, closer to the emic views of many indigenous groups.

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Shamanism and Violence

Power, Repression and Suffering
in Indigenous Religious Conflicts

Edited by

DIANA RIBOLI
Panteio University, Athens, Greece

DAVIDE TORRI
University of Heidelberg, Germany

In memory of Romano Mastromattei and Neil L. Whitehead

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Notes on Contributors

Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer is Research Professor in CERES and the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Georgetown University.

   Professor Balzer's research is in social theory, inter-ethnic relations, religion, the growth of nationalism, and anthropology of the Russian Federation. She has done extensive fieldwork, focusing on Siberia and Central Asia. She has taught at the University of Illinois and the University of Pennsylvania, and held post-doctoral fellowships at Harvard, Columbia, and the Kennan Institute of the Woodrow Wilson Center. She is editor of the journal Anthropology and Archeology of Eurasia and the author of influential articles and books, including *Shamans, Spirituality, and Cultural Revitalization: Explorations in Siberia and Beyond* (2012) and *The Tenacity of Ethnicity: A Siberian Saga in Global Perspective* (1999)

Laurel Kendall is Curator of the American Museum of Natural History and Adjunct Professor at Columbia University. Professor Kendall is a leading scholar in the field of Korean Studies. Her current work concerns the role of material goods in ritual transactions with gods and ancestors. She is the author of numerous influential articles and books, including *Shamans, Housewives and Other Restless Spirits* (1985), *Getting Married in Korea: Of Gender, Morality, and Modernity* (1996) and *Shamans, Nostalgias, and the IMF: South Korean Popular Religion in Motion* (2010).

Daniel Kister, native of the United States, is Emeritus Professor at Sogang University in Seoul, Korea. After receiving a PhD in Comparative Literature, he taught for more than 25 years in Korea and 12 years in China. He has published several books and numerous articles on Korean and Chinese shamanism and has received an award for his research from the International Society for Shamanistic Research.

Peter Knecht was born in Zurich, Switzerland. He taught Cultural Anthropology (Anthropology of Religion) at Nanzan University, Nagoya, Japan, from 1978 to 2006. He was appointed full professor in 1997 and was director of the Nanzan Anthropological Institute. For nearly 30 years he did fieldwork on belief systems in the mountain villages of Northern Japan. Until 2006 he was editor of Asian Folklore Studies, a journal published by the Nanzan Anthropological Institute. He is now retired and lectures part-time at Aichi Gakuin University, Nisshin City, where he teaches Anthropology of Religion.

Michael Oppitz is Emeritus Professor at the University of Zurich and former Director of the Zürcher Völkerkundemuseums. Michael Oppitz is known worldwide for his extensive field research on shamanism. He travelled to Nepal for the first time in 1965, where he carried out fieldwork among the Northern Magar for seven years. During his research, he shot the nearly four-hour documentary *Shamans of the Blind Country* (1980). He is the author of numerous studies, including the two volumes *Morphologie der Schamanentrommel* (2013)

Diana Riboli is a social anthropologist and Assistant Professor at Panteio University in Athens, Greece. She has been carrying out ethnographic research among the Chepang of Central and Southern Nepal and she is currently directing a research project among the Semang-Negrito of Peninsular Malaysia. She is the author and co-author of books and of numerous articles and essays on shamanism, indigenous concepts of health and illness, altered states of consciousness, conflict and violence and strategies for survival of indigenous cultures. Since 2011 she has been vice-president of the International Society for Shamanistic Research (ISSR).

Andrew J. Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart (Strathern) are a husband and wife research team in the Department of Anthropology, University of Pittsburgh, and were the 2012 DeCarle Distinguished Lecturers at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. They are also Research Associates in the Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies, University of Aberdeen, Scotland, and have been Visiting Research Fellows at the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan during parts of every year from 2002–2013. Their long-term, diverse, and creative research work has been published in over 40 books and over 200 influential articles on their research throughout the Pacific, Asia (mainly Taiwan), and Europe (primarily Scotland and Ireland, also on the European Union). Their most recent co-authored books include *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors, and Gossip* (2004); and *Self and Group: Kinship in Action* (2011). Their recent co-edited books include *Exchange and Sacrifice* (2008), *Religious and Ritual Change: Cosmologies and Histories* (2009) and *Ritual* (2010). Their current research and writing is on the topics of Political Peace-making and the new arena that they are developing on Global Disaster Anthropology Studies.

Galina Sychenko is an Ethnomusicologist, currently affiliated to the 'M.I. Glinka' State Conservatory of Novosibirsk (Russia). She has done extensive fieldwork in Siberia, Mongolia and Nepal and is the author of numerous articles and essays. Her range of interests includes the oral transmission of the epic in shamanic traditions.

Davide Torri is currently a Post-doc researcher at the Asia-Europe Cluster of Excellence, University of Heidelberg (Germany). He studied Hindi language and Hinduism at the University of Venice. After his dissertation on the Lepchas of Sikkim, he dedicated himself to the anthropology of religion and to the study of shamanism among indigenous communities of India, Nepal and Mongolia. In

particular, he has specialised in the study of Himalayan indigenous and minority groups. He has written several papers on shamanism and forms of syncretism between South Asian indigenous cultures, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. Having done fieldwork in Nepal during the civil war and the following peace process, he developed an interest in conflict dynamics, politics and patterns of change affecting small-scale societies.

Alban Ada von Stockhausen and **Marion Wettstein** are anthropologists, currently affiliated to the University of Vienna, while previously being affiliated to the University of Zurich. From 2007 to 2010 they were members of the four-year research project 'Material Culture, Oral Traditions and Identity among the Naga of Northeast India' funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF/FSN). They are currently carrying out fieldwork in Eastern Nepal among the Rai. With Michael Oppitz and Thomas Kaiser they co-edited the volume *Naga Identities: Changing Local Cultures in Northeast India* (Snoeck 2008) which accompanied a large exhibition about the Naga in the Ethnographic Museum of Zürich University (Naga – Schmuck und Asche: Völkerkundemuseum der Universität Zürich, 07.06.08–06.09.09) for which they have been co-curators.

Neil L. Whitehead, who died in March 2012, was Professor of Anthropology at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. His research topics included violence and the cultural order; shamanism and sorcery; vampires, zombies and the body; cultural landscapes and development; ethnopornography; captives and castaways. Areas of regional specialisation included South America and the Caribbean, particularly Amazonia and the Anglo/francophone Caribbean.

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Introduction

Diana Riboli and Davide Torri

The idea for this book was prompted by the observation that despite the fact that relations between violence and shamanism are irrefutable and extensive there are almost no studies dedicated exclusively to this topic. The project is quite challenging as violence and shamanism are two of the most contested and controversial terms in anthropology. According to Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, violence is 'a slippery concept – nonlinear, productive, destructive, *and* reproductive' (Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, 2004: 1). The same definition could be applied to the fluid and probably inadequate term 'shamanism', which since the publication of the famous and now much criticised book by Eliade (1950), covers a multitude of different religious traditions the world over.

Shamans are soul-hunters, warriors and leaders, they use magical weapons, they battle bravely against evil forces, witches and witchcraft, they can restore social and physical balance and health. However, they can also provoke illnesses and death. Mastromattei pointed out the similarities between shamans and the Homeric figure of Odysseus, highlighting how the heroic characteristics in both cases 'include relations with war, with contest and duels, with particular ferocity …' (Mastromattei, 2008: 190). During seances, shamans manipulate/employ violence in a 'dark' or 'light' way (Strathern/Stewart, *in this volume*), while at times using it in both ways. Even while pursuing a therapeutic purpose, as well as a harmful one, they are called upon to find supernatural allies and fight other-than-human forces and witches. The 'colour' of the result, which echoes the restrictive categories of 'white' and 'black' magic, varies according to the client's request, circumstances, cultural issues and perceptions.

In the last decades little anthropological research mostly carried out in the Amazon, has introduced the topic of violence in shamanic studies. Being particularly relevant to this geographic and cultural area, most studies focus on the analysis of the relations and links between shamanism, aggression and animal transformation (Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1975), warfare and colonialism (Taussig, 1987; Viveiros de Castro, 1992, Fausto, 2010, 2012), though few seminal studies were dedicated to the difficult and even disturbing topic of 'dark' shamanism and ritual assault and murder (Whitehead, 2002; Whitehead and Wright 2004). At present, a kind of imbalance in the field of shamanic studies should be noted, since these aspects are more evident among indigenous peoples of Amazonia. The conventional definition of shamanism describes a multitude of different religious and cultural traditions which share strong common characteristics. Currently, it seems that shamanism of the Amazon has a stronger link with violence, aggression

and conflict in comparison to other shamanistic complexes. One of the aims of this volume is to examine how violence manifests itself in shamanic complexes in a broader geographical area.

Shamanism is not only a ritual, but also a political response (Thomas and Humphrey, 1996) to internal and external violence as well as individual, collective and social suffering (Kleinman, Das and Lock, 1997). Shamanic practices and rituals mark the triumph of what Whitehead, who observes that violence as a cultural expression and performance has still not been extensively explored in anthropology, powerfully describes as 'the poetic of violence' (Whitehead, 2004).

It should be noted that in many parts of the world and in different geographical, political and religious contexts, shamans have been and in some case still are, not only 'agents' but also 'victims' of violence (Knecht; Oppitz, *in this volume*).

Because of their charismatic power and as they play the role of political and religious leaders in many indigenous groups, shamans have often been perceived as evil, dangerous and even potentially revolutionary figures by colonialists and dominant groups and cultures in the course of history.

Since the onset of the problematic encounter between European and non-European civilisations, the latter have been labelled as primitive, wild, cruel and barbarian. In an effort to impose the supremacy of their identity and cultures against the 'savage' customs of other populations, Westerners found one of their best targets in shamans and shamanic practices. The first missionaries and scholars, travelling in South America and Siberia described shamans as aberrant and anomalous beings, worshippers of the devil and evil destructive forces (Fernandez de Oviedo, 1535; Avaakum Petrovich, 1672). In 1751, after 10 years in Siberia and after attending a seance performed by a Tungus shaman, the German professor of chemistry Johann Georg Gmelin wrote that he wished he could 'take him and his companions to the Urgurian silver mine so that they might spend the rest of their days in perpetual labor' (in Narby, 2001: 28). Gmelin's wishes were fulfilled, as shamanism in Siberia was brutally repressed by the Soviet authorities and shamans were condemned to hard labour or simply sentenced to death.

Shamanic practices and altered or alternated states of consciousness experienced by religious specialists in many parts of the world, probably represented – and in part still represent – one of the most fascinating but also frightening manifestations of Otherness. In different historical periods Western perceptions and emotive reactions have alternated, given that they were formed or guided by economic, political, religious, ethical or spiritual circumstances and needs. Responses toward these complexes varied, ranging from fear and disgust to charm and attraction. Shamans were portrayed as worshippers of the devil, possessed by demons, impostors, charlatans, affected by hysteria or other psychiatric disorders, but also – to mention only more recent New Age tendencies – as superior and idealised beings in total harmony with nature and the universe. The largest range of adjectives and definitions ever used to describe the negative or positive characteristics of human beings have probably been attributed to shamans.

The efforts of colonial powers and dominant cultures to take, possess and exploit territories belonging to indigenous groups in order to obtain full control of the land and natural resources, with little or no consideration for the catastrophic effects on nature, peoples and environment, was and still is in their eyes justified. This view is based upon a sort of Hobbesian conviction that human beings live in a state of *bellum omnium contra omnes* ('war of all against all'). This existential state encompasses all humans living in a 'state of nature', which of course also includes a strong link with the supernatural realm, unable to deal with civilised ethical principles.

Where shamans were or still are hindered or persecuted (Balzer; Riboli *in this volume*) what the dominant group sought was/is first of all to disrupt the relationship between the group and their ancestral land and beliefs. Because of their links with natural and supernatural realms, shamans are particularly disturbing presences who should be eliminated or assimilated into a 'civilised' way of life. In these situations, the discourse of power (Foucault, 1969) promulgating modernity and civilisation declares war on 'backward' and dangerous elements.

The spiritual quest in the Western world and in industrial societies in general, on the contrary, have given birth to movements such as Neo-shamanism and New Age, which pretend to be inspired and even practise – among other things – a very idealised 'shamanism', totally purged of its fundamental belligerent, warlike and conflictual aspects. The 'eclectic spiritualism' (Beck Kehoe, 2000: p. 85) of these movements uses and enacts an image of shamanism that is totally opposite but equally fake and distorted as the one mentioned earlier which is promulgated by dominant groups and cultures.

The attempt to change, assimilate, or eliminate Otherness and diversity either in the name of countering backwardness and superstition or by idealising the 'noble savage', still finds its expression in a very resilient debate on 'hard' or 'soft' primitivism, both equally unfair and – in this sense – violent toward native cultures.

In the contemporary world, ambiguous perceptions about shamanic practices and the ease with which antagonist groups and ideologies can accuse shamans of being involved in violent and criminal activities remain evident. In 2011 14 *curanderos* –all of them from the Shawi ethnic group- were brutally murdered in Peru after the evangelical Christian mayor had accused them of being witches, and responsible for the increase of child mortality in the Balsapuerto area. Even in the USA, cases of traditional healers and shamans accused of causing physical injuries or death during healing ceremonies and exorcisms (Kendall, *in this volume*) have been reported. This seems quite incredible if not impossible to anyone who has witnessed a therapeutic shamanic session, regardless of the ethnic origin of the celebrant.

If, as argued by Arteaga, the violent act and event are always also a 'bodily occurrence' (Arteaga, 2003), violence passes shamans bodies much more than patients ones during a ceremony. In his study about possession amongst the Shongay of Niger, Stoller wrote that 'it is by lending her body to the world that the spirit medium renders meaningful a harsh Sahelien world with dissension, drought, famine and death' (1989: 210) while in his work on Hauka-Shongay spirits that mimic colonial characters – he argues that 'spirit possession is a site

of mimetic production and reproduction, which make it a stage for the production and reproduction of power' (1995: 37).

Complex networks of power and violence – where both these factors act as means and aims – are represented during shamanic performances, and find their embodied manifestation in the polysemantic meaning of communication with other worlds and altered states of consciousness. The shaman's body has powerful political dimensions (Bacigalupo, 2003), which are much more powerful than one might expect. On a macro level, despite the many attacks and pressures of a different nature shamans and shamanic cultures have suffered in many parts of the world, shamanism has survived the harshest of repressions. In Siberia, as in other parts of the world, shamanism is experiencing an unprecedented revitalisation (Balzer 2011; *in this volume*) contributing to and supporting the affirmation of ethnic identities.

On a micro level, despite the difficult and dangerous task of fighting and dealing with spirits, ghosts, divinities, witches and other beings, shamans all over the world, after the call to the profession bravely continue to perform ceremonies, even when they feel that their own lives could be in danger. In fact, they are called not only to continue, but even to intensify their activities in particularly adverse conditions, such as epidemics, natural catastrophes, and political and social turmoil.

It should be clear at this point how much the history, existence, repression, revitalisation, modalities and functions of shamanism are deeply and intricately intertwined with the culturally bound and elusive concept of violence.

Nordstrom and Robben describe violence as a 'socially and culturally constructed manifestation of a deconstitutive dimension of human existence. Thus there is no fixed form of violence. Its manifestation is as flexible and transformative as the people and cultures who materialise it, employ it, suffer it, and defy it' (1995: p. 6).

To attempt to put some order into the complex relations between shamanism and violence, we should probably start by abandoning the use of these terms in the singular form. There are many different 'shamanisms' in the world, as well as many different kinds of 'violences' which shamans -according to the case at hand- manipulate, use or must deal with. The chapters in this book examine the different kinds of 'violences' described in many well-known anthropological works, but not so frequently applied to shamanic complexes. Amongst them, internal and external violence (Schmidt and Schröder, 2001: 14; Halbmayer, 2001), visible and invisible (Copet-Rougier, 1986: 50), symbolic and practical (Bourdieu, 1977: 191; Riches, 1986: 11; Aijmer, 2000).

Shamans must deal with antagonism, conflict, attacks, repression and violence which can occur inside the social group and/or outside it. The same antagonists, different form of violence and conflicts – as well as the shamans' responses – can be visible and/or invisible, and achieve a practical and/or symbolic form. Here we probably encounter one of the major problems in shamanic studies. Contrasting concepts such as 'internal' and 'external', 'visible' and 'invisible', 'practical' and 'symbolic' are not always perceived as opposite notions in shamanic complexes.

Religious specialists generally have different perceptions about, for example, the visible and the invisible spheres compared to the rest of their social group. Intermediaries between the other-than-human and the human world, shamans have direct contact with both of them. They experience both dimensions through a process of awareness and embodiment (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). Though normal people can see the visible effects of a spirit attack by way of a state of sickness or some kind of misfortune, which afflicts an individual and his/her group, shamans are able to see and communicate with the 'invisible' cause of the condition. In fact, in this case, the spirit or ghost is not only 'real' (the belief about the reality of this being is, in any case, shared between most of the members of the group) but even tangible and absolutely 'visible' to the shaman's eyes and senses. Shamanic costumes, paraphernalia, musical instruments and ritual gestures described during the last centuries – ranging firstly from travellers and missionaries and later on by scholars working in different parts of the globe – to observers and anthropologists in particular, seem to have a strong symbolic meaning, while for the shamans they serve a very 'practical' purpose. Moreover, most of them have a belligerent and warlike character: they defend the shaman and the group, while attacking and suppressing threats and evil forces.

In his examination of the functions of the shamanic drums in the Amur region (Siberia), Ivanov wrote that their sound is used as means of instilling fear and to frighten off evil spirits; they are the shamans' mount (reindeer, horse or bird) and they can be the bow shamans use in their battles against hostile beings (1977). The Nepali Chepang's shamanic drum (*ring*) is recognised as having its own individuality and is described as a hunter whose clothes are represented by the membrane, the belt by the wooden frame and the weapons by iron pendants of different shapes hung on the back of the instrument (Riboli, 2000: 107). The Mongol Daur shaman's bronze mirror '… could purify water; flash and frighten away spirits; 'press down' (*dara-*) on and gather up in itself spirit manifestations (diseases and suffering); contain a soul or replace a soul; act as symbolic wall or armour against spirits …' (Humprey, 1996: 224).

During a shamanic session the unbearable suffering generated by violent internal or external, human or non-human attacks finds an explanation, a way to react and a solution in the shaman's dramatic performance. As in a warlike state, what really matters is the strategies of defence and attack. The process of embodiment corresponds to a process of empowerment. The response to violence from which sickness, misfortune, hunger and death generate, requires not only the skills and the knowledge related to defence, but also the ability to counteract and enact violent acts following the tactic of attack and counterattack. In this sense shamanism means resistance and this can – in part – explain the revival of shamanic practices in many native cultures of the world.

On a global level, given the many threats and conflicts (environmental, cultural, political, social, economic, religious) which have undermined and continue to undermine the life and well-being of native groups all over the world, the study

of the strategies of resistance and of meanings, perceptions and manifestations of violence in indigenous culture appears to be particularly urgent.

Chapters' Overview

The chapters in this book highlight several violence-related topics. The result is a complex and multidimensional mosaic map, which will serve the goal of detailing and exploring the role, purpose and phenomenology of violence and its relation to shamanism across a wide range of different contexts.

In the opening chapter, Strathern and Stewart define shamanism through its ambiguity and liminality: the ambivalence of the role of the threshold keeper and trespasser based on the blurring of boundaries. As a socio-political force, shamanism is not only fluid, but also a double-hedged sword: 'Their powers can be exerted in beneficial or harmful ways, and what harms one set of people may benefit others.' What may be defined as dark shamanism, in contrast to the benign light version, is thus intrinsically relational and relative.

Through a carefully selected series of case studies and examples from Africa, New Guinea, Taiwan, South East Asia, and South America, Strathern and Stewart show that harming and healing powers are just the two sides of the same coin, and this is particularly evident where shamans engage in psychic warfare against witches and sorcerers sent by enemy groups. To counteract similar magic raids the shaman has to expel, banish or transfer negative energies back to where they come from in a cycle of evil influences continuously exchanged between groups. Through this glass, darkly, one group's shaman will be a witch to its neighbours. This 'assault sorcery' (Whitehead, 2002; Whitehead and Wright, 2004) stems from socio-political and historical factors and is entrenched and expressed through complex cosmologies and worldviews ranging from the Amazon basin to Papua New Guinea (Stewart and Strathern, 1999, 2004).

As Oppitz argues in the next chapter, for the shaman religion is war. Shamans' paraphernalia not only include weapons and armour: the whole ritual apparatus is conceived as a fight, ending only when the evil influences are destroyed, killed or banished from this world after being lured into a simulacrum or a sacrificial substitute of the patient.

With a careful analysis of the role of religious specialists belonging to the Himalayan indigenous groups (Magar, Tamang and Sherpa) and the Sino-Tibetan (Naxi, Qiang), Oppitz effectively unmasks their warlike nature, portraying shamans as spiritual warriors trained to fight a host of enemies. Despite often being described as a peaceful effort to restore balance, equilibrium and harmony between human and other-than-human spheres, shamanism is, as Oppitz clearly states, mostly a matter of fighting against the overwhelming forces menacing to community. The same kind of pattern was recognised as a core element of several forms of predatory shamanism (Fausto, 2004). It should be noted here that the human community at the centre of such predatory activity is the same community

which can perform predatory acts on other-than-human entities: in a relational system, roles are continuously negotiated and perspectives are constantly shifting (Viveiros de Castro, 1992).

While describing a pattern of violence intrinsic to shamanism, Oppitz also briefly acknowledges another domain: that of extrinsic violence, such as that inflicted on shamanic societies by powerful neighbours or hegemonic societies and cultures. For example in Scandinavia, where the Saami people have been persecuted by Christian missionaries since the eighteenth century, or in Siberia, where the colonising efforts of the Russian Empire, combined with the repressive forces of the Orthodox Church, dealt a heavy blow to indigenous beliefs and practices. The persecution of shamanism was also one of the key-feature of modernisation campaigns launched by Soviet Russia in Siberia, combined with the sheer violence unleashed by the Stalinist purges.

Siberia, the *locus classicus* of the discourse about shamanism, constitutes the geographical area at the core of Balzer's contribution. Building on 25 years of fieldwork, Balzer analyses patterns of repression and resistance during the Soviet Era, at the same time addressing the post-Soviet revitalisation and revival movements in far-eastern Siberian societies. The social dimensions of shamanism, the shaman as an intercessor not only with the spirit world, but also with the state is examined. Healing powers and the fear of sorcery, both associated with the figure of the shaman, clearly have political overtones: even when marginal or marginalised, shamans hold a central position in battles fought over culture (Taussig, 1987)

The dialectic process between extrinsic and intrinsic patterns of violence is the subject of Knecht's chapter on Mongolian shamans in China during the twentieth century. Extrinsic and intrinsic violence sometimes meet in the body of the shaman as reported by Knecht in a biographical story collected during his fieldwork. In the aftermath and as a result of the Cultural Revolution, a Barga shaman was the victim of twofold violence. His election to the position, in the usual form of a 'shamanic illness' could not be answered immediately because, due to political circumstances, there were almost no shamans left to guide the novice through the initiation stage. This failure to recognise or acknowledge what was going on, prompted the spirits to inflict illness upon him.

Knecht then proceeds to analyse the political situation of shamanism in Inner Mongolia, highlighting the official (state) discourse on superstition and backwardness and the reality of a religious practice still monitored (like many others) by state mechanisms. To this socio-political layer of extrinsic violence, Knecht adds the intrinsic one: the shaman as a perpetrator or agent of violence, namely during rituals, especially those involving the killing of an animal.

Several dimensions of shamanic violence are explored by Kister, with special reference to Chinese minorities (namely the Oroqen, the Naxi and the Yi) and Korean shamanism. Physical, psychological, cultural, social and/or supernatural violence is battled by shamans who resort to pragmatic and constructive violence, which is highly symbolic, cathartic and creative. Rituals, according to Kister, serve a social function: to transmute violence into a source of aesthetically appealing

ritual play that can stabilise society, enabling a shift of meaning and channelling destructive social violence into a highly codified framework of ritual activity.

Social harmony is, after all, one of the main concerns both for the shamans belonging to minorities and for the mainstream Chinese and Korean cultures, influenced as they are by Confucian values.

But shamanism obviously has a dark side too, as clearly stated in the opening lines of the volume: this is confirmed in Sytchenko's contribution to the volume. Through a careful examination of a shamanic chant recorded during a ritual in Khakhassiya (Russian Federation), Sytchenko offers us a glimpse of textual violence at its apex: a curse aimed at inflicting harm upon a rival. Amid ritual offerings of liquor and incense, the shamaness addresses her auxiliary spirits and asks them to fulfil a vengeful purpose on behalf of her patient. We are on that slippery ground often termed 'black' shamanism. According to Sytchenko, that distinction has nothing to do with ethical opposition between 'good' or 'bad' practices, but is defined exclusively by the shaman's power and abilities.

The role and modalities of violent behaviour that so often appear to characterise shamanic practices were obviously used by those denouncing it as evidence of a backward past, a mere superstition, and by those wishing to eradicate it. Quite often they were simply misunderstood, as in the case reported by Kendall.

Over the past few years, several newspapers in the United States have reported that on certain occasions, exorcism rituals performed by Korean shamans (*mudang*) in diasporic communities in the US have ended with the violent death of the patient, due to physical abuse. Referring to her knowledge of Korean shamanism, and having witnessed several *kut* (shamanic ritual), Kendall argues that those reports were mainly the fruit of prejudice and misunderstanding. The unfortunate events, she argues, were mostly the result of exorcism performed not by the shamans, but by South Korean adherents of Pentecostal Christianity.

Exorcism, as practised in the context of the *kut* and as performed by Evangelicals, is similar in name only. According to several accounts, despite the display of weapons and martial attires, shamanic exorcism rarely applies coercive force to the patient's body. Apparently, this indicates an overlapping of different layers of meaning, uniting popular theories about possession and exorcism expressed by mainstream media and shamanic ritual practices of Korean immigrants to the US in a defamatory discourse. The problem is one of mistranslation, Kendall argues, a mistranslation leading to misunderstanding and misrepresentation limited not only to non-Koreans. A cultural rift originating in the biased translation performed by Christian missionaries which grouped all Korean gods and goddesses, ghosts, ancestors and spirits together and assimilating them into the demons and devils of Christianity.

When dealing with interactions between religious phenomena, patterns of inclusion or exclusion are common and not mutually exclusive. But these are clearly a source of tension. This is the topic of von Stockhausen and Wettstein's research among the Rai of Nepal.

The religious landscape of this Nepalese *adivasi* group is the battle ground of diverse spiritual approaches, obviously overlapping and interfering with each

other on a social level: shamanism, Christianity, new Kirat religious phenomena like the Om Nanda or the Phalgunanda movements are opposing ideologies pitched against each other in a battle where the weapons are identified as the powers of healing, money and alcohol. These internal conflicts produce mirror images of social tensions in the domain of the production of folklore, mythology and individual accounts.

The domain of a discourse of violence is in fact encapsulated in various narratives, ranging from creation myths or stories to detailed biographic tales regarding initiation. This is the topic analysed by Torri, with references to the cultures of several Himalayan groups.

Structural violence appears to reside in the innermost core of shamanic cultures as testified by stories about the creation of the universe, the apparition of death and the birth of the first shaman. A striking feature of these narratives is the fact that the application of violence is often exchanged between entities closely related to each other within kinship systems which extend well beyond the boundaries of human communities. The presence of hidden levels of violence also characterises a well-known set of stories dealing with confrontation between Buddhist lamas and shamans, where the topic of the spread of Buddhism among the societies of the Himalayan valleys is often employed to explain the contemporary presence of multiple religious specialists, with the shamans often in a counter-hegemonic subaltern position. Curiously enough, even in these sets of stories we find a consistent element of consanguinity among the fighting parties.

Violence is often considered legitimate when it is directed outside, towards the Other. But what happens when there are no Others?

In her chapter, Riboli explores the culture and the shamanic practices of the Semang-Negrito, whose egalitarian social structure is characterised by the absence of any central political power. Amongst these groups, the sense of belonging and kinship itself is extended to the community of life with which they share the environment, without any hierarchical order between human beings, animals and plants. Inside the rain forest, apparently, there is no space for Otherness, everything being inter-related and connected to the whole. Where to find the Other in such a context?

The main dispenser and receptacle of violence in this case appears to be the Muslim Malay dominant culture as the paramount Other. Further levels of Otherness are found in aggressive political actors locally and globally, from the memories of the invasion of the Japanese Army during WWII, to the exploits of the US Army in more recent years, including negative experiences as immigrant workers in the Gulf countries or elsewhere. In contrast to this, the rainforest appears to be a safe haven, where there are no evil other-than-human persons (Harvey, 2003). Nonetheless, recently, Otherness is making its way into the forest in various and unpredicted ways: the *gob* (strangers) seem to have multiplied, not only in terms of governing officers and logging companies, but also criminals, tourists, smugglers and the like walking into Semang-Negrito lands, forcing

the communities and their shamans to rethink the ways in which they confront violence and how to react to it.

The contributions end with the abstract which Whitehead had sent to the editors before his sudden death. In his chapter he would have analysed violence as one of the means for the Sacred Empowerment of global power in a modern world which follows a violent and cannibalistic logic. A cannibal war-machine which is becoming a form of state shamanism.

Dark and Light Shamanisms: Themes of Conflict, Ambivalence and Healing

Andrew J. Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart (Strathern)

Introduction: Shamans as Holistic Figures of Power

Shamans, and many other categories of healers and ritual experts in dealing with forces of the cosmos, occupy an intrinsically ambiguous, or potentially liminal, position, poised between worlds of experience as boundary crossers, explorers, and foragers at the edges of influence over human fortunes and misfortunes. This liminality explains the ambivalence with which shamans have sometimes been regarded, whether by outsiders or by members of their own community. Their powers can be exerted in beneficial or harmful ways, and what harms one set of people may benefit others. They also represent, therefore, a fluid force in political contexts. What is it that determines the pathways they follow? Why is it that they can be symbolized as either destroyers of life or renewers of it? Our argument in this paper is that it is the political, historical, and ideological context that is catalytic to the major image that is attributed to shamans, giving rise to the 'light' or 'dark' aspects of that image. Choosing examples from Africa, New Guinea, Taiwan, South East Asia, and South America, we probe the complexities of the affective and moral conceptualizations and evaluations that emerge out of the holistic assemblage of powers that may be credited to shamanic figures, as also to the figures that appear in accounts as sorcerers or witches. The shaman is a transcendent figure, emerging from a broad background of magico-religious ideas because of his or her powers to travel to the spirit worlds and to be an instrument of revelation and transformation as a result of this hodological ability.

At a broader comparative level, the world-wide infusion of neo- shamanistic procedures into therapies practiced as alternatives to biomedicine indicates the need for healing ideas that grow out of, and in reaction to, the relatively impersonal ways of processing patients in biomedical institutions. Alternative healing is the 'light' side of shamanism. In all instances the evaluations people make depend on changes in the political landscape of the day.

What, then, is a shaman? Like so many words that are part of the technical repertoire of terms in anthropology, there is no simple ostensive or referential definition here. But, as philosophers of language and embodiment theory have been at pains to point out to us (e.g. Johnson, 2007), meanings in general are complex and infused with metaphor. We propose here that 'shaman' is an emotive term,

standing in contrast to biomedical modalities of practice, and encompassing holistic sets of values and predispositions, just as in anthropology generally the concept of 'the gift' has been put forward as a holistic term in contrast with capitalist modes of production (ever since Mauss, 1954; see also Stewart and Strathern, 2008 with refs.). As with 'gift', also, the idea of a form of ritual practitioner diametrically opposed to concepts of biomedicine is in practice misleading. Gifts may slide easily into commodities, and shamans can coexist with doctors or even take on their attributes. Shamans can be either 'archaic' or 'modern', or both (see, e.g., Kendall, 2009b). Thus we find that primordiality and modernity are found together and interpenetrate each other, just as witchcraft and sorcery have increasingly been recognised to do (e.g. Meyer and Pels, 2003; Moore and Sanders, 2001; Stewart and Strathern, 2004, with refs.)

   A striking exposition of the holistic character of the shamanic image is found in Ana Mariella Bacigalupo's portrait of Mapuche shamans in southern Chile. Bacigalupo depicts what she calls 'the struggle for wholeness' as central to the activities of *machi*, the Mapuche shamans, noting how, in classic fashion, the Mapuche 'link individual and social order with cosmological order' (Bacigalupo, 2005: 53), and regard illness as a product of the disruption of order. *Machi* shamans, Bacigalupo argues, mimetically adopt gender (female/male) and generational (old/ young) categories, as these are conceptualised in a deity who combines all four of these categories, with an attempt to energise cosmic powers that can transform 'illness into health, disorder into order, and scarcity into abundance' (ibid., p. 53). She relates this effort to Mapuche myths of origin (ibid., p. 54), and narrates how *machi* 'draw on the power of the four elements: earth, water, air, and fire' (ibid., p. 55). Interestingly, in terms of our theme of what we may call 'primordial modernity', Bacigalupo also points out that Mapuche notions of spirit power have been shaped through their subordination to the Chilean state and their eclectic melding together of divine figures derived from colonial power, Christianity and ancestral figures. Also, Mapuche rituals bring these powers together in dance sequences, and the shamans have created new ritual roles to compensate for the loss of others, supplementing their traditional roles as healers (ibid., p. 61). The *machi* take it on themselves to manifest the power of cosmic wholeness in a fragmented social world (ibid., p. 66).

   Mapuche shamans are thus presented to us as healers and bricoleurs and mediators of historical change and the marginalisation of people; a picture similar to that which we will later outline for shamanic figures among some of the Austronesian indigenous peoples of Taiwan. Bacigalupo's ethnography also enables us to identify another vital feature of shamans as healers: that is, empathy. By virtue of assuming different age and gender identities within their own ritual persona, shamans among the Mapuche can achieve empathy with all kinds of patients. More than this, however, they can themselves call upon powers beyond those of their physical bodies so as to 'transcend gender and the boundaries of the ordinary world, embody wholeness and become divine' (ibid., p. 65).

'Become divine': that is a very strong statement. In all cases, however, some kind of cosmic travelling power is attributed to shamans. Mapuche shamans ride on spirit horses to contact the cosmic powers (ibid., p. 63). They may also have an entourage of ritual helpers and be in converse with a range of spirits, which help them to carry out divination rituals and to determine how to heal persons of afflicting illnesses. In other words, they have multiple channels of communication with the spirit world. They may also go into trance, and spirits may come to them while they are trancing. Their spirit aspect can travel; and spirits can travel to them. Either way, they are mediators with the spirits' world. Perhaps we should say they are especially dramatic and empowered mediators, because all or most ritual experts, whether we call them shamans or not, have mediating capacities of this sort.

In one our field areas, Mount Hagen, Papua New Guinea, the *mön wuö*, a ritual expert, healer and intercessor with spirit categories, acted as a conduit or channel for interaction with spirits. *Mön wuö*, however, did not especially employ dreams, spirit travel, or forms of trancing, as their means of communication with spirits, although they could become possessed by the spirit of an important leader who had recently died and wished to reveal if he had been killed by hostile sorcery. The spells for dealing with sickness which they spoke softly over patients clearly appealed to a cosmic world and displayed intimate knowledge of the sacred landscape, as well as a power of enjoining spirits to move around inside that landscape (see, for example, Strathern and Stewart 2010: 62, where a *mön wuö* directs a 'small spirit' – *kor kil köi* – to go back to the river junction where it has come from and stop causing sickness to a patient.) These pieces of information indicate a certain degree of overlap between the *mön wuö* and the figure of the shaman, simply because they both deal with the spirit world in a privileged way. The shaman, as we have said, is a ritual expert writ large, one whose actions of dealing with spirits elevate him or her to something like a spirit figure, a boundary crosser between spirits and humans.

The Ambivalence of Shamanic Figures: Two Examples

This characteristic also goes some way to explaining why shamans, and other ritual experts, are sometimes regarded with ambivalence. Since they have access to power, and may become its vessel or its incarnation, all depends on how they use it (a shamanic equivalent of the 'power corrupts' adage). For examples here we go to two classic cases, one from Africa, the other from Papua New Guinea. Each case deals with shamanic powers exercised ambivalently or at boundaries. Paul Bohannan gave an ethnographic account of the categories of *tar* and *tsav* among the Tiv people of Northern Nigeria (Bohannan, 1989 [1957]). *Tar* is a term for a territory occupied by an agnatic lineage segment. It connotes community and peaceful relations. War is said to 'spoil the *tar*' (ibid., p. 2). Elders are spoken of as peacefully running the affairs of a *tar*. However, Tiv elders are also said to be *mbatsav*, mystical protectors of the *tar* community, but also in a sense 'witches'

(ibid.). *Tar* can also mean magical instruments, called owl's pipes or father's head, used in 'repairing the *tar*', that is, renewing its well-being or strength by sacrificing something, perhaps 'the life and blood of a person' (ibid., p. 3). Bohannan comments that the *mbatsav* elders/witches 'need human lives to carry out their work of repairing tar, which involves the prosperity of the group' (ibid., p. 3). The elders were also involved in dealing with multiple dispute issues in informal moots or *jir* where they exercised their leadership powers in public contexts. Far into his book, Bohannan notes that, according to Tiv ideas, leadership or any special talent is a product of 'a substance called *tsav* which grows on the heart of some men' (ibid., p. 162). But this same *tsav* is said to be the power by which leaders choose someone as a victim from their own lineage, kill him, bury him and then bring him to life again in order to sacrifice his body and so 'repair the *tar*'. Bohannan reports that Tiv say that the *mbatsav* may begin to use their talents 'to kill for personal gain and for the sheer love of the taste of human flesh' (ibid., p. 163). There can be revolts against elders because of this idea. In peaceful periods the *mbatsav* are said to feed on people's raw livers, causing miscarriages in women (ibid., p. 24). 'They are thus', he writes, 'the object of ambivalent feelings, of recognition of their good deeds and dread of their murderous powers' (ibid.). Bohannan concludes: 'Tiv see all leaders in two lights: as their protectors and as their eventual vanquishers' (ibid., p. 163).

Tiv *mbatsav* were not exactly shamans, it seems. They did not heal sick persons; but they 'healed' the whole *tar*. Yet their healing had its destructive side.

The Baruya people of the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea, studied by a team of researchers working with Maurice Godlier, had healers called *koulaka* whose roles were more obviously similar to the shamanic complex of features. Male and female *koulaka* were supposed to protect Baruya against sickness and death. Male shamans were also said 'to wage a magical war against sorcery, against neighbouring enemy tribes' (Godelier 2009 [1982],: 21). Shamans used to communicate with the spirit world by smoking green tobacco cigars (ibid.), entering into trance which allowed them to see the causes of a sickness. They were also said to send out their spirits at night in dreams, and to transfer hostile objects removed from a patient's body 'in the direction of enemy territory' (ibid.). Shamans declared that 'each night their spirits assembled on the boundaries of Baruya territory, to prevent the spirits of sleeping Baruya from crossing these boundaries and losing themselves [i.e. dying] in enemy territories' (ibid., p. 22). Male shamans also made sorcery to weaken the great warriors in enemy groups or to cause landslides in their territories (ibid.). Protectors and night vigilantes they were, then. Godelier also notes, however, that a shaman's spirit was thought to protect the community from evil (or hostility from outside); but they could also destroy an individual member for 'the good of the whole' (a typical reason given for the putative necessity for sacrificial suffering in varying social scales).

Classic Dark Shamans and Parallel Phenomena

Extreme cases of dark shamans are found in the ethnographic literature of Amazonia. Neil Whitehead and Robin Wright note that their usage of the term 'dark shamans' is drawn from Johannes Wilbert's work on the Warao people and their cosmological practices (Whitehead and Wright, 2004: 4, see also Whitehead, 2002); and they encompass within this term reference to practices of assault sorcery. They stress, also, the wider political and historical contexts of violence into which such ideas are set, as we ourselves did in an earlier publication, and on which they draw to indicate parallels between Amazonia and New Guinea (e.g., Stewart and Strathern, 1999, 2004).

Wilbert's ethnography makes very clear the importance of studying shamanic practices within encompassing cosmological schemes. The Warao people of Venezuela distinguish priest shamans, light shamans, weather shamans and dark shamans. Priest shamans go into trance, medicated by tobacco consumption, and enter into spirit journeys that lead past monsters to an ancestral mountain top where they will eventually reside after their death. In life they intercede with ancestors and punish those who threaten the ties with these ancestors by injecting (blowing) pains into their bodies (Wilbert, 2004: 24). According to a myth of origin, the founding priest-shaman was given 'one of the god's own sons in the form of a rock crystal' after providing a sacrifice of 10 persons (ibid., p. 24). Note here parallels with the Tiv.

Light shamans are *bahanarao*, and a complex origin myth links them to a powerful cosmic Tobacco Spirit. They keep arrow-like projectiles in themselves and can launch these at enemies (ibid., p. 28). They treat sick patients and take payments from them or else keep them in a position of servants (ibid.). They are masters of wooden figurines, and use these in their role of assault sorcerers. The figurine in fact is a weapon used to kill others when it is launched roaring through the air to attack victims of an enemy group. It is clear, then, that Warao light shamans are not simply healers; they are master assault sorcerers. Within their own group, however, they are healers, using oral suction to extract objects projected into their patients' bodies. Their helping spirits travel through their hands to do this (ibid., p. 28). Their spiritual home is the east, the origin place of light itself, the sunrise.

Dark shamans belong to the west, the setting sun, ruled over by an ancient spirit, called Hoebo (ibid., p. 33). Hoebo's manifestation is the red macaw, and macaw spirits are imaged as drinking human blood and feasting on the flesh of humans (ibid., p.33). Indeed, the predominant image of these cosmic feasters seems clearly derived from predatory hunting activities projected on a cosmic scale. Further, a classic type of myth depicting rivalry between spirits for an attractive Warao girl and the murder of one of these spirits (Hoebo) by another (Abahera) is said to have precipitated a cosmic collapse in the transport of blood via a huge pipe between the earth and the netherworld (ibid., p. 35), and the creation of the power of dark shamans, a pneumatic force called *hoa*, from the shattered fragments of the former predatory cosmos. Still, dark shamans are said to go to the place of

Miana in the west, for initiation into their powers (ibid., p. 36), and there to receive *Hoebo* spirits into their bodies (ibid., p. 36). Dark shamans are seen as akin to vampires and blood-sucking insects (ibid., p. 37). They stalk victims in order to kill them as sacrifices to the spirits of the underworld. Junior dark shamans, however, are said to practise as healers, while veterans are strong enough to carry out assault sorcery. As healers the dark shamans use tobacco smoke, sing *hoa* songs, and identify hostile *hoa* spirits that are attacking the bodies of patients, then snaring and extracting them (ibid., p. 42). It is sufficient to note here how close the parallels are with the work of Papua New Guinea shamanic healers and of the Baruya shamans discussed by Godelier who were said to patrol borders and fight against marauding forces: shamans as prime agents of protection against 'the others'. The Warao idea of *hoa* spirits is also closely similar to the idea of the *ombô* spirits vividly portrayed and analysed by Pierre Lemonnier on the Ankave people, Anga speakers related to the Baruya (Lemonnier, 2005), or the Hagen *kum* spirits (Stewart and Strathern, 2004) – detached particles of greed-energy or desire that seek to penetrate bodies and consume their life-force. The shaman as healer extracts these particles of desire, but he does so by mobilising his own *hoa* force. Complex histories of introduced diseases and epidemic deaths have reinforced senses of boundaries between groups, and dark shamans are also sometimes accused of turning their powers against their own people (ibid., p. 48). Throughout Wilbert's exposition, it is clear that ambivalence predominates. The dark shaman has a double presence, as healer and killer; whereas Warao light shamans, if veterans, employ their assault sorcery only against enemy groups. Dark and light, then, may be nuanced valences rather than outright digital contrasts, and their valences may shift over time. Shamans, light or dark, come to somewhat resemble tricksters or shape-changers, wily operators in a cosmos of the imaginary.

Healing Powers among the Temiar

If we shift our attention now away from the forests of Amazonia and to the Temiar of Malaysia, a people whose life is equally encompassed by a deep jungle environment, with which they have an intimate sense of connection, we will find shamanic practices devoted largely to healing (Roseman, 1991). Marina Roseman's pioneering work on 'dreaming, trancing, and singing' among the Temiar brought to attention two important ethnographic features of the Temiar world: humans and other living beings of the cosmos are all thought to have multiple souls, in the case of humans head and heart souls, and the head souls of humans communicate with those of other entities, especially in dreams. Healing practices of shamans focus on the head soul, which is thought to become detached in trancing and in illness, or by sudden disturbances such as startling, so that people try not to upset others by angry words (Roseman 1991: 24–7). Healers use the true names of the souls of elements such as flowers to communicate with them and recover the lost head souls of humans by means of singing a song text given by the flower or other spirit

entity. The memory of such songs is kept in heart souls, where thoughts are also said to be located (ibid., p. 30), although the power of speech belongs to the head soul. The heart soul also becomes weak and vulnerable in illness (ibid., p. 32). The heart souls of some shamans (Roseman uses the term mediums) are said to be tigers, and the tiger is seen as a spirit guide helping the healer to locate the causes of illness (ibid., p. 34).

The prime instrument of healing (its medicine, as we may call it) is a substance called *kahyek*, said to be a manifestation of the head souls of spirit guides. *Kahyek* is a vital cool liquid, like dew or the waters of hillside streams. *Kahyek* is said to come into leafy ornaments inside houses of persons where illness is treated. It is imaged as a 'watery thread' coming from the forest. Healers draw on this thread, or pipe, pulling it out of the leaves in the house and also, it is said, from the front portion of their own bodies (ibid., p. 30). They then blow the *kahyek* into the souls of their patients, instantiating an image of healing deeply linked with perceived beneficent power in the environment, a model of the ecological re-balancing of substances. It is clear also that a humoral theory of substances in the body is at work: healing is linked to a quintessentially cool liquid substance.

The vulnerability and detachability of bodily boundaries for the Temiar is further instanced by ideas that a person's odour can cause sickness to others and that the shadow-form of a person can travel around and can be viewed by the spirit guides of healers (ibid., p. 41). Payments to shamans are made and the shadow-forms of these payments are said to go to the spirit guides who assist in healing (ibid., p. 43). Healers contact these spirit guides in seances, and orchestrate the payments to them (ibid., p. 45).

Despite all this stress on permeability and interconnections between beings in the world, Roseman also notes that 'Temiar interactions with one another and the cosmos are driven by a dynamic tension that, on one hand, celebrates the potential detachability of self, and on the other, guards the integrity of self' (ibid., p. 47). Socio-centric concerns are expressed by the flow of goods from one person to another, and by the idea that if this flow is halted, the desires of people may be frustrated and they may fall ill as a result (ibid., p. 48). (It is remarkable to note in passing how closely this notion resembles the idea of *popokl* in the cultural practices of the Mount Hagen people of Papua New Guinea, see Strathern and Stewart, 2010). Roseman notes: 'Good exchange, then, is good health' (ibid., p. 48). Excess, however, has to be avoided, either in terms of greed for goods or extravagant giving (ibid., p. 50).

Healers are expert dreamers. They receive songs from their spirit guides, obtained from, e.g., flower souls that aspire to be with the dreamers and to teach them knowledge, sometimes from plants the people themselves had planted (ibid., p. 53), and which emit erotic fragrances (odour) from their blossoms. The hodological or travelling aspect of the healers' work is revealed by the point that the receipt of a dream-song from a spirit guide or familiar needs ideally to result from actual travel through the forest in which spirit souls are encountered, and the healer is a singer of the landscape (ibid., p. 58), which is thus an important

repository of memory and history (cf. Stewart and Strathern, 2003). Roseman refers to the personalisation of the landscape among the Temiar as the emergence of the interactive selves of parts of the environment such as mountains. Another way to express this point is that all these entities are seen as alive and possessing agency and personhood. Dream narratives are seen as accounts of the travels of the dreamer's head soul, and encounters with these environmental 'persons' may take the form of young women who in dreams emerge and invite the dreamers to sing and dance with them (ibid., p. 67). Such spirit guides may also incorporate into themselves aspects of outsiders, Malay or Semai, for example, and use Islamic forms of salutation (ibid., p. 69). It is clear in general that an elaborated aesthetic code of attraction is embedded in narratives of how spirits befriend mediums and teach them the arts of healing. Spirit guides are said to be able to see many things and so can identify what causes an illness. The medium, or shaman, is one who is adept enough to be able to cultivate the relationship with a spirit guide and receive the knowledge of healing. The same characteristic of adept expertise means that the mediums or shamans, mostly male, tend also to be community leaders (ibid., p. 76). Roseman notes that the medium's wife plays an important role in conflict resolution surrounding cases of illness (ibid., p. 77). At the end of her exposition, Roseman returns to a concept of the forest world shared by humans and spirits, writing that 'the language of humans and the language of forest spirits rustle, for a moment, together' (ibid., p. 185).

   If we compare these Temiar materials with those cited earlier for the Warao, two points emerge: first, in both instances the forest environment pervades the people's ideas of the cosmos; and second, the cosmological values that have been worked out are strikingly different. The Venezuelan case described by Wilbert provides a picture of an extraction from humans of life-giving blood that is seen as travelling in a cosmic pipe to feed spirits; whereas for the Temiar an analogously conceptualised cosmic pipe or thread carries *kahyek*, cool healing fluids that restore and reinvigorate life rather than depleting or destroying it. Temiar healers are light shamans, and the spirits that give them power are beneficent.

Comparisons: Elements and Complexes

In this discussion, we have been concerned to concentrate on processes rather than on bounded definitions of terms. For example, in our review of Temiar healing, we have noted that Roseman uses the term 'medium' rather than 'shaman', perhaps because of an ethnographic tradition of referring to 'spirit-mediums' in surrounding parts of South East Asia. We have drawn the term shaman into our account because of the intense relationship Temiar healers have with the spirit world, because of the idea of spirit guides, and because of what we call hodological elements, that is, the importance of the notion of travel through a landscape as a constituent of healing practices. If we free the term shaman from a narrow set of definitional or regional criteria, it becomes easier for us to identify processual similarities

between cases. It is also easier to identify differences, for example whether healers are seen potentially as dangerous sorcerers, or, in details of cosmology such as the contrast between the Warao idea of a cosmic 'blood pipe' and the Temiar idea of the healing 'fluid pipe' of *kahyek*.

A further comparative dimension that is made easier to study is that of historical change. Roseman's work was not focused on change but on function, but she does note how readily outside elements have been incorporated into Temiar practices, and this demonstrates the great flexibility of shamanistic traditions, morphing into all the practices labelled as neo-shamanic. Another theme, however, is that of conflict. Shamans may be seen by Christian missionaries as doing the work of the devil (e.g. Laugrand and Oosten, 2010 on Inuit history). Inuits adapted to this new situation by converting to Christianity, but on their own terms, indigenising the new religion through ideas of spirituality and already existing practices of confession and inter-generational consequences of wrong-doing. Over time also, in a process familiar from elsewhere, there was a gradual re-introduction of old practices including an idea of creating a 'shaman church' (Kral, 2011: 197). An interesting further twist on such an idea can be given by referring to Pieter Craffert's work arguing that Jesus was in effect a shamanic figure in his day through his healing of the sick, and perhaps in terms of his hodological ability to travel between heaven and earth. Craffert discusses both Jesus and Paul as shamanic figures, acquainted with ecstatic forms of experience (Craffert, 2008, 2011). Craffert offers this way of looking at Paul as a different, processual, pathway to understanding the language and categories he deployed in his writings. Perhaps one might go further and speculate whether Paul drew on older traditions in ancient Greek religious experiences of ecstasy (see, for example, Dodds, 2004). Jesus, at any rate, may be interpreted here as a light shaman par excellence, especially since he himself is described as the 'light of the world'.

Shamans as charismatic figures certainly lend themselves to being seen as agents of change or as emblematic of emerging national identities, as Young-ho Kim has argued for shamans and the Korean nation. He instances the predictions of shamans that Korea is about to become the centre of world development or a new *axis mundi* in the terms of Mircea Eliade (Kim, 2002). In a different vein, Laurel Kendall, drawing on her long-term field experience, has explored the agency of Korean shamans in the context of ideas of international finance, the World Bank and globalisation (Kendall, 2009b).

Shamanism as a particular kind of ritual practice can be studied from a number of particular perspectives. In two earlier publications we ourselves have looked at shamanism in terms of embodiment theory and issues of performativity. We have argued, in line with our present discussion, that shamanic practice shows a particular linkage 'of performance, performativity, embodiment, and the cosmos' (Strathern and Stewart, 2008a: 69). We cited in this examination Atkinson's work on Wana shamans in Sulawesi, Indonesia. Wana shamans, like their Temiar counterparts, depend on spirit familiars for their healing work, and shamans' rituals also help to re-establish communal solidarity. We argue that the performativity of their embodied

actions results not just from the social dramas that they enact for their audiences but from their special knowledge of the Wana cosmos (the same argument would apply for the Temiar) (Strathern and Stewart, 2008a: 69). In this same paper we also cited the well-known case of the Maring people of Highlands Papua New Guinea. Maring shamans were ritual experts who were primarily important in switching group activities between war and peace through their contacts with the red spirits of the high mountains, mediated by their ecstatic communications with a female deity known as the Kun Kaze Ambra, precipitated through inhaling copious quantities of tobacco smoke. The Kun Kaze Ambra is thought to enter into and possess the shamans and to facilitate communication with the red spirits, who are the spirits of ancestors of the group, killed in warfare. It is the deity that travels to the shaman, then, although the shaman is deeply connected to the cosmological landscape into which Maring politics are traditionally set. The Maring shaman is, or traditionally was, at the heart of local politics, but apparently was not involved as a healer (Strathern and Stewart, 2008a: 69 with refs.; see also Healey, 1990).

In the second of the two articles we have published on the performativity of shamanic practices, we brought in further materials from Papua New Guinea, in this case from the Duna people of the Southern Highlands Province. The Duna, like several other peoples of the Highlands region, including the Maring, give considerable cosmological significance to a female spirit figure, the Payame Ima. She is associated both with high mountain areas and with waterways, including the massive Strickland River that divides the Duna from speakers of the Ok language to their west. The Payame Ima was held to have the ability to enter into an unmarried man whom she chose as her own husband and to empower him to wield a special divining stick (the *dele rowa*) in order to identify cannibal witches causing death to people in the community. The spirit could empower women also, and such women gained the power to remove the effects of witchcraft from sick persons' bodies and so heal them. An unmarried woman might be possessed in this way and run wild in the forest, learning songs from the spirit world and gaining knowledge of how to heal people by rubbing their bodies with earth pigments. In the case of both men and women, once they married the spirit and her power would leave them. The embodied performativity of these temporary shamans was therefore linked to a phase in their life-cycle. Union with the spirit was incompatible with sexual union with a fellow human. We see here the idea of a 'marriage' or of physical possession as a primordial vehicle of spirit influences, traces of which are clearly found in shamanic traditions such as among the Temiar (Strathern and Stewart, 2008b). Possession, and with it altered states of consciousness (ASC), has, of course, been an important part of the interest in shamanism, although we have not made it our primary focus here (for an excellent survey see the Book Review Forum on the work of Michael Winkelman in the *Journal of Ritual Studies*, 18(1) 2004: 96–126).

Shamans and Changing Politics among the Paiwan

Elaborate shamanic practices are prominent in both Han populations and among the indigenous Austronesian-speaking people of Taiwan. Generally, among these indigenous groups shamanic practices were largely concerned with divination by the use of beads and the healing of sickness. Shamans also were custodians of a great deal of knowledge encapsulated in songs and incantations addressed to spirits. As a result of widespread conversion to forms of Christianity (both Catholic and Protestant), these shamanic activities came under attack by church leaders who saw them as 'pagan'. However, in recent years there have been several trends for self-conscious cultural revival among the indigenous groups, and aspects of shamanism, including especially performances connected with reassertions of group identities, have been fostered. Among some groups, shamans are mostly, or entirely, women, and novice shamans have to be inducted into their craft by senior female practitioners, with special costs for sacrifices to spirits and presents to the living. Often, a problem of succession arises as older shamans die and no junior practitioner takes on their skills. Detailed long-term studies of shamans among the Puyuma, an indigenous group living near to the city to Taitung, have been made by Josiane Cauquelin (Cauquelin, 2004, 2008). Female shamans are also historically prominent among the Amis. Their traditions continue also among the mostly Christianised Bunun (e.g. Yang, 2009).

Our own fieldwork has been conducted primarily with the Eastern and Western Paiwan people. Like their neighbours in the east, the Rukai, the Paiwan have strong institutions of hereditary chiefship tied to ranking houses, and an eldest child, whether male or female, is expected to succeed to the position of chief within the ranking lineage. Chiefly status is marked by the term *mamazangilan*. Chiefs generally exercise control over the disposition of tracts of garden land, and formerly harvest tributes of millet were given to them as prestations, in expectation of returns in feasts and general support and care: a familiar picture from many Pacific island societies. Shamans (*pulingau*) as healers and diviners are expected to work with chiefs.

In one Eastern Paiwan village where we have made field studies the influence of a charismatic Presbyterian church pastor has been so significant that the church and its leader appear to have taken over some of the functions of the chief, although not so as to displace the chiefly line itself. Notably, the pastor instigates both community development activities with commercial potential and the cultural revival of initiations for youths, in an attempt to halt the out-migration of young people to cities for work. Such initiations involve shamanic practitioners as ritual overseers of the events.

Eastern and Western Paiwan are divided geographically by a high mountain range, the peaks of which are considered sacred. Western Paiwan people tend to see themselves as the original groups, from which others spread out over time. In one local area, the *mamazangilan* lines and their leaders have mostly joined the local Christian church (Church of the Nazarene), infusing both authority and enthusiasm

into the church. This area has also been deeply disturbed by huge landslips around a river basin, causing the relocation of people into new concentrated village sites where the housing has been provided by cooperation between the government and various charitable organisations, including World Vision, the Red Cross, and Tzu Chi, a Buddhist organisation based in the city of Hualien. The area is therefore experiencing considerable social turbulence and anxieties.

Groups among both Eastern and Western Paiwan have entered into competition to obtain government funding which has been made available to indigenous groups in order to tie them in to the Han-dominated nation state structure. The indigenous groups have also acquired an iconic status in national symbolism, since they have been in Taiwan for longer than the Han immigrants, who first came in numbers in the seventeenth century. Western Paiwan groups have also begun to self-differentiate among themselves by material markers and by emphases in their stories of origins. In this context, again, shamans acquire a special significance, even if this is expressed in cultural performances that are at least partly put on for tourists.

In early 2011, while working in the Western Paiwan area, we learned that there was a growing perception of opposition between Eastern and Western Paiwan. One person reported that while in the eastern city of Taitung, a place she otherwise liked very much, she felt hat she was under spiritual attack, experienced in her dreams. She, and others related to her by kinship ties, linked this to their suspicions of hostile magic implemented against her by local *pulingau*. Our discussion on this matter came up in an interesting way. Terms for shamans are often translated into English as 'witches'. We have invariably sought to correct this usage, pointing out that shamans are healers. In this instance, however, the 'correction' was negated, and we were told that the *pulingau* can make hostile magic. The denouement of this argument manifested itself when people said 'After all we used to practice head-hunting on one another, and these acts of hostile magic are carried out in revenge for those old killings.'

Head-hunting was indeed a strong customary feature of the indigenous groups prior to pacification and religious conversion, but it has been gone for many years now, so to hear it brought up again into his new (or neo-traditional) context was quite remarkable. Our interpretation is that this symbolic development results from a new situation of the recreation of identities in the context of competition for government funds. Our information on this comes only from one part of Western Paiwan. Regardless of whether it is reciprocated on an idea among Eastern Paiwan, the development shows two things: first issues regarding shamans easily tend to gain political resonances because shamans are seen as having occult powers and because they may be cultural icons of identity; and second there is an underlying ambiguity in the shaman's own identity between the role of healer and the role of sorcerer. Within the group the shaman may be a healer, while across group boundaries shamans may be seen as aggressors, at least in popular consciousness. The light shaman/dark shaman contrast comes over once again here, and in the present case it is linked with political change, cultural revivals, Christian conversion, and the attempts people make to understand and manipulate

the shifting forces of regional relations into which their lives are set. The shaman as a historical figure is also able to transcend particular boundaries and to acquire significance in widening spheres of experience. This conclusion is in line with the view of Mary MacDonald that '… shamanism is a social and religious construction transmitted and reinvented through the centuries in particular local circumstance and today incorporated into the practices and narrative constructions of global worldviews' (MacDonald, 2002: 88). This observation fits with the contemporary revival of forms of neo-shamanism in many parts of the world, especially in the domain of healing practices, linked to feelings regarding the impersonal and disembedded characteristics of biomedical procedures, characteristics which some biomedical practitioners may themselves try to transcend in human terms. The spirit of shamanism, if not the spirits that shamans appeal to, may therefore be able partially to recolonise the world of medicine.

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Chapter 2
Enchantment and Destruction

Michael Oppitz

The connections of shamanism and violence – subject of the present book – can be seen from various perspectives. One my feel inclined to look at shamans as religious specialists who exercise power over other people: their patients, members of their own vocation, specialists of other religions, as well as agents of the spiritual world, who bring illness and misfortune to the healers' clients. But one may be equally compelled to look at shamans as victims of violence from external forces; pressure and threat from political and religious powers trying to limit, to suppress, to forbid or to extinguish activities generally classed as 'shamanistic'. In such cases shamans and their followers are – or in the past have been – subjected to ideological aggression or to expansive claims of power, represented by the state, church or a worldview intolerant to local or indigenous beliefs of a less powerful and demanding kind. In the history of religions such forms of violence exercised by an exterior power over smaller communities and representatives of local religious beliefs are of frequent occurrence, if not, in one way or the other, the rule.

For example, in Scandinavia shamanic practices had flourished amongst the old Saami at least up to the seventeenth century. Beginning in the eighteenth and continuing far into the succeeding century the conventional beliefs of these reindeer herders were gradually suppressed by Christian missionaries and likewise by the various Nordic State forces. Shamanic drums were confiscated, symbols replaced and *noaidi* (Lapponian faith healers) executed (Manker, 1938: 17ff). In Siberia, where literally all indigenous peoples had originally adhered to some form of shamanism, several consecutive waves of destruction have eradicated the old beliefs of the northern continent: the colonisation movements of the Russian Empire, begun under Czar Peter the Great; the Enlightenment torches of Catharina II; the suppressive forces of the Orthodox Church; the progressionist drives of the Soviets; the atheistic frenzy of the communists; and the denunciation campaigns of the Stalinist purges culminating in the persecution of shamans and the burning of their drums – all these inundations of violence have done their aggressive best to transform Siberia into a wasteland regarding age – old indigenous beliefs and practices (Znamenski, 2007: 322ff).

In Mongolia, the persecutions were stirred by another power; one whose doctrine of non-violence would not suggest such destructive energies. Here, beginning in the seventeenth century, it was above all the Lamaist clergy whose proselytising methods administered the systematic suppression of shamanism. The missionary methods employed by the Buddhist lamas included a display of superior magical

power than the shamans; greater medical efficacy; economic incentives and support for converts; and iconoclastic purges of shamanic idols (Heissig, 1953: 519). In Tibet and in the Himalayan regions south, the clash between shamanism and Buddhism took the form of physical competition between two protagonists, each of which represented one of the two creeds. That is at least what Tibetan folklore and some oral accounts of several Himalayan mountain tribes recall: the winner of an Olympic decathlon, including a race to a mountain top, would gain religious hegemony over all adjacent territories, from which the loser would have to withdraw (Oppitz, 2012: 462ff).

The use of physical strength paired with magical power is also a topos in purely shamanic stories. Shamans are not only colleagues in a common professional guild, they are, as a rule, also competitors with one another – boastful enemies claiming to strive for their combatants' blood. Anecdotes, in which one healer outwits the other, waylays him, misdirects him, puts obstacles in his path, kicks him over a cliff from behind, attacks him with invisible arrows, sends him stinging bees, poisons him, immobilises him, betrays him, frowns upon him, ridicules him, bears false witness against him, extradites him to inimical forces or simply destroys him, are legendary. One is almost tempted to say that such stories form a genre of their own in the oral literature of these societies, in which the shaman is not only their main medical and psychological expert, the diplomatic mediator with the supernatural world, but also the tricky exterminator of his professional rivals.

What the shaman is able – and almost addicted to doing – to his vocational colleagues, he will never do to his clients or any lay person of his community. He does it all – as part of his calling – to another species of beings: the supernatural forces that cause illness, bad luck and calamities to man. In regard to these, the enmities directed against other shamans, can be seen as a kind of sparring match, a mere rehearsal for the much heavier task of tackling the metaphysical world of spirits, demons and ghosts. These are his real opponents, his transcendental trading partners, those to cheat, to lead by the nose, to bar, or simply enemies that must be put away, destroyed. Here is the main battlefield, the occasion for violence and warlike action.

As with humans, supernatural beings differ from one individual, group or class to another. They must be dealt with according to their character, their predictable behaviour toward man, as well as the expected threat and destruction they can bring. Among the spirits, there are those that may come to the shaman's assistance; these are his auxiliaries, his ancestral and helping spirits. No danger is to be expected from them, but they must be treated obligingly, gratefully, with obeisance and deference. For without their support, the shaman is unable to withstand the force of other kinds of supernatural. Next on the scale of benevolence to malice are the ambivalent spirits, those that do not cause harm, provided one does not infringe upon their territory. However, if one trespasses – intentionally or, more often, unintentionally – onto their domain they react with aggression, which the trespasser will soon be made aware of. He will become ill or the victim of some kind of accident. In this case, the shaman, called by the human trespasser for help,

will try to appease the spirit, whose territory has been disturbed. He will take a mental trip to the border of this spirit's domain and offer an apology, together with an adequate compensational gift.

Next, on the aforementioned scale, are those invisible beings who lie in wait for all kinds of misfortune that they can inflict upon man given the slightest provocation. Their standard act of aggression is to kidnap human souls and run away with them to their hideout. Soul-loss, even if it affects only one of the several souls that a grown-up person possesses, is a serious matter, for it weakens the victim and may cause his death, provided the abducted soul cannot be recaptured by the shaman in time. In order to find it and bring it back to his patient, the shaman has to go on a ritual journey. On his way, he will look for the footprints of the fugitive, try to locate the soul-robber and negotiate a transcendental deal with him: to hand over the soul in exchange for an attractive gift – a blood sacrifice. When the deal is struck, the shaman will return to the patient's home, reincorporate the fugitive soul in materialised form (a worm, a butterfly or an insect) into the patient's body, will order an animal sacrifice – a chicken, pig or goat from the client's household – and offer some bites and some blood to the spiritual trading partner.

Some of the supernaturals, however, cannot be dealt with in this manner of barter of goods and exchange. Their sole aim is to kill; and, therefore, they must be killed beforehand. These are the spirits of people who have died an unnatural and premature death. Having not accomplished a normal life cycle, they are jealous of all living people, and as they cannot return to the living, they will try to drag their victims into a form of existence into which they themselves have tumbled. These ghosts are extremely dangerous and very difficult to combat. They require the most complicated, lengthy and expensive kinds of seance. First they will be courted, beguiled and bewitched by irresistible tunes played on a single-note flute and lured to the house of the patient, whose life they have selected to take. Then, in a moment of sudden surprise the shaman will attack, smash and cut them symbolically into pieces which he then tosses in different locations outside in the wilderness.

The shaman's activities during his dealings with the spirit world can best be described as war – at least those rituals which end in a final destruction of the enemy. However, most of the less murderous rituals also have a warlike character. This can be deduced not only from the shaman's performances, his physical acts and symbolical gestures, but also from his paraphernalia, without which he would not be able to conduct a seance. The basically belligerent nature of the shaman's religious practice is reflected and visualised in the material objects he employs in the course of his professional work. His gear consists – to a considerable degree – of weapons; and his dress is best described as an armour, in which he may look more like a Kagemusha knight or a general during the Era of the Warring States than a village healer. Some indicative equipment of this kind – as used in several Himalayan societies – will be put on display to confirm the very nature of his transcendental business.

Examples will be taken from societies at the opposite ends of the tribal Himalayan regions: from the Magar, Tamang and Sherpa in Nepal; and from the

Figure 2.1   Choreographed dance of Naxi dtô-mbà with weapons

Naxi and Qiang in the Sino-Tibetan Marches. To begin with, the Naxi – in the past – used to equip their traditional religious specialists (*dtô-mbà*) with a host of paraphernalia which resembled – more than anything – an arsenal of weapons.

They consisted of iron spears, lances, swords, cross bows, bows and arrows and quivers, tridents, thunderbolts, thread crosses, spiked fences, helmets, iron crowns, breastplates, shields and special boots to stomp witches into the ground. Some of these were obviously reserved for symbolic use, such as the black witch-boots or the tridents and thunderbolts, the last two well known from elsewhere as religious tools employed in Hindu or Tibetan Buddhist rituals. The swords were used in the elegantly choreographed dances of the *dtô-mbà* priests which may have been designed to challenge negative supernatural forces rather than to actually combat them.

The ritual weapons of the *dtô-mbà* priests do appear also in the iconography of Naxi religious art: in the Naxi *thangka* and *tsagli* tradition (painted scrolls and cards) as well as in Naxi pictographic texts. The standard pictorial representations in both pictographs and paintings reveal that not only are the *dtô-mbà* priests armed, but also their helpers and their foes. Gods, heroes, historical and mythological predecessors of the *dtô-mbà* supporting the priests in their ritual struggles, are furnished with weapons similar to those of the shamans, whereas the opponents in the evil camp carry slightly different tools of destruction. Exclusively reserved for the *dtô-mbà* and their predecessors is a type of weapon which is frequently found in Bonpo as well as in Nepalese Himalayan shamanic paraphernalia, i.e.

Figure 2.2   Bladed iron rattle and sword in the hands of spirit medium (llû'-bù)

the feather. Similar to the Naxi priest, many an Eastern Nepalese healer employ the feather as an offensive tool. A light and smooth appearance on the surface, the feather can be turned into a dangerous steel blade by those equipped with the adequate magical power. Likewise, certain musical instruments in the hands of powerful shamans can be employed as means of violence. These instruments include the drum, the flatbell, the cymbal and the yak horn. This suggests that – no less than physical objects – even sounds can be brought into action in the battles with supernatural enemies, as acoustic weapons.

The Naxi living in the northern parts of Yunnan maintain an oral tradition according to which they originated from the Qiang people, now living in the northern parts of Sichuan. Certain similarities in both their religious concepts and ritual activities suggest that this connection may be grounded in historical facts. Such affinities can also be detected in the ritual equipment of both local religions. The clapper drum, the cymbal, the flatbell, the yak horn, the conch-shell trumpet, the sacred wand, the ritual sword, the iron rattle with a long blade, are all instruments shared by the religious specialists of both traditions, i.e. the *dtô-mbà* and *llû'-bû* priests of the Naxi and the *shüpi* priest of the Qiang.

Figure 2.3   Bow and arrow of Magar shaman as musical instrument

In both traditions, the healing seances of the mediators between the human and the spirit world are perceived as warlike struggles for which the shaman has to arm himself with effective tools, both defensive and offensive weapons. Moreover, the one-sided frame drum, an instrument which the Naxi *dtô-mbà* have replaced with a double-sided drum, is employed by the Qiang *shüpi* for many different functions, several of which are ostensibly belligerent in nature. This multi-purpose drum – including its use as a weapon – recurs in all shamanic traditions of the north Eurasian continent, as well as in some of the cis-Himalayan societies.

Among the Magar and Kami shamans of the Dhaulagiri region, as with the Gurung, Thakali and Chepang shamans in the wider Annapurna region, the one-sided drum with an interior handle is such an instrument with multiple functions. The *ramma* of the Magar and the *jhãkri* of the Kami (both shamans of similar practices) employ this drum as a weapon in various situations: to defend themselves from arrow attacks by fellow shamans, aggressive hunting spirits and inhabitants of the jungle – using it as a shield. The unit of drum and drumstick is

Figure 2.4   Shooting miniature bow in a Magar ritual

employed as a weapon of attack when inimical forces have to be nailed down to the ground or smashed; in this case the drumstick replaces the hammer and the drum stands for an anvil, between which the enemy is crushed. The noise that the drum produces when beaten with the drumstick is understood as a cosmic tremor which so frightens all malevolent beings that they frantically run from the vicinity.

Drum and drumstick are also perceived as analogues to the bow and arrow. This can be deduced from the fact that in some Magar rituals a bow and an arrow are used as if they were a drum and a drumstick. In a ceremony to drive away a spirit responsible for backaches the shaman strikes the string of a bow in a fashion resembling his beat on the membrane of his drum; accordingly, he beats the string with an arrow, as if it were his drumstick.

The sound and rhythm produced are considered equivalent to those of the drum; and the ritual chant to which the beat is produced follows the same metron and melody as those normally suggested by the drum. These analogies between drum and bow can be observed also in rites of the Gurung shamans (*pajyu*).

Bows and arrows – in miniature size – are used in Magar rituals primarily to signal the end of a combat. These model weapons will be employed in the course of a healing seance when an offering gift to the enemy is due. In this situation, the shaman will first pierce his patient with a tiny arrow and then shoot it at the victim, a small chick, with a mini bow to extract some blood from the wound.

After the shot, the miniature bow and the blood-stained arrow are broken and placed – alongside the sacrificial chick – on an offering plate and carried out of the house and village, down to a crossroad, where the gift is deposited. In another situation, the model bow and arrow may be taken to the crossroad by some of the

shaman's assistants where they shoot little arrows in all four directions of the black sky of the night. After shooting they break the bow, throw it away, and return to the house of the ceremony, where, in the meantime, the shaman has continued with the recital of an appropriate origin myth.

According to one of the mythic chants as sung by the healer at night, the shaman's dress is seen primarily as a defensive cover, a plating, invented and primordially worn by the first shaman, Ramma Puran Tsan, against the attacks of his main opponents, the Nine Witch Sisters, Nau Bahini. After Ramma has uncovered the attractive nine sisters as his main enemies, who lust for his blood, he tells them that all their efforts to make him victim of their cannibal desires, will be in vain:

Whatever your tricks may be	whatever your frauds will be
you cannot eat the Ramma	you can't devour the Ranju[1]
If you want to gnaw off Ramma's head	he is protected by a pair of feather bundles
If you want to gnaw off Ramma's ears	he is protected by green syergwa leaves
If you want to gnaw off Ramma's throat	he is protected by an iron necklace
If you want to gnaw off Ramma's neck	he is protected by his snakebone necklace
If you want to gnaw off Ramma's shoulders	he is protected by a pair of claw-bells
	he is protected by his main bells
If you want to gnaw off Ramma's chest	you can't devour the Ranju
All my little sisters all nine beloved sisters	he is protected by a yaktail by an animal carcass
If you want to gnaw off Ramma's back	he is protected on his left arm by a wooden
If you want to gnaw off both his arms	armlace he is protected on his right arm by his
If you want to gnaw off Ramma's heart	drumstick
If you want to gnaw off Ramma's sides	he is protected by his drumframe and its handle
It you want to gnaw off Ramma's waist	he is protected by his wild boar's tusks
If you want to gnaw off Ramma's belly	he is protected by his caurie shells
If you want to gnaw off Ramma's buttocks	he is protected by a bearskin belt
If you want to gnaw off Ramma's thighs	he is protected by a pinewood seat
If you want to gnaw off Ramma's feet	he is protected by nine suns and moons of iron
You cannot gnaw off Ramma's organs	he is protected by his rainbow trousers
	he is protected by his tiger paws
	you can't devour the Ranju

Chant of the First Shaman, *ramma puran can kheti*, lines 826ff.

From this quotation two assertions can be confirmed, repeated over and over again by shamans in their mythic chants and daily conversations: their business with the supernatural beings – spirits, witches, demons and ghosts – is a highly dangerous affair, for which he has to take ample precautions. It is a warlike affair. In order to come through, the shaman has to arm himself. His professional gear is one answer in his struggle for existence; his dress must display the protective qualities of armour.

In the remaining paragraphs I will discuss the nature of weapons and perceptions of battle as found in some groups. The Magar, as stated before, prefer toy weapons in their battles with supernatural beings. This choice indicates that the war they

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[1]   Ranju is Ramma's epic parallel rhyme name.

engage in is a mental one, where all sabre-rattling is symbolic; the Naxi employ ritual arms, used exclusively in religious performances, even if they are made of hard iron and could cause physical wounds to everyone struck by them. The Qiang priests rely on ritual arms as well as real weapons. However, they use the latter only in ceremonial acts. They include swords for dancing, spears for marking the borders of human and spirit territories, and knives for cutting the air. There are also societies whose religious specialists preferably think in terms of real weapons to show their power against metaphysical foes. For instance, the *bombo* (shamans) of the Western Tamang who are also equipped with a choice of ritual arms, count on real weapons in certain ritual situations. When *mhamo*, a demoness known for her vicious nature who delights in feeding her own offspring with the flesh and blood of human babies, strikes a household with her destructive energy, the healer feels obliged to retaliate her actions using heavy artillery. A measure taken toward the end of a long ritual to avert *mhamo*'s powers is to lure her with guile and gifts to the edge of the village and then expel her permanently by shooting strong arrows after her from a large bow. This set of arms is designed for real hunts on wild animals (Holmberg, 1989: 98).

In 2011, in Solukhumbu of eastern Nepal, in a village half a day's walk from the road to Jiri, I saw what I had thought was long extinct or replaced by the religious efforts of Nyingmapa Buddhism: a real Sherpa shaman, locally called *pormbo*. This old gentleman, Managle Sherpa of the Pankarma clan, was richly equipped with paraphernalia to be used in his healing seances. Aside from a whole set of objects to avert magical spells, such as a small meteorite (*thogyido*), several rock crystals (*termido*), a mirga deer bone with a hoof (*khasya khangba*) and a model-sized iron arrow (*dogur*), Mangale unpacked a pair of 'soulcatchers' (*dagar*) – spliced sticks richly adorned with ribbons. Other paraphernalia included several ritual daggers (*thurmi*), an iron necklace with brass bells (*dyiluk*), a snakebone necklace (*rulgyi shing*), a hair tuft made of yak hair with long plaited braids (*thamchok*), a wooden sculpture depicting a horse's and a wild boar's head associated with the deity *phagmo*, and a headband fitted out with a row of porcupine quills. These play a considerable role in many Himalayan folkstories whose heroes are shamans; the quills serve them as magical projectiles, as weapons of a special kind.

The most impressive objects in the shamanic equipment of Mangale Sherpa, however, were large weapons of demonstrative size.

They included a leather shield (*phuk*), a six feet bow (*djyu*) with arrows of equal length (*dachen*), two long lances with iron blades (*dung*), a large sabre or scimitar (*tri*), and finally, two ritual drums (*nga*), categorised as weapons. Their membranes carried chalk drawings of suns, moons and tridents. This set of large weapons – with the exception of the drums – resembled those that could be found among the eighteenth century warriors fighting on either side; for the unification of Nepal or for the independence from the Hindu crown. For the *pormbo* Mangale these weapons were instruments of a different war, namely the battle against the powerful cohorts of the night.

Figure 2.5   Sherpa shaman (***pormbo***) with a pair of lances

Figure 2.6   Sherpa shaman's leather shield

Aside from what has been said so far, the belligerent nature of shamanic practice can also be detected from the magic spells which are pronounced or murmured, mumbled, or muttered on many occasions during a night of ritual. In some of the Himalayan regions such spells may be just jingles of power, without any apparent semantic meaning. In other regions, however, they are clear statements that can be translated and understood by everyone. Among the Kami and Magar shamans of Western Nepal, the *mantra* or *mantar* pronounced by the faith healers, are definitely of the latter kind. As a rule they are imperatives addressed to the spirits: do this! do that! leave this! leave that! come! wake up! get up! go! move away! disappear! die! Or they are encouragements to the acting shaman: bind the hand that strikes! correct false statements! return the patient's soul! knock out the spirit of the graveyard! destroy the ghost! move the witches to the crossroad! stomp them to the ground! strike them! kill them! The whole scale of the shaman's attitude toward harmful spirits can be deduced from such spells, just as indicated by the title of an article on *mantar*: 'Flatter, promise, threaten, kill' – it covers the spectrum (Maskarinec, 1993: 198).

Conclusion

Varying as they may be in terms of origin, or circumstance, what can be surmised from the few examples quoted so far, is that the work of the shaman is not a friendly matter, a peaceful mediation to restore balance between humans and supernatural forces. Occasionally it may appear to be so, for example, when the shaman addresses the spirits in long epic chants with their calmly floating melodies, when he talks to them like a petitioner, an applicant, a match-maker, a betrothed, an in-law, an ally or a lover, or when he praises the magnificent gifts he has prepared for them. In such cases, a 'gift' always has the double sense that Marcel Mauss detected in the term: 'donation' as well as 'poison'. Or when the healer alludes to the friendly relations that used to exist in the past between the different realms of beings … All this is sweet talk, flattery, affectation, hypocrisy or cant, as in the back of the shaman's mind glows the fire of destruction. For he knows that only as a cautious, coaxing and cunning opponent, as a warrior armed to the teeth and permanently on his guard, will he have a chance of firmly standing his ground against the overwhelming forces of the spirit world. For him a successful performance of his profession will primarily depend upon employing a skilful strategy of war and an arsenal of weapons ready for use at any moment.

The warlike nature of the shaman's job can be detected in his very actions, real or symbolic; in his speech and verbal acts: magic spells, narrative stories and myths; and in the physical objects – armaments, paraphernalia, tools, with which he equips himself when he marches to the transcendental battlefield. He can defend and restore health and well-being for his clients only as a declared foe of those beings who strive to obtain man's highest good, his life. Religion, for the shaman, means war.

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Shamans Emerging from Repression in Siberia: Lightning Rods of Fear and Hope

Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer

Introduction

In the post-Soviet milieu of struggling for indigenous people's cultural revitalisation, I have felt an ethical, fieldwork imperative to sympathise with narratives of shamans' repressions during the Soviet period and to affirm shamanic reputations for healing. In the Far East of Russia, Sakha Republic (Yakutia), it has been delightful to extol large-scale festivals that open with eloquent 'white shaman' prayer-blessings. Yet no researcher with an open mind and sensitivity to accounts of their interlocutors could fail to notice what has sometimes been called 'the dark side' of shamanic power (cf. Brown, 1988; 1989; Whitehead and Wright, 2004). This chapter rectifies an imbalance in my work accumulated over decades. It is misleading to dismiss as merely blackening due to the influence of Soviet and Christian propaganda certain indigenous narratives that are truly, frankly, chilling. However, readers should not anticipate murder mystery intrigues. The accounts that follow must be placed within an indigenous cosmological and analytical framework that incorporates diverse shamanic powers and reputations. I claim, along with many Siberians, that reputations of shamans have long been ambiguous, depending on whom they protect and how. For example, indigenous interlocutors circulate morale-building narratives of shamans able to defeat Soviet jailers and atheist propagandists in mystical, socially transcendent ways (Balzer, 2011: 46–56). Shamanic practices are situational, contingent on political context and community support. Their interpretation is intertwined with 'eye of the beholder' issues of cultural relativism, natural relativism and 'perspectivism'.

At least in recent periods if not earlier, the chill effect of shamanic abuse of power has probably been outweighed by the beneficial effects of shamanic individual and community healing in the broadest sense of that word. This assessment is developed further in my analysis and conclusions. But I begin with a chiller, confided in 2012 by an elderly woman originally from the Niurba area of Sakha Republic about her grandmother:

> You know that they say when people are dying, toward their end, they lose their shamanic talents? My grandmother had been bedridden and blind for several years. She was really sinking and out of it. However, toward the end

something very different happened. She got back her spiritual gift, her singing. But it happened in a very scary way. The family could not predict when she was going to die. It was duck hunting season. And my father, my brother and my brother-in-law, three generations, set out for a specific hunting site pretty far away. They had three guns. Grandmother was aware they were gone. She started to sing, a kind of descriptive chant. And my mother's hair nearly stood on end. She was terrified – for what grandmother sang of was that three men, of three generations, had shot each other by accident while they were hunting. It was in the same general place that our family had gone, only it turned out to be across the river, this incident. It really happened – but it turned out it the killing was not in our family but another family. We still wonder – had grandmother seen this whole thing, visualised it somehow in simultaneous time, and described it so vividly, as if she were there? Had she perhaps averted the tragedy from our family to someone else's? Was she describing or actually influencing events? We never found out. She died soon after. I am very scared of this kind of [spirit] power, and do not want it for myself, do not like talking about it … .

We are plunged into a realm of thought and action here that is beyond the experience of most, and not easily reducible to generalisations about special cognitive talents of 'clear seeing' shamans. Memories concerning this grandmother, and other frightening aspects of the speaker's life history, caused her to turn away from shamans to the New Apostolic church in 1998. Yet her so-called 'conversion' has not stopped her faith in shamanic powers, particularly in the Cassandra-like abilities of certain shamans to see, warn of, and sometimes help divert, disasters. Thus her narrative, and many others, can provoke us into thinking more deeply about why and how individuals and communities retain powerful, circulating memories about frightening spiritual worlds, even when they insist they would rather live without such memories and such spirituality. These are far more significant than titillating 'ghost stories' (in Sakha *yuer*) told around a campfire. In culturally mixed contexts, especially times of socioeconomic crisis, political upheaval, and shifting religious values, spiritual conflicts become exacerbated, as data from across the North and from Mongolia and Nepal, amply reveal.[1] They are too unpredictable and politically contingent to enable generalisations about the decline of violence or the advance of humanism (Pinker, 2011).

This chapter is divided into two main sections: narratives of faith and fear, presented in a preliminary typology, and an analysis that attempts to interpret the roots of fear and inconsistent recovery of shamanic worldviews. Distinctions between individual 'faiths' and more communal 'belief systems' are discussed. Both have important ramifications for understanding changing shamanic practices, the anthropology of violence, and for interpreting debates about cultural authenticity (Brown, 2003; 2007; de la Cadena and Starn, 2007:9–25).

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[1]   e.g. Carpenter, 1961; Bulyandelgeriyn, 1997; Pedersen,2011; Riboli and Torri, this volume.

Narratives of Faith and Fear: When Spirits of the Past Remain Present

A blatantly predictive 'Cassandra' narrative can serve to reinforce my argument that accounts of shamans and spirits are widespread and maintained through indigenous community fascination well into post-Soviet times.Such narratives often depict violent events of the Soviet period. Their current circulation perhaps serves as an ongoing processing of the ramifications of Soviet repression of shamans, given their significance as exemplars and leaders of folk religiosity. I heard this one in 2012 from an interlocutor who prefers to remain anonymous:

> Zina had special talents from a very early age. She died young and had a very rough life. They [Soviet doctors] said she was schizophrenic, and they gave her drugs to 'cure' her. At one point she actually broke a window trying to escape. She died relatively young, in a hospital, age 52, many years ago. Her own mother was an *udagan* [female shaman] or at least a *menerik* [spirit message receiver]. Zina sang … and when she did she could predict trouble, but no one appreciated her. [MMB: As if she was out of Greek tragedy?] Yes, she was like Cassandra. Here is an example. Zina envisioned ahead an accident involving a truck and a motorcycle. She saw that a construction vehicle lost a chain that flew back at a young man riding a motorcycle behind it, and he was thrown off and killed. She knew that young man, who was handsome, had a good potential future and was just out of the army. So she decided to warn him to be careful on his motorcycle, and she told him what she had seen. But he laughed it off and sure enough he was killed just as she had envisioned, about a week later. This was such a freak accident it is hard to imagine it being made up ahead of time. Incidentally, Zina was not a pure Sakha. Her mama was Sakha, and her papa was some sort of Russian/Polish mix. But the gift for clear-seeing runs especially in the maternal line, and she had it, to her despair.

Zina's tragedy was compounded by Soviet contempt for all who exhibited shamanic tendencies, such as visions. Psychiatric treatment was usually a form of psychiatric imprisonment, with pseudo-doctors in white coats using a debilitating cocktail of drugs to suppress perceived abnormality. They often diagnosed as 'schizophrenic' those who defied the Soviet system. Political and religious dissidents were predominant among their victims, throughout the Soviet Union (Grigoryants, 1989). The Siberian variation on this theme is that some of the 'best and brightest' potential shamans were thwarted in their ability to fulfil what many saw as their destiny. Instead, they became unloved and mocked by their own communities. In hindsight, we might say that not only the young man, but others around Zina would have done well to heed her visions. But they were powerless to do so in the social milieu of the time, and thus they also were condemned to localise the Cassandra legend that literally has classic resonance from other times and places. Note too that my literate interlocutor named the Cassandra pattern, by definition featuring unloved, thwarted seers. In the Sakha language, a clear-seer is called *keubecheu*, a clear hearer is

yeustachi, and the idea of telepathy is encompassed in the term *agharas étééi kihi*, glossed as 'person with an open body'.

A different salient pattern can be termed 'curses with multigenerational resonance'. These long-term curses, called *kyrys* in Sakha, sometimes are connected to families with the legacy of having Soviet security officers (called NKVD in the older Stalinist days) in their lineages, as well as more numerous victims of repression. Both those arrested within the cruel Soviet state apparatus and their Soviet guards orperpetrators were in some larger sense all victims of the repressive system, as is well known from a burgeoning memoir literature.[2] This phenomenon has a special, wrenching spin in shamanic contexts. A family I was close to in the 1980s emigrated in part because of a shaman's curse on their Soviet Commissar ancestor, Kardashevsky. They have been plagued by personal and health troubles, despite their emigration. The curse was alleged to have explicitly condemned future generations to miseries of ill health. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the mixed ethnic parents refused to allow their children or grandchildren to return to Sakha Republic. For years, I thought they were unique, especially since the father in the family is Jewish. But recently, I heard the following, similar tale from a Sakha woman:

> One of my relatives, Lobashev, was in the NKVD – one of the early Sakha to join. Another was repressed. He had been wealthy. He was accused of stealing his own bull. He had been forced to give up animals to the collective farm, but somehow he did not think this bull was part of the 'gift' and he was trying to feed his family. He was taken to Yakutsk to jail and he died soon after. That Lobashev could have tried to help the family but he did not – he always sided with the authorities and he was known for, as my father said, 'being responsible for so many human tears, so much human bloodshed.' … There is a curse, perhaps, on that family line.Those tears, all that blood and suffering – of course people had cursed his line when he turned them in.

Sadly, post-Soviet trouble began after the speaker reconnected with this line, despite her father's warning not to do so. Both my interlocutor's brother and husband died violently in ways that have caused some members of the family to remember the cursing, long after they thought they were an exempt branch of the family. In this casetoo, some of the immediate family have emigrated, hoping to somehow escape a shamanic fate in a 'New World'. Yet they are nervous about the ramifications of curses extending through generations and across possibly meaningless-to-spirits international borders. While the first curse mentioned above was by a shaman, the second was by more ordinary sufferers, probably several, using shamanic power by begging spirits to bring harm. Calling upon such dark powers of ill-doing spirits (*abaahy*)is not to be taken lightly.

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2   e.g. Ginsburg, 1981; Chirkova, 2002.

My ultimate aim is not simply to place these dramas in categories but to understand the continuities and discontinuities of cosmology, belief and action. In new post-Soviet contexts, why are such narratives compelling for the tellers, so stunning that they sometimes tell their family secrets *sotto voce*? While some turn to Christianity or Judaism or emigration, I have wondered whether any more internal, within shamanic social systems, possibilities exist to alleviate or divert the path toward becoming a shaman. Classic accounts of shamanic initiations describe being 'chosen by the spirits' against one's will and without recourse once 'spirit torture' or 'spirit illness' begins (Basilov, 1997 [1984]).I have recorded similar post-Soviet first-person narratives that depict healers' resulting abilities to have 'radical empathy' with their future supplicants (Balzer, 2011; cf. Koss-Chioino, 2006). But here is one (from the Viliuisk area, 2002) where the speaker's grandmother made a personal sacrifice in order to stop her family from needing to become shamans in successive generations:

My grandmother did not want to become an *udagan*. But the spirits wanted her to. She died when she was 15, after she had already had my mother. She had signs of *menerik*, uncontrolled spirit possession, and all sorts of animals, cattle, horses, were dying at her family homestead.She was ill for a long time, and everyone said it was spirit torture, *éttéénei*. My grandfather called several (male) shamans, *oiuun*, and none could open the door to a cure. The first fled immediately. The second fainted. The third tried to go into a seances, with drumming and dancing, but then he too fell into a faint.'She's stronger than I am', he admitted, though he was renowned through the region.

The key to this bittersweet memory lies in what the grandmother explained on her deathbed. She told her loved ones: 'They are trying to make me an *udagan*, but I will not. I do not want my successors to have this burden, to be ill like this, and to suffer. So I refuse. They [the spirits] will take me in three days.' The grandmother predicted, after hearing a drum through the stove, that the family would become prosperous and fertile. She prescribed certain rituals to be done after her death, which occurred in the 1920s. My interlocutor, who preferred anonymity, was convinced that her grandmother 'closed the road' to her own shamanic practice, and she was grateful. 'At first when I heard my mother tell this story when I was a girl in the village, I thought it was some fairy tale. But now I believe.' She channelled her magnificent creativity in other directions, as a craftswoman, while diligently performing fire feeding rituals, domestic purification rituals and elaborate prayers (*algys*) in archaic Sakha metaphorical language. Helplessness when caught between political and spiritual powers is a recurring theme. Some narratives reveal direct conflicts between the old and new or between Sakha and Russian values. Examples include the tensions between values of ecological preservation versus development. Impossible choices result, and are sometimes processed as nightmares. This 2012 narrative comes from a Suntar Sakha family, who also wish anonymity:

> One aunt was in a line of seers … She was beautiful and married a man who became one of the first Sakha executives at the Mirny diamond mine, in the Soviet period. She had a dream soon after they moved there. An old man, dressed all in white, a white bearded sage-spirit of the local region (*doiduichchite*), came to her and said the diamonds are not for human exploitation.People are not supposed to be digging up the wealth of the earth. This is not for you to just grab.He spoke in a rich Sakha language, filled with poetry. She wrote his archaic words down and showed them to me later. They were beautiful words but he also threatened: anyone taking these diamonds will come to harm.

After I asked whether Russians too were targeted, my interlocutor explained that the spirit 'does not distinguish nationality'. She grimly added that a Russian woman geologist who had helped find the Mirny vein had died an early death, and that others had also come to bad ends, mostly Russians and Poles, since they were predominant. The frightened aunt had told her husband about the dream, but they could do nothing about it. Indeed, 'they had trouble, first with having children, and then with premature death in the family.Her own son died young and they attributed it to the threat'. They eventually were able to move away.

Sakha guilt and grief at the devastation caused by open pit mining should not be underestimated. It is reflected in this amazing dream, where the relevant spirit is far from 'evil', but rather is the ancient 'white' elder – keeper of the whole region (*doiduichchité*, literally glossed as homeland middle-earth spirit). Recently a daughter in the family unexpectedly married an engineer who was assigned back to Mirny. Her mother, thinking 'oh no, not again', gave her daughter strict instructions to 'feed' the local keeper spirit of Mirny, through a fire, an offering of nearly an entire bottle of vodka. Since the daughter's Sakha language was poor and colloquial, her mother wrote a suggested model prayer (*algys*) with appropriate words. The gist of the prayer, to be improvised in the daughter's own words when she was fully, spiritually ready and humble, was that the couple had moved to Mirny against their will, were planning no harm to the earth and its local spirit-keeper, and that they wished to have a fertile, successful family. Several months later, the anxious mother confirmed that her educated, Russified daughter had indeed appealed to the local spirit, although she had never done anything like it before.

While the open diamond pit at Mirny, one of the world's largest, is exhausted, other veins nearby have been discovered, and the industrialisation of the region continues at an alarming pace, as far as many Sakha are concerned. They have become a minority in their own local region of Mirny, and are in danger of becoming politically powerless. Many resent recentralised federal relations, exemplified by Russians taking over the Sakha diamond company ALROSA as President Putin came to power. At a partially compensatory spiritual level, bridging Soviet and post-Soviet periods, Sakha have for many years told stories of early deaths coming to mostly Russian developers, especially of roads that disturbed Sakha graveyards. All this, as well as a recent pipeline perilously close to the Lena River, provides

context for a major ecology movement in the Sakha Republic, partially led by a shaman-turned-activist Ed'ii Dora (Balzer, 2011: 190–96).

A lesson some of my interlocutors derive from emerging spiritualities is that one does not have to be a shaman to use shamanic powers. Indeed it said that those who do not know how to use the powers properly, to show appropriate spirit respect, are those who most often get burned. This is one reason why an actor-turned-healer stopped using the exact wording of certain trance-inducing seance prayers. He confided to me that he did not want to go beyond his perceived ability to control his spirituality. He sensed his own limits, at the threshold of the spirit world, beyond which he feared falling into a trance and never waking up. His account relates to a well-known Sakha saying, that words themselves have 'spirit', *ichchi*.

Many shamanic narratives themselves become 'morality plays' reinforcing belief systems and community behaviour or norms. Older narrative forms included entertaining legends of shamanic competitions, in which one shaman vanquished another in the guise of their 'mother animal' (*iiékyyl*) souls (Balzer, 2011: 114). These narratives of violence possibly once served to differentiate communities according to their loyalty to particular shamans. One community's deadly enemy 'black shaman' was another's 'white shaman' defender. The narratives could also reinforce 'us versus them' ethnic pride, and the competitions they described could have serious ramifications for families, communities, and ethnic groups differentiated by language. While rivalries today between shamans and shamanic healers are notorious, I have not heard them depicted in the form of deadly *iiékyyl* competition or ethnic-based competition. But another 'morality enforcer' narrative has had far-reaching psychological ramifications to this day. It is the strong, archaic belief, sometimes reinforced by whispered rumour, that when shamans use their powers to cause harm, those ill deeds can literally come back to haunt them in the form of harm to themselves or deaths among their loved ones.

The most dramatic and poignant example of shamanic misdeeds redounding against loved ones is the personal tragedy of the famed late shaman Vladimir Kondakov, founder of the Association of Folk Medicine. While he hinted at his regret-filled grief when I first met him in 1992, it took years for me to understand the ramifications of his life history and how he was dealing with it. I begin here with his masked confession. Vladimir's daughter died in 1991, and a year later he explained: 'She was much more talented and wiser than I. She criticised me, and rightly so. She felt her [spiritual] strength, even when she was very young.' In a dream, she came to Vladimir and said, accusingly: 'You yourself know why I died.' With me, he blamed for her death the Russian healthcare system and the poor conditions of an outside toilet in winter at their home on the seedy outskirts of Yakutsk. But years later, he confided to a mutual friend that he felt 'a white shaman's ritual' – his own – had gone wrong and contributed to her death. Whether it was one ritual or several, Vladimir had also admitted to me in 1992 that in his youth he used to enjoy scaring people and using shamanic seances to take mild, playful revenge on those who had insulted him. For years, rumours flew in the republic capital and the provincial town of his birth that Vladimir used his powers

not only for healing but for revenge. A Russian colleague is convinced that Vladimir caused her prolonged back problems – something neither of us will ever be able to prove. At one scary point, Vladimir gave me an 'evil eye' stare at a festival, but I was later able to alleviate his concerns.[3] The point of my recovering this painful history is that many believed he was capable of spirit-directed human harm. The rumour-mongers claimed that this is why his daughter died. In retrospect, I am convinced that the good that he did in founding the Association of Folk Medicine far outweighed his early days of spiritual experimentation with revenge games. But his case starkly reveals the ongoing debates about the power of shamanic spirituality for both benefit and harm.

Black, White and Grey: Shamanic Power, Morality and Multiple Beholders

The previous narratives should serve to convince most sceptics that shamans and shamanic concepts are alive if not well in Siberia. Russian developers have died prematurely. Interlocutors who have 'converted' to Christianity are convinced their grandmothers were psychic and might exert influence from beyond the grave. Some have attempted to escape shamanic heritage or curses to no avail, despite emigration. Theorists of memory remind us that it is as much about forgetting as remembering, but here are cases where attempts to forget are unsuccessful.[4]

What is it about shamanic worldviews and spirituality that are so lasting yet pliable? They are probably lasting because they are pliable. Vladimir Kondakov gave me some insights during several conversations in the early 1990s. He depicted shamanic cosmology as hinging on a Manichean-like world of balanced powers between black and white, darkness and light, evil and pure intentions. The entire panoply of benevolent gods (*Tengri*) in 9 levels of Heavens is mirrored by comparable devils (*Abaahy*) in underworld layers of the earth. Balanced gender relations are important too, for male shamans often have female spirit helpers and female shamans often have males. Certain particularly talented shamans can manipulate and embody the qualities of both genders (cf. Balzer, 1996; Tedlock, 2005). Precisely these balances and adroit manipulations mean that any given shaman or spirit helper should not be defined as being simply 'black' or 'white'. Rather, shamans, as pragmatic mediators among diverse worlds, have the power to tap into a full range from good to bad forces, depending on any given task of their suffering supplicants. Their helper spirits, usually of our middle-world *ichchi* variety, are capricious and complex, like humans. The middle world itself is too ambiguously complex to be characterised in any single way. Motivations

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[3]   Concerns involved every anthropologist's nightmare: an inaccurate translation of one of my published articles featuring Kondakov as an 'urban shaman'. For an early use of the term 'urban shaman', see Hoppál, 1992.

[4]   e.g. Criukshank and Argunova, 2000 on the Sakha Republic; Grant, 2009; Ricoeur, 2004.

of power-hungry or revenge-bent humans are far more dangerous than those of flexible spirits capable of being harnessed and coaxed with sweet, pure offerings of *kumys* (fermented mare's milk) or articulate, heartfelt prayer. Prayer (*algys*) is usually accomplished through the fire (spirit), itself an exemplar of multiform transition, capable of beneficent warmth and terrifying heat. Like a potentially out-of-control fire, shamans must not use their spirituality for ill purposes. Doing such harm could backfire to consume oneself and one's loved ones. This most personal and direct prophylactic is, in effect, a spiritual back-up insurance plan to enforce social, humanistic morality.

In its basic folk wisdom way, Kondakov's depiction is a shamanic variation on significant twentieth century psychological insights, especially those developed by Carl Jung, Otto Rank and William James, as well as others associated with transpersonal psychology. Similar correlations between shamanism and expanded understandings of human potential have been made by many others.[5] Perhaps more analytically challenging are correlations of shamanic abilities and actions with Friedrich Nietzsche-like 'perspectivism', in the sense Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro uses it (1998) and Danish anthropologist Morten Pedersen (2011), working in Mongolia, has developed it with the concept of natural relativism. If shamans have the ability to harness or become one with their spirit helpers, then they can shift in their cognitive perspectives from hunter to hunted, curer to supplicant, human to animal, human to god. Their multinatural horizons are theoretically infinite, and potentially empathy-based, as is their far-from-simplistic philosophy, long caricatured as 'animism'.

How can we relate this philosophy back to the theme of shamanic morality and the constraints on abusing sensitivity to non-ordinary realities or visionary multiple perspectives? Put crudely, were not pre-European-contact Siberian and Amazonian shamans of yore supposed to be among the most vicious on earth? My previous answers to this question have centred on the ways Christian missionaries and shamans slandered each other, and the ways our historical records of shamans were filtered through the eyes of missionaries and colonists.[6]Analysing ramifications of changing social dynamics may shed further light. Far from being capriciously amoral, or chameleon in their behaviours, shamans have long lived within socio-political communities in constant flux, subject to great risks, and coping with the consequences of their indigenous groups frequently being driven from their original homelands. This included Mongolic-Turkic ancestors of Sakha shamans, who probably traveled North with their ragged and devastated families from an original homeland around Lake Baikal before European contact

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[5]   The thesis that shamans use their own full range of psychological potential while stimulating individual and community health has been stressed particularly well by Krippner, 2000; Csordas, 2002; and Tedlock, 2008. Romanucci-Ross, 1977 pioneered in correlating interrelationships between body/mind healing and the 'body politic'.

[6]   See Balzer, 1999; 2011; Flaherty, 1992; Znamenski, 2003; Narby and Huxley, 2001; and Tedlock, 2005. Compare Willerslev, 2007.

(Gogolev, 1993). As leaders who were among the most intelligent and prescient in their communities, shamans of each succeeding generation often became the first fulcrums bearing the brunt of change, including pressures from other communities (warfare), against the environment (development) and against their worldviews (missionaries). This is why Michael Taussig (1987: 237) called shamans the 'shock absorbers of history'. But as their reputations have become tarnished, their ability to engage, negotiate and mitigate change is compromised, and they are plunged into crises of internal dissent and authenticity. Returning to contemporary Siberia, this is precisely what happened to Vladimir Kondakov as he fought in the past two decades to establish his Association of Folk Medicine. It is, however, an institution that has survived his death, probably because the credibility of spirituality and shamanic empathy has begun to be accepted again openly in Sakha society.

We need to analyse this credibility as socially and politically grounded, beyond easy generalisations like 'shamans are the poor-person's psychologists'. One pioneer of Siberian shamanism-as-group-therapy was Sergei Shirokogoroff (1935). But during his pre-Soviet fieldwork living with Évenki, shamanic nomadic communities were relatively in-tact, albeit under Russian Orthodox siege. Communities that have lived through the Soviet period are in an exponentially different level of chaos and debate over what 'traditional values' to preserve, and how to handle spiritual resurgence, seen from human points of view as both situationally welcome and unwelcome (voluntary and involuntary). Some curers have grown into their 'called by the spirits' shamanic illness initiations with grace and creativity, such as my friend the accredited doctor and shamanic healer Alexandra KonstantinovnaChirkova (Balzer, 2011: 163–81). Some seers reputedly have managed to influence juries in court cases or find lost bodies for police departments. But others, especially those who are not shamans but retain some shamanic perspectives, have experienced social, political and economic insecurity along with intensified fears of uncontrolled shamanic heritage, ancestral cursing and revenge that can span generations.

Within current Sakha politically and spiritually fraught contexts, the backlashing revenge by haunting ghost-victims of Soviet repression, as described by Manduhai Bulyandelgeriyn (1997) about contemporary Mongolia, would seem to be not only plausible but palpably logical. Since Manduhai's work appeared, I have asked questions about whether vengeful Sakha political victim ghosts ever existed or have recently multiplied. In Mongolia, such restless ghosts (called *uheer*), having experienced Soviet repression, have surfaced recently during seances and in dreams –out for revenge against their relatives who either did nothing to help them while they were living or did not honour them with proper ritual after they died. I have so far found no similar cases. This may change, but for now my tentative theory is that Sakha rituals of respect were secretly done for those relatives who died from Soviet repression, whether murdered or expired from debilitating jail conditions, even when their bodies were not recovered. I know of no mass graves comparable to those described for Mongolia, and so perhaps also salient is the issue of differential scales of political terror. Another, more psychological

factor may further explain the missing revenge ghosts. Sakha interlocutors have sometimes depicted recent ancestors, while potentially threatening, as nonetheless savvy in their understanding of Sakha inability to control Russian behaviour.After all, they lived with collectivisation, resettlement, development and anti-shaman propaganda before they died. By this logic, the spirits possibly can accept that political pressures were so great that it was impossible to recover loved ones' bodies. Restless ghosts of the 'middle world' do linger in the framework of Sakha cosmology. Called *yeur* (similar to *uheer*), they remain place-specific maidens who died in childbirth, and older ancestral spirits haunting abandoned homesteads.

The hallmark of current Sakha spirituality is a chaotic experimentation, an eclectic grasping for meaning in post-Soviet (post-modern?) times of trouble and transformation. Myriad ways are being discovered or rediscovered to express Sakha-ness or to go beyond conceptual borders of ethnonational identity into global identities, including literal emigration. But the fieldwork I have been doing with members of the Sakha diaspora, in comparison with Sakha remaining in their homeland-republic, reveals ongoing, not diminished, shamanic worldviews. More accurate would be to depict a layering of beliefs and practices, situational and filled with disconnects, as is typical for so many twenty-first century humans struggling to re-find and re-define communities. If we do not have rationality or consistency in our own faith practices (Wuthnow, 2007), why should we expect it in others? The intertwined, systematic aspects of shamanic cosmologies and moralities may be fraying, making it perhaps more appropriate to discuss diverse 'faiths' rather than full-blown systematic beliefs or coherent epistemologies. Just as theorists have 'unpacked' and dissolved the idea of holistic culture and ethnic group psychological cohesion, we can do the same for holistic religiosity, including shamanism.

Along with this eclecticism comes the need to analyse ideas of competing 'authenticity' (Brown, 2003; Handler, 2004; Marcus and Clifford, 1988). Believing in ghosts is no more a 'badge' or requirement for self-identifying Sakha (or Mongolians) than is believing in the main god, AiyyUrungToyon, of the Sakha Turkic hierarchical cosmology. But when Sakha wish to say with pride that their shamanic philosophies are just as sophisticated as those of ancient Greece or modern Europe, and just as worthy of being called a religion as Christianity, then they evoke that complex cosmology. Some insist that their elaborate 'functional' system of gods is relevant to their lives today, especially the moral framework that gives those gods enforcement 'teeth'. Significantly, Sakha linguists have been active in the revival of Sakha shamanism as a system of spirit and god enforced morality, by recovering and legitimising ancient Sakhaterms and concepts. Their 'new/old' system has a label, *aiyyyoreghé* (white spirit teaching), taught in republic post-Soviet schools until recently (cf. Afanas'ev, 1993). As anthropologists or purist ethnographers, who are we to question newly reconstructed relevancies?

Sakha may compare themselves to ancient Greece or modern Europe, or to other indigenous groups. Some anthropologists of Latin America, including those attuned to indigenous worldviews, epistemologies and ontologies, have termed

new indigenous activism plus self-awareness 'emerging indigeneities' (Fortun et al., 2010; de la Cadena and Starn, 2007). They celebrate the perspectivism and multinaturalism mentioned above, and this has been adapted by French iconoclast Bruno Latour, famed for his recognition of internal dissents captured in the concept of 'iconoclash' (Latour, 2002; 2009). Without becoming caught in their distinctions between 'epistemological' and 'ontological' thinking, I see the greatest relevance for any reborn valorisation of shamanic credibility to be in constantly asserting that responsible indigenous caretakers should have legal rights to their homelands and subsurface minerals on a human rights basis. We can then entertain the possibility that shamans and their followers may have special ways of seeing the natural-human connectivity nexus that further validates those rights and renders especially urgent our understanding of human potential and deep ecological knowledge. This is what makes the synthetic, engaged approaches of Canadian indigenous scholar and activist Paul Nadasdy (2007) enormously appropriate and exciting.

Lessons from Shamans and the Anthropology of Violence

In addition to condemning Soviet repression, recent 'neo-colonialism', and lesser sins of narrow-mindedness, how can we analyse shamanic revivals to provide lessons about the overarching theme of violence and evil? Steven Pinker's (2011) justly celebrated and controversial claim that violence has declined worldwide forces us to contemplate old, big questions of how anthropology can contribute to better understanding of the history of morality, beyond cultural relativism. He tantalisingly argues that 'predation, dominance, revenge, sadism, or ideology has been overpowered by self-control, empathy, morality or reason' (2011: 672). He marshals massive data to claim that a genuine humanitarian civilising revolution has enabled humans as a whole to progress from proportionally large-scale violence in 'primitive' pre-state societies to relatively low levels of violence in the twentieth century. My main reason for scepticism is an anthropology training that drilled into my generation a cynical reaction against all self-congratulatory claims of social evolution and Progress. Pinker's impressive but inevitably gap-filled range of historical statistical materials has caused me to wonder how much we know or can know about societies not in relatively direct lines of our ancestry. In my understanding, shamanic societies, especially but not only in Siberia, represent far more than violence-prone superstition. Humanitarianism graces their past and evil-doing haunts their present, as well as the reverse. Both healing and cursing are part of the human social condition, with myriad triggers. Further, we can bemoan the cruelties of past eras without presuming that we can extrapolate back from contemporary societies a better understanding of either the functionality or disfunctionality of 'traditional societies'.

More subtly, the widespread and archaic belief that abuse of shamanic spiritual power can redound against shamans and their families provides a strong argument

for socially salient, reverberating moral restraint in many time periods. This restraint was and is exercised within the very communities reputed to be most prone to violence.[7] This moral restraint is not only confined to maintaining a narrowly defined in-group community for functional solidarity and productivity – tribalism in its worst sense. Tribal protection and moral restraint in shamanic communities can also stimulate peace benefits and 'mutual aid' values that ramify over multiple generations. The negative synergisms of curses, sorcery accusations and violence have often, if unevenly, been balanced by more positive synergisms of cross-cultural healing and social cooperation. The scope of moral restraint can be expanded or contracted by defining 'community' in multiple ways – encompassing, situationally, all indigenous peoples of Siberia, all indigenous peoples across the North, or, at times, all human beings or all living beings.

Experimentation with definitions of community is what may be happening with the contemporary, expanded self-awareness of 'emerging indigeneities'. However, expanded social awareness is not only a contemporary phenomenon. The Buddhism-like ancient sacred wisdom of Native Americans (e.g. Lakota Sioux), made famous by the popularity of 'sweat lodges', proclaims ritually reinforced communion with 'all my relations', meaning 'two-leggeds' and 'four-leggeds' alike.[8] Whether termed solidarity, empathy, sympathy, mystical rapport, telepathy or merely 'perspectivism', Native peoples long ago knew and absorbed far more than experiential lessons of hunting, warfare and brutality. Their reputed 'primitiveness' and 'black shaman' leadership became the excuses to exterminate or convert them, as many have written after studying depressingly many colonial and neo-colonial cases (Maybury-Lewis, 2003).

Without romanticising their at times undeniable aggression, or the ability of female shamans to lead war parties, we repeatedly see that Native peoples of Siberia, as elsewhere, have faced appalling prejudice and misrepresentation. Analysts do them a disservice by focusing exclusively either on male or female shamans' evil-doing 'blackness' or their pure, benevolent 'whiteness'. Their tasks, including political defence of their communities, have long been too complex for this. Further, the mobility and mixing of people that many extol as a prerequisite for today's humanism were also characteristic in other places and time periods. This includes nomadic and settled peoples interacting with each other in large swaths of Siberia. Throughout their turbulent histories, shamans, using all the senses they could muster, have perceived and tried to sooth the messy, changing legacies of intertwined personal and social suffering. In the process, shamans have become lightning rods of fear and hope for those who believe in them.

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[7] Pinker relies on Chagnon, 1997 and Keeley, 1996. A kindred spirit is Whitley, 2009.

[8] I draw on personal sweat lodge experience. That Buddhists have themselves been violent at crucial moments in their histories, for example in Sri Lanka and Tibet, should not obfuscate values of Buddhist teachings. Convergence of Buddhist and Amerindian values goes beyond respect for sustainable natural resources, deep ecology, social ecology and pilgrimage sites.

Acknowledgments

Chapter 4

Experiences of Mongol Shamans in China: Victims and Agents of Violence

Peter Knecht

Given that Mongol shamans are active in various parts of China, upon reading the title of this chapter one may expect that it covers Mongol shamans in general. Lest I be misunderstood, I hasten to add that the focus of the chapter is more limited. It covers only some Mongol shamans active in settlements in the grassland of north-eastern Inner Mongolia. The centre of this region is Hailar, a district of what is now called Hulunbuir City.[1]

If we describe violence as an act or threat of force, the meaning of the term seems to be quite clear. However, if we then ask what the source of such a threat or act is, matters become more complicated. At least in the case of the shamans introduced here violence is somewhat ambiguous, because it appears at times in a form that they definitely consider to be evil, while at other times it may be the harbinger of something positive. Speaking, therefore, of shamans and their relation with violence I intend to show that they are not only victims of violence, but also its agents. Especially the latter aspect involves certain ethical questions, but due to lack of pertinent material I will not be able to discuss them in detail.

The Story of a Barga Shaman

In order to provide the general background of my arguments I first introduce the main points of a story a Barga male shaman told me in response to my simple question of how he had become a shaman.

Born in 1953, this man lost his father when he was two years old. He was then cared for by an uncle, but this person too died three years later. Because his family was poor he did not go to school. One day, while he was guarding a flock of sheep, he was stricken by a severe headache, suddenly lost consciousness and fell to

the ground. At that time he was 12 years old. Although the attacks continued for many years, he did not get treatment until 1990 when he finally was brought to a hospital where he came under the care of a Mongol doctor. However, this doctor told the man that his illness was not of a kind a doctor could treat. He, therefore, advised the man to consult a diviner instead. Taking the advice, the man went to Hailar, where he visited a Han Chinese diviner. He stayed with the diviner for a couple of weeks. While the treatment brought him some relief, it was not a real cure. On leaving, the diviner told him that he was a blessed person and that he therefore should work for the people. He should return to his village and consult old experienced people there about what to do. The diviner further suggested that he should hold a ritual to the sky every year and pray to the spirits, the *ongod*.[2] At the same time he should look for a knowledgeable Mongol who could properly instruct him.

When he returned to his village he found that some old people had already suspected his illness was the initiatory illness of a shaman to be. He also met an old man, Purbu, who had formerly been a shaman. But the old man told him that he could not be his teacher because he had destroyed and thrown away all his shamanic tools during the Great Cultural Revolution. Purbu suggested, therefore, that the man should try to find a way to become a shaman all by himself.

Because the man had somewhat recovered from his illness and was quite reluctant to accept becoming a shaman, he did not want to hold the rituals as suggested by the Chinese diviner. Suddenly, one day, his 7-year-old daughter began dancing violently to the surprise of everybody. At the same time, the members of his family fell sick one after the other. These circumstances forced him to consult with a diviner again. This person suggested that he should see a folk healer, a *bariyaqi*, in Nantung, a settlement south of Hailar. There he met the woman Chichige. She, too, told him that the only way to find relief from his troubles was to ask old knowledgeable men for instruction and celebrate the rituals with them. During such a celebration on the ninth day of the ninth month of 1994 he became possessed for the first time by two of his ancestral spirits. Still he was not quite ready to fully accept their calling, claiming that he did not know how to dance and what to sing. When he argued with the spirits about this they told him that he should not worry, because they would act and speak through him. The following year, 1995, he was called upon to treat a sick woman. Reluctantly he agreed to do it, but when he noticed that his cure was successful he at last accepted his calling as a shaman.[3] Accepting the call also cured him of his own illness.

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2   *Ongod* is the plural form of *ongon*, a Mongol term for ancestral spirits, especially those of shamans.

3   Erdemtu, 'Shamanic Initiation: The Account of a Shaman', in Peter Knecht (ed.), *A Study of Society and Shamanism among Peoples of the Altaic Language Group in Northeastern China* (Nagoya: Nanzan University Faculty ofHumanities, 2004): 81–3 [in Japanese].

In this story the shaman appears to have become the victim of violence in a twofold sense. One of which is violence due to political circumstances. However, in the early stage of his calling, he is the victim of such violence only indirectly. As a consequence of the persecution that the shamans suffered during the Great Cultural Revolution nobody would advise him on the nature of his illness. Secondly, there is violence caused by a spiritual agency, his ancestral spirits. However, a shaman can not only be a victim of violence, but also become the instigator and agent of violence. In what follows I will show and discuss these two aspects of violence as they relate to a shaman.

The Shaman as a Victim of Violence

In the beginning of my search for shamans in Inner Mongolia I had an opportunity to meet the head of the Bureau for Religious Affairs in Hailar and ask him, whether he knew of any shaman we might be allowed to visit. His answer was brief and definite. He said that there were no shamans. There are persons who claim to be shamans, but they are only fake, with the exception of one old man who is a real and even a great shaman. He then quickly added that belief in shamans is 'superstition'; at best it would be a folk custom. However, in present day China, 'superstition', is not, as Stephan Feuchtwang has shown, a socially neutral term used to simply define 'mistaken' beliefs. It is a term that denotes ideas or activities that are not to have a place in a modern socialist society, such as the People's Republic of China, because they are 'refractory to policies of socialist construction and patriotic political movement'.[4] According to this understanding of the term, shamans not only personify backward elements; 'survivals' of old folklore. In addition they are taken to be noxious as they are accused of exploiting the common people and, therefore, are considered to be a hindrance to the development of a modern society. At present there is, to my knowledge, no open suppression of shamans in China, yet the situation remains somewhat uneasy, as I have learned by some experiences.

One day we were looking for a woman shaman who had been introduced to us as being quite famous. We had a general idea where her house was located, but when we came to the area we noticed no sign or clue to direct us. So we asked a woman who had just come out of one of the houses, but she said that she did not know and, in fact, had never heard of a shaman living in the area. To our great surprise, we found out later that we had been standing before the gate of the house we were looking for. This incident reminded me of what the Barga shaman mentioned above had once told me. During the Great Cultural Revolution, many shamans were made to suffer greatly since they were seen by those in power as

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[4]   Stephan Feuchtwang, 'The Problem of "Superstition" in the People's Republic of China', in Gustavo Benavides and M.W. Daly (eds), *Religion and Political Power* (Albany, 1989: 45).

enemies of progress, and many were persecuted and killed. As a consequence, they lived in great fear of being found out. So they destroyed whatever could reveal their being a shaman and when questioned, denied being a shaman or simply kept silence. That was the reason why the Barga shaman did not find a teacher when he was in great need of one, and why the old man Purbu, the former shaman, no longer wanted to be known as a former shaman.

When I met the Barga shaman the first time in 2002, we, the translator and I, had been brought to his house by two officials of the city administration in charge of maintaining the local folklore. After the interview the officials invited us, along with the shaman and some of his disciples, to a rich meal. There, one participant after another took his/her glass and gave a short speech. When the shaman's turn came he used the occasion to accuse the officials of doing little, if anything, for the shamans who – after all – were an important part of local tradition. Alcohol had probably given him the courage to speak out. By the time he had finished his speech the atmosphere had become entirely cold. With a few concluding words by one of the organisers, the gathering abruptly came to a close. It was only too evident that the shaman had touched upon the wrong topic.

About three years later rumour had it that the police were after him and that he had been imprisoned. The latter was not true, but he had disappeared from the village where he had lived at that time. It took us, therefore, a while to find his whereabouts and when we finally succeeded, he had purposefully come back from the grassland to meet us. We had barely settled in his house and exchanged some presents when two police officers appeared and asked my translator and me to accompany them to their station where we were asked the reason of our visit. They also took most of the photographs I had taken the preceding year, which I had just given to the shaman as a present, with them. The following year, at another meeting with that same shaman, he apologised for the incident but said that it did not have any serious consequences for him. Even so, the incident shows how precarious the relations of a shaman to public authorities are, although there are no signs of formal persecution. This along with the fact that in recent years so many studies on shamanism have been carried out and published, especially by Chinese scholars, may lead an outside observer to believe shamans in China can nowadays follow their vocation freely. In my own experience, however, I have repeatedly encountered situations, including the one mentioned above, that lead me to doubt such optimism.

One is the case of a male shaman, whose initiation ritual I was allowed to observe. When I visited him at his house a few days before the ritual, I noticed to my surprise several plates put up prominently at the wall of the room where I was received. They were given to him by the local party committee in recognition of his distinguished services to the village. These plates made me ask him what the party felt about his becoming a shaman. The answer was that he had asked the committee for its permission. They had granted him permission, but also informed him that it was given under the condition that as a shaman he would not work in any form against the party and its goals. The day after the ritual I visited him again

and took some pictures of him standing before the new *ger*[5] that had served for the ritual. For that occasion he did not only dress in a Mongol *deel*, the traditional coat, he also made it a point to put on the medals he had received from the party for his services. It seemed to me that by insisting on having his medals included in the picture he wanted to demonstrate his continued allegiance to the party. I missed the opportunity to ask when I took the picture, but the incident came to my mind later during an interview with another shaman, a woman.

People had told me that she was held in high esteem although she was still quite young. She had readily agreed to be interviewed, but at the meeting she appeared to be rather hesitant to talk about herself. Instead she asked many questions about my reasons for trying to study shamans. Eventually she mentioned that it was difficult to work as a shaman because they did not have the protection of the Constitution as the great established religions did. She then asked whether it might be possible for shamans to establish an organisation, which the government could officially recognise the same way as it recognises the great religions. Such an organisation should perhaps also include scholars studying shamanism. On the one hand, her idea of establishing such an organisation did not appear to be realistic when I thought of the different shamans I had come to know by that time. On the other hand, I thought her idea expressed a feeling of insecurity harboured by other shamans also towards public authority. In other words, it was an indication of the precarious situation of shamans in modern Chinese society.

Although the furore of the Great Cultural Revolution is now a thing of the past, shamans exert great circumspection not to attract an official's attention unnecessarily. That is not to say that the violent oppression of Mongol shamans is only a phenomenon of recent political developments. Nevertheless, neither the recent persecutions nor those in the earlier history of Mongol shamans succeeded in eliminating shamans altogether. The present increase in shamanic vocations provides proof of this, yet the insecurity of their situation forces them to avoid public attention and keep their activities at a low level. Although persons in uniform may sometimes be found among those seeking help from a shaman, the shamans apparently prefer to keep them generally at a distance.

As the story of the Barga shaman reveals, political violence may be cruel or even disastrous, but there is another kind of violence shamans face whose real nature is often difficult to recognise. A person may have to suffer from a particular violent condition for years, until it is finally recognised and accepted as the necessary preparation for becoming a shaman, and therefore considered as being of vital significance for the stricken person. In this case it is often an illness that resists ordinary means of medical treatment though it may also take other forms of misfortune. Perpetrators of this kind of violence are not human but spiritual forces, namely the ancestral spirits, *ongod*, of the person's shaman ancestors. For the Barga shaman of the story this painful period lasted for about 30 years and there were moments, when he wanted to die rather than suffer any longer.

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[5]   *Ger* is the Mongol term for the tent of the herders.

I do not know what happened when the spirits entered him for the first time. In the story he only says how he complained to the spirits that he did not know how to dance or sing. In response to this they are said to have assured him that they would use his body and make him dance and sing. Since he had no elder shaman as a teacher from whom to learn how to perform a ritual, giving his body up to the spirits for them to handle was the only way to learn how to conduct a ritual. On the day of our visit he offered to perform a ritual for us. He took up his drum and while beating it softly he began to recite a text in a low voice. After a very short time he suddenly collapsed. His assistant picked him up and made him sit on the edge of his bed. Then the spirit who had entered the shaman began to speak through his mouth addressing some of the bystanders one after the other. After the spirit had arrived, the shaman was given two wooden staffs with their top carved in the shape of a horse's head to hold, one in each hand. He kept holding them that way for most of the time the spirit was speaking. Periodically he agitated the staffs as though wanting to stress a pronouncement, but in general he gave the impression of being unaware of what was going on around him. The scene was rather quiet until the shaman suddenly jumped up vigorously so that the assistant had difficulty holding him by his belt and getting him seated again. This signalled the end of the short ritual. The shaman now quietly smoked a cigarette and had a bit to drink, while the bystanders talked and the disciples busied themselves with getting the room in order.

During the ritual people had gradually closed in on the shaman in order to catch what the spirit was saying. They were sometimes forced to recede in a hurry towards the walls, when the shaman made a sudden move towards them. On the whole, however, the ritual developed with only a little vigorous action. Later on in my research I came to think that this one ritual may have been somewhat unusually subdued.

One day, while observing the ritual of a Daur woman shaman for the first time, I was really frightened by the sudden outbreak of violence at the moment the spirit entered her. She had begun by dancing slowly while singing and beating her drum softly for a few moments, when she suddenly jumped up, threw the drum away and fell to the ground. On the ground she rolled back and forth with such vigour that her assistant had great difficulty in catching her belt before he eventually succeeded in having her sit on a chair. During these moments her face looked torn, like the face of someone in great pain, but once she was seated and had been handed her two horse-head staffs, the spirit who had taken her so suddenly began to speak. With this her face returned to normal. All the force and violence we had witnessed just a moment ago were gone. At the end, when the spirit had finished speaking, she jumped up from her seat, but with much less vigour, and as soon as she was given her drum she calmed down. Although I witnessed such a ritual many times and learned to recognise the moment when the spirit would arrive and throw the shaman violently to the ground, it was frightening every time it happened. The important point, however, is that the violence of this incident notwithstanding, the shaman always called for it, which demonstrates that he could control the attack of

the spirit. For an instant the shaman is the victim of the spirit's tumultuous arrival, but he cooperates with the spirit and controls its violent attack. In that sense, he is a victim of the spirit's violence, but only with his own consent.

From this point of view, a spirit attack during a formal ritual is quite different from the one suffered by the young daughter of the Barga shaman mentioned before. In that case, nobody, neither the daughter herself nor her family had expected anything like her being suddenly taken by a spirit. As the Barga shaman had to learn from others, the spirit who had attacked his daughter had, in fact, wanted to enter the little girl's father, namely the shaman. Yet, so far the spirit had always been refused because the father could not bring himself to consent to becoming a shaman. It can be said, therefore, that in order to demonstrate its intention to the father with compelling force the spirit chose an innocent victim. In that sense, the violence the daughter suffered was actually meant for somebody else, namely her father, in whose place she had become a victim. In fact, the daughter was nothing but a passive victim of the spirit, who used her to violently promote its own cause. The girl was not given a chance to either consent with or refuse the spirit's action. She was not in a position to control the spirit's intrusion. In this sense, the violence of the spirit attack suffered by the girl differs from the violence experienced by a shaman in a ritual by the fact that the first is beyond the control of the unsuspecting victim while the second is controlled by the shaman within the framework of a formal ritual where the presence of a spirit is actively sought out.

In the story of the Barga shaman, he himself appears to be a victim of the violence of a spirit who inflicted him with a painful illness whose reason was either not known or not acknowledged. Its cure was possible the moment the shaman accepted its cause, namely a spirit's calling. The daughter's case differs from this in that she became the victim of the same spirit's violent action so that her father would be forced to finally accept the will of the spirit. In another case, a spirit forcefully victimises a woman repeatedly, but for reasons different from the one that unleashed the attack on the girl mentioned above.

This woman is a disciple of the Daur shaman mentioned. I first met her at a ritual performed by that shaman. In fact, she was often present at several rituals and was always giving a helping hand, appearing to be very knowledgeable in matters concerning shamanism and the rituals. I was told that she was quite ready to formally become a shaman, but that there was a serious problem. The problem was that her mother strongly disagreed with her becoming a shaman, although she herself knew that she was being called and was prepared to accept the calling. So, because she was not allowed to accept the spirit's call, it was decided to hold a ritual for her during which the spirit claiming her would be asked permission to let her postpone becoming a shaman for the time being. Instead, she would become a healer, a *bariyaqi*. As such, she could engage in a profession helping people under the protection of her spirit, yet without becoming possessed by the spirit and without the obligation of taking care of the spirit as a shaman would have to do. As a result of the ritual performed for her, the spirit was said to have agreed to postpone her becoming a shaman for several years.

In the summer of 2010 her teacher, the Daur shaman, held a great ritual lasting for three days in order to attain the highest degree as shaman. The woman, who had become a *bariyaqi* a few years earlier, attended every day, busily preparing decorations and offerings for the ritual. On the last day of her teacher's great ritual all the guests, visiting shamans as well as the other guests, were assembled outside of the main *ger*, where the altars for the spirits were installed. The Daur shaman, the ritual's main officiator, became possessed by her spirit several times on that day, sometimes for quite lengthy periods. After her, all the other visiting shamans became possessed one after another. Every time a spirit arrived, the targeted shaman would fall to the ground and roll back and forth as described.

The *bariyaqi* woman was watching these scenes with the crowd of onlookers standing at the edge of the ritual space, just a few steps away from where I was standing. At a certain moment I turned around to see how she was because I had a feeling that something unusual was about to happen. There she was, standing, a concentrated expression on her face and her hands folded before her chest. In this posture she had begun shivering. A few moments later a great commotion started in the crowd where she had stood. She was rolling on the ground, just as a shaman possessed by a spirit would do. People hurried to come to her aid, but it took some time, until finally a woman disciple of the Daur shaman got a secure hold of her and had her seated on a chair. The disciple bound a cloth girdle around the woman's abdomen, pressed her head with her hands and spat mouthfuls of alcohol onto her face, her chest and her back. The stricken woman did not utter a word, but her face was terrible to look at and she was weeping fitfully. It took a great amount of effort by the woman disciple to calm the victim. After the *bariyaqi* woman had finally regained her composure she left for the main *ger*, but she was still visibly shaken. The question of what had happened to her and why it happened was apparently on the minds of many of the onlookers.

The husband of the Daur shaman who serves also as her ritual assistant explained to me the reason for the sudden occurrence. It was the woman's *ongon*, the spirit who wants her to be a shaman rather than continue working as a *bariyaqi*. Because she is not a shaman yet, the attack came not only suddenly, but also the spirit did not speak through her. Therefore, this meant that like the daughter of the Barga shaman she had become a victim of the spirit who – by this attack – reiterated its will that she become a shaman. Yet, the fact that the spirit did not speak was a sign that the spirit could not use her as its instrument. Because she had already had similar experiences several times before, the new violent attack only showed her once more, how serious the spirit was in wanting her to become a shaman. I can now add that this moment had finally come because her mother, who had resisted her becoming a shaman so vigorously, had died. The woman's husband, for his part, had agreed that she be initiated as a shaman. The road was therefore finally open for her to formally become a shaman and be capable of controlling her spirit and outgrowing her passive role as a mere victim of violent spirit attacks.

From what has been examined so far, I hope it has become evident that the Mongol shamans introduced in this text can be considered victims of violence in two senses: one quite different from the other. In one context they are prone to become victims of political or ideological forces since they are considered to be a hindrance to the social and economic development of modern society. In another sense, and one that has a vital significance for them, they become victims of the violent action of the spirit who is to be, and later is, their tutelary. As long as they do not cooperate with the spirit by accepting the violence suffered as a sign of the spirit calling them to become a shaman and the spirit's servant, they are likely to suffer sudden attacks beyond their control. However, once they have agreed to become shamans they also become capable of controlling a spirit's attack. As to the attack becoming the decisive sign in the early stages of ritual, it announces that the shaman's body is about to be used by the spirit as a channel to address those who asked for the ritual and answer their prayers. With the ability to control the violence of the tutelary spirit intruding the shaman, the latter acquires, in turn, the ability to now become an agent of violence to various degrees depending on the situation where the violent action takes place.

The Shaman as an Agent of Violence

An important and extended ritual performed to, for example, initiate a new shaman or ask the spirit's permission to postpone the initiation, initiate a new *bariyaqi,* consecrate a newly erected *obo*,[6] or serve the ancestral spirits of a family is clearly divided into two parts. The first part ends with the sacrificial killing of a victim, usually a sheep. The victim is brought before the shaman who first anoints it with three liquids, alcohol, tea and milk, and then throws a handful of polished rice over it consecrating the animal as a sacrificial victim. The shaman does not personally kill the animal, but he ritually prepares the animal for the violent act. An experienced person will take its life. That way, the shaman is not directly the agent of the violence committed against the victim, but he is essentially involved in it because without his action the killing would not be a sacrifice. His close relationship with the victim is manifest further, I believe, when everybody sits down after the ritual has ended and partakes of the sacrificial meat. Before the participants begin to eat, the shaman cuts small parts from the best meat and especially from the white fat of the tail. These pieces are then brought outside under the open sky where they are thrown in the four cardinal directions as a token for the spirits. Again, usually it is not the shaman personally who performs this small last rite, but it is done in his name. Therefore, it seems to me that the shaman is the ultimate cause of the violence carried out against the victim in order to have it serve as sacrifice to a spirit, while the killing itself is performed by another person.

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⁶   *Obo* is a structure built with stones and twigs on a prominent spot. It may be made at a spot, where people venerate an ancestor or deities.

At nightfall before the third day of her promotion ritual the Daur shaman mentioned above presided over a sacrifice of a different kind. Although this sacrifice was somewhat similar to the sacrifices of sheep offered to her tutelary, it also differed distinctly from them. In this case the victim was a black goat. The goat was killed without any ritual preparation, butchered and its raw meat placed onto a grid on the western side outside the marked area used during the day for the rituals. The meat was arranged so that the goat head was facing west. The shaman performed a short ritual in the dark but was not possessed. As soon as the rite was over, two men from among her assistants hurriedly picked up every part of the goat and ran with it in a western direction towards an area covered with bushes at some distance from the ritual space. There they unceremoniously threw the goat's remains away and the location was supposed to remain unseen and unknown. Compared to the careful treatment towards the animals sacrificed to a spirit before it entered the shaman, the treatment of the goat was very crude. Although this ritual, too, was a sacrifice of sorts it was in sharp contrast with the sacrifice of a sheep. While the latter was offered in a careful manner in the daytime with the intention of inviting the shaman's spirit, the goat was killed at night and its remains were treated violently till the last moment. By this violent action evil spirits that might threaten the important rituals to be held on the following day are forcefully driven away. Although an ordinary sacrifice cannot forgo the use of a certain amount of violence, that kind of violence is a far cry from the one performed involving the goat victim. In both cases the actual violence of killing is perpetrated by the shaman's assistants, but indirectly it is applied with the responsibility, and in the name of the shaman conducting the ritual.

In the aforementioned examples of sacrificial victims the animals killed are the recipients of violent acts. The example of the goat underscores something more, because there, the rough handling of the goat is actually meant for evil spirits in order to keep them off the sacred premises. There are, however, instances where even the spirit who possesses the shaman is the target of the latter's violent actions. When the spirit enters the shaman in the beginning of a ritual there is always a moment of tension and great violence and a moment wherein the shaman is invariably the victim. At the end of the ritual, when the spirit leaves the shaman, the roles of shaman and spirit may sometimes, not always, be inverted in the sense that now the spirit is the target of violent action by the shaman. The form of the spirit's send off depends on how the shaman perceives the nature of the possessing spirit. In an ordinary case, the shaman jumps up from the seat he has taken while the spirit is talking. He is handed the drum and after a few beats he bows before the altar and the spirit is thought to have left. There is no special commotion in this case. There are, however, other cases where the shaman may have to resort to violent action in order to make the spirit leave.

Throughout the spirit's addresses to the audience those who have asked for a pronouncement are called before the shaman and, there, listen to what the spirit tells them. At this point, the shaman is seated and clutches a horse-head staff in each hand. Sometimes he shakes the staffs and causes the small bells attached

to ring. In the crowded space of a *ger* or of a room in a house, the audience tends to close in more and more on the shaman in order to hear what the spirit says. At a certain point in the ritual performed by an elderly woman shaman her assistant directed the crowd to open a path from where the shaman was seated to the door. Soon afterwards the shaman held her two staffs tightly together with both hands, jumped up and wildly ran towards the door proceeding outside. She uttered wild unarticulated sounds and thrust the staffs vigorously towards the ceiling accompanied by the rattling of their bells. Once outside, she calmed down immediately, got on her knees and greeted the spirit with a last ringing of the small bells. With this sudden violent action in closing a ritual, the shaman insures, I was told, that the spirit leaves properly. It may occur, however, that a spirit is reluctant to leave and, therefore, has to be forced into leaving.

Last year, at the new History Museum in Hailar, I had the opportunity to watch a video of a ritual performed by the Barga shaman mentioned. The main part of the recording confirmed what I knew already about rituals at that time. The last section, which showed the send off of the spirit, was new to me and came as a great surprise. It began with increasingly violent convulsions suffered by the shaman until, at a certain moment, his assistant handed him a long knife. With this knife the shaman began stabbing his abdomen. When he finally threw the knife away, he had an utterly exhausted look on his face. Knowing that this shaman had always shown a certain inclination to theatrical performance, I was not sure of what to think of this recording. A few days later I met with the shaman. During our conversation, I asked him what this final scene meant. He explained it by pinpointing the attitude of the spirit who had possessed him as the cause of this action. The spirit had proved to be utterly recalcitrant and did not want to leave at the ritual's end. The shaman, therefore, had no means other than the use of violent force to make the spirit leave. Other shamans have told me that sometimes such violent actions have to be taken, but I have never observed it with the exception of the recording mentioned. Yet, it seems to me, that it represents the extreme of an action that falls into the same category as the raucous send off performed by the elderly woman shaman. Both these violent actions have the same purpose, the definite leaving of the spirit. The degree of violence the shaman needs to apply in order to guarantee the spirit's proper leaving is a matter of the spirit's degree of resistance.

Conclusion

For the Mongol shamans I have met, their activities, and in particular their ritual activities, are not a matter of prescribed forms or of teachings to be strictly observed. They are a matter of personal experience and its demonstration in ritual practice. In both, experience and practice, the shaman is faced with or acts with violence. Again and again I have been told that a person cannot become a shaman unless he goes through the painful experience of a mysterious illness. And once he has come to realise that the illness is a sign of shamanic calling, he resists

for a long time because he feels that such an illness is a violent force attempting to pressure him into a profession he does not want to accept. The reasons for his resistance are various. For one, he hesitates to accept the social responsibility imposed upon a shaman by the people who rely on him. In addition, he is aware of violence imposed upon shamans by political or religious institutions. In all of these instances the shaman feels a victim of violent behaviour. On the other hand, the shaman cannot act without becoming an agent of violence himself in order to fulfil his ritual obligations. He has to take the life of sacrificial victims to satisfy the demands of spirits. But, he may also have to resort to various degrees of violence in order to ascertain that the spirits who have visited him leave properly. It may be said, that violence in various disguises is a necessary part of the life and activity of a shaman. However, in order to function properly as a shaman for the people who look to him for help he needs to be in control of both the violence he inevitably faces and the violence he applies as a shaman.

Variations of Violence at the Vital Core of Chinese and Korean Shamanic Ritual Worlds

Daniel A. Kister

This chapter discusses ways in which violence functions at the core of Chinese and Korean shamanic ritual worlds. Much research has focused on one aspect of shamanic activity that involves violence: trance possession. However, a broad range of violence sparks the life pulse of these worlds. Rites ward off multiple forms of destructive violence: physical, psychological, cultural, social, spirit-initiated. To do so, they employ multiple forms of pragmatic constructive violence: symbolic, cathartic, creative, transformative, celebratory. Focusing on various facets of the violence involved in shamanic and para-shamanic rites, this chapter seeks to shed light on the dynamics of the rites and the vital nature of the worlds they embody.

Chinese Rites

Oroqen Hunting Rite

With a population of about 8,000, the Oroqen (Elunchun) People of northeastern China are one of China's 55 indigenous 'minority' peoples. Under the newly established Communist government in the 1950s, a grand rite was performed to send their shamanic gods away. Nonetheless, hunting rites and some other rites continued to be held. Before the hunt, a shaman or other hunters carve the face of the Mountain God on a tree, bow, and pray for success. Afterwards, they give a thanksgiving offering, sticking meat from the catch and a cigarette on the god's lips. As with any hunting society, violence lies at the core of the Oroqen world of physical well-being. However, the ecological vision underlying the rite constitutes the core of their world of spiritual well-being. The simple rite transforms the violence of their hunt into a source of environmental harmony with supernatural forces of the forest.

As in Siberian hunting societies, Oroqen hunters seem consciously or subconsciously to recognise that after killing innocent animals, they need to restore the forest's spirit-centred ecological balance. Perhaps like ancient Greek hunting societies, they too feel a need to cleanse themselves of guilt about the slaughter by transforming the meat of the hunt into a sacrificial offering (Burkert, 1983: 1–48). From a negative perspective, this basically non-violent Oroqen rite

itself constitutes a form of 'cultural violence', an act 'aimed at making other forms of violence appear just' (Imbusch, 2003: 25). Seen positively, however, it displays the vitality of the indigenous Oroqen religious vision as it transforms the hunt's violence into a means of preserving a world of harmony among human beings, nature, and spirit forces of the forest. Whatever the rite achieves in the spirit world, the vitality of that vision is such that its ecological wisdom can be appreciated even by non-believers, such as the PhD candidates of the Chinese Academy of Sciences to whom I once introduced it.

The Oroqen rite is an act of a shamanic culture, though not in the classic sense. This is not because it involves no trance or shamanic feat, but because it represents only a one-way movement of human beings to the gods, with no revelatory movement of the gods to them in vision, trance, or dramatic representation. The vitality of the religious worldview underlying the rite, moreover, may be waning. The person said to be the last Oroqen shaman has died; and though he believed in the Mountain God honoured in the rite, his teenage son did not.

Naxi Sacrificial Rite to Worship Heaven

Turning from northeastern China to the southwest, we find variations of violence of a quite different sort in rituals of the Naxi People. Numbering about 300,000, the Naxi depend on male shamanic figures called *dongba* to preserve their pictographic language and rituals. One village rite is the Sacrificial Rite to Worship Heaven. Oroqen hunters use basically non-violent ritual to transform the physical violence of their way of life into a means of maintaining a world of ecological harmony with forest spirits. Naxi villagers use the pragmatic violence of blood sacrifice to keep alive a world of harmony with ancestral spirits. The sacrificial rite transforms villagers' physical bloodline into a spirit-centred lifeline. The violence of blood sacrifice is perhaps almost as common in shamanic rites as the psycho-physical violence of trance. The *dongba* officiating at this Naxi rite, however, is more sacrificial priest than shaman.

To usher in the rite, families joyfully call out '*daji dali*' (good fortune and success) as they process to an area north of the village, the direction from which their ancestors came. They carry food offerings, large incense sticks, a sacrificial pig, and three tree branches. They set up one of these for the God of Heaven, one for the God of Earth, and in the middle one for ancestral god(s). In the key ritual action, the throats of the pig and a cock are slit. A *dongba* collects the cock's blood in a cup and hangs its carcass behind the centre branch. He collects the pig's blood in a bowl and sprinkles it on the branches, the cock, and stones holding a pot above a fire. Later, the pig's carcass is split in two, half to be consumed by those present and half divided up as gifts from the gods for each family. The *dongba* sets the pig's head and cock's carcass before the branches; and as males bow, he raises a live cock toward the altar as if it, too, were bowing. The women prepare a ritual meal, all eat, and young men perform ritual games.

Shamanic and sacrificial rites take various forms, the significance of which resonates differently with diverse participants. Crying 'good fortune and success', most Naxi villagers no doubt see their sacrifice as a gift to seek blessings for well-being in return. It is said, however, that 'killing never stands alone in sacrifice; it is always combined with other actions, some of which may actually have more ritual significance than the act of killing itself' (MacClymond, 2008: 31). The symbolic dynamics of the present rite focuses as much on two products of the sacrificial action as on the action itself: the sprinkled blood and the meat for the ritual meal.

Sprinkled on the branches representing the gods and ancestral spirits, the blood may serve in some persons' minds as an offering to the gods that expiates the guilt of shedding innocent blood or as a means of purifying or consecrating the sacrificial area that the bloodshed has defiled. If the Naxi share the ancient Hebrew notion that 'the life of all flesh is in its blood' (Leviticus, 17: 14; Milgrom, 1991: 704–13), the sprinkled blood may be vaguely felt, too, as a surrogate offering of their own life-blood to the mythically transformed village ancestors. A vital binding force originally received from them, it is ritually cleansed and returned. For its part, the meat provides food for a sacred meal that transforms the violence of the sacrificial act into a harmonious celebration of that bond.

Celebrating the villagers' spirit-centred lifeline, the Rite to Worship Heaven as a whole exemplifies 'the two-sided nature of sacrifice – the encounter with death and the will to live' (Burkert, 1983: 135). From a religious point of view, the lifeline at the core of the Naxi mythic world is assured by blood sacrifice. From an experiential point of view, it is maintained by the shared ritual meal and accompanying play.

Naxi Sacrificial Rite for the Winds

As projected in another rite, the Sacrificial Rite for the Winds, the Naxi world has a complex and ambivalent dark side. In this rite, the ancestral lifeline is in danger of being sapped by shadowy forces of social and spirit violence. In its social dynamics, the rite aims to purge society of the physical violence of love-suicide. Many Naxi lovers apparently took this drastic measure to fulfil love in a society that exercised psychological violence to oppose it. In its religious dynamics, the rite aims to avert the threat of psychological violence that their ghosts now exert against the living. Caught in turbulent winds and unable to go to paradise, the unsettled spirits of suicidal lovers constitute the baneful threat that is said to haunt sacrificial societies, a concrete presence that 'invades his universe, mysteriously infects, without participating in it, and buffets him about rather in the manner of a plague' (Girard, 1977: 31). The lovers' spirits are thought to lure others to follow their violent path and further taint the bloodline that they defiled by sapping love of its generative power in death.

To ward off this twofold social-spirit threat of violence, the Rite for the Winds deploys a two-pronged force of symbolic ritual violence: blood sacrifice and an aesthetically playful but intrinsically violent battle dance. Dressed in multicoloured

smocks and wielding swords, a *dongba* troupe imaginatively joins warrior gods in battling the threatening ghosts. The dancers' actions are more clearly shamanic than in the previous rite; for they give dramatic life to the two-directional movement of classic shamanism: supernatural to the human and human to the supernatural.

In the performance that I know, the battle sacrifice takes place in a grassy area marked off by stakes with painted pictographs and by two poles topped with branches and colourful flags. The poles represent the male and female protective deities. Between them are strung multicoloured flags, along with painted plaques symbolising things lovers used when they were alive; and throughout the area, there are small enclosures marked by painted stakes. One such enclosure represents the Village of Flying Ghosts, with a pine holding a nest of eggs that ghosts lay. Another houses the Mother of Wind Clouds, who was blown to her death over a cliff on her way to her wedding. Two others enclose figures of lovers who died for love, and an empty enclosure is for known lovers who did so.

The symbolic rite unfolds as a sacrificial action in three stages, the violence of which is dramatised by the battle dance. A cock is slaughtered and its blood sprinkled before the Mother of Wind Clouds. A goat is killed and its blood sprinkled on the stakes marking off the ritual area and various small enclosures. As with the previous rite, the blood cleansed in the sacrificial process is as important as the sacrificial act itself. Its cleansing power may be understood differently, however, by various individuals present in terms of each one's belief-expectancies. A life-force ritually cleansed and sanctified, the blood may serve in the minds of the rite's original framers and some participants as an offering to the protective deities to purge the guilt of sacrificial slaughter and purify the sacrificial area. From another religious perspective, in purifying the area with its symbols of suicidal lovers, the sprinkled blood seems aimed at cleansing the lovers themselves. They defiled their own life-blood and the whole Naxi bloodline in suicide. From still another perspective, it provides religious purification for Naxi society as a whole. Society's psychological violence against lovers in banning their love may have unwittingly brought them to suicide.

As the ritual play continues, a *dongba* with a bow and arrow summons a Warrior God, while another bears on his shoulder a pig representing threatening ghosts. As the *dongba* troupe move toward the enclosure of known lovers, the stately staged dance quickens. The pig is set down. The dancers toss their swords at it, and the one shoots it with an arrow. An assistant slits its throat and dips its blood around that empty enclosure and the whole ritual area. Another spreads food around the whole area and the Ghost Village. At the dramatic climax, a *dongba* wielding a firebrand leads the dancers toward the pine of the Ghost Village. He torches its nest of eggs, and the others wildly hack the tree down.

It is said that 'staged … forms of violence, which are frequently found in specific subcultures, help to build the community through their characteristically playful-ritual form and are not destructive' (Imbusch, 2003: 26). From the Naxi's religious perspective, the symbolic rite's staged cathartic violence bolsters social stability by purifying the spirit forces that defile the Naxi lifeline and sending

them to peace. From the socio-psychological perspective of the ritual theorist René Girard, it does so experientially by purging violent tendencies within Naxi society itself.

Girard understands ritual sacrifice as a religious manifestation of a general socio-psychological tendency to deflect on a social outsider as scapegoat 'the violence that would otherwise be vented on its own members' (1977: 4). Religious sacrifice allows a community to vent its frustrations and rancour not on a human scapegoat, but on a surrogate animal. Though unrecognised by the community, the sacrificial victim serves as 'substitute for all the members of the community, offered up by the members themselves'. For the short term at least, and as long as the substitutional dynamics remains unrecognised, 'the sacrifice serves to protect the entire community from *its own* violence' (1977: 8, 310). If the purgative dynamics of scapegoating underlies the previous Naxi rite, it is unrecognised, as Girard says should be the case. Here, however, the violence is explicitly dramatised in the staged battle dance and wild hacking at the pine.

The danced battle sacrifice does more than vent violent social urges. In a cathartic dynamics that is as much aesthetic as social or psychological, it brings into play the 'antitheses and tensions' that are 'the stuff of ritual' (Burkert, 1983: 83–4). Wild at the end, the symbolic battle dance vents violent gut emotions. For the most part stately and elegant, however, it keeps such emotions at an aesthetic distance in a kind of Brechtian alienation effect. As Girard says of all religious activity, the rite has roots in violence. As is also said of religious activity, however, it has roots in 'playfulness and the creative imagination' (Krech, 2003: 1018). The well-orchestrated battle dance does not just purge Naxi violence; it playfully transmutes it into an artistic celebration. As with other artistic presentations of violence, moreover, 'one empathizes with the perpetrators of violence, however much one may deplore or abominate the violences themselves' (Fraser, 1974: 85). One deplores lovers' suicidal violence, but sends them sympathetically to paradise.

Modern rationalistic societies use measurement, analysis, and reflection to understand human violence. Mythic societies like the Oroqen and Naxi use ritual to transform it. Modern societies would understand the Naxi tendency to love-suicide abstractly as an inherited socio-psychological mindset and use social education or psychological counselling to offset it. The Rite for the Winds manifests the vitality of the Naxi religious tradition in its power to absorb the raw violence of desperate love and social oppression into a holistic mythic world and to manipulate artistically framed symbolic violence to both purge and celebrate it.

Yi Sacrificial Rite for Family Well-being

As do the Naxi, the Yi (pronounced 'ee') inhabit the mountains of southwest China, but with a much larger population of about 7,000,000. The shamanic male representatives responsible for preserving their indigenous written characters, rituals, and culture are called *bimo*. In some areas, they officiate at family rites held annually or in times of need to ward off threats to family well-being. As a *bimo*

once said, the vitality of the Yi religious world, like that of the Oroqen, centres on spirit forces of nature pervading the local forest. There are also, however, constructive spirit forces in the form of totemic family ancestors and gods that can be called upon in time of need; and on the dark side, there are antithetical forces of destruction in the form of curses from hostile family clans.

In a variation of the socially rooted spirit violence of the Naxi world, the curses are imaginatively projected onto ghostly forces in spirit space. Apparently a bane of traditional Yi society, the threat posed by such curses is not countered by discursive conflict resolution among the parties involved. Once again, it is purged by a two-pronged thrust of pragmatic symbolic violence: blood sacrifice and ritual battle. Here, too, moreover, imaginative creativity and play stand in dynamic tension with the cathartic violence. As opposed to the Naxi rite, however, the battle is not enacted visually. It is imagined in poetic chants as taking place in a spirit realm between mythically transformed spirit-curses and gods summoned to the family's defence by the *bimo* as shaman. It takes visual form only in a small configuration of 'spirit branches' stuck in the courtyard to represent the gods' battle formation. In contrast to the Naxi rite, too, those present are not detached spectators. They playfully join the fray as they urge on the helping gods with shouts of '*Pao-u*' (no lexical meaning), sometimes laughing as they do so.

As in the Naxi rite, ritual battle and sacrifice come together at the climax in the sacrificial slaughter of a cock and goat. The *bimo* protests that the family is not killing an animal, but cursing enemies. As is said of other sacrificial cultures, the Yi apparently feel that such a protest is necessary to allow them to commit acts of violence against the victim 'without fear of reprisal' (Girard, 1977: 13). The *bimo* subsequently makes the dead cock crow, blowing into a hole cut in its wind pipe. Though the family knows this trick, they regard it as a feat of shamanic power. '*Pao-u*.' The animals' carcasses are tapped by those who killed them and lined up between the spirit branches and courtyard gate together with the knife and stick used to kill them. The sacrificial victims thus clearly serve as surrogate scapegoat offerings pointing the evil of social violence outside and away. '*Pao-u*.' The *bimo*'s sacrificial priestly role and shamanic role as manipulator of spirit battle come together as he tosses the sacrificial knife outside the gate to rout evil forces. He then tosses out the cock, drags the goat to the gate, and chants. '*Pao-u*.'

On the consciously stated level, the rite aims to purge violence in the spirit realm. In accord with the socio-psychological dynamics of sacrifice in Girard's schema, it purges violent tendencies within society as well (1977: 4). The violence of clan curses would otherwise take its natural course and infect the sponsoring family with urges of retaliation. The rite deflects such urges on the surrogate victims and spirit battle, 'absorbing all the internal tensions, feuds, and rivalries pent up within the community' and at least temporarily 'securing the safety of the group by checking the impulse for revenge' (1977: 7, 21). The surrogates are not just scapegoat animals. They are also battling gods. Like sports fans cheering their team, the family urges them in the fray, venting violent impulses with shouts

of '*Pao-u.*' The accompanying laughter, however, together with the entertaining poetic chants, transforms the violence of the event into a happy celebration.

It is said that 'legal institutions are the major instruments for managing conflicts among persons under a government's jurisdiction' (Kriesberg, 2003: 37). In modern China, the Yi have such institutions to determine who is in the right and who is in the wrong. Still, they consciously or unconsciously turn also to this cathartic means of conflict management rooted in their holistic socio-spirit worldview and ritual tradition. 'In Western societies there is a tendency for disputants in a controversy to have internalized expectations that there will be a winner and a loser'; but in the Yi rite, as 'in many traditional societies and often in Asian cultures, the goal is to restore harmonious relations between the contending parties' so that they can 'resume coexistence in reasonable tranquility' (Kriesberg, 109–10).

With the battle won, the sacrificed animals provide meat for a ritual meal. The 'antitheses and tensions' of ritual then take another turn. The focus shifts from destructive social forces from outside the family to personally disruptive forces within the family circle itself, and from spirit battle to a more intimate, down-to-earth mode of conflict management. The *bimo* manipulates simple symbolic gestures to invite family members to reflect on sinful tendencies that they themselves may have to disrupt family peace by inflicting psychological violence on others in the family. He rubs a small grass figure and egg on the arm of family members to remove such tendencies. Each member blows on the egg, which the *bimo* breaks open. They untie knots tied on grass figures early in the rite to symbolise both curses from other families and misunderstandings within the sponsoring family itself. The *bimo* then washes their hands and shoes and uses the spirit branches and a steaming stone to purify them.

What the Yi rite achieves in the spirit world cannot be known; but on the experiential level, it serves an important religious, cultural, social, psychological function. It preserves a world of interaction among supernatural, social and personal forces in which violence is both a threat and a source of celebration. The vitality of that world may be waning, however. In one case, the college-age son of the family, now a civil engineer, valued it for its poetry and cultural significance; but he didn't actually believe in it. In another, only the mother believed in the rite, along with the paternal grandfather, who was the performing *bimo*. The Chinese government uses various means to preserve indigenous cultures, but their future is at risk because many of the youth have little interest in their indigenous language and religious belief.

In the four Chinese rites we have surveyed, violence, sacrifice and shamanic ritual are far from univocal forms of human activity (see also Kister, 2010: 81–7, 107–10, 191–214). None of the rites fit the classic mode of Siberian shamanic rites as a means of contact with the spirit world through a medium who travels to that world in trance (Eliade, 1964: 5). In these Chinese rites, violence, not trance, is the common denominator. Most would not exist if there were no violence to deal with; and most use pragmatic violence to deal with it, sometimes in dynamic tension with creative play. The multifaceted violence that contributes to the life beat of the

rites is much richer than the limited psycho-physical violence of shamanic trance. Attention to the multiple facets of violence at work in the rites reveals much about the varying nature of the rites themselves and the worlds of belief from which they spring. This becomes still clearer as we turn to Korean shamanic rites.

Korean Rites

Seoul Initiation Rite

In contrast to China's numerous indigenous cultures, Koreans pride themselves on their single racial and cultural identity. That identity includes multiple religious traditions, however, that continue to thrive: shamanism for over 2,000 years, Buddhism, Confucianism, and for the past 200 years Christianity. These days, shamanism has the fewest adherents; but it maintains its vitality despite efforts by Confucian scholars, Christian missionaries, and recent governments to discredit it. It readily moves from the countryside into the urban metropolis of Seoul and on into the cyber network (see S. Kim, 2001: 269–95). Different from Naxi *dongba* and Yi *bimo*, Korean shamans, or *mudang*, are commonly women; and their cultural role is limited to rites in which, as believed, they serve as mediums for gods and ancestral spirits. They do so in village and neighbourhood rites, and especially family rites. The enduring vitality of their religious tradition derives in part from variations of violence at the core of its ritual worlds.

   In the Seoul area, a person commonly becomes a *mudang* through a long initiation process that marks the world of classic shamanism's revelatory movement of the supernatural to human beings. The process begins with the intrusion of supernatural presence into the person's life in the form of the physical, psychological and ultimately creative violence of the 'spirit illness'. This anomalous and empirically undiagnosable affliction is thought to mark a call to shamanhood by a deity or by an unsettled spirit of the dead that seeks something similar to reincarnation in the afflicted person. It is characterised by prolonged psychic disintegration and commonly accompanied by social rejection as scapegoat, following Girard's schema. In Eliade's mythic schema, the disintegration signifies 'a symbolic return to the precosmogonic Chaos' that in the mythic mentality 'is equivalent to preparing a new Creation' (1958: 89). In Korea, the afflicted person resists the call as a summons to a hard life in the service of people in distress. She eventually submits to destiny, however, and undergoes a Rite of [the god's] Descent. The rite cures as it initiates her into her destined new life as *mudang*.

   Beginning on an evening at a mountain shrine and ending the next morning, the sometimes chaotic rite draws her and others present into a world of the spirits that in Korea is said to be a realm of chaos (T. Kim, 1981: 150 ff.). The rite proceeds by way of dramatic interaction with various deities in numerous episodes of symbolic ritual play and some pragmatic physical violence. More chaotic than

in Naxi and Yi rites, the play may include folk song and dance, a comic episode with the boisterous *Taegam* spirit, and an episode in which the initiate seeks out clothes of the gods that she hopes will possess her. The violence may include the sacrificial slaughter of a pig. Dramatising the violence of the sacrificial act, the officiating *mudang* first jabs the animal with a large ritual knife and trident. On one occasion, she later danced around in wild trance, smearing the slaughtered pig's blood on her person. Nonetheless, the victim seems more like a ritual offering than a scapegoat; and meat from the local butcher shop office commonly suffices without *in situ* slaughter.

Pragmatic physical violence that is more integral to the rite's therapeutic dynamics comes to the fore at the climax, when the officiant and initiate submit themselves to it in shamanic feats. The officiant may do an awe-inspiring chaotic dance as she brandishes ritual knives and presses sharp straw-chopper blades against her hands, calves, face and tongue. In a climactic manifestation of tenable supernatural power at work in their persons, she – and then the initiate – 'ride the blades,' standing barefoot on high-raised chopper blades dressed in the elaborate garb of the Spirit General. In submitting to the physical violence of the blades, the initiate submits to her new, god-ordained life in the service of others as well. Believed to be divinely empowered and miraculously unharmed as she stands on the sharp blades, she – for the first time in her life – proclaims the god's oracles to assembled believers, who eagerly await the event as a supernatural sign that certifies belief. A fabricated ritual miracle, the dramatic feat compels belief because it caps the drama of the initiate's real-life experience of supernatural influence in the spirit illness and now the cure. The rite cures not by restoring former psychic and social well-being, but by raising her to a radically new, god-centred life in the service of her community. The violence of the spirit illness that initiated the transformational process thus reveals itself as a life-enhancing creative force at the wellspring of their world of shamanic belief.

The violence of the initiatory experience is radically different from that of the Naxi and Yi sacrificial rites. There we found blood sacrifice; here we have the sacrifice of the initiate's whole life. There violence marks a ritual movement of human beings to the supernatural; here it crowns what is perceived as real-life movement of the supernatural to the human in the illness and cure. In Naxi and Yi rites, the scapegoat animal dies an unwilling victim; but for the initiatory cure to succeed, the *mudang* initiate must willingly accept her destined new life.

Girard sees a revolutionary rejection of traditional scapegoat sacrifice in the Judeo-Christian biblical quote, 'The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner' (Ps 118:22; Luke 10:17). He notes that 'the rejected stone is the scapegoat, who is Christ' (1987: 178); but he stresses that by submitting to violence, Christ overturns the socio-religious tradition of scapegoating. The suffering Christ replaces it with a radically new and potentially more fruitful mechanism to deal with the violence of sin and, we might add death, as he takes it upon himself. Girard sees this event as unique to the biblical tradition, but it finds a resonance in the classic shamanic initiatory experience. The new *mudang* is a stone initially rejected, but

now raised to the centre of her community. In submitting to violence, she takes people's pain and violence upon herself. She does so especially in family rites. In Seoul family rites, she helps people deal with a form of spirit-initiated disruption of family life that is radically different from the creative disruption of the spirit illness. To do so, she employs a ritual form of group psychotherapy that can be more fruitful in the long run than surrogate blood sacrifice.

Seoul Family Rite

Like Yi families, some Korean families hold seasonal rites to honour gods and ancestors and ad hoc rites to cope with disruptions of family well-being. Whereas a Seoul initiation rite focuses on a creative form of physical and psychological violence at the core of many shamanic cultures, a Seoul family rite deals with a form of psychological violence thought to be particularly Korean. It aims to assuage *han* (Mandarin Chinese pronunciation *hen*): lingering frustrations, regrets, rancour and resentments that can gnaw away at one's heart and sour relations with others. The violent potential of *han* is commonly said to lie at the core of the Korean shamanic world, and the cathartic power of Korean shamanic rites derives in great part from the holistic psycho-therapeutical, spirit world means that *mudang* use to assuage it.

Prolonged family disruption in the form of illness, financial setbacks and accompanying family tensions is thought to have its source in the *han* of a deceased family member. The soul of the deceased may be burdened with resentment against the violent intrusion of death itself or hold a grudge against family members for a real or supposed slight. Differing from Naxi and Yi spirits, Korean spirits of the dead are not imagined as ghostly beings in spirit space. They have the same down-to-earth feelings as the living – at peace when things go well, but disgruntled when things don't go their way. Their pent-up rancour readily breaks out in physical and psychological violence against the living that disrupts family stability.

In one instance, family troubles were thought to stem from the fact that the father's spirit was burdened with *han* because he had been unable to leave his family a proper inheritance. In another, when the grandmother, a prominent *mudang*, had died 20 years earlier, a *mudang* friend of hers suggested that the family become Christians, which they did. This severance of the family's religious roots was thought to spark rancour in the grandmother that spilled over into the disruption of the family's fortunes. The potential of disgruntled ancestral spirits to destabilise a family is more subtle than the baneful influence of Naxi or Yi spirits, but more palpably real.

A Seoul *mudang* spends her life helping families deal ritually with such disruption from the spirit world. She commonly does so not by loading the deceased's *han* and family tensions onto a surrogate sacrificial animal, but by taking them upon herself as spirit medium and ritual psychotherapist. She draws upon religious belief, group psychotherapy, comic banter and empathy derived from the pain of her own initiatory experience to purge the violent potential of *han*

on the part of the dead and the living. After calling upon various deities, she brings to dramatic life a file of the family dead. In interaction with them, she brings tensions out in the open, provides objectifying perspectives on them, and brings about cathartic release in tears and laughter. In modern Korean cities, there are many more purely rationalistic means available for crisis management; but some families appreciate the vital effectiveness of the *mudang*'s holistic ritual approach.

The psycho-dramatic dynamics involves no spirit battles, but it may reach a pitch of pragmatic psychological violence when a rite is held for a recently deceased loved one. This was the case in a rite held by a woman for her husband who was murdered by his mistress. Such was also the case in a rite held by adult offspring for their recently deceased mother. In life, relations between the mother and first daughter-in-law had been strained. In a key episode of the lengthy rite, the daughter-in-law went into a kind of chaotic trance, speaking sometimes in the mother's voice as supposed medium, sometimes in her own. At one point, referring to the first son's bad health, the mother repeatedly cried out, 'What's to be done?' The daughter-in-law later told her that she was sorry for the distress she had caused, and the mother promised assistance from the grave. At one point, the mother said, 'I want to go' and then suddenly cried out, 'I'll take my son with me.' She apparently thought it would be better for him to die than to be in such poor health. Eventually, the daughter-in-law came out of trance; and the seance ended. Whatever the dramatic exchange achieved for the mother, it gave the daughter-in-law an opportunity to seek forgiveness and the family a chance for restored well-being (see Kister, 1997: 99–100; 2010: 179).

The Korean shamanic world manifests its vitality by providing a supernatural context for dealing with human pain and violence as it brings the supernatural to a down-to-earth human level. Shamanic rites help families deal with suffering and violence in a way that Korea's other religious traditions find hard to match with palpable results. Some Christians thus turn to them despite the official disapprobation of Christian churches.

Family Rite on Jeju Island

In another variation on violence as it exists in the Korean shamanic world, family rites on the southern island of Jeju have provided a venue to deal with family disruption in a holistic context that is sometimes social and historical as well as supernatural. For decades, the Korean government tried to suppress memories of bloodshed in the course of an uprising on the island on April 3, 1948. It did so out of fear that memories of the painful conflict could stir up violence anew. In family rites, however, male shamans called *simbang* preserved these memories in chanted ritual laments (S. Kim, 1989: 251 ff.).

A two-day psycho-dramatic rite that included such laments was once held to honour family ancestors, seek healing for chronic headaches of the host's wife, and divine whether a family member who had disappeared after going to North Korea years earlier was still alive. As background for the family's troubles, chants

called to mind the tragic division of the Korean nation between South and North. Bringing history down to the level of personal family sorrow, a prayer toward the end of the rite evoked a poignant image of the soul of the lost family member, who was divined to have died: 'Please be reborn … into the body of a blue butterfly or red butterfly. You pitiful soul! Wherever you go in the other world, please take away the iron net around the head of the wife' (S. Kim, 1989: 263).

Whatever the rite achieved for the wife or deceased victims of history, it served a vital social role by preserving the Jeju people's collective *han*, their inner resentment against the government that could not be otherwise expressed for fear of reprisal. Rites cannot ward off the violence of the past; but for decades, Jeju rites served to heal the wounds of the past by keeping inner antagonisms alive until the truth could come to public light toward the end of the twentieth century.

Korean Death Rites

The most universal form of physical violence at the core of shamanic cultures is death. It is as much a threat to Seoul urbanites as to the hunted animals of Oroqen forests. For the final variation of violence surveyed here, we expand our discussion of Korean family rites to include the procedures they use to deal with death. Death rites are held weeks or months after the funeral to bring peaceful closure to death's violent intrusion. In their aesthetically rich, psychologically astute, and religiously engaging dynamics, they manifest the vitality of the indigenous Korean shamanic world. Rites commonly insure closure in three contrasting ways. They assuage the family's sorrow and the *han* of the deceased in a tearful psycho-dramatic exchange between the deceased and the living. They may further assuage sorrow in episodes that arouse laughter. They then send the deceased to the other world in episodes that transform the *han*-charged disruption of death into an event of beauty and peace.

The cathartic power of laughter stands out in a Seoul death rite when the Messenger Spirit from the Buddhist World of Darkness comes to snatch away the deceased to judgement. Frightening though it is, the Messenger's violent intrusion may be quite comical. Mouth stuffed with rice cake and arms flailing a long white cloth, he tries to lasso the soul of the deceased symbolised by white papers attached to paper-craft flowers on an altar. As the family fends him off in mock battle, the playful mode of the mimed violence temporarily shatters sorrow with farcical banter and gleeful laughter. An episode in an East Coast rite does the same when the *mudang* comically mimes a blacksmith who gets maimed at the forge while making a mansion in the sky for the deceased.

The transformative power of aesthetic beauty comes to the fore at the end of a Seoul rite when the *mudang*, dressed in the elegant royal robes of the psychopomp spirit, the Abandoned Princess, leads the deceased to peace. She does so in a graceful dance around tables of offerings before a paper-flower bedecked 'gate of thorns' to the other world. A family representative follows, bearing a small table with clothes symbolising the deceased. Finally, the *mudang* dramatises the violent rupture of death by wildly splitting a long white cloth with her whole body. This

final gesture, coupled with the image of death as beset with thorns, evokes death's brutality. In thought-provoking tension, however, the symbolic flowers point to the rupture of death as the flowering of life.

In an East Coast rite, the *mudang*, wearing no special costume, does a dance with colourful Buddhistic paper lanterns that symbolise the deceased's mansion in the sky. Here the passage through death is not through a gate, but across the sea. The *mudang* imaginatively loads the lanterns on a colourful paper boat. She then holds a paper-flower tipped staff embodying the deceased before the bereaved family to bid final words of farewell. She next glides the lanterns and boat along a long white cloth that symbolises the watery path to the 'other shore'. Finally, she uses the staff slowly and gracefully to split the cloth, fusing the searing pain of separation in death with an image of the flowering of existence. To the cathartic power of laughter, she adds this mind-teasing symbolic gesture, transforming death into an event of dignity, peace and beauty.

Conclusion

This survey of the variations of violence found at the core of shamanic and para-shamanic rites brings to light various aspects of the dynamics of the rites and the nature and vitality of the worlds they embody. The Oroqen rite raises the hunt's violence to the centre of a world of ecological spirit-harmony. The Naxi rites use sacrificial violence and dance battle to maintain harmony with ancestors and transform the socio-spirit violence of love-suicide into an artistically pleasing celebration. The Yi family rite does so to transform the violence of clan curses into a playful cultural game. A Seoul family rite uses psycho-drama that can itself be violent to alleviate the subtle physical and psychological violence that the dead are thought to exert on the living. Jeju ritual chants serve society by keeping alive important memories of historical violence. Korean death rites employ psycho-drama, laughter, and aesthetic artistry to celebrate the universally threatening violence of death. A Korean initiation rite celebrates the creative, god-initiated violence of the shamanic initiation process as life-enhancing for both the initiate and her community.

The rites we have surveyed give a glimpse of the multifaceted forms that shamanic ritual can have, as well as the various forms that violence can take in social interaction and ritual activity. Han Chinese students have said that they envy the harmonious relationships between individuals that they find in China's minority peoples, a harmony they do not experience among their own, dominant Han nationality. For their part, Koreans stress the need to maintain harmony in social relationships and are proud to refer to their nation as the 'Land of the Morning Calm'. The rites we have seen give evidence, however, that efforts to preserve social harmony in China and Korea are needed because the harmony is readily threatened by tendencies to violence. It is threatened not just in outbreaks of social turmoil and war, but in the commonplace relationships among Yi villagers,

Yi and Korean family members, and Naxi lovers. The rites of these peoples have no doubt endured through the ages in great part because they serve to ease, purge and transmute violence into a source of aesthetically appealing ritual play that can stabilise society. The rites highlight the function of violence in the dynamics of play, with the Yi and Naxi rites drawing much of their power to purge and transform social violence from the pragmatic violence of their entertaining play. At the same time, the rites highlight the function of violence in religious ritual. In the holistic worldview of mythic societies, gods and spirits of the dead have a part in both the origin and ritual purgation of violence. On the whole, violence contributes to the enduring power of shamanic ritual by its dynamic role in worship, play and the maintenance of social harmony.

Chapter 6

Words of Violence:
a Shamanic Curse in a Sagay Text

Galina Sychenko

When speaking about violence in shamanism – the topic of the present volume – we are confronted with many different aspects and ramifications. Relevant data can be found in a vast array of scientific and fictional literature on shamanism, and, although it is not my intention to undertake a full review of such sources, I would, however, like to raise certain issues and point out few facets of the subject under discussion.

For instance, shamans participate in real historical events, including acts of violence such as political protests (Leete, 1998), although testimonies of this kind are rather rare. The persecution of shamans, another aspect of violence, is much more common.

For example, in Siberia shamans were persecuted not only by the Soviet regime, but also, earlier on, by the Buddhist Oirot administration, by the Muslim Kyrgyzes and even by the Altai Burkhanists (see the legends in: Anokhin, 1924: 112–13, 125, 128–9, 146). This is what may be defined as external violence, i.e. violence from outside world against shamanic tradition.

On the other hand, several concepts referring to violence can also be found within shamanic traditions. Probably the most common is a concept of violence coming from the spirits, especially during the period of so-called 'shamanic disease' (Anokhin, 1924: 25–6). Even today stories about how spirits force a neophyte to become a shaman are frequently mentioned. This concept of shamanic culture contains, at least in Siberia, a variety of motives and typical expressions: spirits will attack, exert pressure and harass a person destined to become a shaman. In the period of initiation spirits take him/her to another world where his/her body passes through all sorts of violent treatments: dismemberment, immersion in boiling water, etc.

During a shaman's regular practice, violence wrought by the spirits might also occur periodically. Thus, one of my informants, the Chalkan shamaness A.K. Abasheva[1], told me that if she does not shamanise for a relatively long period, the spirits come, harass her and force her to conduct a ritual. The main reason – as she explained – is that they wish to be nurtured and honoured.

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[1]   See Sychenko, 2009.

Figure 6.1   Shaman carrying a whip, Tuva 2009

An important concept comes forward in stories about fights or even wars between shamans (Anokhin, 1924: 140; Shirokogoroff, 1935: 371–3). These stories, narrated both by shamans and common people, aim to demonstrate a shaman's power and reflect mutual competitiveness. Still, the capacity to kidnap a soul in order to replace it with another one, one captured by a pernicious spirit and destined to die, is well known. As a rule, these ideas and observations are related to so-called 'black shamanism', which, in my opinion, has nothing to do with the 'good–bad' opposition, but exclusively with a shaman's power and ability. First of all, the power which is represented in numerous narratives of this kind has to be demonstrated as such; secondly, the power should engender people's respect; and, thirdly, the power should prevent people and/or spirits from doing harm to others.

Many traits of violence demonstrate both a spirits' activity and a shaman's healing practice, mostly as a reaction to it. In the latter case, shamans often use tools such as a lash, whip, switch, bundle of twigs, or sticks.

Using such *paraphernalia*, shamans perform actions such as striking, hitting, lashing, whipping, beating and so on (see, for example, the very revealing photos by Mihály Hoppál depicting Kirghis *bakšï* (Somfai Kara, Hoppál, Sipos, 2007; photos 6–13 in the colour insert).

Apart from 'tools of violence' and 'actions of violence', impressive 'words of violence' constitute an important part of a shaman's activity, in particular during his/her healing practice.

Moving on to the textual level of shamanism, we may pose the question: when, in which situations and forms do the words of violence reveal themselves in shamanic texts? In order to answer this, a thorough examination of all available information should be conducted, although this is not the focus of my chapter. Rather, the aim is to make a modest contribution to an area almost totally bereft of information.

Textual evidence of violence within shamanic traditions is extremely rare, with the fortunate exception being the essay by Gregory Maskarinec 'The Rulings of the Night: An Ethnography of Nepalese Shaman Oral Texts' (Maskarinec 1995), where he vividly and impressively describes a battle between a shaman and his principal enemies, nine witches, adducing numerous quotations from original Nepali shamanic texts (ibid., 62–7 and others). The noteworthy violent act here is the killing of an enemy – the maximum of violence which can be rendered! We should emphasise that the most important part of this violence is expressed textually. In the course of his book Maskarinec continues to stress not only the importance of texts, but rather their essential character and, in effect, the generative role in a shaman's activity.

Bearing these things in mind, let me move on to examine a text which Khakass philologist L. N. Achitaeva and I recorded in 1998, during an expedition to the Khakass-Sagays[2] of the Askis district of the Khakassiya Republic (Russian Federation). The performer – one of the last authentic ritual specialists of the shamanic type[3] – Tatiana (Tadí) Semënovna Burnakova, who lived in the remote village of Verkh-Tёya, agreed to conduct a ritual in response to our request. We told her straight away that we were not the usual kind of visitor. Asking permission to tape a ritual, we explained that we were scholars and were interested in shamanism. 'Granny Tadí' – as everybody called her – told us that she was not a *kam* (i.e shaman), but a *tag kizi* 'mountain person'.

It is difficult to recognise the subtle difference between the two types of ritual specialists. As far as I know, nobody has managed to do this. I would like to state that a very strong connection between the cult of the mountains and all other sacred spheres and practices, particularly for Khakass culture, is typical. Tadí had very close relationships with *tag kiziler* 'mountain people' and communicated with them constantly, seeing them and hearing their voices. She lived literally between two

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[2] Khakass-Sagays, or simple Sagays are one of the four main ethnic groups of Khakasses. Each of them includes different clans, each clan consists of families.

[3] See Kharitonova, 2005, 2006.

worlds – the ordinary and the supernatural, which for her was much more real. She was summoned by her 'people' in the way that shamans are normally summoned. During our conversation she did not use the words 'spirits' or 'masters', but she commandeered as shamans do – summoning them whenever necessary, asking them for information, or to honour her requests. As we will see below, she even had the power to command – not the spirits, of course, but the person who might be harming the patient. She referred to the typical shamanic paraphernalia, i.e. the shamanic drum and stick only in conversation. Altogether, her performance looked like that of other modern shamans, minus the drum[4]. She was the daughter of a shaman and she also had other shaman ancestors. Therefore I – as well as other scholars – am inclined to believe that Tadí Burnakova represents a kind of shamanic figure. I call ritual specialists of this sort 'the last representatives of the authentic shamanic tradition', distinguishing them from so-called 'neo-shamans', i.e. modern shamans who have gestated under social conditions (educational, professional, commercial, informational) different from traditional ones.

Let me go on to the analysis of the text, i.e. the text of a healing ritual consisting of three parts. The first part (A) includes lines from 1 to 78; the second (B) includes lines from 79 to 110; the third part (C) lines from 111 to 131. Each part (A, B and C) is performed to a different melody[5].

Part A is much longer than the other two. It has a more complex structure and consists of several sections which are:

1. Invocation of the main female spirit *Toγys Markha* (lines 1–4).
2. Dialog with the patient, asking her name (lines 5–6).
3. Making spirits know the patient's name (lines 7–14).
4. Invocation of the corresponding male spirit *Toγys Khara Tülkü* (lines 15–20) and other spirits (lines 21–4).
5. Concluding invocation describing the ritual actions performed (lines 25–9).
6. Dialog with the patient, asking her enemy's name (lines 30–36).
7. Séance of healing (lines 36–74).
8. Reference to shamanic drum (lines 75–8).

The second part (B) is a description of harmful spirits, made – I would imagine – in accordance with the traditional canon (lines 79–106). At the end a shamanic rattle, called *orba*, is mentioned (lines 107–10).

The third part (C) is a magic spell (lines 111–14), which confirms the results, purifies the patient (with the words *alas*, lines 115–23) and blesses him or her with

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Figure 6.2   'Granny Tadí', Khakhassia 1998

a cross, while summoning supernatural forces which, according to the shamaness, actually inspire and initiate the ritual (lines 124–31).

Each part ends with a reference to the shamanic paraphernalia, i.e. the drum ('solid wood'), the *orba* and the cross (deriving from the influence of the Orthodox faith). Not one of these objects existed or was used in reality. During the ritual a hawthorn twig (*Crataégus laevigata*) and an Orthodox icon were used.

The text also mentioned a Mountain Master *tag eezi* – the typical figure of a shamanic pantheon in South Siberia, which indicates, in my opinion, that the text does belong to the main shamanic tradition and that its shamanic character is beyond doubt.

The reason for the shamanic seance, the *kamlaniye*, was that someone had been inflicting harm on a patient. After asking the names of both patient and aggressor, the shamaness started an appropriate healing seance.

The harm inflicted in the text is defined as a snakeskin. In itself, the metaphor seems to be very powerful and violent, since a snake is certainly generally regarded as something dangerous and virulent. The shamaness describes the person who inflicted the harm as being dressed in the snakeskin – evidently representing the aggressor as a very bad person. But what does the snake actually symbolise in Siberian shamanic traditions? Why is this image used as a symbol of evil and harm?

In order to try and answer the first question, let me turn to the classical works on Sayan-Altai shamanism. In Anokhin's celebrated book on the subject (Anokhin 1924) one may find several cases referring to the image of a snake in

Altai shamanism. On the one hand, the image of a snake belongs to the lower world and therefore presumably represents a negative condition. This perceived characterisation is also shared with other reptiles both real (frog, lizard, watersnake) and mythical (*ker t'utpa* – a kind of swallower). On the other hand, to define an underground world as 'negative' would seem to reiterate the usual European / Christian point of view. A.V. Anokhin, a child of his time, *nolens volens* shared the same biased views. But his materials provide very precise evidence of the ambivalence intrinsic to concepts such as 'good – bad' in reference to the universe. As his materials show, 'bad' beings often help shamans and protect people, whereas 'good' ones may well carry out all kinds of violent acts against people. Both need to be honoured, both require sacrifices.

If we examine the context in which the snake appears, we find that it is a rather positive personage, thus challenging the notion that the snake exclusively belongs to a lower world. Snake images – both two- and three-dimensional – appear very often on a shaman's costume and drum (see the numerous photos in the collection of the Russian Ethnographic Museum of St Sankt-Peterburg and in the relevant catalogues (Massari, Mazzoleni 2002; Gorbacheva, Sem, Solovyeva 2006; Kasten 2009). The reason is that the snake is often considered as one of the shaman's helpers and a very effective guardian spirit. As A.K. Abasheva, who shamanised without the drum, told me, reptiles form a solid armour around her body during the often dangerous and unpredictable shamanic journey.

Another symbol which is connected with the snake is a type of cowry shell (*Cypraea*), called *chylan pazhy* 'snake's head'. This object has extremely positive meaning and is widely used both inside in shamanic contexts (in particular, in marriage symbolism), as well in others. The use of cowry shells for the decoration of a shaman's costume and hat is very common in Southern Siberia (see the catalogues mentioned above). But in this particular case, the image of a snake has another significance, representing the harm one person has been inflicting on another and, therefore, has an exclusively negative meaning.

There are a number of expressions in the text, which incorporate the word 'snakeskin' symbolising harm. They are: 'In a snakeskin' (lines 38–40), 'In a snakeskin Irina' (lines 45–6), 'Take, take the snakeskin!' (lines 50, 53, 62, 72), 'Take back the snakeskin!' (line 68) and in section 7 of part A, 39 lines (lines 36–74) consist of such expressions, which occupy more than one fourth of the 'seance of healing'.

In order to neutralise the harm, the shamaness uses a method which may be defined as the 'redemption of harm', something expressed explicitly in the formula 'What have you done, take it back!' (line 41), 'Take back the snakeskin!' (line 68), 'I am giving it back to you!' (twice in line 42) and 'I am giving it back!' (lines 51–2), 'It will have turned to herself, won't it?' (line 69) and 'It will be bad to herself, won't it?' (line 70).

The shamaness uses three kinds of grammatical constructions to express the act of violence verbally: present continuous ('I am giving…'), imperative mood ('Take

back…!') and tag questions (…, won't it?).[6] Each formula appears only once in the text (some of them are repeated) – probably because of its power and violence.

Another form in which the act of violence from the part of the shamaness' side is expressed more implicitly is 'I am making to you!' (line 37), 'I am making for God's person!' (lines 43–4), 'Here, here I am making!' (lines 66–7), 'You need it, don't you?' (line 47), 'Irina, you will need it for yourself!' (line 54), 'It will be of use to you!' (lines 63, 73–4). Once again the text uses present continuous, tag questions and the future indefinite, while the imperative mood is used in the first group of phrases.

Apart from positive constructions aimed at sending harm to the person who inflicted it, there are several negative constructions bearing a didactic meaning – 'One should not do such things!' (line 49), 'For God's person to make [bad] / One cannot, one cannot!' (lines 64–5).

In general, we may conclude that this section of the text depicting a proper healing seance is permeated with what could be defined as the verbal equivalent of an act of violence.

The last question is: Why is the image of the snake (or to be more exact – of the snakeskin) used as a symbol of harm? As I have mentioned above, in Siberian shamanism the snake does not have a negative meaning. Being a shaman's helper, it often follows him or her during the journey across the shamanic universe. In this case the snake is a live creature, whereas in the present study we have the skin of the snake, that is, a dead snake.

This image does not appear to be very traditional and quite possibly is innovative. Tadí Burnakova, being a type of shamanic figure, is at the same time an Orthodox believer – a religious synthesis rather typical of many Siberian peoples. This particular case has already been the subject of discussion (see e.g. Kharitonova, 2006; Sychenko, 2009).

Apart from her shamanic repertoire, Tadí Burnakova also performed Christian prayers, for example, 'Our Father'. She told us that it was a very powerful prayer, one given to her by her spirits *tag kiziler*. The text published here mentions a cross (amongst other paraphernalia) and an action with the cross or icon (lines 124, 125, 128, and 29, 128 respectively). During the ritual an Orthodox icon was also used (see Photo 2).

In my opinion, the negative meaning of the snake, typical in Judaic and Christian traditions, might have penetrated the shamanic text after the invasion of the Orthodox Church into Siberia. It is quite possible, therefore, that this central element of a shamanic text is at the same time a reflection of Christian symbolism.

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[6]   I refer to grammatical constructions in English language.

APPENDIX

Хамның сарыны «ағырығ кізіні имнепчеткені»
Shamanic Chant 'The Healing of a Sick Person'

Performer: Burnakova Tadi Semionovna
Duration: about 6 minutes; 131 text lines
Composition: A B C (A – lines 1–78; B – lines 79–110; C – lines 111–131)

(singing and sprinkling vodka)

1. – Toγуs Markha[7], Toγуs Markha,
2. Toγуs Markha, Toγуs Markha!
3. I am giving you a liquor, I am giving you a liquor!
4. I am making, I am making!

(speaking to the patient)

5. What is your name?
6. – Rita[8].

(singing)

7. – Eh, for Rita I am making,
8. What is bad in her – I want to take away.
9. There is my daughter[9] with fifty pigtails,
10. There is my daughter with fifty pigtails.
11. Nine with Fifty[10], Nine with Fifty,
12. Nine with Fifty, Nine with Fifty!
13. For God's person Rita
14. Making, I give, making, I give!
15. There is my son with fifty girdles,
16. There is my son with fifty girdles,

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    [7]   *Toγуs Markha* (literally, 'Nine Buttons' or, probably, 'Nine Nipples') is a name of one of the main female spirit-helpers of the shamaness.
    [8]   All real names of participants are changed by obvious reasons.
    [9]   In shamanic texts of Southern Siberian Turcs it is rather common to refer to supernatural beings using terms of kinship, such as 'father, mother, son, daughter, son-in-law, grandfather, grandmother' and so on, both in a singular and a plural forms (see, for example, analysis of a poetics of a Chalkan Shamanic text in Sychenko, 2004).
    [10]   'Nine with Fifty' in this case is a formula which refers both to the daughter and to the son of the Mountain Master. Their full names contain both numbers (see Ref. notes 7 and 11 as well as lines 9–10 and 15–16 of the text).

17. Toγys, Toγys Khara Tülkü[11],
18. Toγys, Toγys Khara Tülkü!
19. Mountain Master's[12] son, son.
20. Here, here I am giving a liquor!
21. To Mother of Shaman[13] I give a liquor,
22. To Father of Shaman[14] I give a liquor!
23. There is nothing that they wouldn't know,
24. I am asking about everything.

… (*pause*)

25. Here, here I am making,
26. Here, here I am making,
27. Here, here I am making,
28. I am making, I am making!
29. I am crossing[15], I am crossing!

(speaking to the patient)

30. What is this person's name?
31. – Anna.
32. – Anna.
33. – Irina?
34. – Irina you said.
35. – Yes.

(singing)

36. – Irina, Irina,
37. I am making to you, I am making to you!
38. In a snakeskin, in a snakeskin,
39. In a snakeskin, in a snakeskin,
40. In a snakeskin, in a snakeskin!
41. What have you done, take back!
42. I am giving you back, I am giving you back!
43. I am making for God's person,

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[11] *Toγys Khara Tülkü* (lit. 'Nine Black Foxes') is a name of one of the main male spirit-helpers of the shamaness.

[12] In the original Khakass' text a typical shamanic expression *tag eezi* is used.

[13] See note 9.

[14] See note 9.

[15] This formula was attended by clockwise movement around the patient's had with an icon in the shamaness' hands.

44. I am making for God's person!
45. In a snakeskin Irina,
46. In a snakeskin Irina
47. You need it, don't you?
48. I don't need it!
49. One should not do such things!
50. Take, take the snakeskin!
51. I am giving it back,
52. I am giving it back!
53. Take, take the snakeskin!
54. Irina, you will need it for yourself!
55. This something what I am doing,
56. Won't go away in vain!
57. What Mountain Master is doing
58. Will be good in one-two days,
59. In one-two days it will go away!
60. It fills both eyes with sleep,
61. It gives a wide place to lie,
62. Take, take the snakeskin!
63. It will be of use to you!
64. For God's person to make [bad]
65. One cannot, one cannot!
66. Here, here I am making,
67. Here, here I am making!
68. Take back the snake skin!
69. It will have turned to herself, won't it?
70. It will be bad to her, won't it?
71. In a snakeskin Irina
72. Take, take the snakeskin!
73. It will be of use to you!
74. It will be of use to you!
75. From the source of black water
76. I have taken a solid wood[16].
77. From the source of black water
78. I have taken a solid wood.
79. Like snakes [they] don't hiss,
80. Like worms [they] don't crawl,
81. With irregular teeth,
82. With cheeks as a cliff-*khomys*[17].
83. [They] don't turn on their feet,

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16   Metaphorical name of the South Siberian shamanic drum, which always has a wooden handle.

17   The meaning of this epithet is not quite clear.

84. [They] don't whirl their hems,
85. [They] don't hit who is not hit,
86. [They] don't affect who is not affected.
87. With eyes as beads,
88. With teeth as needles.
89. Like snakes [they] don't hiss,
90. Like worms [they] don't crawl,
91. With irregular teeth,
92. With cheeks as a cliff-*khomys*.
93. [They] don't hit who is not hit,
94. [They] don't affect who is not affected.
95. [They] don't cause a pain to a black head!
96. From which land you came,
97. Collecting two hems –
98. Come back there!
99. Like snakes [they] don't hiss,
100. Like worms [they] don't crawl,
101. With irregular teeth,
102. With cheeks as a cliff.
103. [They] don't turn on their feet,
104. [They] don't whirl with their hems,
105. [They] don't hit who is not hit,
106. [They] don't affect who is not affected.
107. By a shaman's *orba*[18], by a shaman's *orba*
108. I am beating, I am beating!
109. It's me who is thundering by a shaman's *orba*,
110. It's me who is thundering by a shaman's *orba*!
111. Little by little be healed and closed up!
112. Little by little be healed and closed up!
113. Little by little be healed and closed up!
114. Little by little be healed and closed up!
115. *Alas*[19], *alas*, my *alas*!
116. Mother-of-thyme from fifty mountains!
117. *Alas*, *alas*, my *alas*!
118. Juniper from the top of mountain!
119. Tied arms I have untied,
120. Tangled legs I have untangled.
121. *Alas*, *alas*, my *alas*!
122. Mother-of-thyme from fifty mountains!

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[18] *Orba* – shamanic rattle, which could be used instead of a shamanic drum by neophyte shamans.

[19] *Alas* – a word used during rituals of purification, always attended by burning of incense – juniper and mother-of-thyme.

123. Juniper from the top of mountain!
124. Cross…, cross, my cross!
125. Cross, cross, my cross!
126. What Mountain Master makes,
127. Passes in one-two days!
128. Cross, cross, I am giving a cross!
129. It's me who is giving the benediction with my cross.
130. It's Mountain Master who is making it,
131. It's Mountain Master who is giving it.

Chapter 7

Exorcism Death in Virginia: On the Misrepresentation of Korean Shamans

Laurel Kendall

On 22 October 2009, the *Washington Post* carried this lurid front page header, 'Fairfax Teen May Have Died in Korean Exorcism, Police Say'. The article, by Tom Jackman, described how in July 2008, 18-year-old Rayoung Kim had been pummelled and smothered in her bedroom during what the victim's brother described as 'a religious ritual'. The 'ritual' in question, the article explained, was 'the ancient Korean rite of *kut* in which a shaman communicates with spirits' and described it as a 'sometimes dangerous practice'. The alleged shaman was said by members of the victim's family to have returned to Korea and the claim was under police investigation. The article elaborated, noting the deep historical connections between 'shamanism' and Korean history and culture. Jackman quoted a respected scholar of Korean studies who said, 'he had watched a number of *kuts* in South Korea. He said they involve holding the person down while the evil spirits are pushed out of the stomach and forced out through the throat. In a 1996 case in California, a woman who died during a Korean exorcism had suffered 16 broken ribs and a crushed heart' (Jackman, 2009). Huh what?

I have been studying shamans in Korea for more than 30 years. I have witnessed countless exorcisms and been exorcised myself on numerous occasions. Even allowing for regional variation, violent exorcisms with crushing physical force applied to the belly and throat are difficult to imagin*e in the context of Korean shaman ritual*. Such incidents have, however, been reported in association with Korean *Christian* practice (*Mokhoe Sŏngyo/Ministry and Mission* 2005: 7) and several such cases have been noted in Korean immigrant communities. In the 1996 California case that Jackman invoked, Mrs Kyung Chung, age 53, died as a result of beatings administered during a six-hour exorcism administered to 'relieve her body of evil spirits'. Wire services described the victim and her husband as Methodist missionaries who had been living in Bangladesh (Wireservice: Upn (UPI US) and World 9 July 1996; RTw (Reuters World Report) 9 July 1996, Gorman, 1996). In other words, Kyung Chung died during a Christian exorcism, not a shaman's *kut*.

This distinction was lost on Jackman who, in a broadcast for public radio's 'Interfaith Voices' (2009: Show #46) a few weeks after his initial article, held to the idea that fatal exorcisms among Koreans resident in the United States were a product of the shaman tradition 'that dates back, uh, in Korean, Korean history

long before the introduction of the sort of organized religions that we see now of Presbyterianism and Methodism' (*Interfaith Voices* Show #46–2009, 5 November 2011). In the broadcast, he cited additional cases: 'I know three or four around this country, most of them in California, that have occurred. There were two, one in the L.A. area, and one in the San Francisco area, in the late '90s where people were prosecuted for murder … when, ah, the subjects of these *kuts* died during them. There was also a highly publicized one in New Zealand in 2001, and then there was one in Chicago where the lady lived, but had suffered really bad injuries …' (ibid.) Victims of *kut*? In what was most certainly one of these California cases, in Emeryville in 1995, the fatal exorcism was administered by five members of what the press described as a 'sect' or 'cult' called the Jesus-Amen Ministries who were attempting to cure the victim of her chronic insomnia by driving demons out of her body (*Mercury News*, 1995; Gorman, 1996). In the 2001 New Zealand case, the fatal exorcism was administered by a 'Pastor Lee' of the Mt. Roskill Lord of All's Church' (*Mercury News*, 1995; Kavan, 2007). I have not yet been able to trace the 'one in Chicago' but in all three of these cases, all but certainly the cases Jackman was invoking, *no* Korean shaman was the agent of fatal violence and no *kut* was its setting. These instances of violent death were closer to the logic of a ritual form sensationalised for American audiences in the *Exorcist* movies and the 'ancient' Judeo-Christian beliefs that informed this genre, rather than to Korean indigenous traditions.

    'Exorcism', the forced or coerced expulsion of negative forces from the alleged victim by ritual means, is a broadly observed and to that degree broadly generalizable ritual practice, a possible translation across many different cultures of religious practice. Those who have been observed to perform the role of 'exorcist' might be shamans, all manner of indigenous healers, Buddhist monks, Christian clergy and lay practitioners. This same ease of translation carries the danger of eliding significant differences in the ontology of invasive spirits and the logics of exorcistic practices mustered to deal with them. Arguing against the possibility of a Korean shaman's having performed the alleged exorcism death in Virginia; I will use this morbid example as a foil for the explication of significant differences between 'exorcism' in Korean Christian and Korean shamanic practice. I will suggest that a long history of *mis*translation that has been projected onto the morbid instances of exorcism death evoked above. I will argue that 'exorcism' in Korean shamanic and Christian contexts is deployed under fundamentally different premises toward fundamentally different ends and that the 'Koreanised' elements of Korean Christian practices may actually work counter the dangerous premises that, in some rare instances, have resulted in exorcism death.

Shamans and Missionaries

My task is to sharpen distinctions between shamanic and Christian exorcistic practice. Before I do this, however, it seems necessary to explore another possibility,

one frequently encountered in writing about the history of Korean Christianity: that many contemporary Korean Christian practices draw on indigenous shamanic roots. By this logic, even if a shaman from South Korea did not perform the Virginia exorcism, a shamanic past was somehow responsible for it. The muddled presentation in the *Washington Post*, of resident shamans performing exorcisms in Korean Christian churches and exorcism carried out in Pentecostal Christian contexts attributed to 'the ancient ritual of *kut*' becomes a decollage, revealing pagan impulses beneath the Christian layering.

It has become a common sense when liberal Protestant South Koreans write about Korean Christianity to attribute the prominence within it of such potentially embarrassing elements as prayers for material gain, the active agency of ancestors, and exorcism as either the legacy of Korea's shamanic past or a 'shamanistic tendency' in the present (Kim, 2006: 324; Lee, 1977; Suh, 1983: 49–51; Yoo, 1988: 66). The appeal is to distinctive Korean roots but it ignores a global and far from exclusively Korean phenomenon where exorcisms, prayers for wealth, and other magical practices have been widely noted among new Christian converts within an expansive, worldwide Pentecostal movement.[1] Scholars of religion have interpreted these developments as a reworking of older practices in response to more recent traumas and dislocations, a position not incompatible with the notion of a 'shamanised' Korean Christianity (Csordas, 2009: 9–11; Cox, 1995; Meyer, 1999). Massive migrations – such as the resettling of a largely rural South Korean population in industrial cities over a few decades in the late twentieth century, have unsettled, challenged or stretched the boundaries of prior faith communities through exposure to new and hybrid religious forms and the circulation of new religious narratives that make universalistic claims (Csordas, 2009; Levitt, 2007; Tweed, 2006; Vásquez and Marquardt, 2003). Religion is a creative domain of human experience, no less so in South Korea than elsewhere, but this does not necessarily mean that new or unconventional elements are necessarily cut from the whole cloth of a shamanic past. As Timothy Lee refreshingly notes, 'practices that are often impressionistically regarded as "Shamanistic" in Korean evangelicalism … are readily paralleled in evangelicalism elsewhere, even in cultures not known for Shamanism' (Lee, 2010: 125).

Early Protestant Christian encounters with Korean shamans yielded a long legacy of mistranslation. Missionaries, and early western travellers who relied on resident missionaries for information, described Korean popular religion through a language of 'demon worship, exorcism, and superstition', glossing virtually

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[1]   Missionisation, ever a global phenomenon, takes on a new complexity in contemporary Korea where, in 1999, Korean Protestant churches commissioned more missionaries than did any other national church except the United States. According to Buswell and Lee, more than 12,000 Korean missionaries are now active globally (Buswell and Lee, 2006: 2). Recall that Kyung Chung, the victim of the 1996 California exorcism death, and her husband were Methodist missionaries who had been living in Bangladesh, representatives of a broad Korean Evangelical movement.

any shamanic activity as 'exorcism', from a dramatic purging of invasive spirits, to commiserating with ancestors, to playfully bantering with gods during a *kut*. They converted (if one can use that word) the diverse gods, restless ancestors, wandering ghosts and noxious influences of Korean popular religion to 'evil spirits' and 'demons,' sometimes to 'the devil' himself (Oak, n.d.). '[A]s with Luther, the devil is an important personage, and they have many ceremonies for exorcising him' (Rockhill, 1891: 183).[2]

In reportage and lightly fictionalised novels, Korea missionaries described the awesome absolute of conversion as itself a kind of exorcism. In 'fetish' burnings, great bonfires of ancestral tablets and spirit placings were 'destroyed as were the books in Ephesus' (Cram, 1905: 149; Gifford, 1898; 115; Jones, 1902: 51). In the most dramatic accounts, vanquished shamans cast their own paraphernalia into the flames, sometimes inspiring their more timid neighbours to destroy their own 'fetishes'[3] (Jones, 1902: 148; Baird, 1909: 99–101; Bishop 1970: 348; Cram 1905; Oak, n.d.: 18). Missionaries enthusiastically circulated the story of a converted shaman who became a zealous faith healer, casting out demons in the Christian mode (Baird, 1909; 102, Oak, n.d.), a possibility replayed in Youngsook Kim Harvey's 1970s life history of the former shaman, 'Deaconess Chang' (Harvey, 1979: 205–34, 1987). Korea's premier celebrity shaman, Kim Geum-hwa, experiences frequent harassment from Christians attempting to exorcise her of demons, incidents that she describes as an insult to both her culture and her religion (Ch'a, 1997: 38; Kim 2003: 158).

Missionaries were initially surprised when – as they described it – new converts and potential converts came to them 'in great terror', asking 'to be freed from devils and evil spirits' (Gale, 1898: 246–7). Biblical accounts of early Christian exorcism took on a new and more literal relevance (Oak, n.d.: 17): 'Our remedy is to read from the New Testament, translating the English into Korean as we proceed' (Allen, 1908: 171; Baird, 1909; Cram, 1905; Gifford, 1898: 117; Oak, n.d.). In this, they had the reinforcing work of the Reverend John L. Nevius, a successful China missionary who had collected from the mission field wide-ranging accounts of 'demonic possession' and on the basis of his own experience, suggested the efficacy of exorcisms performed by native converts reading appropriate Bible passages (Oak, n.d.: 15–16, Nevius, 1893). Thus were foul spirits 'adjured in the name of Jesus to come out' (Bishop, 1970: 348). The exorcistic struggle between shaman and Christian even became a literary motif in Kim Tongni's colonial period novella, *Portrait of a Shaman* (Munyŏdo) (Kim, 1971), produced as a film

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   2   Seung-Deuk Oak describes how English-speaking Protestant missionaries of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century followed the language used by the French priests who had preceded them, retaining these terms even as missionary scholars began to write a more complex understanding of the Korean folk pantheon (Oak, n.d.; cf. Jones, 1902; Anonymous, 1895: 146).

   3   These unspecified 'fetishes' were probably either ancestor tablets or placings for the household gods as described in Jones (1902).

in the early 1970s. Some Pentecostal South Korean Christians today continue to regard native spirits as devils and demons (*sat'an*) requiring exorcism, many see shamans as engaging in 'devil worship', and some groups zealously strive to rescue shamans from Satan's grasp (Ch'a, 1997: 38; Harvey, 1979: 205–34; 1987; Sun, 1991: 203–4).[4]

While the missionaries' field reports, memoirs and fictionalised narratives suggest a firm faith in the healing power of scripture, the power of prayer to produce miraculous cures and cause converts to lead better, happier lives, they reveal more ambiguity regarding the literal presence of devils and demons. A few speak with the Reverend W. G. Cram's certainty, 'At home we read of devil possession in the Bible and we know how Christ dealt with such cases, but we seldom see a person possessed with demons. In Korea we come in contact with such cases regularly … That the devil at times makes his home in the bodies of men and women, especially in heathen lands, is a matter of unmistakable evidence' (Cram, 1905:148). The Reverend Charles Alan Clark, initially sceptical of devil exorcism in the mission field, found himself confronting Satan during a particularly impassioned Korean revival meeting (Clark, 2003: 39–40). In general, however, missionary authors wrote of the shaman (*mudang*) with ethnographic distance and from an explicitly modern perspective: 'She claims to be in league with the evil spirits which infest the world, and can appease them and persuade them to leave' (Moose, 1911: 194). '… It is easy for us as Westerners to ridicule the superstitions of the Koreans; but if we, in a spirit of sympathy, assume for a time their angle of vision, we can see that to *them* the fear of demons is the cause of frequent and intense mental suffering' (Gifford, 1898: 11) [my emphasis]. A similar ambivalence appears in the present in the writing of liberal Protestant Korean and Korean American theologians when they survey the popularity of Pentecostal denominations and the prevalence of prayers for wealth. Some have even attributed the shortcomings of Korean Christianity to an over-reliance in the early years on the proselytising powers of illiterate native Bible women, barely removed from their own shamanic roots (Lee, 1977, EWUWSP, 1977: 208). But what were those roots? Certainly they were not the worship of devils and demons as missionary writers were wont to construe them.

Korean Shamans and Shamanic Exorcism

Korean shamans (*mudang*, *mansin*) do the work of maintaining harmony between denizens of the living family, their household gods, and familial dead. Neglected or otherwise offended gods take offence and drop their protection of the family. The dead, motivated by longing, anger or worldly craving, move among the living, causing a variety of misfortunes. In the absence of divine protection, ghosts and

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[4]   For example, one believer told me that *kut* most certainly cure afflictions because the devil would have it so.

an accretion of other ominous entities exert a baleful influence on living members of the household. Gods, ancestors and ghosts are neither demons nor devils. They are capable of causing mischief and harm, but as the aggrieved alter in an ongoing relationship where, when given their proper due, they are expected to tender protection and blessings.

Shamans, called *mudang* or *mansin*, are empowered to interpret the will of gods and ancestors through dreams, visions and intuition and to right the balance between the living family, the gods and the ancestors through appropriate ritual work. As in other shamanic traditions, they have been chosen by the gods for this destiny, usually tortured with misfortune, madness or other inexplicable circumstance until they accept their calling (Kendall, 1985). Aided by their own guardian gods, *mudang* or *mansin* are empowered to divine and perform a variety of rituals, the most spectacular of which are called '*kut*'.[5] *Kut* are, in effect, parties to entertain the gods, offerings in the form of food, drink, music and an opportunity for the denizens of the spirit world to act out, stating grievances, exacting proper recognition, and eventually promising succour. In *kut*, different deities appear sequentially, manifested through shamans garbed in costumes appropriate to each of the gods they manifest.[6] The god is invoked with drumming and singing, the shaman dances, and as inspiration strikes her, leaps to percussive drumming. When the drumming stops, she[7] speaks, mimes and otherwise enacts the presence of the deity whose will and intentions she intuits from visions, voices, bodily sensations, and/or her canny reading of the situation. Even if visions elude her, the shamans' understanding is that they must correctly convey the gods' intentions in order for the *kut* to be successful. In the gods' persona they speak and give divinations – 'the true words of the spirits' – they also banter and tease depending on the gods' persona and inclinations. Ancestors appear in one special sequence in tearful evocations, lament all that they missed while alive and all that they miss for being dead, and are eventually sent on their way with cups of wine and bits of cash as 'travel money'.

Kut that are performed to heal a client of illness or affliction attributed to the presence of wandering ghosts and other noxious influences (*uhwan kut*), the kind of *kut* the hypothetical shaman would have performed in Fairfax, usually include a small exorcism to leave the client 'clean', purged of all manner of baleful and unclean entities that cause misfortune. The following exorcism was held at the

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[5]   Although there are several different styles of shaman practice in Korea, the costumed *kut* performed by *mansin* from the Seoul region and North Korea are best known and widely imitated. My own fieldwork has been with shamans who perform in the tradition of the Seoul region (Hanyang, Hansŏng).

[6]   This is a general description of *kut* performed by shamans (*mansin*) of the Seoul region (*hanyang kut, hansŏng kut*) and related traditions from North Korea. These are the most elaborate *kut* performed by charismatic shamans.

[7]   Since most, although not all, Korean shamans are women I use the feminine pronoun.

end of a *kut* for 'Mrs Yi', a woman suffering from bodily aches and pains and also hoping to recoup her family's fortune after a business failure. It is typical of the many exorcisms I have witnessed during my research and the several that have been performed on me:

> The shaman Yongsu's Mother seats Mrs. Yi on the edge of the narrow veranda facing the open courtyard of the shrine. She covers her with the colored flags that the Spirit Warrior, the deity who will perform the exorcism, uses for divination. She takes the halberd and trident that the military spirits carry and crosses it in front of Mrs. Yi's chest as talismanic protection and a threat to any lurking unwholesome entities. While another member of the shaman team strikes the cymbals in close proximity to Mrs. Yi's ear, Yongsu's Mother, in the Spirit Warrior's persona, whoops as she pelts her with scraps of food and bits of coarse grain, the kinds of offerings for wandering ghosts who are being driven out into the open courtyard. She takes the bundle of clothing that was earlier offered to the ancestors and wafts it around Mrs. Yi to draw away the doleful presence of her own family dead, then casts the bundle away into the courtyard. She tears cloth 'bridges' over Mrs. Yi's body to release the hold of the dead and whooping, briefly and lightly straddles her, then lightly presses the point of her knife, a common kitchen knife, against Mrs. Yi's shoulders. She tosses her knife into the courtyard and verifies the tip points away from the room, away from Mrs. Yi, to signify that all manner of unclean and inauspicious forces have been driven away. She pulls away the flags and spits a jet of milky rice wine into Mrs. Yi's face. The cymbals go silent. Mrs. Yi is judged to be 'clean'. The shamans will carry the bundle of clothing away from the shrine room to be burned.

Such an exorcism is a sensory as well as a symbolic experience. In tandem with the spatial logic of a *kut*, inauspicious things are driven away from the client, sent outside and physically removed from her person and interior space in the form of scraps of food, cloth and clothing that have become vehicles of ghosts and noxious influences. During this brief ritual activity, the client is subjected to a battery of sensory indications of the battle being waged on her behalf while her vision is blocked by the flag covering, the cymbals implode in her ear punctuated by whoops from the Spirit Warrior. The grain and scraps strike her back, the knife tip brushes her shoulder, a slight engagement with the weight of the shaman's body, the unforeseen spurt of wine in her face, and then silence. I experience this silence, after sensory implosion, as a lightening sense of release; I assume that clients like Mrs Yi experience something like this as well. There is no pressure on the ribs and abdomen and no strangling, nothing that resembles the physical practices commonly described for exorcism death. Significantly, the client's vital organs are protected by her posture with only her back exposed to the Spirit Warrior's activity.

But if I have described a routine exorcism, what happens in more dire situations? What happens when the client 'might have had mental health issues' as

Figure 7.1   Exorcism in process, Seoul, 1994

claimed for Rayoung Kim (Jackman, 2009)? In the shamans' view, full-on violent possessions, cases of a client being caught and possessed by a particularly angry god and driven insane, happen rarely. In these cases, the possession is so violent that the invasive god or ancestor must be driven out or the client will be tormented to death. The situation is more nearly adversarial. Does it therefore carry a greater risk of violence? I saw one such 'crazy *kut*' (*mich'in kut*) during my first fieldwork and at the time the shamans I was working with impressed upon me that this was a rare circumstance, something that I ought not to miss.

Mrs Min, an impoverished woman had suffered the deaths of several of her children and none of her male babies had survived. Her kinswomen and neighbours described her as someone who held her feelings in and never expressed her frustration. When she attended the final death rites for her own mother, she was struck crazy and began to shriek and writhe. Taken to a small clinic, she received a tranquilising shot and spent the next three days in a drugged state, her face twisted in pain. At that point, her husbands' sisters consulted a shaman who quickly determined that she was possessed by her own dead mother, out of pity, and a supernatural official who was vexed that she had brought rice to her own

mother's death rites but had been too poor to make rice cake offerings to her own household gods. In the shamans' view, this was a life-and-death situation.

They performed a small exorcism outside the house gate to drive out a malevolent spirit who had come from beyond the house. Mrs Min bundled in a thick quilt and with a cooking pot on her head as a protective helmet, was lightly beaten with a bundle of peach wood twigs, a wood with exorcistic properties. As with Mrs Yi's *kut*, the main exorcism would take place toward the end of the *kut*, after a full night of appearances by gods and ancestors who derided Mrs Min and her family for having neglected them and then commiserated over her pitiable condition and departed promising succour. Throughout these events, family women and shamans carefully ministered to Mrs Min's needs in an atmosphere of support and concern. At 2:40 in the morning, Mrs Min was made to kneel at the edge of the veranda, covered with the divination flags and had the knives crossed at her chest. Yongsu's Mother manifested the martial spirits:

> Okkyŏng's Mother [then an apprentice shaman] hits the cymbals, a steady percussive sequence in close proximity to Mrs. Min's ear as Yongsu's Mother/ the Spirit Warrior swiftly pelts her with rice and millet grain, bits of rice cake, and bits of chicken. So far, this is a standard exorcism, done in any family experiencing illness or misfortune, the sort of exorcism that I will experience many times. With a mich'in person's possession, however, the *mansin* must expose the tormenting spirit and force it to depart. While Yongsu's Mother presses the [blunt] prongs of her trident against Mrs. Min's back, Chatterbox *Mansin* stands on the ground below the veranda, wielding a flaming bundle of rice straw. The interrogation begins.
>
> YONGSU'S MOTHER/SPIRIT WARRIOR: Is it Mother who is doing this?
> CHATTERBOX: Because you're so pathetic?
> YONGSU'S MOTHER/SPIRIT WARRIOR: Speak up!
> CHATTERBOX: So pathetic, so pitiful, is that it? Or is it the honorable Official who's doing this? You didn't give him rice cake and he was vexed? Is that it? You didn't give him any wine and you took the grain out of the house, so he was angry. Is that what it's all about?
> Mrs. Min sits mute. Chatterbox threatens, brandishing the flaming straw, 'If you don't speak up, we'll take our knives and cast you into this fiery hole!' She asks, 'Is this the Official who came trailing after an old wooden post?' the Official from the old shack that she had seen in her divination. She asks if it is the Warrior Official from outside the gate, 'lacking company, wandering alone like a noxious weed, roaming here and there until he settled on this client from the Pak family?' With a slight acknowledgement from Mrs. Min, a sign imperceptible to me but legible to Chatterbox, the *mansin* begins the next phase of her questioning. She coaxes the intrusive spirits to acknowledge when they will depart, scripting the encounter and leading the witness:

> CHATTERBOX: If you just let our Lady Kim know the day that you'll leave, we'll take you to a rib house and give you the front leg of a cow and the back leg of a cow. Look! The Official's eyes are blinking open. Oho! So that's the sort of talk that makes you open your eyes! What a well-behaved Official now! Such a tranquil Official, who is going to go far, far away.
>
> The *mansin* repeats her lavish promises of a cow's head, hind legs, and fore legs, remarking on how the hungry Official's eyes seem to be blinking wider and wider at the mention of meat. The women drag a steamer of rice cake to where the troublesome god can see it and the husband's brother's wife holds out the scrawny chicken [offering meat]. Chatterbox continues to alternately bribe and threaten until she discerns some slight affirmation from Mrs. Min that the Official will depart. Now she extracts a specific time, 'All right, then when will you restore her? I know very well that you will be leaving. Just tell me when. When will she be well? On the third day? That's it, on the third day!'
>
> 'The third day!' The possessing spirits will leave today. The *mansin* shout their victory, whooping to a rising crescendo of cymbals. Chatterbox pitches the fiery band into the courtyard. Yongsu's Mother/the Spirit Warrior zealously pelts Mrs. Min with more rice cake and bits of dried fish in a grand confusion of sound and fury and sends the metal bowl clattering to the ground. She waves the remains of the scrawny chicken [that has been offered to carnivorous gods] once more around Mrs. Min's head.
>
> Chatterbox has Mrs. Min choose a divination flag by tapping the flagsticks. Chatterbox draws it away and it comes up red, the most auspicious colour. The general is ascendant and the exorcism a success. 'You've chosen such a pretty one,' Chatterbox triumphantly waves the flag over Mrs. Min's head. A giddy air of relief fills the house. A grinning Spirit Warrior dances on the veranda with light and lively steps.[8]

Mrs Min's eyes had lost their glazed look. She was responsive, able to accomplish the simple ritual tasks required of her as the *kut* moved to its conclusion, and within three days, she had resumed her normal life. The full story of her *kut* is more complex than can be presented here (Kendall, 2009b: 34–65) but this brief description should suggest a fundamental distinction between exorcism – I think we can safely call this practice an 'exorcism' – performed in *kut* and the kinds of violent activity described above and associated with exorcisms in some Christian contexts.

The gods and ancestors who were torturing Mrs Min and the unquiet ancestors who were contributing to Mrs Yi's difficulties were not 'Satan' in the Christian sense. They were not devils, embodiments of pure evil as the Manichean antithesis of the divine. They did not enter the human world from the dark side – except perhaps in the imaginations of those converts who had learned to regard them

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8   The descriptions of the exorcisms for Mrs Yi and Mrs Min are excerpted from Kendall (2009b) and have been lightly edited for clarity of context. They are reproduced here with the permission of University of Hawai'i Press.

as adversaries, like the Korean Christian enthusiast who told me that *kut* 'work' because the devil would have it so. In the view of shamans and their clients, these were gods and ancestors with issues, entities with grievances and sufficient agency to bring the living to account. Household gods are entitled to offerings; when well rewarded they bestow blessing. The household tutelary who had been denied his due through the household's many years of poverty vented his anger by torturing poor Mrs Min but his manifestation in the *kut* affirmed that he was equally capable of showering good fortune on the family; now mollified, he would assume a more benign presence in the future. Ancestors who died young, in unhappy states, or who have urgent business with the living need to be pacified and ritually distanced. Mrs Min's dead mother grieved for her daughter's fate, but when she was moved by pity to touch her, an inappropriate connection between the living and the dead, she helped to drive her daughter mad. The bargaining and bantering that was a part of this exorcism follows upon the logic of encounters between humans and spirits in all *kut*, bargaining and bantering with an eventual hard-won resolution that opens the possibility of a better future, 'conjuring hope' in Galena Lindquist's (2005) apt turn of phrase.

However theatrical these encounters, with their stage prop knives and tridents, the war whoops and percussion, the persons undergoing exorcism during a *kut* are not subjected to dangerous activity. If anything, the process is playful – particularly that spit of rice wine in the face. Could a shaman, in the enthusiasms of the Spirit Warrior persona, get carried away and the exorcism turn terribly, fatally wrong? Could those knives, tridents, and peach wood sticks ever be lethally misapplied? Yongsu's Mother related how once, earlier in her career, she approached the limits of acceptable practice when manifesting the Spirit Warrior in an exorcism, but the older shamans quickly intervened. She told this story with humour in the sense that the ceremony was under control and there was no real danger. Could things go wrong in less competent hands? This is a long shot. I am quite certain, however, that one is far safer kneeling with one's back to an exorcising Spirit Warrior than spread with one's back to the floor, one's throat, ribs and vital organs vulnerable to the enthusiasms of those who believe they are confronting evil spirits if not the very devil. The objects of the exorcisms described for *kut* are negotiable beings or the kinds of baleful entities that are tractable to the work of protective deities. The angry god and restless ancestor who had possessed Mrs Min were subjects of relationships which, however resolved in the immediate moment, would be perpetuated in future cycles of obligation and blessing.

Mistranslation in the Present?

I have made a case for why I consider it highly unlikely that a Korean *mudang* – or even a Korean shamanistic legacy in Christian practice – caused the death of Rayoung Kim. I have suggested fundamental differences between Christian exorcism and seemingly equivalent Korean shamanic practices. I have also

suggested why, following a long history of mistranslation, an American reporter with little or no prior knowledge of Korea (and possibly some of his informants who should have known better) confused sensational reports of exorcism in Korean Christian contexts with the work of Korean shamans and traced a genealogy of misinformation. At the same time, I do not want to err in the mirror image of the alleged Fairfax exorcism death story by suggesting that violent, life-threatening exorcism is a commonplace of Korean Christian practice rather than an aberrant exaggeration of its logic.

Exorcism is widely practised in Korean Evangelical (including but not exclusively Pentecostal) churches. Tae-Joo Hwang, a Korean doctoral candidate in the Fuller Theological Seminary, argued in his dissertation that exorcism, as practised in several South Korean churches, should be regarded as an appropriate part of pastoral care consistent with an Evangelical understanding of the doctrine of Satan (Hwang, 1987). At the time of Kyung Chung's Death, Peter Rhee, an assistant pastor at a Korean Presbyterian Church in southern California, told the press that although Korean Evangelicals put an emphasis on divine healing and exorcism, it would be rare to apply physical force in the process. 'We don't have to use any physical power to cast out demons. We do have the ministry by the power of the Holy Spirit' (Gorman, 1996). To the degree that instances of violent, even fatal, exorcisms occur within Korean Christian practice, Korean Christians have also condemned them as aberrant and dangerous (*Mokhoe Sŏngyo/Ministry and Mission*, 2005: 7).

Fuchigami Kyōko's 1992 study of faith healing in several Korean Christian churches presents 'exorcism' is a commonplace, but without the physical danger reported above. After visiting several different congregations, Fuchigami describes widespread belief that malevolent spirits (*kwisin*, also translated as 'ghost') – 'persons who died without knowing or believing in Jesus' – enter people and cause illnesses, which can only be healed through the power of Jesus Christ. She describes a spectrum of exorcistic practices, most of them carried out in an atmosphere of impassioned prayer, many of them highly tactile, and none of them violent. In Yoido Full Gospel Church 'The methods of lay on of hands and manipulation are limited to lightly hitting the head, back, or chest with the palm of the hand or to laying a hand on the afflicted person's head while saying a simple prayer or making a 'Shhh!' sound' (Fuchigami, 1992: 35). Often the 'dirty spirit' is commanded to depart at once. In a Baptist church, she describes exorcism carried out in an atmosphere of 'terror' where the presiding minister engages in an interrogation and intimidation with the afflicting spirit that recalls the interrogation of the greedy god and restless ancestor inhabiting Mrs Min (Fuchigami, 1992: 48–9). But apart from the minister's laying of hands on the head of the afflicted, she describes no physical contact, much less violent physical contact.

Most of these spirits (*kwisin*) were known or related to the afflicted in the manner of 'ancestors' in *kut* and unlike the 'devils,' 'demons,' or 'evil spirits' of missionary expectation (Fuchigami, 1992: 52–5). Such practices most certainly keep the idea of ancestral agency alive. Perhaps there is a link between these

possessing spirits and the inauspicious illnesses and misfortunes abducted to them and the ancestors that nominally Christian Korean women in Los Angeles ask a shaman to propitiate on their behalf because they are no longer receiving offerings (Ha, 1996: 47).

If Fuchigami's account and Sen Hea Ha's description of a Korean shaman in Los Angeles are representative, then we might speculate that to the degree shamanic practices have influenced Korean Christianity and fostered ritual exorcism, this influence is in directions *counter* to the practice of *dangerous* exorcism. If the missionaries translated the range of gods, ancestors, ghosts and inauspicious entities Koreans describe as '*kwisin*' into uniformly malevolent beings, the demons of Biblical experience, then Korean popular religion seems to be claiming them back as restless ancestors who deserve pity and are tractable to human ministration.

Concluding Thoughts

When Maureen Fiedler, moderator of the radio programme 'Interfaith Voices' interviewed me on the subject of Rayoung Kim's death and I made some of the same arguments presented here, she asked me if I thought that the press presentation had been motivated by an exotic perception of Korean residents in the United States. My initial response had been 'no', since the misunderstanding and misrepresentation of Korean shamans is not restricted to non-Koreans. But I have had reason to wonder whether this was the appropriate reply. The recent devastating earthquake in Haiti and Pat Robertson's subsequent claims of a devil pact sworn by 'voodoo' priests recalled the too easy sensationalism of popular religious practices even despite a volume of serious and solid scholarship testifying to the contrary (Freedman, 2010). I am reminded that religion in globalisation does not inhabit a level playing field or to invoke a water metaphor, the global flow does not raise all boats to equal heights. Korean shamans, like Vodou priests and priestesses in Brooklyn (Brown, 2004) and Vietnamese spirit mediums in Silicon Valley (Fjelstad and Nguyen, 2011), exist in the interstices of immigrant religious life. They usually lack the sorts of organisations and spokespersons who might speak out against such gross defamations and easy sensationalism as led me to write this chapter in the first instance.

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Chapter 8

Contesting Power, Negotiating Influence: Rai Shamans and New Religious Movements in Eastern Nepal

Alban von Stockhausen and Marion Wettstein

Walking through the village of Simpani in Khotang District of Eastern Nepal, our friend pointed to a small, broken altar in the courtyard of one of the first houses we passed. 'It was destroyed by Christians several years ago', he explained. We entered the courtyard and asked the house-owner, an elderly lady sitting on the veranda, to tell us about the broken altar. At first she was reluctant to speak to us – after all, as Western foreigners we might have been Christian missionaries. Bit by bit she revealed that she had also been beaten by her Christian relatives, who live in Dharan, a small town at the foot of the hills in Eastern Nepal, and one of the centres of Christian missionary work in Nepal. After having understood that as anthropologists, we were interested in the local religions and had nothing to do with the Christian mission, and encouraged by our friend Chatur Bhakta Rai, she entrusted us with the full story.

It was eight or nine years ago when she suddenly had started to tremble rhythmically, especially when she heard the beat of a drum. This symptom is generally recognised among the Rai and Limbu – and other Kirat groups such as the Sunuwar and Yakkha – as a sign of a deceased shaman's spirit, referred to as the guru, taking possession of a living person and calling him or her to become a shaman. She travelled to the Terai, the southern lowlands of Nepal, to the place from which her Limbu guru had been calling her. She stayed there for 17 days, and it was expected that during this time, the *muddhum*, the orally transmitted recitations of her guru's knowledge, would come to her mind. Among the Kirat, the ritual texts, the oral tradition, and the knowledge of the shamans – referred to as the *muddhum* or by similar terms in the respective local languages – is generally said to be learned in dreams or visions from the guru.[1] But the *muddhum* did not come to her. So she returned to her home in Simpani and started to build an altar in her courtyard, a little house with all sorts of collected paraphernalia in it. Once the altar was finished, the *muddhum* came to her, and she started to perform rituals as a shaman.

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[1] For more details on the *muddhum* see Gaenszle 1991, 2002.

About three years later she received a visit from her Christian relatives living in Dharan, who gave her money and forced her to buy a Bible. But within a short time her Limbu guru visited her in a dream and warned her not to convert to Christianity and give up her own culture. The dream continued with a very fierce man with long sharp teeth. She did not know who he was, but surmised it to be an ancestor or spirit. He commanded her to return the money and the book at once. He added that if she did not adhere to her ancient culture he would gobble her up. She was so impressed by this dream that she gave back the Bible and the money, and subsequently was beaten up by her relatives. She never converted to Christianity; however, as she was afraid of her relatives she also never dared to rebuild the altar and work again as a shaman, even though she still starts trembling regularly. After she had finished her story she gave some thought to the idea that now might actually be the right time to rebuild the altar. She could not give a definite answer to the question of whether she was still afraid of her Christian relatives. It seemed, however, that the dream spirit with the long sharp teeth had impressed her far more than the physical threat of her relatives.

Leaving her with her thoughts, we walked on to the other side of the hill, and after a few hours reached Chiurikharka village. Climbing up through the houses clustered along the steep hill we heard cymbals and singing from afar, and soon saw a tarpaulin of rainbow colours stretched across the courtyard of one of the houses. 'Let's see what's going on there', we said and immediately sensed our companion's discomfort; obviously there was something going on that he disapproved of. He explained that this was a group of followers of Om Nanda and that as the president of the Kirat Rai Yayokkha,[2] which strongly advocated the ancient, traditional type of Rai shamans and priests, it would be ill-advised for him to get involved with this new type of religious Kirat movement. However, after giving it a second thought, he agreed to help us satisfy our curiosity and we stepped into the courtyard. The scene that presented itself to us was entirely different from anything we had seen of Rai religious practices till then. A group of two dozen people – women, men, young and old – were sitting in a circle around an altar strewn with flowers, candles, and fruit. Many of the believers wore white garments, and while balancing a book on their heads were listening ecstatically to a young man preaching words of love and peace with eyes closed. Our presence was studiously ignored; nothing could disturb the believers in their devotion, and none of the bystanders were willing to answer questions. Our friend gave us a sign to leave and, while climbing further up into the village, he told us the story of an old Dumi Rai who had once been an Om Nanda follower, but had returned to the shamanic beliefs.

While still a young boy, his father had returned from serving in the Indian army and performed one of the most respected rituals in the life of a Dumi Rai, the so-called *chamdam*. Many years of preparatory rituals and a great amount of wealth are required for a *chamdam*, but once accomplished, the performer receives a new

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2   The cultural, social and political organisation of the Kirat Rai.

Figure 8.1   Om Nanda priest and devotees praying with books on their heads. Ciurikharka village, May 2011

ritual name that will be remembered in every subsequent ritual in his lineage. The ritual is performed at the central fireplace in his house, like most rituals of the Dumi Rai, and after that it is considered a special ritual hearth, very few of which still exist today. Our man was also closely linked to the ancestral spirits through his wife, who occupied a special ritual position. She was a *masumi*, a ritual dancer who accompanies a specific type of shaman in his rituals, and the shaman she was dancing for happened to be her brother. Another of her brothers had chosen to leave the village and settled in Dharan, where he had come into contact with the followers of Om Nanda. Over the years, the *masumi*'s brother came to be known as 'the Pillar of Om Nanda in Dharan', and his influence had also reached the remote village. The whole family converted to the Om Nanda movement and gave up the ancient religion. The former *masumi* stopped dancing, and the couple even destroyed the *chamdam* fireplace and replaced it with a modern oven. At this point in time our protagonist was the village president and a very rich man who owned as many as 40 cows. But before long odd things started happening.

He suddenly began speaking in a woozy manner and to talk to himself. His condition worsened over a period of several months and the villagers suspected that the main reason was the destruction of the *chamdam* fireplace: the ancestors were angry at him and were taking revenge. After three years he reached the peak of his madness, following the loss of all of his cows. They had been taken to the forest by a herdsman, and should have stayed there with him for a number of weeks. But the herdsman had been murdered and lay dead in the forest for nine

days before he was found. The cows had all gone missing or had died of thirst. The man's madness became uncontrollable and one of his sons living in Korea ordered a helicopter to fly his father out of the village to a mental hospital in Kathmandu. After several weeks he returned to the village, completely recovered and once again his old self. Upon arrival back home the first thing he did was to re-establish the ancestral fireplace. No one ever tried to convert him to any other religion again, and for many years now he lives in peace of mind, following the old shamanic traditions of his ancestors. When we met him during one of the following days at the market of Baksila, nothing in his cheerful demeanour recaptured the days of his madness.

The two cases described above give an idea of the most evident and powerful fields of conflict that have opened up in the religious realm of the Rai in Eastern Nepal over the last two decades. But apart from the two new religious movements in the region, i.e. (Baptist) Christianity and Om Nanda, there are other religious protagonists and movements that have also left their traces, some have been present for centuries, while creating few – if any – conflicts at the present time, as for instance Hinduism and Buddhism.

Religious Movements and Worldviews among the Rai

The aim of this section is to briefly outline the religious movements and their protagonists currently active among the Rai. This will provide us with the background when we later proceed to analyse the fields of conflict that open up, especially in relation to the ancient, traditional religious worldview of the Rai.

Traditional Rai Beliefs

Traditionally, the religious worldview of the Rai is an animistic one. An essential part of it is played by the ancestors who exist in a parallel world, albeit in the same geography as the living.

They comprise any deceased or former member of the community, ranging from the grandmother who passed away last week to the founders of the world, Paruhang and Sumnima. In the universe of the ancestors, some are believed to possess special powers, and some to have turned into evil spirits. The Rai basically perform rituals for their ancestors, and an important phrase in their recitations consists of the assertion that 'we are doing it just as you ancestors did'. Rituals are performed by specialists, some of whom may be characterised by the term 'shamans' (going into trance, travelling to the other world, and healing the sick by fighting with the evil forces and bringing back lost souls), others as village priests (giving seasonal offerings to the ancestors or the deities of nature, and performing community and life cycle rituals). Traditionally, the Rai shamans and village priests are not organised in a systematic or institutionalised structure. For instance

Figure 8.2   The Dumi Rai shaman Sher Bahadur making offerings to the ancestors in the context of the Bhume ritual. Sabru village, May 2011

the Dumi Rai, our main research focus, have neither temples nor architectural monuments. The shamans and priests essentially function as individuals, each trying to achieve renown and power by their single-handed ritual performances, and thus trying to attract new clients or newly installed deities that the community puts under their charge. It is also not uncommon for shamans to fight one another in the otherworld by casting spells and blockers that diminish the other's power. Among the individual shamans, we may find strong competitiveness which results in each shaman being a single entity of religious and ritual power, cautiously guarding his or her knowledge and skills.[3]

[3]   For a more comprehensive understanding of Rai culture and shamanism see for example McDougal, 1979; Gaenszle, 1991, 2002; Hardman, 2000; Schlemmer, 2004; Nicoletti, 2006.

Hindu Influences

Up until 2006, Nepal was a Hindu state by its constitution. Many religious laws were also imposed on people who did not follow Hindu tradition, including the Rai. The prohibition of killing a cow or eating beef, for example, changed the nature of local rituals, which in former times had also included the offering of cow meat. A general influence from Hinduism can be found among the Rai inasmuch as many local deities are associated with Hindu gods and goddesses, and most people know the major outlines of Hindu mythology and can recount anecdotes from the *Mahabharata* or Vedic literature. Even in remote villages, many Rai celebrate Hindu festivals such as Dasain and Tihar, while some of the local dances, as the Maruni, for example, are linked to syncretic forms of Shiva worship. Regarding religion, there seem to be very few conflicts at present between immigrant Hindu believers and the traditional Rai, and no attempts at conversion are recorded.

Figure 8.3   Group of Dumi Rai men performing the Hindu-influenced Maruni dance. The man on the left is wearing a Shiva mask, others are dressed as women. Daskate village, December 2008

According to Chatur Bhakta Rai, it must have been around the 1970s when the role model of the Hindu *sadhu* reached the Dumi Rai. The 'Sadhu Dharma', not being very specific in its affiliation to any clearly defined Hindu 'sect' or orientation, for some time attracted a small number of followers. In the perception of the other villagers, this new Sadhu Dharma consisted mainly of singing Krishna and Rama songs, while some of the followers also refrained from eating meat.

Most of them returned to their old beliefs after some years, once the initial wave of enthusiasm was over. Among other Rai groups, and especially among the Limbu, the influence of the *sadhu* as a role model was much stronger and eventually developed into a new form of religious leadership which will be described below.

Buddhist Influences

Until recently, the influence of Buddhism among the Rai was quite inconsequential. Buddhism was encountered on a daily basis only in the northern region, where contact with the Sherpa community was more intense, chiefly as the religion of another community. Ever since the state of Nepal was secularised in 2006, some Nepali communities have claimed that they actually had always been Buddhist but had been forced to declare themselves Hindu in the Hindu state of Nepal. These include the Gurung and Tamang, considerable numbers of whom can also be found living in the Rai region. Many new, small Buddhist *gompas* (shrines) have been built by these communities. All three communities – Sherpa, Gurung and Tamang – also have a shamanic tradition; and Buddhism and shamanism or animism have coexisted in these communities for centuries. This might be a reason why it seems that no fields of conflict are emerging between the Buddhist communities of these other ethnic groups and the world views and practices of the Rai shamanic culture. It is also remarkable that Buddhist ideas, rituals and festivals do not seem to have influenced Rai culture to any great extent as of yet.

Christian Influences

In Khotang District, our main research area, Christianity only arrived substantially in the 1980s. The first (Baptist) Christian missionary in the district was a Sampang Rai from Khartamcha, a British Army home-comer. To this day the Sampang area continues to be not only the main region from which Christian missions sets out to remote villages, but also where Christianity is most fervently practised. For about 20 years the Dumi Christian community has assembled in the central market village of Baksila in a house overlooking the school, and today the building is their central Baptist church.

   According to one of its members, the Baksila Baptist church currently embraces 40 households, from which 32 individual persons have received baptism. The Dumi branch of the Church is linked to the main Baptist church in Dharan – as are all Baptist churches in the district – and missionising and expansion are clearly on its agenda, with a new branch envisioned for the Koyee Rai of Sungdel area. Among the Dumi Rai, no trained pastor has assumed leadership so far. This means that missionising is still at its very initial stage, preparing the ground for the 'professionals' to take over in the next generation. But in other Rai areas the tone and style of the missionary

Figure 8.4   The Baptist church building of the Sampang Rai village of Chiprun.
              A megaphone above its main entrance door is used to loudly
              broadcast the church services onto the entire village area. June 2012

work has taken a more fundamentalist turn, and other Christian denominations are
also slowly starting to enter the region, as we shall see later.

New Charismatic Kirat Leaders

Among the Rai and Limbu, a few outstanding religious leaders have arisen during
the twentieth century who, in their teaching and behaviour, mainly represent a
mixture of the Hindu Sadhu Dharma, the Christian charismatic churches, and old
Kirat beliefs. According to Gaenszle (2007), the movement goes back to Nardhoj
Lingden, alias Phalgunanda, who was born in 1885. He had been a remarkable
child, who had shown signs of receiving a shamanistic calling, and who – rather
hazardously – had entered the British Army. Because of his devotion to the (Hindu)
goddess Bhagwati and his general behaviour, he was soon regarded as a Tantric
healer. After leaving the army in the 1920s, he set out on a series of intensive
ascetic pilgrimages in India and returned to his native village in the 1930s,
where he gathered an increasing number of followers. He became known as a
powerful Tantric, and was also regarded as a reformer of religious and political
ideas especially due to his rationalist and educational approach. The rediscovery
of the Kirat script was especially influential. Education and teaching the 'right'
lifestyle – which included not eating meat and not drinking alcohol – were some

of the most important aims on his agenda. Phalgunanda died in 1949, after having prophesied that he would soon be reborn.

After Phalgunanda's death, a little boy in the family came to the attention of the followers because his behaviour very much resembled that of Phalgunanda during his own childhood. And at the age of seven, Shyam Bahadur Lingden, later known as Aatma Nanda, was declared to be the reincarnation of Phalgunanda. Aatma Nanda became a religious leader, but unlike his uncle, was not an ascetic; he married and had several children. According to Gaenszle (2007), he gathered a considerable following among the Limbu and Rai, was even visited by King Gyanendra, and was the chairman of the 'First International Conference on the Kiranti Religion' in 2000, which was attended by over 1,000 people. Even today, Aatma Nanda has a large following, especially among the middle-aged Limbu generation.

The younger generation, especially the Rai youth, seems to be attracted to another religious leader who claims to be a reincarnation of Phalgunanda: Bhakta Bahadur Rai alias Om Nanda, a Bantawa Rai from Udayapur District. At the beginning, Om Nanda was also a follower of Aatma Nanda, but soon split off from the original movement and built up his own following. Today his movement is called the Heavenly Path and, unlike that of Aatma Nanda, operates very much on an international level, attracting followers in Hong Kong, Japan, the USA and many other countries. His popularity with the younger generation is also due to his presence on the Internet.

As Gaenszle (2007) has pointed out, the central message of Phalgunanda, Aatma Nanda, and Om Nanda does not differ greatly in its content: leading a pure life (no meat, no alcohol, no lies and other acts of renunciation), and embracing Kirat identity. To put it in the words of the Heavenly Path website (UK): 'His Holiness, Swami Baal Tapaswi Sat Guru Om Nanda, the Supreme Master Godangel, is the founder of Heavenly Path/ Nirvana Path; the Philosopher of Lovism; the founder of Art of Happiness; a reviver of fading indigenous culture and tradition; an advocator of World peace, Humanity and Human Rights.'[4]

Conflicts between the Ancient World View of the Rai and New Religious Movements

In view of the above summary, it is obvious that not only in the urban centres of Kathmandu and Dharan but also in the remote villages of NepalEastern Nepal, the people are constantly being courted by a great number of religious movements. The local reactions to this process are rooted in certain characteristics of the traditional Rai worldview and religion, in which one's own well-being is defined by a balanced relationship with the ancestors. To secure this relationship and to please one's predecessors is the duty of traditional religious specialists; it is the core of the indigenous religious concept as such, and the main function

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[4]   http://heavenlypath.info/eng/smg/smgs-bio.html [accessed 5 July 2012].

of all ritual activities. Since the shamans and village priests are not organised in institutionalised structures, but function as single units, the individual client always has a great number of choices when it comes to fulfilling these obligations towards the ancestral world. In everyday life, many Rai families regularly 'use' a certain specific shaman, but they also attend rituals by others, or pragmatically embrace ritual practices from other religions that might sort out their problems. From the client's point of view, the different religions or religious practitioners are not usually measured against one another as such; rather, the outcome or success of a certain treatment or ritual performance defines its usefulness.

This profound tolerance toward other religious practices makes the Rai especially vulnerable to outside influence. If somebody knocks at the door and offers to solve a certain problem he is let in, no matter what his religious background. The religious exclusivity encountered in many of the new influencing bodies, in particular the fundamentalist branch of Baptist Christianity, was traditionally unknown in the Kirat context. However, in fundamentalist Christianity the mission paradigm is especially strong because the conversion of non-Christians directly adds to the religious merit of the missionary: the more people you convert, the greater your personal credit on doomsday.

Inevitably the arrival of these new religious ideas has had a large influence on Rai religiosity, not only in terms not only of generating fields of conflict, but also of reflecting on and restructuring the traditional belief system in order to make it fit for resistance. In the following we shall discuss some of the main arguments and strategies that have emerged in the most obvious fields of conflict, with special focus on the most violent players, notably the Christian mission.

Violence: Physical, Psychological, Social

As the two cases described above have shown, there are several types of violence that are enacted by various religious agents. We may categorise as physical, psychological and social violence. In addition to living human beings, we have to include 'the ancestors' in the row of agents in order to do justice to the indigenous Rai belief system, and we must also include 'the Christian God' as a potential punisher of sins.

Among the religious movements present in Eastern Nepal, the Christian denominations are the least tolerant toward other belief systems. The basic assumption that non-Christians are not 'worthy' humans as such – as literally stated to us by several Baptist pastors elsewhere[5] – quickly leads to hidden or open aggression from Christians towards their non-Christian fellow villagers. Especially among the youth, which one may say can easily be incited to extremes, this aggression is sometimes physically enacted. Several cases were reported to

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5   Predominately in Northeast India, our second research area (cf. Oppitz et. al., 2008).

us throughout the Rai area in which groups of youths had destroyed the gods and goddesses of their forefathers – manifesting in stones, trees and caves – in order to prove that they are powerless. Cases of religiously motivated physical violence against fellow human beings, as in the story recounted above, fortunately seem to be the exception, even if it is difficult to discern the motivations of domestic physical violence in general.

The many forms of psychological and social violence usually first starting within the family are more widespread and more effective than physical violence. In the case of Christian missions, we were told that single converted family members were forbidden from talking and socialising any longer with their non-Christian family members, or had chosen to do so by themselves. The greatest missionising effect is achieved when those family members are converted who have been closely linked with the performance of traditional rituals. Among the conversion cases reported to us, the majority included near kin or important assistants of powerful shamans. As an example we describe this touching case: since some years the son of a very famous shaman felt the call of his father's guru. However, if he became a shaman himself his father would soon die, according to popular belief. As he didn't want his father to die, he agreed to be baptised in order to rid himself of the guru's call. He soon became unhappy with the new religion, but the Christians threatened him that if he returned to his old beliefs he would be trapped eternally in a fire and all his subsequent generations would be born dumb. Now he lives in constant fear.

The fact that social 'pressure' can be a form of true violence becomes obvious in the following case. One evening we came across a Chamling Rai village near the famous pilgrimage site of Haleshi and asked for shelter at one of the houses along the path. It turned out to be a Christian household and the family told us that most of the village had converted to an old-testamentary denomination from Darjeeling. After discussing our interests in the traditional culture and the *sakela* dance for a while, a young man secretly divulged to us that until recently he had been one of the main *sakela* dance leaders in the village. In traditional Rai communities, *sakela* dance leaders are people of some account. But he had been forced to stop practising by the community because, given that now that most of them were Christians, it was forbidden to dance at all. This development filled him with great sadness and it had now come to the point where he had either to leave his village and family, or obey the 'new rules' and give up his dancing passion. From his account we gathered that Christians had become the majority in the village and had taken over control and now forced the remaining traditional believers to either give in or leave.

However, as we have seen in the aforementioned cases, the ancestors, the most powerful members of the traditional belief system, are not defenceless against intruding religions. We have to acknowledge that their method of psychological violence is neither a new invention nor ineffective. When the ancestors are not amused they take drastic action and can make you seriously ill or insane. It should be noted that the ancestors always react by inflicting illness, misfortune, or natural

disaster when their authority is questioned: not only when a traditional believer attempts to convert to another faith, but also when he or she fails to perform the traditional rituals correctly, goes against the traditional code of conduct and honour, or turns down the call of a shaman's spirit. As one of our friends put it, the ancestors are constantly dissatisfied and have to be cared for all the time. Threatening the living with illness may, thus, be regarded as a common form of perpetrating psychological violence within traditional Rai religion. The challenge for the shamans is then to heal the illness by negotiating with the ancestors, spirits and witches. Precisely this power of healing influences a person's choice for, or against, a certain religious belief.

The Power of Healing

One of the primary duties of the traditional Rai shamans is to heal illness. Minor illnesses are addressed with a short ritual performance, mostly consisting of a divination with a few rice grains, a pulse diagnosis, some recitations, and, perhaps, the 'sucking out' of the negative power. More serious or complicated cases are dealt with in a so-called *cinta*, a night-long ritual in which the shaman visits the house of the sick person along with at least two drummers. The household has to prepare some of the required paraphernalia, including a sufficient amount of local alcohol (*raksi*), which is needed for offerings, for the shaman, and also for all the kin and neighbours, who may attend the ritual throughout the night. From dusk till dawn, the shaman recites and dances to the rhythms of the drum, mentally travelling through the other world. If the ritual is not successful, the same shaman may be called for a second round, or another shaman may be invited. Most shamans have a clear understanding of what they can – and cannot – cure, and are not too proud to say that they could not help a patient and that he needs another type of cure. We were even told of cases in which the shamans themselves suggested a patient should visit the Christians – perhaps they could help? The shamans define themselves through their power of healing, and anyone who fails accepts defeat.

This is often the moment in which new religious movements put the foot in the door. The Christian communities in particular actively scout out ill persons and promise cures through prayer. So far, the villagers say, the Christians have attempted to cure illness by the power of prayer alone. Contrary to what has been witnessed in other parts of Nepal, unfair methods such as applying Western-type medication and then claiming it was the prayer or God/Jesus that had healed the patient, were not encountered in our narrower research area. But we did receive several reports that Christian communities pressured ill persons and their family members to first receive baptism, for otherwise the prayers would not work – accompanied by a warning of no return as in the above case.

Thus, the contest for followers is often fought over the power of healing. But whereas the shamans just give their best as healers, because this is their self-definition, for the Christian missionaries the power of healing is a means to

another end: conversion. For the client, health stands is a central concern, but even if the illness is very threatening local people often evince a great deal of scepticism towards the Christian system of 'payment in advance', reversing the conditions by declaring that they will receive baptism if the prayers prove to be effective.

The Power of Money

Money, and the promise of it, plays an important role in people's decisions for or against a new religion. Especially in the case of Christianity, money is a crucial factor in conversion. A few years back a poster found its way to the Rai villages that sums up the hopes of the local people most concisely. It shows a neoclassical villa with a huge verandah and a golden entrance gate, surrounded by blossoming bushes and a lake in the background. In front of the gate is a Cadillac and underneath it one can read: 'With God everything is possible'. The notion that in the Western world everybody is rich and Christian has resulted in the logic that if you become a Christian, you will get rich. Real money plays a part in convincing people to convert. A few years back, word spread among the Dumi Rai that anyone who succeeded in converting 20 people will receive three times the monthly wage of a government school teacher. Only recently an active member of the local cultural organisation of the Dumi Rai decided to leave the organisation, to convert to Christianity, and apply for the post of pastor that had fallen vacant. In answer to why he had converted, he openly explained that Christianity would bring a lot of money to the Dumi Rai and he wanted to have his share.[6] So far no large sums have been invested by the mother church in the Dumi region, but funds for sustaining the church building or for sending members to special education camps in Dharan are occasionally given.

Similarly, but from a very different angle, the new charismatic Kirat leaders likewise have money as a factor to support their argument. In the case of Phalgunanda, his underlying motive for analysing the reasons why the local people seemed to drift into poverty was a real concern on his part to empower the indigenous people so as to keep their wealth together. He was one of the first to recognise that because the local people had sold all their land to immigrants, they were losing the main source their livelihood, and in his view only good education would help people understand these connections. Om Nanda constitutes a role model as regard money in another sense: his international followers have endowed him with so much that he can afford to fly round the world and travel about Nepal with an escort of seven jeeps and a horde of bodyguards. He is the embodiment of the alliance of wealth and religious belief.

That the communities of the new religions do in fact seem to be blessed with increased wealth, while money seems constantly to slip through the fingers of the traditional believers, is largely related to a third factor which, depending on how

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[6]   He did not, however, get the pastor's post.

one looks at it, constitutes a power, or a real weakness of the traditional Rai belief system: alcohol.

The Power of Alcohol

Alcohol plays a crucial role in traditional Rai culture. A light millet or rice beer, *jhand*, is consumed at social get-togethers and rituals – often on a daily basis and even in childhood years. The actual drink associated with ritual and respect is, however, distilled rice or millet 'brandy', *raksi*. Traditionally, *raksi* is served in small, lidded, wooden vessels as a gesture of honour to guests visiting the household. The guest is expected to empty the vessel and accept as many refills as offered. Up until a few years ago, turning down an offer of *raksi* was regarded as impolite, if not offensive. *Raksi* is used in large amounts in rituals as an offering to the ancestors and spirits, in honour of the shaman, who drinks a considerable amount, especially during the nightly *cinta* rituals, and to honour the guests attending the ritual. From the perspective of the traditional Rai belief system, alcohol is a potent and powerful means of communicating with the ancestors. In the hey-day of the Maoist revolution,[7] the production and consumption of alcohol was officially forbidden, but regardless of that, continued in secret. For a major public ritual that we attended in Baksila in 2003, in which *raksi* was absolutely mandatory as an offering to the ancestors, the village leaders even took the risk of negotiating with the Maoist leaders so to allow at least a few bottles for the purpose – and succeeded.

Alcoholism is certainly a problem in Rai culture for it prevents people from working, leads to unrest and misery in families, and causes expensive medical bills. In addition, the more *raksi* that is produced the less staple food there is for the cooking pot or to be taken to the market to support the household budget. So the *raksi* culture consumes a major part of the natural productive wealth of the region, and hinders people in gaining wealth. This is where the new religions have a strong argument for conversion by simply forbidding alcohol or declaring it a sin.

All of the new, up-and-coming religious movements in the Rai area are 'non-alcohol' religions. In the case of charismatic leaders like Phalgunanda, Om Nanda and Aatma Nanda, alcohol is just one of many things from which the adepts are supposed to refrain. They do not eat meat, for instance, which is a major challenge in Rai culture where meat is part of the ritual offerings. Influenced by the Hindu ascetic tradition, many acts of renunciation and abstention are an inherent part of the path to personal bliss. However, while the pursuit of this ascetic lifestyle is considered to be a matter of personal choice and character, the Christians take another approach: they simply promise that the problem of alcoholism will be solved as soon as you convert, since at that point alcohol is then forbidden. But

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[7]   In Dumi Rai region between 2002 and 2004, reaching its peak in the general assembly of the Moabadi fighters in Baksila in 2003.

the reason why the Christian churches forbid alcohol is not merely a humanitarian one: they are well aware that the traditional religions rely heavily on alcohol in their rituals and that without *raksi*, a ritual cannot be performed properly: get rid of the alcohol and you get rid of the pagan rituals.

The Christian mission in the region spread the notion that Christians don't drink in general. Coming as we do from a Christian cultural background, we are often looked at with great amazement if we accept a cup of *raksi*. Due to general lack of modern education, the villagers have no possibility of realising that the denominations of Christianity that have imposed themselves in the region are often fundamentalist minority groups and do not represent the general Christian-influenced culture that exists in most parts of the Western world. However, the fact that the new religions address alcohol as a problem also made the traditional Rai believers reconsider their attitudes. Nowadays, in many traditional households, it is quite possible to decline *raksi* as a drink of honour without causing any social upset.

The Answers of the Shamans

Having discussed some of the most prevalent arguments and strategies in the current religious conflicts, we can – at this point – observe that the emergence of new religious movements among the Rai has also led to counter-reactions aimed at strengthening the traditional belief system. It is interesting to note, however, that these counter-reactions do not originate from the shamans themselves. To this day, traditional shamans and village priests have always followed a very open and tolerant religious practice and tried to attract clients based on the quality of their performance. No attempts to organise their religion into a church-like structure, or new forms of advertising for clients have been observed. The counter-reactions seem to emerge from the community of possible clients. Two interlinked phenomena that we observed in the last few years might serve as examples of this new strength in the traditional Rai belief system, in which the shamans and village priests themselves seem to act as receptive and serving players: in the last five or six years, new sacred places have been established or 'discovered' throughout the Rai region that are related to a sowing and harvest ritual (*ubhauli – udhauli*) and to the worship of the land. Among the Dumi Rai, these rituals are called *bhume puja*; *bhume* being a deity of the land and soil that manifests in small stones. During a nightly *cinta*, a shaman has to evaluate whether there are such *bhume* stones in a given locality and whether they are ready to be revealed. Once found, the stones are placed in a *bhume than*, a specially designated place. After this, they are showed to the community once a year, accompanied by a large ritual festival that includes the dancing of the *sakela* dance mentioned above. Over the last few years there has been a tremendous mushrooming of new *bhume thans*, not only among the Dumi, but also among other Rai groups. It is not usually the case that a shaman indicates that a new *bhume* is ready, but rather the community asks a shaman whether

he or she would be willing to test a particular locality, and if so, to assume the responsibility for the annual rituals. Since the festival accompanying the *bhume puja* includes a lot of *sakela* dancing, the rituals are also sometimes called *sakela* rituals, and in some regions the stones themselves are referred to as such.

In the urban areas, especially in Kathmandu, the *bhume* stones have become secondary, and the *sakela* dance has become one of the central determining elements of the ritual. Nowadays, the political and cultural umbrella organisation of the Rai, the Kirat Rai Yayokkha, and many of its local sub-organisations, organise several big festivals over the year and throughout the country that mainly consist of *sakela* dancing, accompanied by some ritual celebrations performed by especially appointed shamans. In the speeches that are given by the community leaders on these occasions, a strong emphasis is placed on the fact that being Rai means following traditional Rai culture and religion. This means that the most powerful Rai organisations in Nepal strongly support the traditional Rai belief system, and actively equate it with the quintessence of Rai identity. This shows that, currently, shamans and village priests still have a large and strong hold in Rai society. Without actively having to make any further comment on the new religious movements that are encroaching on the region, they just continue to do the things they were summoned to do by their ancestral spirits, with all their heart and to the best of their ability

Acknowledgments

Chapter 9

Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Himalayan Encounters with Human and Other-Than-Human Opponents

Davide Torri

I am Paldan Lhamo, I am Paldan Lhamo.
Listen. Since the beginning of the world
I have done good for all six classes of living beings.
But I was born in the world of evil spirits.
For my father was born a daemon
And my mother a tsan.
And I was born a lha, a god,
Called Paldan Lhamo.
My parents lived on eating corpses.
Every day they ate people, horses, donkeys and wild yaks.
From my parents' meals
The evil spirit Adag drank oceans of blood (…)

(Rösing, 2006: 246)

Shamanism, Animism or a Dialectic of Violence

A discourse on violence animates and permeates shamanic worldviews, ideology and practices. Life in the cosmos is inherently violent. It is true that cooperation is equally important to the system, but destruction is constantly at hand. Violence, as well, is not just a possibility, but a structural component of the whole process. Entangled in the great game of life, human and other-than-human persons act sometimes as prey, sometimes as predators: as occurs with other commodities violence is exchanged to help the smooth functioning of social relations.

According to a neo-animist perspective,[1] in fact, there are obviously more agents in the world than the one we usually think of as such. As Graham Harvey frankly says:

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[1]   I define neo-animism as the recent developments brought in the field of Religious Studies by the contributions of several scholars, namely Irving A. Hallowell (1960), Nurit

(…) the world is full of persons, only some of whom are human. (Harvey, 2005: xi)

A person, human or not, is someone with whom we establish, or we may establish, a relationship. To live is to enact relationships, and some of the actions undertaken involve violence: from a lesser degree to a full extent, all the possible aspects of violent behavior are to be taken into account.

(…) shamans and shamanising provide particularly powerful tests of the boundaries of human attempts to find appropriate ways to live alongside other persons, i.e. of animism. Two major problems of recognising one's ontological similarity with others, of knowing the necessity of naming them persons, and of attempting to relate respectfully to all who live, are (a) some such persons (human or otherwise) are aggressive or even predatory, and (b) one must eat at least some of them in order to live. The maintenance and furtherance of human community within the wider community of life – of persons only some of whom are human – requires enormous efforts to establish, safeguard, repair, stabilise and enhance relationships threatened by various everyday acts of intimate violence. (Harvey, 2005: 139–40)

In this chapter I will explore the structural and systemic dimensions of violence in shamanic cultures from the Himalaya, as expressed through myths and folk tales.

A Tale of Two Brothers: Structures of Intimate Violence

Apparently, human beings are aware of their role when they assert, through myths and theories, the necessity of cosmic harmony and equilibrium. Myths are not only stories about things which are thought to have happened long ago: the discourse on the origins of everything is really a story about their consequences, the present time, and how to deal with them. From a mythic point of view, the world, the cosmos, was once at peace. In the realm of the undifferentiated everything was fine until something obviously went terribly wrong. Almost all the myths or stories dealing with such moment in time, in the Himalayas as elsewhere, depict an idyllic situation in a place now secluded and forever lost. In those times, we have been told, there was neither death nor sorrow. Generally speaking, there were also very few human beings (usually two, but the picture is not always clear): the shadow of incest appears often in the background of several narrations regarding the loss of this primeval condition. As a result, it seems, human beings were then confined to a more or less hostile world, where they were introduced to death and harassment by evil beings of various nature. There is evil in the world. And evil brings violence. Both are necessary, it seems: the myth is always tautological in its essence. Human

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Bird-David (1993, 1999), Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1992, 1998, 1999), Carlos Fausto (2004), Kenneth Morrison (2000), Graham Harvey (2005) and others.

beings and demons (generally held to be responsible for illness and death), to start with, are more often than not brothers, cousins or close friends.

The Lepcha[2] myth on the origin of human beings exemplifies poignantly illustrates this theme. Created by Itbu Debu Rum, with the pure snow of the Kanchenjunga, Fudongthing and Nazon Nyu, the first couple, were supposed to live like brother and sister, but very soon they started procreating.

Seven children were conceived in this way and abandoned in the jungle. When the progenitors of humanity were finally discovered, they were chased away from the original place, somewhere in the lap of the mighty mountain Kanchenjunga, and exiled to the lower lands of Nye Mayel Lyang (today Sikkim, India), in order to live separated from that primeval state of blissful harmony. The Lepchas descended from them. But the first children, left in the jungles and among the ravines, turned into the ominous and vengeful class of *mungs*, the demonic others, instigators of quarrels, misfortunes and diseases. And they brought terrors and fear, leprosy and madness, and waged war without mercy against the Lepchas. The myth never clearly acknowledges the kinship between the two different generations of brothers, but it appears clearly has having motivated such hatred: the jealousy of the neglected children against the favoured ones (Siiger, 1972: 240, 244). Out of pity for them, finally, the gods sent down Tamsang Thing, a supernatural hero (also credited with the teaching of the first shamanic couple of *bongthing* and *mun*) or Jor Bongthing, to help them in the long fight against Láso Múng Pano[3], the demon king, and his host.

The fight against Láso Múng Pano, who is thought to be the eldest of the children abandoned in the forest by Fudong Thing and Nazong Nyu, lasted for 12 years. The *mung* king was finally defeated, and the story of the battle is encoded in spatial, social and temporal coordinates of the Lepcha universe.

Láso Múng was hiding on a tree on a mountain top. That tree was magic: no matter how much of the trunk was cut during day-time, the wood regenerated itself by night. Finally, with the help of the caterpillar, the trunk was eroded from the inside and the tree fell down, blocking the path once and for all toward the otherworld. According to some versions, at this point, Láso Múng took the form of a bird and started flying all over the country, killing people wherever he encountered them.

According to other versions, he took several forms: mouse, ox, tiger, eagle, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, hen, dog and pig. This cycle of transformations is illustrated by the 12-year cycle of the Lepcha calendar (Bentley, 2008: 117–18). When he was finally slain, his body was dismembered and burnt to

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[2]   The Lepchas or Rong are an indigenous group inhabiting the hills around Darjeeling and Kalimpong (West Bengal, India) and Sikkim (India). For a comprehensive bibliography on the Lepchas, see Heileen Plaisiers website: http://www.lepcha.info/bibliography.htm.

[3]   Several accounts of this story have been collected through time. For a detailed and comparative analysis of several versions dealing with the fight against the *mungs*, see Jenny Bentley (2008).

ashes. The whole process took a week, and the days of the week were named after
the elements used to deal with the corpse the week days were named. At least 10
clans were also named after their role and behaviour in the fight with the demon
and their actions, which ranged from the forging of weapons to the scattering of
his ashes (Bentley, 2008: 121–5).

In a similar fashion, as told to Maskarinec by a Kāmī *jhankri*, there were
once two brothers, Gorāpā and Serāpā, always competing to test their strength
one against one other (Maskarinec, 2000: 42–4). They had eight and seven sons,
respectively.

Gorāpā and his sons collectively represent the autochthonous threats that
originate in the uncultivated, wild parts of the earth, from the forests, streams,
lakes and ridges found outside the boundaries of human settlement (Lecomte
Tilouine 1987, 'hommes/divinités de la foret', *Etudes rurales*, 107–8: 55–69).
This group includes not only various ghost and demons, but also physical curses
like wasps, wild bees and vipers (Maskarinec, 2000: 43).

Gorāpā was often humiliated by Serāpā, so they decided to divide the land
among themselves, in order to live separately to avoid any further quarrels. Serāpā
was tricked out of the fertile lands and forced to retreat into the jungle. Later
he was killed by Gorāpā's sons while they were hunting in the jungle. Gorāpā's
sons obviously broke the rule decided upon previously. In order to appease their
cousins they surrendered all the fertile lands and went into hiding in the jungles:

> They went to stay in the middle of the Budo lake,
> Went to stay in the middle of rivers,
> Went to stay as wasp stingers in trees,
> Went to stay as wild bee stingers on cliffs,
> Went to stay as short tailed star vipers in Sila Khagar,
> Went to stay as young wild goats on Rata Pahar,
> Went to stay as pheasant wings in Charkabhot,
> Went to stay as honeybee stingers in hives,
> Went to stay as hornet stingers in leaves,
> Went to stay as bears and she-bears,
> Tigers and she-tigers in Sila Khagar,
> Went to stay as young red deer in Khairyan groves,
> Went to stay as wild sows and wild boars in Barejataka.
> Gorāpā's sons said,
> 'What would we eat, father, what would we wear?'
> Those sons that stayed in the water were Jal Barah,
> Those that stayed on hilltops were Inyal Thinyal,
> Those that stayed in trees on jhangari tombs were jhangaris,
> Those that stayed in waterfalls were ghosts,
> Those that stayed in springs were Deurali,
> Those that stayed in rivers were vai,
> Those that stayed in bodies were rai. (Maskarinec, 2000: 43–44)

A counter-society made up of the inhabitants of dangerous places (rivers, ravines, cliffs) and creatures of the wild (poisonous snakes and insects, bears, tigers, etc.), angry ghosts and the like: all the dangers out there were, originally, the descendants of Gorāpā. They are often located and identified spatially, providing the Kham Magar[4] with a local map of other-than-human persons with whom they share the land they live on.

A similar story is told among the Apatani[5] (Blackburn, 2008: 74–8). Among the wives of the Apatani cultural hero, Abo Tani, was Piisii Timii. Piisii Timii was the sister of Doji, leader of the beings inhabiting the forest. The three lived together in a longhouse, tending two different fires at the extremities of the house. This polarization was just a symptom of a deeper fracture between the two: Abo Tani hunted several animals in the forest, and whenever he killed one, Doji felt deeply angered. To Doji, in fact, the forest animals were not only domesticated, they were his kin as well. At the same time, Doji hunted down dogs, cows and buffaloes, which were domestic to Abo Tani.

Several times Doji and his fellows tried to get rid of Abo Tani by killing him, but he was always one step ahead of them: in fact his wife Piisii Tiimi, knowing of her brother's intentions, was giving him advice enabling him to thwart their efforts.

One day, after a last assassination attempt, Abo Tani went hiding in a hole. His enemies decided to kill him with fire and smoke. When they were sure he was dead, they called the one among them with the longest hands, Koblak, to grab the corpse in order to have a meal, but Abo Tani was still alive, and he grabbed the hand of Koblak, trapping him. The spirits finally decided to hold peace talks. After several useless efforts, Sii Abo, the owner of the land, with power over mountains and waters, was named as their spokesman.

Peace talks began, and eventually the territories for Abo Tani and for the spirits were decided. 'When you two live together, there is fighting,' said Sii Abo. 'Better to separate and live in separate places.' Then Abo Tani loosened his grip on the hand, and Sii Abo told him to come out. 'I am here, so you don't have to worry. I've made my decision and anyone who doesn't follow it will drown or fall down a mountain.'

When Abo Tani came out, Sii Abo named their separate places: 'Doji, yours is far away, the place of caves and thorny trees. Abo Tani, yours is the flat and fertile land. If there is any dispute, you can read chicken livers and decide. This is my decision. Now, the birds Chegu and Pudume must go and find places for Doji.' Those birds went and found caves, thorny bushes, rocks and deep forest. (…) This was how Abo Tani and the spirits were finally separated. We humans, we Nyishis and *nipaks* [non-tribals] are the descendants of Abo Tani. Doji has his own place – in damp and hollow areas, like dark areas of streams, and on rocky hills. Today

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[4]   The Kham Magar are the inhabitants of Rukum, Salyan, Rolpa and Pyuthan Districts of Nepal.

[5]   The Apatani are an indigenous group inhabiting the Ziro Valley in Arunachal Pradesh (India).

we live according to Sii Abo's decision: if we go to the forest for food or clear the forest for planting, we must first make a sacrifice to Doji. Likewise, the spirits stay in their areas, and Doji keeps out of our villages (Blackburn, 2008:77–8).

The world so partitioned is the one we know today. The split between human and other-than-human is only apparent, since the whole is obviously unified. The two apparently different halves are constantly overlapping and every misstep is met with a bitter reward: bad luck, disgrace, illness and attacks by other-than-human persons.

The Nine Witch Sisters and Rama, the First Shaman

A story collected by Hitchcock and analysed by Iltis will illustrate once again the underlying role violence has in actually making processes of creation and transformation possible. The story is about the first Shaman and the Nine Witch Sisters, and it was collected in an area inhabited mainly by Chetri and Magar in Nepal (Iltis, 2002).

After the world was destroyed[6], consumed by the nine suns and moons unleashed by Anakheni, Parmesvar[7] tried to create human beings. He was unsuccessful, and so he went seeking the help of the Chicken, burned almost to death by the all-devouring fires and hidden in the lake created by the tears of Anakheni. Parmesvar restored the chicken's body, using various elements, and in turn he obtained dung to create human beings. The first human being, Manu, disrupted some plants in the garden of the goddess Sita, and in revenge she released untimely and sudden death upon mankind at the hands of the Nine Witches, who originated from the Nine Stars and bringing ill-luck and disasters on the earth. Several healers and sages from different traditions tried to help the human beings, but their efforts were not successful. Finally, Manu resorted calling Rama, the first *jhankri*.

Rama, who was the uncle[8] of the Nine Witches, led them astray on a journey across the Indian subcontinent, visiting various and diverse sacred places, linked with shamanic lineages. Finally, luring them onto a bridge, he let them fall into the waters. Only the youngest one, Piraimala, who transformed herself into a butterfly, escaped the fateful fall hiding into Rama's headdress. She asked him to spare her, since, without her he would never be called to shamanise again:

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[6]   The story includes references to relevant figures of the Hindu pantheon, embedded in a local mythological framework: the result is a combination of diverse elements united in an original religious discourse about the creation of the world, human beings and shamanism.

[7]   Literally the 'supreme lord', from Sanskrit *parameshwara*.

[8]   See Iltis, 2002: 35: 'Rama usually calls them using the familiar human female forms of niece (*bhānjī*), little girl or daughter (*nānī*), and younger sisters (*bahinī*)'.

> Piraimala in despair pleaded with Rama, and reminded him that only if her envious eye should fall on someone would he, Rama, be called as a shaman. If she were dead, then he would never again be called, and would thus be out of a job. But if she could be allowed to live, she would agree that whenever he, Rama, asked her to leave, she would leave. Also, she said: As a result, you'll have precious bangles, gold in your ear, a cow to milk, a plowing bullock, the nine gifts that are put before the shaman, nine measures of sesame, nine measures of rice, and nine bundles of clothes. So Rama spared her. (Iltis, 2002: 33)

The shaman and the witch roles, despite their apparent opposition, are thus engaged in a dialectic pattern: their positions are complementary and each one benefits from the activities of the other. Moreover, in this kind of story we find, as usual, the blurred boundaries between human and other-than-human. Gods, animals and human beings appears to be constantly transforming into something else. The eight witches killed in the water, for example, became the eight goddesses (*ashtamātṛkās*) of the Hindu pantheon: Kālikā Devī, Mālikā Devī, Jālikā Devī, Jāmīre Devī, Sundaullā Devī, Mahākālī, Dakshinā Devī, Parbatī Devī (Iltis, 2002: 33).

From the defilement of Sita's garden and her vengeance descends the institution of shamanism, the setting of rules to counteract illness and disgrace and even the eight protective deities: Rama's violence against the witches results, finally, in their change of status.

'In a time of only earth and stones': Negotiating Religious Boundaries in the Himalayas

(Religious) conflicts are not uncommon in a cultural area featuring multiple religious systems, constantly overlapping and, in fact, constituting a continuum of religious experiences far beyond syncretism. The notion of syncretism itself is quite obsolete: indigenous worldviews often display a textile made up of elements drawn from local religious system and Hindu and/or Buddhist ones. Boundaries between different religious systems seem to be constantly shifting. In such a liquid milieu, conflict appears to be systemic, and the production of an inherent folklore is vast, rich and detailed.

One of the most common topics is that of a confrontation between a Buddhist master and a shaman or a Bonpo.[9] Milarepa's confrontation with Naro Bon is one of the best-known episodes of such a rivalry, and a popular piece of the hagiographic literature of Tibetan Buddhism as well. While on his way to meditate at Mount Kailash, Milarepa encounters Naro Bon and accuses him of being just a juggler. Naro Bon, in reply, challenges him to race to the top of the sacred mountain.

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[9]   On the similarities, differences and confusion arising from the identification of Bön with shamanism *tout court*, see Bjerken, 2004:4–59.

At dawn of the 15th (day), Naro-Bon-chuun, being dressed in a blue fur-dress, playing the cymbal, called 'shang', and mounting a tambourine, went toward the sky. The pupil of Je-tsun (Milarepa), seeing this, went to him and found him fast asleep. One of the pupils named Re-chhun addressed him: – 'Venerable Sir! Naro-Bon-chhun, early this morning, riding his own tambourine, flew towards the sky. By this time he has reached the waist of Tesi.' Je-tsun being still in bed, his pupil thought that the Bonpo had gained the day and carried off the possession of the place. Earnestly, he pressed Je-tsun to get up, and the same was done by all the pupils. Je-tsun now looked with fixed eyes toward Tesi and said – 'behold! The Bonpo, being unable to climb the precipice, has gone round it'. Then in a finger's snapping he mounted the sun-beam and, by spreading his raiment as outspread wings, flew towards the top of Tesi, which he reached in a moment along the glowing sun (…) When Naru-Bon-chhun was attempting to rise above the neck of Tesi, he fell down, and his tambourine rolled down towards the southern valley of Tesi. (Das, 1881:211)

The race to the top of the sacred mountain Kailash can be seen as a metaphorical context between the competing powers, the Buddhist religion versus Bön, and, as such is an essential part of the Tibetan Buddhist canon. But there's obviously more to it, and several similar stories have been continuously told and retold among the people of several Himalayan societies, part of a shared and common heritage for all those cultures adhering to unique religious systems drawing from Buddhist and shamanic traditions.

While doing fieldwork among the Tamang in Nepal, Holmberg retrieved a story sharing similar features (Holmberg, 1996: 218–20):

In a time of only earth and stones, there were two brothers. The older brother was a lama, Kalten Sangkye, and the younger brother was a *bombo*, Dungsro Bon. At that time, Dungsro Bon did all the things. He cured the people; he expelled the dead, and he performed the memorial death feasts. The lama did nothing. One day, the lama's wife chided her husband, asking him what good he was; why he did nothing and why he had nothing. She told him that Dungsro Bon, the *bombo*, called the dead, that the dead appeared to the community and ate their food offerings. (Holmberg, 1996: 218)

In those mythic times, then, we find two brothers, whose religious roles are clearly stated, but only one of them seems to have the actual power and the authority to perform.

Challenged by his wife, Kalten Sangkye explained that his brother has no real power: he was just a trickster and a conjurer of evil spirits. He then gave his wife a *dorje*[10] and told her to display it next time Dungsro Bon is evoking the dead. In

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    [10]   A ritual object used very often in Tibetan Buddhist rituals. The Tibetan word *dorje* means 'diamond' or 'thunderbolt'.

doing so, she expelled the evil spirits, leaving Dungsro Bon humiliated. To regain is status, Dungsro Bon challenged his brother to a competition: a pilgrimage to a sacred mountain lake, Chhomamo Ngyingtso. While the shaman started off, the lama sat quietly at home for three days. On the third day, he transformed himself into a bird and flew up to the lake, where he planted his staff and rested on it, in the shape of a vulture (Holmberg, 1996: 218).

Arriving there, the *bombo* saw only a vulture, and started throwing things at it, not recognising his older brother.

This time Kalten Sangkye became angry at his younger brother. He took his spoon, dipped it in the water, and flipped the lake over, driving Dungsro Bon down and into the midst of the lake. The lama thought he had finished off Dungsro Bon and returned to his home. Kalten Sangkye's daughter, out of affection for her father, had gone to the lake, but when she arrived he had left, descending by a different trail from hers. All she heard was the sound of a drum beating. She looked over and down into the lake and saw Dungsro Bon dancing and beating his drum. She wondered what had happened. Three days went by while she looked. Up from the midst of the lake, Dungsro Bon sent the curse of the porcupine quill and ruined the eyes of Kalten Sangkye's daughter. Kalten Sangkye came and tried to cure his daughter. He consulted his books and blew his mantras onto her. But could not find the cure. Finally, he called out to his brother, who was still dancing and beating his drum while lodged in the midst of the earth. The lama said, 'Look here, big man. Don't call yourself Dungsro Bon anymore; call yourself Nharu Bon. Chant only for the living; I will give you five rupees and nine level measures of grain if you cure my daughter's eyes.' He then extracted the bombo from the midst of the lake. The lama then bound the following oath: 'Look, I will take care of the dead and you will take care of the living' (Holmberg, 1996: 219).

As in the story of Milarepa, the shaman is defeated only due to a display of magical superiority. This superiority is then used to claim a hegemonic status pertaining to religious practices: in the case of Milarepa, the advancement of Buddhism in Tibet, while Kalten Sangkye obtained the right to perform death rituals. In this second case, the outcome of the contest is used to explain the contemporary presence of multiple and diverse religious specialists in Tamang society, wherein each has a generally well defined role to play, a mythical process of division of (religious) labour in order to avoid overlapping.

A different version of the same story is analysed by Brigitte Steinemann. The two brothers in her version are Dunjur Bon and Guru Pema. Dunjur Bon is able to make the dead dance to the sound of his drum and obey him (Steinmann 1998: 6). Guru Pema challenges him to reach the heavens and Dunjur Bon repeatedly tries to reach them by metamorphosing himself into a bird-like creature, but all his efforts are thwarted by Guru Pema, who is continuously performing rituals to prevent his rival from reaching the sky. Dunjur Bon is finally defeated when he falls back to the ground:

Where is the key of the door (locked)?

On the earth he fell full length
In the middle of the seat of Herung Hill
On the biggest tree, the tree of the jhankri,
The jhankri having fallen down into the tree,
His flesh was cut and his blood spurted out (Steinmann, 1998: 22)
After the fateful conclusion of this attempt to reach the heavens, the shaman
obtains new life on earth:
At the time of Yurung Bon
Was given death at the Kasyor temple
The Sangge Guru Pema
Has shaken the tree of the Jhankri
He fell down in hell
The blood spurted on the nettlebed
Guru Pema (Himself) was frightened
'Atha, atha', (My God!) he shouted
(about) the chestnut tree and the nettles (or oak tree)
One says that the Bompos know about their secrets,
Near the snow of Gosainkunda
Keep the secret formulas of ancient times
Keep secret in the mind the lama's words,
A long time ago, in the time of the origins,
The shadow of the Pipal tree,
What is (the story) of the bompo's creation?
There are the words of the bompo's origins
The words of the bompo's rebirth
In the field, the millet grows (Steinmann, 1998: 23).

The defeat of Dunjur Bon is – thus – the original sacrifice operating a caesura
between a mythic time and the actual situation, where the practices of the lama
are considered superior to those of the shaman (*jhankri* or *bompo*). The death of
Dunjur Bon is also the event marking:

> the advent of pollution (*dip*), the bompo's rebirth (*kesa*) on earth and human
> procreation: henceforth we have a clear separation between living beings and the
> dead, between bompo and lamas. The primeval non-oriented time of *thungsa*,
> identified by the bompo's ability to fly, terminates with *kesa*, with his fall to
> earth and his dismemberment in the nettlebed. (Steinmann, 1998: 8)

One more version of the same confrontation will serve well the purpose to highlight
multiple levels of meaning attached to the eventful series of confrontations between
shamans and lamas in the Himalayas. In a version of the story collected by Höfer,
we find two lamas (Urgyen Pe:ma and Kàlden Lama) and two shamans (Dunsur
Bon and Naru Bon). Of the two opposing couples, the first one (Urgyen Pe:ma and
Dunsur Bon), is clearly made up of two divine cultural heroes (although one of

them has to be defeated), while Naru Bon and Kalden Lama are the 'prototypes of those specialists who act in our days' (Höfer, 1994: 335). In this version, Dunsur Bon arrogates the role of performer of death rituals: while performing for his wife, he notices that she is able to eat the ritual offerings. Kàlden Lama is angered, because the corpse he is performing for is cold and still. According to him, Dunsur's wife is not really dead and he moves on to expose the trick to everyone by performing the *phowa* for her, in doing this, he extracts her soul from the body through a lock of hair on the top of her head, thus making her really dead. Urgyen Pe:ma then states that there is a disorder arising from a 'false' ritual by a 'false' specialist' over a 'false' corpse (Höfer, 1994: 335).

To avenge himself, Dunsur Bon curses them and then elopes with Lasya, the wife of Naru Bon. Kalden lama, Naru Bon and Urgyen Pe:ma start searching for them, flying over the mountains having transformed themselves into cuckoos or vultures. On the shore of the lake Cho Mamo, they spot Dunsur dancing and beating the drum. From the opposite shore, Kàlden Lama challenges Dunsur to fight the acquatic monster living in the lake and, gesticulating with his spoon, turns the world upside down, thus trapping Dunsur under the lake's waters. Unafraid, Dunsur keep playing his drum thus taming the acquatic monster. He even succeeds in injuring the eyes of Menjyun, Kàlden Lama's daughter. Finally, Kàlden Lama starts reciting from his book, while Naru throws the branches of several sacred trees until one stalk coils around a lock of Dunsur's hair. Kàlden, while tearing out Dunsur's lock of hair and performing the *phowa*, succeeds in banishing Dunsur to the other world, where he transforms into the evil ogress Dunsur Mamo. Lasya, is also transformed into the Witch of the Four Primordial Bombos (Höfer, 1994: 336).

In this last account we find several motifs: the first and most evident is the confrontation for religious supremacy between Buddhism and shamanism/bönism. This superiority is expressed by the authority over death rituals, and is obtained through a contest and a display of supernatural powers. Dunsur Bon (who is obviously Dungsro and Dunjur of the two aforementioned accounts) is killed, banished, transformed or domesticated: he dies from falling off the *jhankri* tree and is reborn on earth. Or he changes his name in Nharu (Naru, Naro) Bon and negotiates a new religious role and renounces the performance of death rituals leaving them to the lama. The shaman has really two options: to be killed or banished to the other world where he becomes an ogress, or to cooperate with the lama accepting a division of labour.

The wide range of mythic options is obviously an a posteriori explanation of his peripheral role in Tamang's religious life, but this peripheral position is obtained only after an angry, pitched and violent religious battle.

Knowledge and Danger: Initiation and Violence

A certain degree of violence is involved in the first phase of almost every shamanic experience: beginnings are often, if not always, traumatic. To become a shaman,

one has to die, more or less metaphorically. Insanity, hallucinations, visions of death, dialogs with ancestors and/or abduction by powerful beings of the forests are the most common paths a shaman has to deal with before he/she can claim to be a full-fledged shaman. To refuse the call, is to invite permanent madness or even sudden death. The dynamics of initiation are, as we have said, highly dramatic in their essence. From the narrations of individual initiations, a discourse usually unfolds on the boundaries between human and other-than-human, leaving several trends of violence exposed, linking the visible world with the invisible one.

The story told to Macdonald by a *jhankri* from Darjeeling (West Bengal) is a frightening one; a tale of dealing with sickness, apparitions, ghastly events, visions and mystical experiences (MacDonald, 1996: 309–26). Although there are only few samples of direct violence, a looming sense of danger is pervasive throughout the whole story. The other-than-human persons involved, local deities and major figures from the Hindu pantheon, despite being benign, always possess a frightening side, and they appear to be closely associated with evil entities like the *masan* and other corpse-animating ghosts. The neophyte is walking a thin line between life and death, between sanity and madness.

When Gobind Prasad got the fever at the age of 13, he was sick for three months. He used to see a boy next to his bed, dressed in white, with long golden hair and a red face. The boy helped him to rise and feed him with tea, milk and sugar pills.

One night, he came bringing with him a few plants and a small saucer made of white stone. There were other people in the room and they were all frightened by the wondrous boy apparition. He lit an empty lamp and a blue flame rose. He then took a *rudrakshamala*[11] from his neck and put it around Gobind Prasad's. He wiped his body with the sacred leaves and then announced that, after 21 days, he would return to get him. He also warned him to be careful the eighteenth day. At this point, three girls with long black hair and dressed, respectively, in green, red and white, entered the room. They, too, would return on the twenty-first day to get him away with them.

He became more and more sick, and on the eighteenth he fainted. All the people believed he was dead, since there was no sign of life. During the night vigil, while all the people, wailing, gathered around the corpse, a voice came three times from outside the door, calling his name. The people started whispering to each other in terror that probably it was a *masan*. Checking the body they found it to be warm. He remained unconscious for three days. While unconscious, he was dreaming. In the dream he was climbing a high mountain, following the young boy up to a large house at the top of the mountain. The boy said the mountain was Sumerugiri. They entered the house by the West door. Through the East door he saw the Sun and the Moon. Through the North one Gobind Prasad saw, in the distance, Mahadeo, clad in a tiger-skin and holding the *trisula*[12]. He was afraid, because Mahadeo mouth,

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[11]   Ritual prayer beads chain made of *Elaeocarpus ganitrus*' seeds.

[12]   A trident: one of the symbols often associated with the Hindu god Shiva, also called Mahadeo, from the Sanskrit Mahādeva, 'the great god'.

lips and teeth were all red. 'Don't be afraid – said the boy – he's my father'. All of a sudden, they were in presence of Mahadeo, very close to him, and Gobind Prasad was sitting on the knees of the boy. Only, the boy was now a big man, with a beard and moustache, a *trisula* painted on his forehead, a *dhyangro*[13] in one hand and the gajo in the other, and other *jhankri*'s paraphernalia hanging from his clothes.

The next door, opened westward, took them closer to a goddess dressed in red seated on a lion[14] among the Himalayas: the mother of the golden boy. He told Gobind that he had six brothers, older and younger than him. He was the third one. 'There is still another door, but I cannot let you see what is on the other side. Your dead father is there with Yamarāj'(Macdonald, 1996: 314). He then brought him back to his room and left. Several people heard his voice telling them not to touch him. The next morning, the body being very cold, the people started getting ready to take him to the cremation *ghat*. But when they went to get him, they could not find the corpse under the shroud. It was the morning of the twenty-first day.

A noise came from a slope where a shrine of the goddess (Devi), was tended by a *sadhu*[15]. The *sadhu* was very angry because he had found a corpse hanging from a tree nearby his shrine. That was the body of Gobind Prasad. The people gathered there with ropes to lower the body to the ground, tied with several knots. On touching the ground, Gobind started running away. He went to his home and went inside, standing there without emitting a word. His mother hugged him, and he started trembling, shaking for the whole day, 'without drinking, eating or saying a word' (Macdonald, 1996: 315).

Several shamans from nearby were called to deal with him. But, since he was possessed by a powerful *ban deuta*[16], they were not successful. A *bijuwa* trying to test the entity possessing Gobind Prasad was driven into violent trance and sent into the fire, then into a thorny bush, the latrines and finally into a nearby river. Finally a Lepcha *bijwami*, Yankit, seemed to be able to deal with the *ban deuta* and accepted to make Gobind Prasad her disciple. Three days after the meeting with Yankit, Gobind Prasad felt strange. He wasn't able to close his mouth for an entire day. At night, the boy entered Gobind's house and fed him. He then told Gobind Prasad: 'From now on I will no longer show you my face as I do now. In the future, I will come to you like the wind. When you were sick, I came to save you from your sickness and from death, and to prove to the others that there are *deutā*' (Macdonald, 1996: 315).

Exceptionally detailed and rich in wondrous experience, Macdonald's account vividly portrays the complexity involving the process of becoming a shaman which can be simplified as follows:

1. Sickness

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13   A type of shamanic drum employed in the Himalayas.
14   The Hindu goddess Durga.
15   In the Hindu culture, a wandering ascetic.
16   In Nepali, 'forest god'.

  2. Ambiguous possession
  3. Near-death experience
  4. Dreams and visions
  5. Training with a recognised shaman.

Interaction with human and other-than-human persons shows that the shaman is embedded in a *communitas* and that this *communitas* 'reflects the existence of "generalized" (i.e. undifferentiated) social ties' (Riches, 1994: 383), extended far beyond the limits of humanity, and far into the environment and the whole community of life.

Until training with a recognised shaman, the call to become a shaman is marred with dangerous and even violent outbursts of uncontrolled trance-like states and modified states of consciousness. The presence of death and madness is constantly at hand and through dreams and visions the neophyte is tested by powerful other-than-human persons.

In Nepal and Sikkim, another set of initiations is characterised by the direct intervention of the *ban jhankri*, the 'forest shaman'. He is portrayed as a mysterious being dwelling deep in the forest and he is held responsible for kidnappings and abductions of children in order to instruct them in the shamanic lore.

The *ban jhankri* is often depicted as a small and hairy being, covered with red or golden hair all over his body except for face and hands (Peters, 2004: 179). He is usually thought of as bringing the kidnapped into his secret cave for days or weeks and to communicating using a secret language. Often his duty is also to protect the abducted by his cannibalistic female counterpart (Miller, 1997: 222–3), the *ban jhankrini*, always eager to kill and eat human beings: 'She provokes fear, demanding pieces of the flesh and the lives of the 'pure' child disciples her husband abducts' (Peters, 2004: 202).

This couple of forest-dwellers constitutes a powerful dyad: male/female, small/large, golden or red/black, careful teacher/menacing flesh eater.

According to Mastromattei's informant, there are at least seven *ban jhankri* (Mastromattei, 2008: 49). As we have seen, even in the story of Gobind Prasad the boy with the golden hair and the red face told him he had six brothers. These brothers are, on one hand, linked with Mahadeo (Shiva), and on the other similar to the being known in the folklore as the Wild Man, the *yeti*.

The kidnapping experience was undoubtedly frightening: the little Cheta had been dragged into the forest and taken into a cave by a monstrous being covered with hair. The cave, on the other hand, was well-lighted by lamps and scented with incense. At this point, Cheta's discourse began to refer a general situation:

> whoever is kidnapped will experience the situation described below. Inside the cave, there was a spring of drinking water, and meals were served on metal dishes (…) The diet was varied, and included cooked rice – the Nepalese staple and object of religious respect – vegetables, but also grubs and worms, unclean and repugnant food. This *jhānkri* had a wife with enormous pendolous breasts,

and a mother, who was a witch and would like to eat babies. For this reason, the *jhānkri* kept her shut up in a golden cage. He himself had no children and wished to 'educate people'. The whole family lived almost naked in the cave. (Mastromattei, 2008: 48–9)

With the complex of the *ban jhankri* we are probably close to the missing link between human and other-than-human, shown by the threat of intimate cannibalistic consumption of the abducted: while the *ban jhankri* is looking for a child to instruct, his wife is looking for an easy meal. The *ban jhankri*, the *ban jhankrini* and the abducted child constitute a sort of family in which knowledge and danger are so strictly interwoven through a fictive, although functional, kinship.

Conclusion

Dangerous enemies and tricksters, malignant entities and powerful gods constitute the main characters of a rich repertoire of oral literature centred on violence-related stories. A discourse of violence permeates the very core, worldviews and perspectives of shamanic cultures of the Himalayas. From creation stories to folk tales, from ritual songs to biographic accounts of individual shamans, we find violence is a recurrent topic, a major feature and a key concept used to frame experiential phenomena and ontological understanding related to the cosmos, living beings and their personal lives. The discourse on violence is really a discourse about boundaries: on how they are established, blurred, crossed or trespassed. The shaman is just one of the travellers: many more linger and tread on the visible and invisible paths spread like a web on local geographies.

Local geographies appear to be divided by series of overlapping fault-lines, each one the consequence of a negotiation of sorts. Negotiation, as it clearly results from creation stories, was meant as a way to prevent intimate violence among peers. Such violence is quick to erupt or resume every time a fault line is trespassed inappropriately, mostly in the form of sickness, bad luck or disgrace. Shamanism is the reply to such outburst of conflict.

A similar pattern characterises shamanic interactions with competing religious systems, and here, too, we find conceptual boundaries related to a division of religious labour of sorts: shamanism, Buddhism and Hinduism are so strictly intertwined in and around the Himalayas that a liquid religion is the most common option available to the people. This, again, is the result of conflict and an ongoing negotiation between conflicting sides. Deeply embedded in a cycle of violence and counter-violence, the shaman uses this to negotiate or to counteract: the common currency enabling social relations between human and other-than-human persons.

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Chapter 10

Of Angry Thunders, Smelly Intruders and Human-Tigers. Shamanic Representations of Violence and Conflict in Non-Violent Peoples: The Semang-Negrito (Malaysia)

Diana Riboli

The Orang Asli or aboriginal groups of Peninsular Malaysia have often been described in anthropological literature as non-violent peoples. Accounts have depicted them as peaceful and shy peoples enslaved, manipulated and persecuted by other dominant groups in the course of turbulent periods throughout history from the Portuguese and Dutch hegemonies (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), the British colonial rule (formalised by the Anglo-Dutch Treaty in 1824), the Japanese occupation during the Second World War (1942–45), the Emergency period of the Communist insurgency (1948–60) to the declaration of independence and rise to power of the Malay population (1957) (Stewart, 1954; Noone, 1972).

To a certain extent this is the case. The Orang Asli have certainly more often been the victims rather than the agents of violence. But this doesn't mean that they are unable to understand, react to, confront and even implement acts of violence. Dentan, author of a seminal study on the non-violent Semai (1968), recently elaborated the theory of 'negative peaceability', a reaction to terror and 'a peaceful way of life that emerges from a fear of violence' (Dentan, 2009: 6).

This chapter aims to describe the way in which violence manifests itself in one of the three Orang Asli subgroups, the Semang-Negrito, with particular reference to the Batek and Jahai ethnic groups.[1] It examines the violence of non-violence and its symbolic and/or non-symbolic representations in shamanic context and ideology. Though the problematic term 'shamanism' is widely used in anthropological studies devoted to Orang Asli cultures (Endicott, 1979; Howell, 1984; Benjamin, 2004; Fung, 2004; Tuck-Po, 2005; Riboli 2009, 2010, 2011; Dallos, 2011), this definition is probably inadequate and even limiting. Shamanism, in the classic sense of the term (Eliade, 1951), appears to be in decline and the

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[1]   Orang Asli is a general term which replaced the definition of 'aborigine' in the late 1950s (Benjamin, 2003: 17). The Orang Asli make up 0.6 per cent of the entire population and are divided into three large subgroups: the Senoi, the Aboriginal Malay and the Semang-Negrito.

number of shamans is rapidly decreasing. But what I would call the shamanic perception/sense of the individual, of collectivity, nature and the universe is still alive and remains distinct and distant from other groups' ways of interpreting life, in particular from the perceptions of the dominant Malay Muslim culture.

The Problem of the Definition

The first, very much debated, problem over the past few years is establishing a definition for the term 'violence'. As a multiplicity of concepts related to social life, exchanges and dynamics of power, the perception of violence is culturally bound and defined, as is the perception/definition of peace, where the latter – in any case – cannot be fully understood as the opposite of the first. Violence is perpetrated and endured in many different ways and at different levels, where personal dimensions and perceptions also play a fundamental role.

As a process of social exchange, violence is always related to the Other. In industrial, capitalist and atomistic societies where antagonism is promoted at every level from the earliest years of life of the individual, the perception of the violent Other is multiple and related to the personal, as well as, the collective level. On a personal level, the violent Other can be discerned in the child who, while playing in kindergarten, takes another child's toy, making him/her cry; in the teacher who has the right to punish students who don't follow the rules; in the employer who reprimands his employees loudly; in the thief who breaks into an apartment and steals the owners' valuables; in the husband who beats his wife and children.

On a collective level, a wide array of layers of violent Otherness are perceived, which I could divide into two large categories: the external violent Otherness (which includes transnational conflicts, wars, banks' and capitalism's role in economic crises) and the internal violent Otherness, generally referring to minority groups within national borders, such as gypsies, immigrants, drug addicts, ethnic and/or religious minorities, perceived as a threat and danger to the social life order.

But what happens in cultures based on egalitarianism, on the lack of central political power and property, on sharing and on ethical rules? And what happens when these cultures, considered problematic and backward minorities in a country such as Malaysia, which is rapidly racing toward development and modernity, somehow enter and participate in the national and global history and market?

Amongst the Orang Asli, and probably indigenous groups in general living in nations where politics, the economy, religion and social structures are controlled by other ethnic groups, the two categories mentioned earlier are not always distinct. The external violent Otherness does not just act outside the national borders, but at least partially represents the internal violent Otherness which in developed countries is mostly found in minority groups, whereas among indigenous populations, this is expressed by the dominant culture/cultures of the country.

The Semang-Negrito

The Semang-Negrito were probably the first inhabitants of Peninsular Malaysia. Archaeological evidence links them to the Hoabinhians, nomadic foragers who inhabited this geographic area between 8,000 BC and 1,000 BC (Nicholas, 2000: 3). There are six Semang-Negrito groups in Peninsular Malaysia: the Batek, Jahai, Mendriq, Kintak, Lanoh and Kensiu. Around 400 to 500 Batek are still nomadic hunters and gatherers and live in the Taman Negara National Park, while the other groups are sedentary.

Batek and Jahai cultures, like Orang Asli cultures in general, are intricately connected to the world of the rainforest, considered a safe maternal womb. The world outside the jungle is perceived as an 'Other' dangerous and violent world, even by sedentary populations (Riboli, 2010, 2011), most of which at least partially retain an egalitarian structure characterised by the absence of any central political power or social hierarchy. In hunter-gatherer societies – which are considered the least violent in the world – reciprocity, cooperation and non-violent conflict resolution (Sponsel, 2009: 38) restrict the presentation of antagonistic conflicts. This means that, at a personal level, companions are not perceived as antagonistic violent Others. All the members of the groups share the same rights and duties.

Among the Batek and the Jahai imposition on others is *lawac* ('prohibited' in Batek and Jahai languages) and therefore punished by other-than-human forces. Within the same group, the Other is perceived as close and friendly and not competitively. This is evident in children's games which for the most part have no fixed rules, are not aggressive or antagonistic and, generally speaking, do not end with a winner and a loser (Endicott, 2008: 118).

Transferring the famous statement of Melford Spiro to the context of a single ethnic group, it could be said that the Batek and Jahai do not respectively consider themselves 'Others' but rather 'brothers' (Spiro, 1992). This brotherhood is extended to all the living beings of the pluvial jungle, as these cultures do not recognise a strict hierarchical order between the human, animal and plant spheres. This is also the reason why the *halak* (shamans) are supposed to be able to change their form into animals and plants (Riboli, 2009).

On a collective level, violence and aggression are avoided between people belonging to the same group. Negativity, threat, danger, conflict and violence always involve the joint spheres of the internal violent Otherness and external violent Otherness, which includes whatever or whoever does not belong to the group or to the realm of the jungle. Non-Batek or Jahai people are known as *gob*, the outsiders, or strangers.

On a national level, for the Batek and Jahai, violence is rooted in the supreme Otherness which is mainly recognised in the dominant Malay Muslim culture. On a transnational level, violence is more imagined and associated with historical memories: the Japanese are considered violent and dangerous, as are the North Americans and people from Arab countries. In the first case the judgement is of course due to the Japanese occupation of Malaysia during the Second World War.

In the second case, this is due to the impression created by American B action movies and to the fact that even Batek nomadic hunters and gatherers regularly listen to the radio and, even without having a clear understanding of the situation, perceive the USA as a dangerous superpower trying to control the world, creating wars, polluting the world and killing innocent people to gain possession of the oil of the planet. In fact, during my fieldwork in 2004 and 2005 the Batek and the Jahai often asked me about President Bush and the Iraq war, and a few of them asked me about the problems Native Americans and indigenous groups have to face in the USA as well as in the Amazonian forest. The idea that people from Arab countries are violent and aggressive is generated in part by the fact that they know that the official religion[2] in these countries is Islam. This perception is empowered by the accounts of a few young Batek – mostly from villages – who have been to work in Qatar and Dubai. Apart from the fact that most of them quickly returned back to Malaysia, their description of the rigid rules and the restrictions and clothing especially related to Arab women horrified their companions. Moreover, as we will see in one of the case studies reported in this paper, Malaysian and Southeast Asian news programmes often report cases of abuse against migrant workers from Asia in Arab countries, exacerbating this perception.

While violence is avoided with 'brothers', it is not totally condemned and is acceptable when it affects 'Others'. Whatever or whoever belongs to the rainforest and the social group is located in a peaceful and reassuring imaginary world. The Batek and Jahai do not believe in the existence of evil other-than-human persons (Hallowell, 1960: 21; Harvey, 2003: 9–11) and they often repeat that in the jungle nothing is evil. Evil beings and acts such as ghosts and black magic are of course not unheard of, but these are always encountered in other non-Orang Asli groups. Therefore, in these cultures, the *halak* do not act as warriors, they do not fight against evil spirits and do not use magical weapons, but are still, along with their companions, called on to confront violence and increasing social, religious and economic pressures.

Sister, What is Jealousy?

While we were walking in the thick and sticky heat of the rainforest, A. – a young Batek helper of mine – was chatting quietly with a couple of friends. As the discussion concerned 'male' topics, I stopped to rest for a while in the shade of a tree. After few minutes A. came up to me and in an embarrassed but amused voice asked me: 'Sister, what is jealousy?' I understood that the question referred to sexual and love affairs, so I asked him to make himself more clear. He explained

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2   To date the nomadic Batek of Taman Negara have refused to convert to Islam. A large percentage of other Batek and Jahai have converted, but generally do not have a clear perception of this religion, to which they do not feel connected and which in many ways is contradictory to their traditional religion (Riboli, 2010).

that when Chinese and Malay traders passed through Orang Asli villages in their cars and vans to sell their quite highly priced goods, they would rent DVDs with American and Asian action and erotic B movies. I was of course aware that television and DVD players had permeated the villages in the past few years and that the indigenous appeared to be particularly fond of very violent and even pornographic movies. A. told me that he and his friends had recently watched such a movie, where violent and probably splatter acts started at the very beginning of the film, when a man found his wife in bed with her lover.

The question surprised me because of course I knew that the Batek experience states of jealousy and rage just like any other human being. In any case, I thought that I could explain by using an example. So, I asked him what he would have felt in his heart if his beautiful young wife had decided to leave him in order to marry another man. 'Great sadness in my heart and angry', he replied, but then he added that in any case he would not have the right to speak or to act against his wife or her partner, for the simple reason that to contradict or hinder his wife's decision would have been *lawac*.

The problem was not in the understanding of what rage, jealousy, conflict and violence are, as individual concepts, feelings or acts, but to link and make sense of them as consequent actions.

Thunder, Lightning, Floods and Punishments

The Batek and Jahai pantheon is small. The only god is the irascible god of thunder, known as Gobar by the Batek, and Karei by the Jahai. The god of thunder and thundersqualls is also a central figure in other Orang Asli groups (Dentan, 2009: 68; Howell, 1984: 79; Roseman, 1991: 137). This is understandable as thunderstorms and floods are probably the most feared and catastrophic events in Peninsular Malaysia. Gobar/Karei is a distant god who doesn't care much about human matters. His role is that of a punisher, easily demonstrating his rage and aggressiveness when humans violate one of the numerous taboos that regulate the social sphere.

It is probably no coincidence that the only divine figure in non-violent groups is himself a representation of violence. Gobar/Karei is not venerated and never invoked during ceremonies: he doesn't help people, only punishes them. In fact, the Batek and Jahai attitude toward this supreme being is the same as their attitude to violence: it exists but remains outside the social group, an external manifestation of power among egalitarian people to remind them of the catastrophic effects of violent acts. As observed by Schröder and Schmidt, 'violence needs to be imagined in order to be carried out' (2001: 9). Gobar/Karei represents both external and internal violent Otherness. The Batek and Jahai are aware that this god is not recognised as such by other groups, for instance the Malay, the Chinese and the Indians. In this sense he expresses a sort of internal Otherness, in that he is strongly associated with a sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group, at the same time

Figure 10.1   Jahai women performing a ceremony in the jungle, Malaysia 2009

remaining a distant figure that originates from a sphere of Otherness where non-human violence, which is nonetheless supreme and tangible, is projected.

Gobar/Karei lives and behaves very differently to humans. According to some versions, he lives in complete solitude, in hidden places in the jungle, the sky, or the sun. In contrast, living in social groups is essential for the Batek and Jahai and anyone who does not participate in the social life and activities of the community is regarded with suspicion. Moreover, the Batek and Jahai never punish their children or their companions. Punishment is sometimes threatened, but never meted out. Hitting children or adults is forbidden and physical violence is regarded with mixed feelings of disgust and fear. Gobar/Karei, on the other hand, is cruel and not always just, as the punishments he sends in the form of thunder, lightning, heavy rains and floods can cause damage or even kill innocent people along with any guilty individuals. It is true, as pointed out by Tuck-Po, that he represents the 'moral order', a 'response to certain misbehaviours' (2005: 1, 50) but it is also true that his punishments are often seen to be undeserved. For this reason, Gobar is more often feared and sometimes even mocked (Endicott, 1979: 163–4) rather than respected, as he is basically a god but unable to control his actions, often exposing himself to ridicule.

Gobar is the only other-than-human-person who requires a sacrifice of blood to appease his anger. Animal sacrifice is not commonly practised by hunter-gatherer populations. Humans only have the right to kill animals during hunting activities for the purpose of provisioning food. Animals belong to the jungle, which is the only entity that can decide to sacrifice them to feed humans as well as other animals.

Interestingly, it is forbidden to kill animals fed by humans. This taboo is also respected by sedentary populations which, for this reason, do not rear domestic animals. This could be interpreted as a paradox: the social group refutes violence and killing, whereas their only god requires blood in order to be pacified. But humans have found a solution in an interesting form of self-sacrifice. During violent thunderstorms, adults cut their calves with a knife and collect the blood in a bamboo container. The blood is then mixed with rainwater and the mixture sprayed upwards into the air toward the sky to stop the storm.

Both Batek and Jahai observe a long list of *lawac* in order to not offend Gobar/Karei and to prevent thundersqualls (Endicott, 1979: 68–80; Rambo, 1985: 41). Amongst others, the god of thunder is very sensitive to smells and noises. In fact, the long list of taboos includes the prohibition of making a noise in the jungle[3] and cooking two different foods of animal origin over the same fire, as the mingling of odours is particularly unpleasant for Gobar/Karei. Another important taboo is related to menstrual blood, which – again – is considered to have a very strong and particularly bad smell. Menstruating women are not allowed to bathe in the rivers or come into contact with rainwater as rain and consequently the rivers are for obvious reasons, linked to the god of thunder.

In former times, these prohibitions applied to the internal social Batek and Jahai orders and to the realm of the jungle (Schebesta, 1928; Evans, 1937; Endicott, 1979). Any violations of these taboos were punished by the irascible and distant Gobar/Karei, whose rage was aimed at individuals in these specific ethnic groups.

However, over the past few years, due to the problematic and increasing dialogue and exchange between indigenous and non-indigenous groups on a national as well as a global level, Batek and Jahai beliefs about prohibitions, punishments and the imaginary world related to violence, conflict, internal and external violent Otherness, are undergoing interesting changes. The *lawac* observed by sedentary Jahai according to which it is forbidden to cook the meat of different animals on the same fire, no longer seems to be so related to the hunting of wild game in the rainforest, but to two different categories of foodstuffs: food originating from the wild realm of the jungle and that which originates from the world outside the jungle. The two opposing categories include both animals and vegetables, with the exception of rice, considered to be somehow 'neutral' (Riboli 2012). While in the jungle, the Jahai take care not to mix processed or cultivated foods, such as salt and spices, with foods originating from the wild, as the intermingling of odours would invoke the rage of Karei who abhors anything that 'stinks' of the world outside the rainforest.

This shared distrust of anything that does not originate in the jungle somehow brought this distant god, traditionally a personification of a violent Otherness, closer to the humans. Processed food in particular is considered to be harmful and the cause

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[3]   For a very interesting analysis of the perception of sounds and noise and their cultural meanings among the Batek, see Tuck-Po (2005: 151–6).

of disease and unbalance, also the reason why traditional midwives (*bidan*, also shamanic figures), pregnant women and traditional healers should avoid it.

Violent thunderstorms and floods in the Jeli area of Kelantan, are now interpreted not so much as Karei's punishment of the Jahai, but are perceived as being directed against other foreign groups. In particular, they are considered to be aimed at the Malays who control their lives and whom they fear, and the migrant seasonal workers – mostly from Thailand – recruited by logging companies and plantation owners whom the Jahai accuse of polluting the rivers and being 'dangerous' and 'dirty'.

Smelly and Noisy Tourists, the Flight of the Human-Tigers and the Collapse of a Cave

In 1938 Taman Negara was declared a national park, the largest in Peninsular Malaysia, covering 4,343 square kilometres across the states of Kelantan, Pahang and Terengganu. The park is a major tourist attraction, offering visitors the unique and exciting opportunity of experiencing the oldest rainforest on the planet (130 million years old). A wide range of activities such as trekking, bird and animal watching, rafting and visits to Orang Asli camps are available, and the jungle is also home to around 500 Batek. In reality, tourists are only taken to a few Batek camps close to Kuala Tahan, the main entrance to the park. The Batek receive a small amount of money for allowing tourists to photograph the camp, and for demonstrations of how to light a fire without lighters and matches and how to use a blowpipe. Though they are considered the original inhabitants of the forest, they have no administrative function (Tuck-Po, 2005: 10) and, with very few exceptions, are not recruited to work in the park as rangers and tourist guides, who are mostly Malay.

The 'invasion' of large groups of tourists – in high peak season up to 300 persons per day – is tolerated and even sought after because of the economic benefits it brings. However, it is also creating stressful situations amongst the Batek, who generally spend some time in these camps working as tourist attractions, returning to the depths of the jungle when they tire of this activity and of the noise and smell of tourists. Nomadism is, at present, a choice, as most of the Batek are settled in villages outside the national park, but the decision to move from one place to another is not only dictated by activities such as hunting, fruit gathering and search for and collection of wild products from the jungle to trade, but also by the discomfort generated by the tourist presence.

During my fieldwork of the last six years, I have noticed increasing levels of anxiety among the Batek of Taman Negara. This mainly stems from the fact that working with tourists brings 'easy money' which can be used to purchase *gob* products such as radios, DVD players, watches and – in particular – mobile phones. From another point of view, the smell of the *gob* and the constant ensuing noise pollution are considered (and effectively are) dangerous and harmful for

Figure 10.2   Tourists watch a Batek boy lighting a fire in Taman Negara, Malaysia, 2007

the jungle and an offence to Gobar. Though the Batek have had contact with other groups, particularly to trade different jungle products, for many years, their experience of tourist visitors is singularly distinct. Tourists come from all over the world and are generally accompanied by a Malay guide who explains the Orang Asli way of life and customs.

Before he passed away, *halak* Machang, probably one of the last full shamans among the Batek in Taman Negara, often expressed his concern about this situation. He was not in favour of frequent contacts with tourists, as their presence makes the jungle sick, and contaminates the living beings and other-than-human-persons inhabiting it. Machang was a tiger-shaman and, when he was young, could wander in the jungle in form of a tiger and other animals. He was also the first person to tell me about the Sakai Pangan, tigers with supernatural powers who can change into human forms: a sort of inverted lycanthropy.

The Sakai Pangan prefer to avoid any contact with humans, but can be dangerous and when they decide to kill a victim either use their animal form, human form or a combination of the two. Batek tiger-shamans play a positive role. In their tiger form, they protect their companions against attacks by wild animals, whereas in their human or combination of human and tiger forms, the Sakai Pangan generally perpetrate acts of violence against humans. Probably not surprisingly, *halak* Machang and other Batek told me that the human form preferred by the Sakai Pangan is that of a Malay. Interestingly, the terms 'Sakai' (a derogatory term which means 'slave', 'serve') and 'Pangan' (used in the sense of 'men of the forest') were both used in the past by other communities to refer to Orang Asli (Nagata, 2006).

The Sakai Pangan share some common features with Gobar: they are both other-than-human-persons, distant from humans, but also potentially violent and dangerous, as a powerful representation of violent Otherness, the Sakai Pangan are believed to live and hide in deep caves in the jungle.

Not far from Kuala Tahan, lies a major attraction called Gua Telinga (Ear Cave), a long limestone cave home to bats, frogs and insects. On the tourist trail to reach the cave was a sizeable Batek camp. Two tourist attractions in one. Caves are special places for the Batek, who fear and respect them, as they are the favourite dwelling-places of other-than-human-persons. In 2005, a Batek *bidan*, an important informant and helper in my research, explained that all the women and many of the men were worried about Gua Telinga and the fact that hundreds of noisy tourists were taken there every day. Something in it was terribly wrong and dangerous. For this reason most of her companions preferred to stay away and not to enter the cave. In 2006, during another informal discussion with the Batek in the Gua Telinga area, I was told that the cave was still inhabited by a few Sakai Pangan. However, on my most recent visit, it was reported that the last of them had decided to abandon the place, looking for other caves further inside the jungle, less accessible to the *gob*. As these creatures are potentially dangerous, I presumed the departure of the Sakai Pangan was a positive development for the local community, but the abandonment of the cave was perceived as a very bad omen and said to have incurred the wrath of Gobar.

There is no documentation of any relationship between Gobar and the Sakai Pangan in Batek tradition. But the association between the two probably derives from the fact that neither can stand the loud noise and the odours of outsiders as shown by the continuum of the story. In 2010, during my most recent fieldwork in Taman Negara, Batek informers again voiced their concerns about the thousands of tourists who enter the cave, making it dirty and noisy. In the last few months, thunderstorms had been very violent, a clear sign that Gobar was really angry. Moreover, a few months before my arrival, an old man in a nearby Batek camp 'had gone crazy' one night and ran about threatening to kill everybody with his knife. The Batek were shocked by this explosion of violence against people belonging to the same group. This very unusual event was interpreted as a violent

manifestation and probably some kind of intrusion of an other-than-human-person. The following day, the Batek camp was immediately abandoned.

The night after our conversation, part of Gua Telinga collapsed, and huge boulders blocked the only entrance to the cave, which is now inaccessible. The Batek left no trace behind them of their camp, not even the huts of leaves where they sleep.

The Tsunami and the Housemaid's Menstrual Blood

On 26 December 2004, Sumatra was struck by an earthquake with a magnitude of 9.3. Because of the deformation of the ocean floor, the seawater created a devastating tsunami wave. Though the consequences for Malaysia were not as dramatic as for other countries, the population was shocked and scared for a long period.

In Taman Negara, Batek informants told me that the night before the earthquake, nobody could sleep as the Malaysian peacock-pheasant (*Polyprecton malacense*), which lives in remote jungle areas, had come right to the edges of the forest and cried all night long. The adults were sure that something really bad was going to happen.

There are different explanations for this catastrophic event, but one of the most common among the Batek makes reference to Gobar and is of a transnational nature. As mentioned earlier, the Batek often listen to the radio and can watch television in the floating restaurants on the riverside of Kuala Tahan. Of late, the media in Southeast Asia have been reporting cases of mainly physical, sexual, but also psychological abuse of migrant domestic workers – most of whom are Indonesians – in Arab countries.[4] News reports particularly emphasise cases where housemaids have been tortured and abused by their employers, with detailed descriptions of physical injuries and how they were caused.

A young Batek who has been receiving therapeutic songs and spiritual teaching through dreams for the past few years, and who may become the next *halak* in Taman Negara, explained that the tsunami was a terrible punishment sent by Gobar, whose rage had been incurred by the worst offence: the purposeful pouring of menstrual blood into the water of a river or the sea. Together with his friends and relatives, the *halak* explained that some poor Indonesian girl must have been hired as a housemaid in Dubai or Saudi Arabia and had probably decided to take a revenge on her cruel employer for the many abuses and injuries she had suffered by using black magic.[5] They believed she had probably gone to the sea and thrown in a concoction of her menstrual blood mixed with other things, and the consequences

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[4]   According to a survey conducted by Sayiadaty (a sister publication of Arab News), in 2011 3 million maids were abused in the Gulf region and Egypt (http://www.arabnews.com/node/365880).

[5]   In Malaysia it is common knowledge that Indonesian women are charming but dangerous, as they are believed to be particularly skilled in black magic. For more information regarding the role of black magic in Southeast Asia see C.W. Watson and Ellen

of her act had grown out of proportion. Her pain, suffering and rage along with her menstrual blood, transported by strong sea currents, tried to go back to her country of origin: Indonesia. When the menstrual blood crossed the sea close to Malaysia, Gobar smelled it and, offended, but also struck by the attempt and the girl's suffering, transformed it into a devastating force which, combined with the powerful black magic, exploded as soon as it came close to Sumatra. The Batek could not explain who was supposed to be the real target of Gobar's punishment. It had certainly not been directed at the Batek, or the rest of Malaysian population. It had perhaps been directed at the girl, her family and social group, as well as her vicious employer somewhere in Dubai or Saudi Arabia.

Injustice and suffering had provoked rage and the desire for revenge, which was sought using black magic. The abuse and violence were so extreme that the consequences enacted by other-than-human-persons somehow mirrored the violent acts perpetrated by humans: a tsunami wave which killed over 230,000 people in 14 different countries.

Conclusions

The cultures of the Batek, Jahai and Orang Asli groups in general are under threat. The Malaysian government seems to consider the 'good' Orang Asli to be the ones who accept the process of religious, cultural and social assimilation into Malay culture and rules, while the others are believed to be 'backward' and 'savage'. In the last decades the government's Islamisation programme for indigenous populations, as well as the 'western' fashions and habits Orang Asli see in the media and in foreigners and tourists, together with the process of rapid 'modernisation' of the country, are creating new forms of stress and social suffering.

For thousands of years, the Batek and Jahai have been confronting their greatest fear and dislike: conflict and violence. But this is probably the first time in their long history they have had to confront a violent Otherness which transcends national borders. Their curiosity and quest for violent movies, which has soared recently, is also feeding their perceptions and imaginary of violence in a form of 'discursive amplification' which is what Whitehead means by the term 'poetics of violent practices' (2004: 6).

Amongst the Orang Asli, the categories of internal and external violent Otherness referred to in a particular nation – clearly defined in capitalist and modern societies – are not clearly distinct, and their boundaries are extending in various directions, including into the supernatural sphere. The *gob* are no longer only the Malay, other groups living in Malaysia or the British colonialists or the Japanese invaders of the past. The category of violent *gob* now includes people from all over the world, those who torture poor Indonesian girls, kill innocent

Roy (eds), *Understanding Witchcraft and Sorcery in Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993).

Figure 10.3   *Halak* (shaman) Machang, Malaysia 2005

people looking for power and oil, who – like in the violent American and Asian action and B movies – perpetrate and even enjoy violent acts and violent sex, who enter Batek camps taking pictures of everybody without asking permission, making a noise, and offending the god of thunder.

Many violent Othernesses are linked to each other, collaborate, or are in any case perceived as a common threat. A couple of years ago, in the Batek camp close to Gua Telinga, a Dutch tourist yelled at the Malay guide because she had paid money to see 'real' indigenous people, meaning that in her imaginary 'real' indigenous people were supposed to be almost naked. The lady's disappointment was because most of the Batek were wearing t-shirts, shorts, even jeans and baseball caps and the women had their breasts covered. Her screaming and demands to get her money back provoked confusion among the Batek. When the group of tourists left, one man told me in a quite angry tone: 'you have to decide what you want from us: the Malays want our body covered, westerners want us naked. Why don't

you talk to each other and work out a solution and communicate the decision to us afterwards?'

This was probably the very first time I had ever seen a Batek man really angry and the first time that such an attitude also included me. That night there was a very strong thunderstorm and the same man told me that he should have controlled his rage.

Violence is still unacceptable between members of the same groups, the only person allowed to mete out punishment being Gobar/Karei. The god is now taking on an international dimension and his rage is no longer confined to the Malaysian rainforest. The decreasing numbers of full shamans has increased the sense of insecurity in Batek and Jahai populations, as the *halak* were responsible for preserving the balance, well-being and safety of their companions and of the jungle itself.

As stated by Strathern and Stewart, 'physical and "mystical" killings can form historical chains in people's minds' (2002: 6), particularly evident in processes where revenge is involved. Ranging from acts of violence such as mixing pure jungle products with harmful processed ones, being noisy in a cave inhabited by other-than-human-persons or in a Batek camp, abusing an Indonesian housemaid, resorting to black magic, or sending down a thunderstorm or a devastating tsunami wave, mystical and physical violence join together, the one becoming the consequence of the other. In many Jahai villages there are no longer any expert shamans left who are expert at treating ghost-sicknesses, and this is considered to be the real cause behind many deaths. These are perceived as real killings, where the ghosts responsible are always believed to belong to other ethnic groups.

The violent Other is becoming stronger, more diffuse and aggressive. Gobar/Karei is now closer than ever before to the Batek and the Jahai, also punishing offenders outside these groups, which is perceived as a logical and justifiable course of action.

Though only isolated cases have been documented to date, the Batek and Jahai have discovered that they can use violence and even kill in order to protect their families and land. An example of this is 'the Jeli incident', reported by the press in 1993, where Jahai men killed four Malays who wanted to take their land. A case I witnessed in another Jahai village was that of men who – brandishing their blowpipes – chased away and threatened to kill one of the Malay teachers of the school who had beaten a Jahai kid.

These are isolated and exceptional cases which are still unprecedented in Batek and Jahai history and lifestyles. Future studies should investigate how these populations will cope with and confront the multifaceted and insidious violent Othernesses which represent yet another dangerous threat to the survival of their cultures.

Chapter 11

Appendix[1]

Divine Hunger – The Cannibal War-Machine

Neil L. Whitehead

The mark of the modern is violence, one of the means for the Sacred Empowerment of global power. Modernist violence, originating with the colonial creation of a cannibal war-machine in the New World of the Americas, gave rise to a form of spirituality in which ontological engagement with the immaterial Sacred has come to be supplanted by a cultural fetish centred on the auto-consumption of material commodity.

The logic of the modern world order is thus necessarily violent and cannibalistic. Persons and ecologies are perpetually consumed through forms of commodity production and price speculation that profit from the systematic creation of social chaos and its re-ordering through the violence and destruction of high-tech military performance and the enforced disciplines of emergency or pandemic management and homeland security.

Unleashing the cannibal war-machine thus reinvigorates capital accumulation through provoking incessant crises which fuel commodity speculation and the plunder of natural resources. Local resistance is reframed as insurgency; local capital is reframed as criminality and local spirituality becomes superstition.

This process is made occult, becomes a form of state shamanism, through a Western liberal discourse of democratic transparency and terrorist conspiracy. Rational, infinite, justice-seeking violence conjoined to the agonistic procedures of science and research, thus perversely promise pre-apocalypse global redemption through faithful adherence to the cult of the modern.

However, our colonial history of relentless immiseration of local communities for the last 500 years and a twentieth-century apotheosis of the modern which killed millions, shows that Sacred Empowerment of the modern is necessarily violent and so perpetually stimulates the Divine Hunger of the Cannibal War-Machine.

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[1]   Note of the Editors: Professor Neil L. Whitehead, one of the strongest voices in contemporary anthropology, suddenly passed away on 22 March 2012. The editors have decided to publish here the abstract of the chapter he was writing for the volume, which unfortunately he did not have the chance to finish.

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