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# DIATRACICA II

Ruzha Neykova

## Shamanhood and the Bulgars



Professor Marin Džinov Academic Publishing House



Senior Research Fellow Dr. Ruzha Neykova is an ethnomusicologist and ethnologist at the Institute of Folklore at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and a complex researcher of rites with extensive field experience in different folk music regions in Bulgaria. She is the author of numerous articles and studies on female rites and *vestnarsivo*. Her main research interests are folkloric traditions as a unity of musical and spiritual components cyclically determined over the centuries by the indigenous dimensions of faith.

### *Monographs*

Фол В., Нейкова Р. 2000. **Огън и музика**. АИ „Марин Дринов“.

Изд. „Лилия“. София (author of the second, autonomous section of the monograph);

Нейкова Р., Тодоров Т. – СбНУ 63. „Народни песни от Източното Старопланиние“. АИ „Марин Дринов“, София.

Нейкова Р. 2006. **Имаго ли е памани на Балканите?** – Studia Thracica 9. АИ „Марин Дринов“, София.

STUDIA THRACICA 11

*Ruzha Neykova*

**SHAMANHOOD  
AND THE BULGARS**



Professor Marin Drinov Academic Publishing House

This monograph examines the curious subject of shamanhood, a subject that is still problematic in Bulgarian science. It is problematic because some historiographers and art historians, who lack sufficient first-hand knowledge of traditional rites in the present and erstwhile Bulgarian lands, have declared "beyond doubt" that the Bulgars (and the Thracians) had shamans... If the curious, and informed, reader accepts this to be true, then he or she is bound to consider the question of how could the so-called *animism/animatism* have possibly "coexisted" with submound and overground temple structures, with the ideology of statehood and the state, which requires *a God* with a retinue of his likes, and not a cohort of spirits... The question of whether the Bulgars had shamans is one of the possible approaches to the inherited ethno-cultural memory.

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## A DISTURBING READ FOR ARMCHAIR SHAMAN-LOVERS

*To my Finnish  
colleagues*

A new volume of *Studia Thracica*, the monograph series of the Institute of Thracology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, is an appropriate occasion to wish the book every success, but does not obligate the editorial board to introduce it with a preface. This introduction, however, is prompted by three unusual distinctive features of the text in question.

The first is obvious from the very beginning of the book, where a quote notes that “North American Indians and Inuits are, for their part, worried about literature that describes North American culture in shamanistic terms”. I hope that what is worrying North Americans will also begin to worry Bulgarian readers, connoisseurs and experts who, at least until now, have quite thoughtlessly allowed the history and culture of the ancient Bulgars, and even of their contemporary “folkloric heirs” as revealed through relicts in traditional folk culture, to be described in shamanic terms. Shamanic terminology is equally, but groundlessly, aggressive both in the form of shamanhood, i.e. of a possibly ascertainable Arctic religiosity, and under the cloak of shamanism, i.e. of a structuralist theory of spiritual universality.

The second distinctive feature of the book is connected with the one mentioned above and contains the reasons why the Institute of Thracology has included this monograph in its series. These reasons are associated both with the factual material and with its successful methodological use to support the thesis that shamanhood is not a religious practice and set of beliefs of the Thracians, and that the latter cannot be treated as objects of the theory of shamanism. In this way the old but constantly forgotten conclusion that “there were and are no shamans in Europe” is validated, with the addition that those who see them in their armchaired offices must keep them locked up there.

The mention of offices brings me to the third distinctive feature of this book: the fascinating field studies conducted by Senior Research Fellow Dr. Ruzha Neykova. Following the imperatives of her own research, the author found herself where no other contemporary Bulgarian researcher has ever been – among those who continue to regard themselves as Bulgarian in the Volga Region. Forgotten by us because of the stubbornness of a wrong typologization of “Bulgarians and non-Bulgarians”, these people still carry their pre-Christian

beliefs and customs, and hope that they will not end up in the company of shamans, sent there by some scholar.

The editorial board of this series presents this book within the framework of the problematics of cultural-historical continuity in Southeast Europe and in the Bulgarian lands, which is also one of the scientific and research priorities of the Institute of Thracology.

Sofia, January 2003

*Alexander Fol*

## PREFACE

Shamanhood has long been a subject of different theses and hypotheses, of scientific forums in the international academic (and non-academic) community. The world literature on shamanhood is impressive in scope and it is written in different languages. It took me many years to read just a small part of it. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work in foreign archives and libraries and to hear the “sound” of shamanhood and the opinions of fellow researchers who have toiled in the field for years. This has helped me identify and structure the different levels of the relevant problematics, the different lines of thought and approaches towards shamanhood and shamans, and the motivation of academic debates (some of which have reached an enviable intensity), as well as to judge the veracity of Bulgarian literature on the subject.

The attempts to find shamans among the ancient Bulgars (who supposedly brought them from Asia), Thracians and Greeks go back more than a hundred years and are, in my view, a scientific anachronism. As an ethnologist and ethnomusicologist, I disagree with those who find *shamanism* and *shamanistic* elements in the traditional ethno-cultural heritage of the Balkans. This problem is not just a local, i.e. Balkan, one. For years, the scope of the phenomenon and its specific dimensions have been a controversial point among scholars. As J. Pentikäinen (2001b: 509) writes, “The concept of ‘shamanism’, first used in English in the end of the 18th century is problematic.” Within the academic community itself there is no consensus on whether shamanhood exists outside Asia, but this has not stopped some enthusiastic observers from discovering it in a wide array of traditional cultures. In response, voices have been raised in defence of the faded colour of their “traditional costume” against “shamanism”.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “[M]ost Africanists do not agree that shamanism exists in Africa, and even such a ‘universalist’ as Eliade is a bit doubtful...” (Hultkrantz 1988: 70). “North American Indians and Inuits are, for their part, worried about literature that describes North American culture in shamanistic terms... In the words of Ines M. Talamantez, an Apache professor of Religious Studies at the University of California (Santa Barbara): ‘They raped us by taking away our language. Now they are stealing our religion by calling our medicine men shamans and by telling stories about how you can become a shaman by taking drugs and beating a drum. Our language does not know shamans, and that name is used only by neo-shamans; not our chanters’” (Pentikäinen 1998: 44).

Quite often elements that are just as typical of the rites of non-shamanic communities are identified as “specifically” shamanic in various publications, including Bulgarian ones. While similarities in the rites and concepts in different traditions (or the so-called “ritual universals”) can of course be compared by every studious scholar, I hope this text will show that these similarities do not constitute the specificity of the phenomenon. Shamans *per se* simply do not exist. And claiming that shamanism exists “*per se*” is equivalent to saying that folklore exists “*per se*”. Fortunately, some authors’ purported discovery of shamanic structures in certain ethno-cultural heritages does not deprive shamanhood itself of its uniqueness and own profile, of its territorial dimensions, of its “proto-” and neo-forms, of its history...

The questions of *what is shamanhood, where does or did it exist and when*, inspired me to write this book in 2003 precisely for Bulgarian readers for whom the subject remains, I would say, quite vague. This is entirely understandable not just because of the foreign, incomprehensible term but primarily because of the fact that shamanhood does not have an equivalent in Bulgarian traditional culture to which it can be compared in any way. That is why the first three chapters of this book are informative, and their content is well-known to my fellow-researchers on the subject. English-speaking readers who are familiar with the phenomenon will probably find the second part more interesting, as it presents the contents of ancient Bulgarian religiosity which has survived to date in the form of folk beliefs and an ancient substratum. Precisely folk rites – as a *faith-behaviour*, not as an “official” religion<sup>2</sup> – are a reliable point of reference in examining the ancient spiritual values of a community or people. The problem of whether there are or aren’t shamanic elements in the inherited Bulgarian folk tradition, which is a synthesis of the spiritual legacies of ancient ethno-cultural communities, belongs to the same sphere (of the ancient Bulgarian state ideology and ritual system). This also holds for the indigenous ritual heritage of the Balkans, where according to the official view the Bulgars founded their successive state in the seventh century AD.

Hereinafter the terms *Balkans* and *Bulgars* refers primarily to the **Balkans and to the Bulgarians in ancient times**. The behaviours of faith and culture (including the stratification of society and the worldview conceptions determining the particular value systems and statehood) in these lands can be traced from archeological findings and historiographic sources as far back as the second half of the fourth millennium BC (to which the Varna Necropolis has been dated – Ал. Фол 1997: 86). This archaeological and historiographic situation needs to be re-examined, especially when looking for connections with an-

<sup>2</sup> The term *faith-behaviour* is derived from the concept of “culture seen as historically active behaviour ... and *faith-rites*” – Фол Ал. 1986: 30; 1995:18 (emphasis added); for more on the history of culture as a “history of ideas” and on culture as a form of “behaviour of its carriers determined by their gradually established value system”, see Фол Ал. 1997: 101.

other ethno-cultural circle which some people have suddenly decided was once “ours”. Until the first half of the first millennium BC, the Balkans were a political and ideological entity that was part of the so-called Circumpontic cultural-historical community. The term designates “the amazing similarity and unity” in the development of cultures around the entire Black Sea (including of the Thracian civilizations) regarding their “ideological characteristics, economic structure, socioeconomic and socio-political structure” (Порожанов 1998: 43-44: with References, see chapter “Pèrke”). The various ethnic formations built their destiny in the subsequent epochs by transforming but also preserving this ancient basis. The latter probably accounts for the many similarities in the rites and beliefs in the contemporary cultural heritages on the territory of the erstwhile Circumpontic community. My experience as an ethnologist and ethnomusicologist in the folk-musical “field” has taught me to be very careful when dealing with one of the fundamental problems of rites: the multi-layered dimensions and transformations of different “principles” and conceptions inherited over thousands of years. Anyone who “leaps through” the folk ritual tradition is bound to get lost at some point in the labyrinth of “*who’s who*”. This conundrum also faces every scholar of Asia, regardless of whether he or she is exploring the territories of classical shamanhood or the spiritual realms of some sophisticated doctrine.

Shamanhood is a phenomenon born of the tradition and worldview of a particular society. No research undertaking on the subject can be correct without knowledge of the spiritual and social context of “shamanic” communities. This assumption underlies this text, which focuses on the ritual and sound traits of the so-called “classical” Siberian shamanhood. The specificity of the phenomenon is examined from different perspectives with the help of already established, conceptualized and discussed characteristics. Their repetition is unavoidable and more than necessary – and, moreover, in the form in which they have been recorded in *field studies and descriptions*. My interpretation of them and knowledge of the Bulgarian ritual system informs my personal view, which I have deliberately formulated as a question. I always write the preface last. This gives me a last opportunity to ask myself if I had at least one good reason for writing my text. In this particular case, it would be enough for me if my book makes at least one reader think about the question: *Did the Bulgars have shamans?*

This book is the result of research projects of the Institute of Folklore at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Department of Music Anthropology at the University of Tampere, Finland. It would have been impossible without the help and support of my Finnish colleagues, my colleagues from the Institute of Folklore and the Institute of Thracology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and my translator, Katerina Popova.

My special thanks go to the *Stichting Horizon* Foundation, Holland, which financed my field studies in the Northern Caucasus and the Volga Region.

## SHAMANHOOD/SHAMANISM

### CLASSICAL TERRITORIES AND BELIEFS

Shamanhood, in its traditional authentic form, is found in unstratified hunter-gatherer communities. The territories where ethnologists have identified the so-called “classical form”<sup>1</sup> of shamanhood and where there still are seasonal nomadic communities are located in Siberia and parts of Middle Asia. Siberia occupies an area of 13,488,500 square kilometres (from the Urals in the west to the Atlantic in the east; from the Arctic Circle in the north to a northern latitude of approximately 50 degrees in the south – to Northern Kazakhstan included, Tuva and the Altai Mountains, Mongolia and Northeastern China) and is divided into three vast geographical regions. Western Siberia lies between the Ural Mountains and the Yenisey River; Central Siberia encompasses the land between the Yenisey and Lena rivers; Eastern Siberia extends from the Lena River to the Pacific coast. The etymology of the name “Siberia” remains uncertain.<sup>2</sup> The territory of Siberia has always been characterized by a low density of population and great ethnic diversity. At present, it is inhabited by more than thirty peoples speaking different languages from the Palaeo-Asiatic, Altaic and Indo-European language groups. Western Siberia is the home of peoples such as the Evenk, Selkup, Ket, Chulym, Kyzyl, Beltir and Shor, and the mainly Finno-Ugric Mansi/Vogul, Khanty/Ostyak, Nenets/Samoyed, and Komi.<sup>3</sup> The northern parts of Central Siberia are populated by the Yakut, Nganasan and Dolgan; to the south, a large area is inhabited by the Ket, Evenk and Yakut, followed further southwards by the Tofalar, Buryat, Tuvan and other peoples. The population of Eastern Siberia, from north to south, is made up of the Eskimo, Chukchi, Koryak, Yukaghir, Itelmen, Yakut, Even, Trans-Baikal and Amur Evenk, Oroch, Udege, Nivkh and others. The extreme northeastern portion of Siberia is inhabited by the Eskimo, who live on the Arctic coast of the Chukotka

<sup>1</sup> For the justification and meaning of the term “classical shamanism”, see also Grim 1983: 33-34.

<sup>2</sup> For the different versions and interpretations of the name, see Olex 2001: 5-6. All data on the population, ethnic groups and their migrations here and below are from SIBERIA, Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2001; Krupnik 1996; Alekseyenko et al. 1998; Olex 2001, and others.

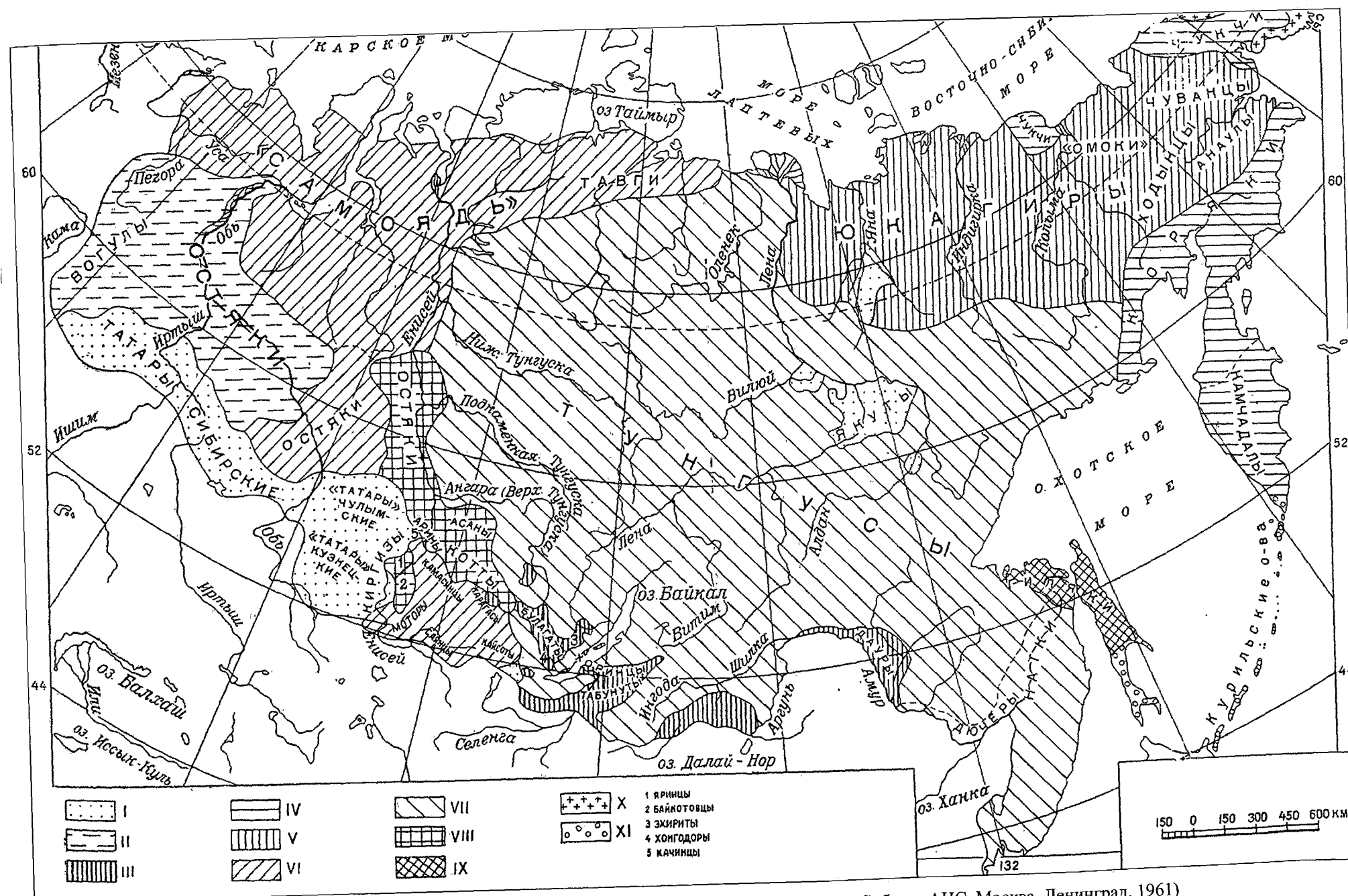
<sup>3</sup> The Finno-Ugric peoples have “inner and outer names (i.e. how they call themselves, and how others call them)” (Lazar 1997: 241). The first names listed here are their endonyms (Mansi, Khanty, Nenets).



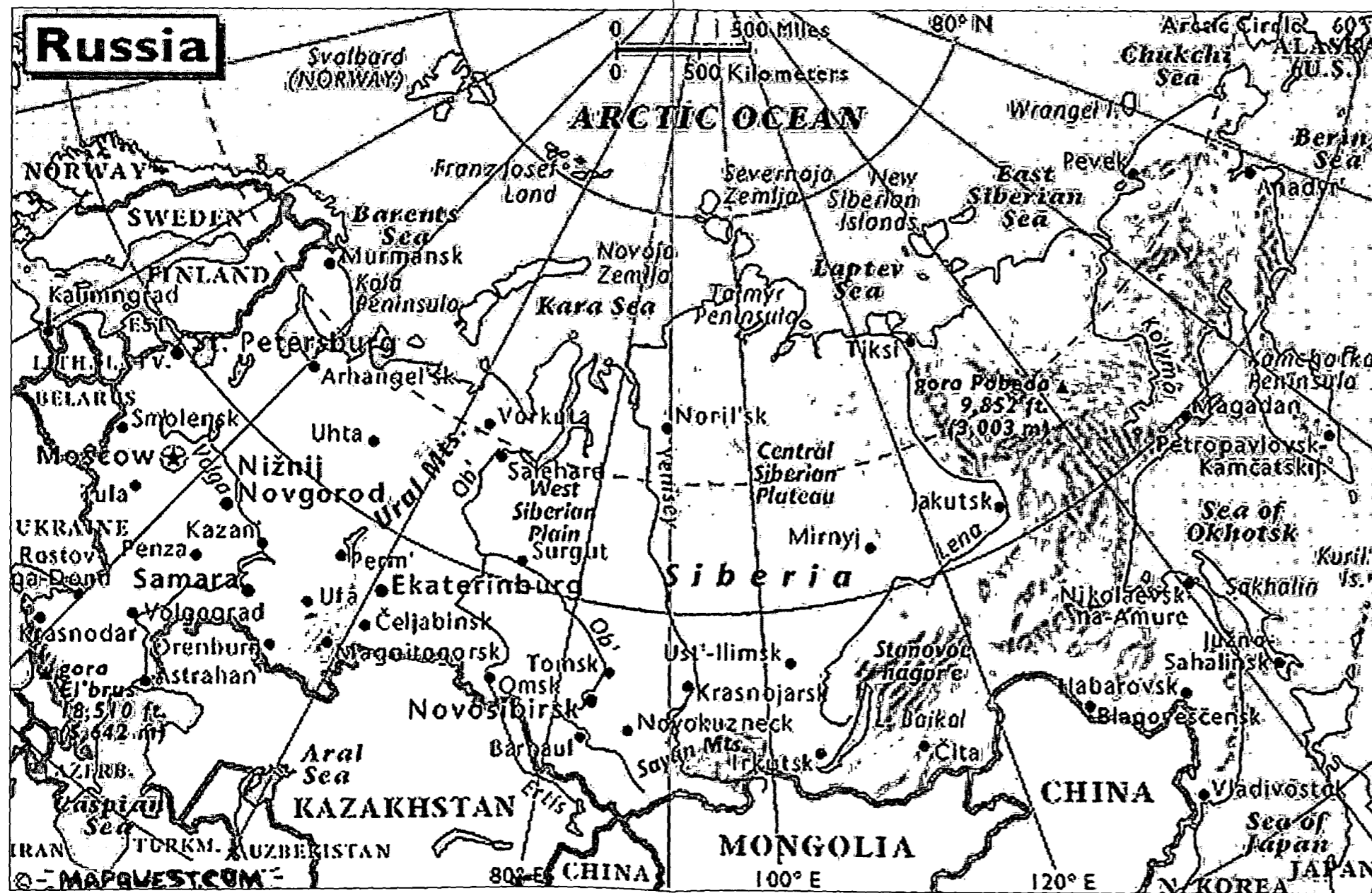
Peninsula. The largest ethnic group here are the Chukchi (from *chauchu* or "rich in reindeer"), who probably originate from the territories around the Sea of Okhotsk. The Chukchi and the Koryak are kindred peoples with similar histories, languages and traditions. The Yukaghir once inhabited a large part of north-eastern Siberia; almost assimilated over the centuries by the expanding Even, Yakut and Chukchi, they are now confined to the valley of the Kolyma River. The Evenk and the Even are the largest ethnic groups in Eastern Siberia, occupying a large area north of Lake Baikal, between the Yenisey River and the Sea of Okhotsk. The southern portion of the Siberian Pacific coast (once part of the ancient Chinese and Korean empires) includes the valley of the lower Amur River. Traffic and migration along the river led to the development of crop and animal husbandry, metalworking and pottery in this vast eastern region.

A large group of the peoples of Central and Eastern Siberia (including the Pacific coast) are known as *Tungus*. Because of their language (which belongs to the Manchu-Tungus language family, also spoken in Northern China), they are believed to be distantly related to the Türks and Mongols. The Tungus originally inhabited the area between Lake Baikal and the upper Amur River. Over the centuries, they migrated northwards and deeper into the Siberian taiga, eventually splitting into three distinct groups. The most numerous group, which migrated north and west of Lake Baikal, is known as the *Evenk* (numbering approximately 30,000 in present-day Russia and 20,000 in Northern China). Some of the earliest evidence about Siberian shamans concerns precisely the Evenk and comes from the Russian priest Avvakum, who lived among them after he was exiled as an Old Believer to Central Siberia in the mid-seventeenth century. The Tungus who migrated east (towards the Kolyma River and the Sea of Okhotsk) are known as the *Even* (now numbering approximately 17,000). Part of the Tungus remained in the valley of the Amur River, where they mixed with other indigenous ethnic groups from inland Siberia (with Manchu, Nivkh and probably Ainu from Sakhalin Island). With the exception of the Nivkh, all indigenous peoples along the Amur River speak Manchu-Tungus languages and call themselves *Nani* ("local people"). Today they are known as Nanai, Ulch, Udege, Oroch, Negidal and others, and some of them live in China. Siberia is also the home of a number of small peoples which can be found only in specialized demographic studies. Some of them are threatened with extinction because of high mortality rates and assimilation by other peoples.

As a result of a number of socioeconomic and migration factors, the Siberian population has undergone different historical changes related not least to the location of the different ethnic groups. The majority of them differ by origin, language and culture but have a similar, nomadic and semi-nomadic, way of life and livelihood. The main livelihoods in the forest belt (taiga, *Yakut*) and around the big rivers were and remain fishing, hunting and livestock breeding (reindeer, cattle and horse breeding). In the traditional way of life of the Ostyak, for example, families (each made up of five to twenty people) live alone, migrating over the year to spring, summer and winter settlements in order to subsist (Lazar



The peoples of Siberia in the seventeenth century (Историко-этнографический Атлас Сибири. АНС. Москва, Ленинград, 1961)  
 (I – peoples of the Turkic language group; II – peoples of the Finno-Ugric language group; III – peoples of the Mongol language group; IV – Northeastern Palae-Asians; V – Yukaghir; VI – peoples of the Samoyedic language group; VII – peoples of the Manchu-Tungus language group; VIII – peoples of the Ket language group; IX – Gilyak/Nivkh; X – Eskimo; XI – Ainu)



Map of Siberia in the twentieth century

1997: 242). In Siberia, this way of life has existed for centuries. It was recorded and described even by the first Russian colonizers back in the sixteenth century. Hundreds of years later, some regions are still characterized mainly by territorial communities, a patriarchal clan system, subsistence farming and very loose economic stratification.

The political history of the majority of the peoples north of Central Asia began with the Russian conquest of Siberia in the sixteenth century. The Russian colonizers imposed a late-feudal system that was foreign to these territories and that, for objective reasons, could hardly have originated locally. Siberia did not have a local feudal class; a large part of its vast territory belonged to no one and remained unused. This was a perfect situation for Russia's colonization policy, which "propagated the idea of the inferiority ... and fatal non-historicity" of the indigenous population. The socioeconomic development of the Siberian peoples remained "traditional" even in the nineteenth century. Although they found themselves in an emerging "capitalist context", they continued to live off seasonal hunting, fishing, gathering of wild plants and products. Even though there were intermediate variants of social stratification among some peoples, in Siberia "the way of life remained archaic ... and societies were dominated by patriarchal clan relations" (Olex 2001: 35-39, 75-78, 115-117). Today there are still some regions that belong administratively to Russia but have never had a hierarchical "vertical" social stratification, only a family-clan one.

It is not by accident that shamanism in its most solid form developed ... in societies with no class structure or at least very loosely stratified societies. ... Thus, it was mainly among people having a hunting/collecting subsistence that shamans were found. ... Hunting societies were often small in size and did not have one of the main religions (like Christianity, Buddhism, Islam etc.), based on priests. (Gilberg 1984: 24)

This type of communities and their social specificity are most often described in terms such as clan, tribe, ethnic group, people. Referring to Yakut shamanhood, Grim (1983: 40) argues that it is precisely "the tribal world view [that] created an appropriate milieu for shamanism".

The social-political specificity of the classical Siberian communities unambiguously indicates that although the phenomenon under review (shamanhood) belongs administratively to separate states (for example, Mongolia, China, Russia), it is not a national product but part of the cultural tradition of numerous peoples. This also accounts for another important feature verified by contemporary studies - namely, that the classical dimensions and functions of shamanhood have not transcended their family-clan and tribal boundaries. The manifestations of this specific feature are yet to be studied. It is determined by the very ethno-demographic characteristics and processes on vast geographic territories, parts of which still remain unexplored.

It is also important for the subject of this book that unlike in Northern Asia, in Middle and Central Asia there were socially differentiated societies as early as the first millennium BC. Early-feudal unions (such as those of the Huns or the

Dingling) were formed there at that time, as well as in the first millennium AD and later (for example, the Turkic Khanate which emerged in the mid-sixth century or the union of the Mongols in the thirteenth century). Such "centralized military-political unions" were short-lived; they usually broke up after the death of their founder or, in the best case, after the death of his closest successors (Фолл Ал. 1997: 124); because of the specificity of their organization, they evolved into "empires" by territorially subjecting other formations with a more complex form of government, and with more diverse and advanced economies. Perhaps the most telling example of this is the so-called Mongol Empire, now confined to some of the harshest lands in Middle Asia where nomadism still largely determines the local culture and way of life. The heroic image of the "likes of Genghis Khan and his hoards", built for example in Hollywood, has nothing to do with what Olekh (Олех 2001: 28-36) calls the "carriers of barbarism" from the thirteenth century who "disrupted the advance of a smoothly developing civilization", swallowing up and destroying some of the existing or emerging state formations in Middle Asia and the West.

This brief ethno-demographic and political overview is relevant to the different theories about the origin of shamanhood as well as to the different forms of its specific ethnic profile. Siberian shamanhood (especially "in the circum-polar-subarctic region ... practised by relatively small and isolated populations", Pentikäinen 2001b: 508) remains a classic point of reference and basis for comparison in many publications, especially in those tracing the development of similar lines of the phenomenon from north to south, at the geographical centre of Asia as well as to the west and east of the latter. It is also a point of reference in studies on controversial forms of shamanhood elsewhere on Earth and on the so-called syncretic forms in which scholars have identified a shamanic substratum transformed and conceptualized in a different, doctrinal or religious, context. Following the concept of "classical shamanhood", this text will not deal with neoshamanism, a subject that has received growing scholarly attention in recent years.

Studies on Siberian classical shamanhood are widely used in analyzing and reviewing a similar phenomenon on the American continent. It is believed that back in ancient times Asia and North America were connected by a land bridge at what is now the Bering Strait (Олех 2001: 25 and others). Hence, there is a "widely accepted hypothesis that Native American peoples emigrated from North Asia" (Grim 1983: 34) and that the first settlers in Alaska came from Northeast Asia. The common features and similarities in the cultures of the two northern hemispheres have been pointed out repeatedly by a number of twentieth-century scholars.

"Everything in the universe has spirit"

There is ample archaeological evidence that the ancient culture of the Palaeo-Siberian peoples goes back two thousand years. It was created by non-literate communities that did not have a *polity-based* – or, in most cases, not

even an ethnic-based<sup>4</sup> – way of thinking and organization of society. Neither did they have a *well-developed ritual system based on the annual calendar cycle* (like the ritual systems based on the agricultural calendar on the Balkans) or *calendar-based Music genres* (Music, i.e. from the Muses, designating a unity of music/speech/dance). Shamanhood as a traditional phenomenon is "oral-unwritten ... it lacks any kind of holy scripts or books ... [as well as] a separate class of religious specialists (priests)" (Pentikäinen 2001b: 508). This last is a *field observation* on Siberian classical shamanic societies. It must be borne in mind because it is relevant to the following exposition as well as to the problems related to the terminology and spread of the phenomenon itself. From the different angle of their seasonal settlements, Siberian seasonal nomadic communities contemplated and conceptualized the Cosmos, the Divine Sky and themselves as one, as a mutual manifestation of life and communion. Such unity with, and not differentiation from, the environment may be generally defined as a way of life followed by all members of the community, none of whom had dissociated themselves to observe and describe it from the side or from "above" as a system of knowledge. All available data and descriptions of the different mytho-narratives come from outside observers, mostly field researchers from the last two centuries. This situation is found elsewhere in the world as well.

At the core of Siberian and Asian spiritual – demonological, mythic, doctrinal and religious – life is the belief that all matter, both animate and inanimate, has a spirit. One of the terms for this is *animism*.<sup>5</sup> The dictionaries which frivolously define the term as a "primitive belief" or a "belief of primitive peoples" were most likely written by politicians, not by well-educated people. In older and more recent literature, phrases like "primitive religion" and "primitive peoples" are convenient for distinguishing between different communities: for example, between those that build skyscrapers (albeit temporarily) and physically move through the skies, and those that contemplate the Cosmos spiritually from their straw huts. It is precisely because of their belief in *animism* and *animatism*<sup>6</sup> that the latter are aware that the World Order is resident in everything

<sup>4</sup> The *ethnos* was a political formation in the ancient world; it is not to be confused with nation/nationality, which in its modern form is associated with a particular state formation and the so-called national self-consciousness. For the meaning of *ethnos* and *ethnic-based society* (ruled by an authoritarian ruler and a retinue of aristocrats) whose values and virtues are based on the norms of tradition, see Фолл В. 1998:146-148; Фолл Ал. 2000: 3-48.

<sup>5</sup> Etymologically and historically, the term *animism* comes from *anima mundi* = *Soul of the World*, a power supposed to organize the whole universe and to coordinate its parts (OTD); for the Pythagoreans, this is the "world soul"; in Egyptian and Hindu teachings, this is the "spirit". The doctrine of Taoism is based on the same concept: every thing in the world has *chi* (*ki* for the Mongols), i.e. life force or spirit; there are two basic life forces in the world, *ying chi* and *yang ki*. The material or phenomenal world is manifested through various interactions of these two life forces, which generally ought to work in harmony.

<sup>6</sup> For the difference between the two terms, see Hultkranz 1979: 483, 510. For more on animatism as a "primary form of the animistic worldview", see Штернберг 1936: 268.

and everywhere and that *It/The Cosmos* can be perceived and understood only by *the elect* who humbly walk the earth. Over the centuries since the birth of the Buddha and Confucius (since the sixth century BC), the potential of animism has been developed and elevated in Asia to the highest *doctrinal level* on Earth. Its roots are also preserved by some *technologically backward* peoples whose rites, however, are far more complex than, say, eating turkey for Thanksgiving. Some interpret this animistic concept as part of an elaborate mythic system which many of the technologically advanced peoples from other continents have never had. *Animism* and *animatism* are also a good starting point for introducing the subject of shamanhood. But only for introducing it, as the belief in the vitality of substances is not a "patent" of Asia – similar contents are found elsewhere too.

**Shamanhood is a folkloric phenomenon** and it should therefore be investigated as part of the traditional conceptual system of the relevant ethno-cultural milieu. Most of the Siberian and Middle Asian peoples have the same or similar concepts of *high* and *low* deities, and of the so-called *spirits*; they have a similar animistic and mythic basis of shamanhood itself. This is also manifest in the sphere of *Tengriism*. In Central, East and West Asia, the belief in *Tengri*<sup>7</sup> encompasses and functions at different levels: from the idea of a single divine principle to the concepts of its different multiplications and theophanies. In many parts of Siberia and Middle Asia, this is the name of the sky itself or of a non-personified self-created divine principle, *the spirit of the sky*, which is as a rule eternal, beneficent, the Creator and Lord of the Universe. The concept of the life-giving celestial force (including of the couple *Sky – Earth*) is also found in later Manichean and Muslim texts. The Mongols still worship "the infinite blue sky" (*kök tengri*) in itself – as a non-personified omnipresent creator. Among the Chukchi, benevolent "supernatural beings are called ... *vairgit*, i.e. 'beings' ... which Bogoras supposes to be merely vague and impersonal names of qualities. They represent a very loose and indefinite personification of the creative principle of the world. ... Their names are ... Creator, lit. 'One who induces things to be created', Upper-Being, World, lit. 'The Outer-One', Merciful-Being, Life-giving Being, Luck-giving Being ... They live in twenty-two different directions ... The chief of these beings is the one residing in the zenith, which is called 'being-a-crown' ". (Czaplicka 1914, citing Bogoras)

This abstract supreme proto-image is known in science as *Deus otiosus*, rendered concrete in its identification with the sky and celestial phenomena

<sup>7</sup> Known to the Altaians, Orkhon Türks, Tüvan, Kachin, Beltir as *tengri*, *tengeri*; to the Shor as *tegrî*; to the Khakas as *ter*; to the Yakut as *tangarà*; to the Mongols as *tenger*, *tengri*; to the Buryat as *tengeri*, *tengri*; to the Kalmyk as *tenger*; to the Türks as *tàre*; to the Kyrgyz as *tàngri* etc.; to the Tungus as *tanara* etc.; the name is also known from the age of the First Turkic Khanate (Неклюдов 1982: 500-501). These names come from the ancient Sumerian *Dingir* (fourth-third millennium BC).

(Елиаде 1995: 86, 62-135). But I have a serious objection to the uncritical use of the term *God* and the concept of a *Supreme Sky God*, especially when referring to the Arctic and North Asian territories. In many investigations and field studies the terms *god*, *deity* and *spirit* are used as synonyms, which shows that the relevant terms and concepts are used without due consideration for the ideological system within which they function. For example, according to a description of the creation myths of the Buryat, "In the beginning ... there were only celestial spirits, the **Tengris** ... the Tengris of the West, good gods [?],<sup>8</sup> and the Tengris of the East, who were evil beings [?]. ... The Tengris of the West created humans" (Massenzio 1984: 204). The belief in and appeals to the *Sky in Itself* (as an abstract and non-personified principle) are not coherent with other doctrinal and theological concepts of God in sedentary agricultural communities – on the continent to the south and elsewhere.

There are different opinions about the essence and origin of the Celestial Divine Being – as an originally existing being, as a historically later form of the belief that conceived it as an anthropomorphic being, and celestial phenomena as its "kin". The process whereby *Deus otiosus* functionally broke up into a divine progeny, into a "cult" of spirit mediators and other suchlike has been defined as a "progressive descent (of the sacred) into the concrete" (Елиаде 1995: 75, 79). Based on his observations of the Koryak, Jochelson (1905-1908: 24) argues in favour of the opposite process of origination: from multiple "deities"/spirits to monotheism. Both views recognize that the divine sky was multiplied and concretized in other divine figures born of the concept that there is a *spirit in everything*. The genealogy of the *multiple tengri* who are engaged in kinship relations and a particular hierarchy between themselves is probably an expression of such personification as well.

In demonologies and in mythic concepts, the supreme god remains somewhere there, up high, in an independent and chronologically constant position above the Middle Asian horsemen riding through the centuries as well as above the complex and intertwined genealogy of the hierarchically ruling spirits. While the *Sacred Sky* keeps its perimeter as an inaccessible sacred form, the ritual practices of shamanic communities (in Northern Siberia, in Mongol, in Turkic communities after the seventh century, and elsewhere) are addressed mostly to other, lower "deities" or, more precisely, "beings" which are not always celestial in origin. For example, the Samoyed chief god, *Nini* (literally "giver of life"), the Ruler of Earth and Heaven, never descends to the "unclean earth" but communicates with people only through the spirits, who for this purpose choose mediators – *tadibey* (shamans) – from among people (Islavin 1847: 109). The supreme deity of the Koryak (called World, Universe, Supervisor, The-Master-on-High) is assisted by Big-Raven, the first man and shaman among

<sup>8</sup> Here and below, [?] or [?!] are inserted by the author (Ruzha Neykova, hereinafter RN) to indicate an unclear, wrong, quasi-scientific use of a term or phrase.

the Koryak. It is from Big-Raven that people learned and received everything they need in life; Big-Raven is invoked in every rite and mentioned in tales and myths from Northeast Asia and along the entire Pacific coast (Jochelson 1905-1908: 24). The Siberian peoples believe that it is precisely the **spirits that are mediators** between humans and the supreme divine force. That is why almost all sacrifices and offerings are made to the spirits – because they are masters of the directions, owners of the taiga, the mountains, the sea, fire, and so on. For the Khanty and the Mansi in Western Siberia, the mediator between humans and the supreme deity is the *spirit master of the sacrificial site* who will dispatch the soul of the sacrificed reindeer to the Highest One:

*Numi-Torum* created the world and also ... the man. ... After the completion of the acts of creation, he no longer meddles with further developments in the world. ... Relatively little is known about him, and it is virtually impossible to contact him directly. As such, he belongs to the long list of *dei otiosi* known all over the world. ... *Numi-Torum* dwells on the seventh floor of the upper world, too high to deal with the affairs of mortals. ... Torum is inaccessible to common people and it is not possible to bring sacrifices to him directly. ... *Even shamans are unable to converse with him*: the best of them only reached as high as the fifth heaven in their journeys. ... If a person desires to address Numi-Torum, he must do so through the mediation of some lower god. ... In the Khanty language, *Torum* is ... signifying also weather and the sky. ... Therefore, when the name *Torum* is mentioned without epithets, it is sometimes difficult to decide which deity is referred to... (Barkalaja 1997: 2000)

The invocation of deities and spirits in ritual practices is also based on the concepts of the **cardinal directions**, which differ in parts of Central Asia and Siberia. For the Turkic and some Tungus-Manchu peoples, the main direction of movement is sunwise: east is front/celestial/light/good, west is back/underground/dark/bad. "The Yakut division of the universe is mainly horizontal, comprising two parts – east and south, the habitation of good spirits, and west and north, of evil spirits. The great evil spirit *Underground-Old-Man*, lives in the far north" (Czaplicka 1914). The beliefs and behaviour of some Mongol and Chinese peoples follow another general orientation, the polar one: the world is oriented in the North → South direction, to which the corresponding oppositions are back/night – front/sun; the western side of the world is right/upper/male/celestial/white, the home of the sky spirits *tenger*; the eastern side is left/lower/female/underground, the abode of the Black Spirit and spirits of disease. These "assumptions" predetermine the alignment of yurts, of winter huts and their interior layout.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Among the Mongols, the entrance of the yurt always faces south, which is *front*; the most honourable place inside is the north side behind the fire, where shamans sit; the right, west, side (if we face south) is the male side; the left, east, side is the place for household objects, women and children. Movement in shamanic dances, worship, and rituals is "sunwise" – from right to left – in a clockwise direction (Mongolian Shamanism – *Introduction 101*. 1997).

Different peoples in Siberia and Middle Asia have similar mythic concepts about the **stratification and three-tier vertical structure of the world**. The Upper and the Lower Worlds have a sun, moon, forests, human-like inhabitants and even shamans. In some tales the Upper World is very similar to this world, but it is brighter because it has seven suns. It corresponds to the classical concept of an ideal world whose inhabitants live in the traditional ways of the ancestors. The dwellers of the Upper and Lower Worlds are invisible in our middle world (but not to shamans), their presence being betrayed by a sudden crackle in the fire or the sounds of particular animals. The Samoyed believe that the Lower World is darker because its sun and moon are half rather than full orbs. This is also depicted on shaman's drums. The concepts of the directions, of the horizontal and vertical stratification of the Universe (most often at seven levels – an earthly one, three upper and three lower levels) are linked to the heavenly and earthly **perimeter and power of the spirits**. Waterways (rivers, lakes, the ocean) are their usual passages for travel between the worlds. The spirits, including *tengri/tenger*, have many common characteristics, functions, and similar ethnonyms. Among the Buryat, *tengri* is the name of a good/light, of an evil/dark spirit, as well as of lightning. The Mongols believe that the strongest of the nature spirits are the sky spirits *tenger*, who live at each of the four cardinal directions: the right, western, *tenger* created man, the dog and all the food animals, the greatest of them being *Ulgen*, son of Father Heaven and lord of the spirits of the Upper World; the left, eastern, *tenger* created the animals forbidden to eat, and the disease spirits; the greatest of the eastern *tenger* is *Erleg Khan*, brother of *Ulgen* and lord of the Lower World. The water spirits and their lord, *Usan Khan*, are invoked from the southern/front direction; the lord of lightning and thunder is *Keiden (Tatai Tenger)*, who is invoked from the northern/back direction. In this cosmogony, the underworldly is associated with the eastern and the northern, and the heavenly with the western and the southern. According to the belief of the Altaians, the good spirits, who are subjects of *Ulgen*, live in seventeen floors above the earth, while the bad spirits, ruled by *Erleg/Erlig*, occupy seven or nine under it. The Buryat believe that the highest spirits, called *tengeri/tengeriny*, inhabit the sky. There are ninety-nine *tengeri*, divided into two groups: western and eastern. Those of the west, who predominate in numbers (being fifty-five), are the good white *tengeri*; the eastern ones, known as black *tengeri* (forty-four in number), are mischievous and hostile to humans, among whom they send misfortunes, quarrels, sickness, and death (after Czaplicka 1914). Among all Siberian and Central Asian peoples, the most venerated spirits are the white sky spirits. They are invoked in need, for protection against evil and sickness, as protectors of the family and hunters, and as givers of life force to humans and animals, etc. Among some Siberian peoples, the spirits inhabiting the different parts of the dwelling (for example, the spirit of the fire/hearth), hunting deities, and other spirits are also known under the name of *Tengri* (Mongolian Shamanism – *Introduction 101*. 1997).

According to the Mongols, the heavenly bodies and phenomena are concrete manifestations and dimensions of *Father Heaven* (for example, the sun and moon are the eyes of *Tenger*). The Koryak call the sun *The-Master-on-High*; the Ainu believe that there is a goddess of the sun, the special ruler of all good things in the Universe, and a goddess of the moon. Among the Chukchi, the sun, moon, stars, and constellations are known as *vairgit* (benevolent beings); the sun is represented as a man clad in a bright garment, driving dogs or reindeer; although the moon is also represented as a man, he is not a *vairgit* but the son of a *kele*, an evil spirit of the lower world (after Czaplicka 1914, with References).

The *Sacred Sky* has sons and daughters – its envoys, who are invoked for different purposes in rituals. The concept of the seven sons of the Sky is represented, for example, in the sacrificial rituals of the Khanty, Mansi and Nenets, in which the performers of the sacrifice turn themselves around, scream and bow seven times, and toss the blood of the sacrificed animal in seven directions (Leete 1997). As a rule, only *white animals* (reindeer, horses), white cloth (the sacrificial reindeer), “white” coins are sacrificed to the Supreme Force and white heavenly spirits. Only men take part in such rituals. Before they are sacrificed, the reindeer are untied and arranged in a line with their heads to the south – “to the sun” and the white heavenly spirits. The skin of the reindeer together with the head and horns, the lasso and the white cloth are hung on or tied to a “white”, “heavenly tree” that symbolizes the Upper World (Leete 1997). The sacrificial sites are chosen depending on the hierarchy of the spirit to which the sacrifice is offered: at a higher or lower location. As a rule, the Sacred Sky and white heavenly spirits are worshipped on a hill or peak (in the plain or mountains), near piles of stones.

The Türks and the Mongols also believe that the spirits ruling over the Middle and the Lower World are sons of the *Sky*. They sacrifice dark-coloured or black animals to the Lord of the **Underworld**. Among some Finno-Ugric groups, He is known as a “spirit of disease”, “spirit of death”, “the evil spirit” who can turn into an animal (such as a cat or dog). The sacrifices offered to Him and to the underworld spirits are black reindeer and a piece of black cloth, which is spread on the ground; the skin of the reindeer (together with the lasso, the head and the horns) is hung on a black tree (cedar in the case of the Nenets, pine or spruce in that of the Khanty). Sacrifices to the White Heavenly and the Black Underworld Lords are performed in different places, but the prayers to them are similar in content – for a happy life and good health, for reindeer, for success in hunting or fishing, etc.

Among the Siberian peoples, the **large inter-clan and communal sacrifices** are linked to the **cycle of the seasons**. For them, as well as in many parts of Middle Asia, winter is the time when migrant and scattered families gather in common settlements. They believe that sacrifices must not be made when the

moon is waning or the snow is melting. The best time for community-wide sacrifices and prayers is during the last full moon of the year (usually in December), always in the daytime, before noon. If many animals are to be sacrificed, the ceremony continues the next day. Unlike this tradition, in some parts of Western Siberia such sacrifices are made in autumn or in spring (Leete 1997; Barkalaja 1997, 2000). The Northeastern Asian peoples (the Eskimo, Chukchi, Ainu and others) have autumn, winter, spring and summer community-wide sacrifices, which are annual (for details, see Bogoras 1907: 368-401; Jochelson 1905-1908: 65-90). They are made mostly to the good spirits who will ensure successful hunting and fishing, and are also offered in thanksgiving after the hunting season. The ceremonies that are most important to these peoples are those performed in autumn and at the beginning of winter. In Northeastern Asia, these are the whale-, bear-, wolf- and reindeer-festivals or feasts, which are similar in form and functions (Czaplicka 1914, with References). The Yakut and the Altaians also have spring and autumn sacrificial ceremonies – the former dedicated to the good and the latter to the malignant black spirits – at which the sacrifices are made at night (Mikhailovski 1894: 63-67). According to Bogoras, the Chukchi sacrifice to the evil spirits *kelet* (with various monstrous forms) “animals which are born with any deformity ... the offerings to these are made at midnight, in darkness, and are never spoken of” (Bogoras 1907: 369-370; 292-298).

The deification of Mother Earth as a life-bearing being is a parallel (to the Sacred Sky) conceptual universal in Siberia and Middle Asia. Like the Sacred Sky, Mother Earth or the spirit of Mother Earth is not conceived of in anthropomorphic form, being personified by the mountains, streams, forests, cliffs and trees. Odd-shaped cliffs and trees are especially venerated, as they are believed to be inhabited by a powerful spirit. The spirits of mountains and the spirit of the forest are especially powerful and strongly venerated in all hunter-communities, including in the Far East. Every clan, and in some parts every settlement, has a sacred mountain with a spirit owner who is offered sacrifices. It is universally believed that every mountain, hill, cliff and sometimes even parts of these, i.e. that every feature of the landscape has its owner-spirit who can protect those living or passing through it. On various occasions – for example, during the clan’s migration from one seasonal settlement to another – spirit owners are placated by bloody or bloodless sacrifices. Every lake, river and spring also has a spirit owner who is offered sacrifice before fishing (in the case of the Selkup, Tuvan, Kumandin, Ural and other peoples). All maritime peoples have sea-deities who are offered sacrifices to secure a good catch. “Some of the Koryak say that the ‘owner’ of the sea is a woman, and others consider the sea itself as a woman” (Jochelson 1905-1908: 30).

The Siberian and Middle Asian peoples have different female spirits which have heavenly origins and similar functions. The **Spirit of the Earth**,

which some believe is the daughter of Mother Earth and Father Heaven, is known as *Umai* and *Tenger Niannian*, which comes from the Tungus word for *earth/soil*. She is worshipped as the womb goddess, protectress of childbirth and children, and there is a wooden figure of her in the sacred corner of all Siberian settlements and huts. The Nenets place such a figure in the cradle of a newborn child, believing that the spirit of the Earth sends the child's soul (Aleksyenko et al. 1998: 167). Mother Earth and her daughter are also appealed to for fertility. Czaplicka notes that among many peoples in Central Asia (Mongols, Buryat, Yakut, Altaians, Torgout, Kidan, Kyrgyz, etc.) "there is one general term for a woman-shaman, which has a slightly different form in each tribe: *utagan*, *udagan*, *udaghan*, *ubakhan*, *utygan*, *utiugun*, *iduan* (*duana*); whereas the word for man-shaman is different in each of these tribes" (Czaplicka 1914). These names, which come from Itugen/Mother Earth, actually attest to the semantic unity of "woman-earth" as well as to the concept that women-shamans are "elect".

Another high personage with common features in different territories is the **Mother/Spirit of Fire**, who is also protectress of the family, childbirth and children. A red cloth and "white reindeer with the slightest red markings on their fur" are sacrificed to her (Barkalaja 2000). The Khanty believe that this spirit can take the shape of a hare, an owl and other animals. Among the Mongols, the spirit of fire is known as *Golomto*; begotten by flint and iron, she is another daughter of Mother Earth and Father Heaven, and the most sacred place in the yurt is the fire (which is always at the centre of the yurt). The Yakut visualize fire as a loquacious old man in perpetual motion who knows and sees everything, but his speech is intelligible only to shamans and newborns. For the Nenets, Yakut, Tuvan, fire is the strongest of all spirits (Leete 1997; Hoppál 1997). Hoppál writes that in the hierarchy of spirits, "[t]he Yakut categorized the spirit owner of fire (*Uat iccite*) among the most revered spirits, elevated to the rank of a deity" (Hoppál 1997). The universal conception of fire as a living, all-seeing and all-knowing substance underlies the taboo on desecration of fire and the worship of fire with food.

In the vast Middle Asian and Siberian territories, there are **common, recurrent concepts and characteristics of shamanhood**. Even early observers of these territories noted the commonality of essential features and particular details, including in the vocabulary. This has led to a search for a possible common centre of origin as well as to the hypothesis that peoples which are now far apart had contacts and relations in ancient times. Many scholars start from the basic premise that **Siberia is a cultural continuation of Middle Asia** and view Siberian shamanhood in the context of Central Asian religiosity. Some argue, not without reason, that it originated from *animism* in the southern agricultural regions (south of Siberia) or from Buddhism itself (Hultkranz 1984: 34, with References). Mikhajlov (1984: 105) has similar hypotheses about the roots of

the phenomenon in Central Asia and Southern Siberia. In the second millennium AD, significant changes took place in these territories: formation of many of the peoples known today, expansion of the Mongol conquests, migration of Turco-Mongol groups in Middle Asia, including along the Ob, Angara, Yenisey, Irtysh, Lena and other rivers. The migration of the Tungus ethnic groups in this period is believed to have largely contributed to the spread and similarity of Central Asian and Siberian shamanhood.

Mikhajlov uses the term "Central Asian shamanism" to designate shamanhood among the Turco-Mongolian peoples, which he describes as "a syncretic phenomenon" developed on the basis of animism, with a "very rich and multi-genre oral literature and folklore". In his view, similarities in Central Asian shamanism are to be found in the ideas about the "supernatural" forces, in the mythic concepts, in the "cult" of heaven, earth and water, in the worshipping of particular animals, etc.; in the forms of collective and individual offering, in the methods of divination, in the utilization of objects of the same type in ritual practice, in funeral rites; in the system of training and initiating shamans, in their functions and accessories, in the teaching about the shamanic predestination; in the terminology, i.e. the names of spirits, of the World tree, of some sacred accessories of shamans, in some ritual exclamations uttered by shamans during the offering ceremony, etc. (Михайлов 1980: 208; Mikhajlov 1984: 98-99). At the same time, the problems of greatest concern to scholars of shamanhood in Central and Middle Asia are related to the syncretic ritual forms, the contentious features of shamanhood and its absence in some regions (where Iranian ideological elements have been preserved), which is also noted by earlier observers (Сухарева 1975: 78, with References), as well as its late emergence among Turkic ethnic groups (after the eighth-twelfth centuries – a thesis best defended in Гумилев 1967). Many publications devoted to the Siberian and Middle Asian traditions discuss the religious influences exercised on shamanhood by the high theological cultures that spread northwards from India, Tibet, China, and the problematic interpretation of the intertwined mythological, doctrinal and theological elements (for details, see Каражаев 1984).

New theological ideas and beliefs spread in Middle and Northern Asia at different stages in its history. In the first centuries AD, **Buddhism** spread to the north, west, and northeast. It reached Korea in the fourth century, the Uighur several centuries later, the Mongols in the thirteenth century, and the region of the Amur River in the fourteenth century. Buddhism had a particularly strong influence on the Buryat and the Mongols. "[T]he Mongolian nomadic people ... were always susceptible to outside cultural influences. Today their western tribes are influenced by Islamic culture, while Lamaistic Buddhism and Chinese culture dominate in the East" (Malm 1977: 143). The influence of Tibetan Lamaism is especially tangible in the shamanhood of the Mongols. In his notes on the Buryat, Banzaroff writes that "[a]fter the introduction of Buddhism among

the Mongolic nations, they called their old religion 'The Black Faith' (*Khara Shadjin*), in contradistinction to Buddhism, which they called 'Yellow Faith' (*Shira Shadjin*)" (after Czaplicka 1914). In Mongolia, *white* shamans who have adopted Buddhism are called "yellow shamans or lamaised shamans, shamans of yellow direction": "They recite Buddhist texts, use Buddhist objects and make prayer gestures like those of Buddhist monks. As a consequence of the early (17th century) and strong lamaisation of Western Mongolia, the number of 'black shamans' ... diminished significantly over the centuries" (Birtalan 2001: 120).

Unlike Buddhism, **Taoism** – which also influenced significantly the way of thinking, rituals and behaviour of many Asian peoples – made its way only into the regions bordering China in the area of the lower Amur River. During and after the Early Middle Ages, **Manichaeism** likewise spread into Siberia. According to Kyzlasov, the true spiritual culture of the Siberian peoples cannot be viewed without taking into consideration the influence and spread of Manichaeism.<sup>10</sup> Obviously, the expansion of Manichaeism in Middle, Northern and Southern Asia was due not least to its religious strategy. The Manichaeans spread the "faith of Mani" in the local languages, used the runic alphabet of the Türks, and "fitted" into the local traditions. In Southern Siberia, Manichaeism incorporated many images and concepts from the local pagan beliefs, including from "Turkic shamanism". In the eighth-tenth centuries, it influenced also the ancient Turkic "Tengriism which tended towards monotheism" (Урманчеев 2001: 467). That is also probably why the name of *Tengri* has been preserved in Turkic-language sacred texts. "Siberian Manichaeism is a direct continuation of Central Asian Manichaeism. But whereas the latter was 'dressed in Buddhist garb', Manichaeism in the north had a shaman's cloak." After the eighth-ninth centuries, the Sayan-Altai Türks and their neighbours (the Khakas, Tuvan, Tofalar, the peoples along the Ob and Yenisey rivers) did not "remain ordinary shamans, as many scholars still think ... they became Siberian Manichaeans". It is claimed that traces of fading Manichaeism can still be found in the shamanhood, language and beliefs of the Siberian peoples (Кызласов 2001: 83-90). Some Manichaean ideas also reached the Mansi in Western Siberia. Their creation legend about the Supreme Deity probably has a similar basis: "*Numi-Torum* fashioned the figure of a human being out of clay but could not give it the breath of life. It was only his sister *Kaltash* who could give the soul to humans" (information in Barkalaja 2000, with References).

<sup>10</sup> A philosophical, encyclopaedic and literary religion which originated in Babylon in the third century. Its founder, the prophet Mani, preached that Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Buddhism are *one* true religion and that his mission was to restore it as such. Manichaeism spread into China, Tibet, part of India, the Sayan-Altai Plateau, Altai, Tuva, the territory of present-day Mongolia, reaching Southern Siberia in the eighth century. Manichaeism teaches that the human body was created by the god of Evil and that only the soul was created by the god of Good. Manichaeans were known for their knowledge of astrology and the exact sciences, and their "philosophical meditations"; they built libraries, temples, monasteries with a rich and complex architecture (Кызласов 2001: 83-90).

**Islam**, which spread into Middle Asia from the eighth century onwards (more precisely, Sufism – Pentikainen 1998: 40), gradually overlaid the animistic ideology with images of Muslim saints, as it did with Christianity. In some Middle Asian shamanic rituals Islam partly changed the terminology and some names, and shamans began invoking not only the old spirits but also Muslim prophets (for example, among the Kyrgyz, Kazakh, Turkmen, Uzbek and others<sup>11</sup>). Uрманчеев explains the comparatively easy spread of Islam in the Volga Region, the territories around the Urals, and Central and Middle Asia with the similarity between the "cult of Tengri" and Islam: "[T]he needs and requirements of the two religions were so similar that they turned into mutually complementary ones. It is no coincidence that along with the Arabic-Muslim Allah, the older name of the god, Tengri, has survived in the Turkic-speaking world" (Урманчеев 2001: 467-468). As noted above, the concepts of Tengri – along with the worship of water, the earth, the sun, the belief in guardian spirits and spirit helpers, the cult of ancestors and of the wolf, the tiered structure of the world, etc. – have survived in many parts of Middle Asia and Siberia, even among those influenced by later religions. As we shall see below, this also applies to some Caucasian peoples who adopted Islam, to the Chuvash and the so-called "Tatars" in the Volga Region. The same applies to the peoples who adopted Christianity (Lapp, Ob-Ugric peoples, peoples in Northern Siberia), in whose tradition the old beliefs have integrated with newer ones.

The changes in the worldview and beliefs of the Southern Siberian and Middle Asian traditional communities occurred at a different pace. Mutual ethno-cultural influences and layers gradually accumulated in these especially active, transitory territories. Theological concepts spread to the north, west and east (from India, China and Korea), towards the relatively "pure" type of cultures, additionally shaping the rites and some worldview concepts in the Siberian traditions. Shamanhood, in its turn, intensified some contents in the behaviour and concepts of "religious life" to a different extent (Hultkranz 1984: 33). The processes of spiritual inter-penetration (for example, between animism, mythology, religion) complexified and even gave rise to *new types of behaviour* among all Asian peoples that have *doctrinal and theological belief-systems* and a legacy of shamanhood which can still be identified as such. An especially typical example of this is the Korean tradition and shamanhood, about which there is written evidence dating as far back as the first century BC. According to researchers, Korean shamanhood stands out precisely as a "developed" and syncretic phenomenon deeply influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. This influence is associated with the theory of *yin-yang* and

<sup>11</sup> For more on the survival of shamanhood among these peoples, see Beliaev 1975: 122; for the influence of Islam on shamanhood, see Сухарева 1975; Муродов 1975; Басилов, Ниязклычев 1975.



mysticism (from Taoism),<sup>12</sup> with the idea of not taking life without cause (from Buddhism), with the concepts of the multiple souls and their characteristics, which are found in similar form among other Asian peoples too (*Introduction to Korean Folklore*; Cho 1984; Kendall, Griffin 1987; Lee 1973, 1974, 1981; Menges 1983; Kim 1988, etc.). Scholars studying the Korean as well as other Asian communities are concerned with the questions of the origin of the proto-elements and the extent to which they are preserved, of the mutual influence between the traditional/pagan and the theological. The problem of *mythology and shamanhood in religion* and vice versa, as well as the subject of the so-called religious syncretism, preoccupies every contemporary scholar of Asia. This ought to be instructive for some Bulgarian authors, who identify shamanhood as a "religion of the ancient Bulgars" and automatically locate it in the vast spiritual and geographical region of Middle Asia without any sound scientific evidence.

At the beginning of the third millennium, one should not expect that classical Siberian shamanhood has survived intact. The problems regarding its territorial dimensions and names/terms remain purely academic ones. They are also related to the attempts to define the phenomenon itself and even to come up with an unambiguous definition. What is shamanhood? A religion, a cult form, a syncretic form, an early form of religion, a kinship institution, a psychological technique? The answers to this question are different. Some of them go as follows:

- Shamanism is the religious complex developed around the shaman. ... Shamanism could pass as a typical phenomenon of hunting cultures in general. (Hultkranz 1973: 36; 1984: 32)
- Shamanism is in fact a universal phenomenon within a system of traditional religion. (Taksami 1998: 14)
- Shamanism is not only characteristic of tribal peoples but also is an ongoing and irreducible mode of experiencing the sacred that is not limited to a particular ethnic group. (Grim 1983: 25-29)

The idea of the existence of shamanic elements in different traditional cultures actually belongs to Eliade, and has since been interpreted repeatedly:

While shamanism is indeed a pre-eminently religious phenomenon of Central and North Asia, it is nevertheless not a religion as such. ... The ideology as well as the mythology and rites of the Arctic, Siberian and Asian populations are not the product of the relevant shamans. ... The sacred space, the meaning of songs, the mystic or sym-

<sup>12</sup> The Koreans believe that death means disruption of the spiritual connection between the ying and the yang, upon which the yang component leaves the body and ascends to heaven. If the deceased had a meaningful and good life on earth, they become *sin*, a benevolent spirit; conversely, if they lived in depravity the yang element cannot ascend and remains among the living as *kwi*, an evil spirit/ghost. Of course, shamans can help *kwi* ascend to heaven. People who die in accidents or on the battlefield, or who commit suicide – i.e. those who die a violent or premature death – also become *kwi*.

bolic communication between Heaven and Earth, the initiatory or funereal Bridge – although they are a component of Asian shamanism, those different elements precede and transcend it. (Елиаде 1996: 21, 425)

Seeking to answer the question of *what is shamanhood?*, a number of scholars have justifiably asked themselves if shamanism is truly a religion:

- Is shamanism a religion? The question is not without problems, because the languages of shamanic cultures do not have their own words for religion or shamanism. ... Shamanhood should be understood as being an entity, including both the visible and invisible elements of shaman rituals. Shamanhood therefore covers a wider area than "religion" in its western traditional sense... (Pentikainen 1998: 36)
- Shamanism ... by itself is not a religion but only a cult form integrated into a religion. (Gilbert 1984: 23)
- Shamanism is not, as is often supposed, a religion, but a psychological technique which, theoretically, could appear within the framework of any religion.<sup>13</sup>
- Instead of using the term shamanism I prefer to speak of shaman belief. ... Shamanism I believe is not a religion but a world view of a kind, a relation to things, to the world and to one's environment. (Hoppál 1999: 58)
- Shamanism is an animistic ideology. (Paulson 1964: 131)
- Today shamanism is a pure neologism which misleads its very advocates into assuming that Siberian nomadic tribes had created a conscious religious system. (Фол А.Л. 2002: 245)

Even some years ago, Pentikainen drew serious attention to the differences between shamanhood and *shamanism*, which are still used as synonymous in studies in different languages, as well as to the need of reformulating the terminology "to emphasize the importance of non-dogmatic and symbolic aspects of shamanic mythical worldviews":

Avvakum and other early writers on the subject of Siberian cultures wrote about shamans, not shamanism. The phenomenon only became known as *shamanism* after it was recognised as being a "pagan religion". ... Mission churches had therefore found a new "-ism" to ward off in the late 18th century. Siberian pagan phenomena were given the label shamanism, although they were not theological and not at all dogmatic. As the whole idea of *shamanism* is connected with definitions given by eastern and western Christianity, we should probably talk instead about "shamanhood" as being the basic concept of shamanic culture – its mythology, way of life and philosophy. (Pentikainen 1998: 36)

"Shamanhood" ... is closer to the self-perception of the shamans themselves, since they do not see shamanism as a "religion" in the western sense of the word. (Pentikainen 2001b: 508-509)

<sup>13</sup> Lommel 1967. *Shamanism: The Beginning of Art*. New York – Toronto: McGraw – Hill, p. 69 (quoted from Hoppál 1984: 441).

In my view, the phenomenon is best defined as a “system of beliefs” and it is no doubt true that Siberian shamanic societies “did not have one of the main religions (like Christianity, Buddhism, Islam etc.) based on priests” (Gilberg 1984: 24). The misconception that shamanhood is a religion (found in many ethnological and anthropological publications) most likely comes from the popular definitions authored by not particularly religious people... They presume that *religion* is the totality of diachronically accumulated spiritual layers in a given territory and nation or ethnic group. This totality invariably includes the deification of nature (i.e. of the creation, and not of the Creator!) and the presence of the mysterious “supernatural/superhuman”, which no doubt offers plenty of material for the film industry. Actually, the problem is not whether the phenomenon called religion exists and when did it appear, but what are its contents and how does it differ from the so-called pre-religious thinking.

Irrespective of time and territory, *religion* is **institutionalized faith with a hierarchically organized system of worship governed by established rules**. In many cases, religion was imposed historically as a political act and constitutes an **autonomous ideological system**. Within this sphere there are essentially different types of religion. Some of them are defined as messianic and originate from *charismatic figures* who actually created esoteric doctrines. The subsequently emergent institution absolutized the deeds and words of the founders and imposed dogmatic models of behaviour, to the point where its “claims to universality” and “exceptionality of its ideas” turn into “intolerance towards all other faiths” (after Григорьев 1995: 319; Pentikainen 2001b: 510). The individual phenomenon (in human form), transformed into an ideological and even into a political model of “us/them” behaviour, gave rise to the term *paganism*<sup>14</sup> (as in the term *shamanism*) referring to the previous “high” religion. Incidentally, *paganism* likewise indiscriminately lumps together animistic, doctrinal and religious activities and ideas. Any one of what I will tentatively call the “charismatic” religions is neither more nor less universal or global than the others. On the contrary. The term and concept of *universality* or *globality* correspond to another, older type of *cosmogonic religiosity* which strives to achieve harmony between *Humans* and the *Cosmos* and the union of humans with the divine through inherited supra-individual ideas and concepts of the Universe.

Every “charismatic” religion (for example, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism) has a pre-history, its emergence having been essentially conditioned by the preceding types of religiosity. To one extent or another, it was integrated precisely into and through the inherited high value systems and models of behaviour. Diachronically, the latter continued to prevail and function outside the field of the official state religion – in traditional folk faith. As is well-known, at that level full coincidence between faith-rites and official state reli-

<sup>14</sup> C.E.D. – pagan – L. *paganus*, from *pagus*, the country, a countryman.

gion is not found as a purely synchronic phenomenon among any ethnic group or even in any country. At the diachronic level, they are always in a state of constant overlapping and inter-penetration. And it is precisely in the sphere of folk faith and rites that official state religions are likewise reduced to “folk” religions (folk Christianity, folk Islam etc.). If the gap that appears between a newly imposed ideology and the previous type of ideology is not filled, the relevant society will simply fall apart...

Studying intertwining spiritual relationships and their various connotations is an especially interesting challenge but also a serious task for science. That is also why equating different (both diachronically and territorially) spiritual realities and subsuming them under a single “collective” term smacks of dubious literacy. It actually eliminates the essence of *religion* as a type of *worldview level* and *institutional level*. And if according to those who love “universal” generalizations religion is a universal phenomenon that has existed ever since *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis* and down to the present day in general, then we might ask ourselves a simple rhetorical question: Why haven’t humans, too, still remained of the same species?

## RITES AND CONCEPTS

The term *shaman* (*sama:n, samon, saman, khaman*, translated as “someone who knows” – Pentikäinen 2001b: 508) has been recorded among the Tungus people *Evenk*.<sup>1</sup> The Turkic *cam* – hence the Russian term for the shamanic rite *kamlanie* (i.e. invocations of spirits – Mikhailovski 1894: 55; Niemi 1998: 72) – has a similar meaning. The different Siberian peoples have different names for the shaman (in Yakut, he is called *oïun*; in Mongol, *buge*; Buryat, *buge* or *bö*; Tungus, *samman, hamman*; Turkic, *kam*; Altaic Turkic, *kam, gam*; Samoyed, *tadibey* etc.), for the shamanic drum, rites and ritual accessories. To quote Pentikäinen,

the majority of Siberian cultures do not know the concept “shaman” (it is lacking from most of their vocabularies), although they are clearly shamanistic. ... Typical Siberian shamanic features are found in the vocabularies, mythologies, folklore, drum and music, dress and gastronomy of the Arctic and Subarctic Uralic cultures (Sami, Ob-Ugric, Samoyed) of the northern fell, tundra and taiga regions. (Pentikäinen 1998: 30; 2001b: 506, 510)

**Shamanhood is part of the tradition of a particular society.** In addition to specific healing skills, shamans must have knowledge of herbs, of the mytho-narratives of their community, of different spells, charms, incantations, songs, myths, and so on. Shamans are universally believed to be travellers and **mediators between the worlds**, as well as to possess special abilities to contact the spirits. Many authors define the so-called “**soul journey**” as a shaman’s most distinctive feature (Gilbert 1984: 23, with References). Both **men and women** can be shamans. Their teeth, fontanelles, hair and other unusual birth conditions or marks are believed to be a sign of their predestination. The Tuvan believe that the soul of the dead shaman-predecessor lodges itself into his successor,

<sup>1</sup> From Czaplicka 1914: “In Sanskrit *sram* = to be tired, to become weary; *sramana* = work, religious mendicant. In the Pali language the word *samana* has the same meaning. These two latter words have been adopted by the Buddhists as names for their priests. But, according to Banzaroff, the word shaman originated in northern Asia: *saman* is a Manchu word, meaning ‘one who is excited, moved, raised’; *samman* (pronounced *shaman*) and *hamman* in Tungus, have the same meaning. *Samdambi* is Manchu: ‘I shamanize’, i.e. ‘I call the spirits dancing before the charm’.”

who is usually one of his relatives, even at an early age. With every passing year, the hereditary “gift” and possession are manifested in “dreams that come true”, unusual experiences, “virtual insanity”, etc. (Alexeev 1984: 273, with References; Pentikäinen 1998: 32, 33). The shaman’s gift may also manifest itself in sudden mental or physical illness, in initiatory visions (such as travel to the Upper World, bodily dismemberment and restoration, i.e. rebirth as a “new” and stronger one). Among the Buryat, a child “elected” to be a shaman will often fall into meditation and introversion, and have mysterious dreams and fainting-fits; they believe that at such moments the child’s soul leaves its body and goes to be trained by the western, white, or eastern, black, *tenger* depending on whether the child is predestined to be a “white” or a “black” shaman. During the “training”, under the guidance of dead shamans, the travelling soul must memorize the names of the spirits, the places they inhabit, the ways to propitiate them, etc. (Агапитов, Чангалов 1883: 42-53).

The belief in the **hereditary transmission of “the shaman’s gift”** is common to all of Siberia, to some Turkic and Asian peoples who consider only **hereditary shamans to be true shamans** (Кенин-Лопсан 2000). According to Lintrop, who studies the mechanisms of transmission in this tradition, the belief in the hereditary transmission of the shaman’s gift influences the future shaman’s own conscious and subconscious motives, creating a subsystem of the ego, which is the supernatural being (spirit) that possesses an individual. Lintrop tries to explain the process of origin of “the shaman’s sickness” using Walker’s and Shor’s conceptions of hypnosis and possession as different forms of regression in the service of the ego (Walker), and of hypnosis as “a complex of two processes, one of which is the construction of a special, temporary orientation and the other is the relative fading of the generalized reality-orientation into non-functional unawareness” (Shor). Lintrop uses the term “reality of legends” to mark the “temporary orientation” that enables possession, in which consciousness passes into a “relatively non-functional state”. During the initiatory visions, “[t]he novice is possessed not only by one particular supernatural being but the whole world beyond with its inhabitants. Although familiar from legends and myths, this unexpectedly visualized world is still strange and frightening. ... During initiation these are balanced and the visions of the novice become fairly traditional. The candidate adapts himself to the reality of legends – that is becomes a shaman” (Lintrop 1996a).

Among the Ostyak, the father himself chooses his successor, not necessarily according to age, but according to capacity; and to the chosen one he gives his own knowledge. If he has no children, he may pass on the office to a friend, or to an adopted child. ... Among both the Yakut and the Buryat, although the office is not necessarily hereditary ... it will generally happen that the shamanistic spirit passes from one to another of the same family. ... Bogoras did not hear of any transferring of shamanistic power while he was among the Chukchee. He found it, however, among Eskimo women, who were taught by their husbands, and whose children were taught by their

parents. ... To people of more mature age the shamanistic call may come during some great misfortune, dangerous and protracted illness, sudden loss of family or property. ... However, very old people are not supposed to hear the shamanistic call. (Czaplicka 1914, with References)

Among the Chukchi, the older shaman,

[t]he man who gives a part of his power to another man loses correspondingly, and can hardly recover the loss afterwards. To transfer his power, the older shaman must blow on the eyes or into the mouth of the recipient, or he may stab himself with a knife, with the blade of which, still reeking with his "source of life" (*telkeyun*), he will immediately pierce the body of the recipient. ... The Ostyak shaman occasionally sells his familiar spirit to another shaman. After receiving payment, he divides his hair into tresses, and fixes the time when the spirit is to pass to his new master. The spirit, having changed owners, makes his new possessor suffer. (Czaplicka 1914, with References)

During the **period of preparation** of the new shaman, "his relations call in a good shaman, who makes a sacrifice to propitiate the spirits and induce them to help the young shaman-to-be. If the future shaman belongs to a poor family, the whole community helps to procure the sacrificial animals and other things which are indispensable for the ceremonies" (Czaplicka 1914). "During the time of preparation the shaman has to pass through both a mental and a physical training. ... The young novice ... loses all interest in the ordinary affairs of life. He ceases to work, eats but little ... ceases to talk to people, and does not even answer their questions. The greater part of his time he spends in sleep" (Bogoras 1907: 420, 421; Jochelson 1905-1908: 47). For the weaker shamans and for female shamans the preparatory period is less painful, and the inspiration comes mainly through dreams. But for a powerful/great shaman this stage is long (lasting from one to several years) and very painful. Among the Buryat, the novice

cannot, however, become a shaman until he reaches the age of twenty. Finally he undergoes a purification ceremony. One such ceremony does not confer all the rights and powers of a shaman; there are, in fact, nine. But very few shamans go through all these purifications; most only undergo two or three; some, none at all, for they dread the responsibilities which devolve upon consecrated shamans. To a fully consecrated shaman the gods are very severe, and punish his faults or mistakes with death. (Czaplicka 1914)

In many societies, people are reluctant to become shamans, regarding the shaman's painful gift as a life-long burden. Bogoras writes that young shamans fight internally against their calling and against the spirits, which makes their preparatory period even more painful. The process of initiation itself is extremely stressful; "some youths prefer death to obedience to the call of spirits", which the Chukchi believe "are very bad-tempered, and punish with immediate death the slightest disobedience of the shaman. ... There are cases of young persons who, having suffered for years from lingering illness (usually of a nervous

character), at last feel a call to take up shamanistic practice and by this means overcome the disease" (Bogoras 1907: 420, 421, 417, 450). At the same time, hereditary vocation by itself is seldom enough, and in most cases the future shaman must train for years as an apprentice to and assistant of an old shaman (Gilberg 1984: 25; Кенин-Лопсан 2000: 85). The children and grandchildren of shamans enter this training with an advantage, which comes from their observations and contact with the old shaman's knowledge, songs and stories, descriptions of the Upper and the Lower World, of supernatural beings, etc. (Lintrop 1996a).

Shamanhood is **not specific to a particular social class**, stratum or gender; it depends on the personal abilities of *individuals*. In life they may be ascetic or non-ascetic, gay or straight. In the past as well as in the present, the majority of the bearers of this tradition are illiterate (Pentikainen 2001b: 508). Almost all nineteenth- and early twentieth-century observers note that among a number of Siberian peoples (such as the Yukaghir, Koryak, Chukchi, Samoyed, Ostyak, Tungus, Yakut, Buryat), there were as many **shamanesses** as male shamans. Their social status is higher than that of the other women in the community, and they, as well as male shamans, are not subject to certain taboos that apply to ordinary people (Czaplicka 1914). Among the Itelmen as among some Turkic and Mongol peoples, female shamans predominate. According to a Chukchi shaman, "women are shamans by nature" and their initiation period is shorter and easier than that of male shamans. The crucial point in their lives is childbirth, which may lead to temporary or complete loss of their shamanic gift.

Shamanic ceremonies have **different purposes and functions**, and can be classified generally as **public and private**. Both have common structural components (invocation, supplication, incantation, offering etc.). The former are associated with the cycle of the agricultural/hunting season (e.g. for successful hunting), the well-being of a particular community, family, clan, village etc.; the latter are performed on personal request (for healing, finding lost property, returning a soul stolen by a spirit, begetting a child, "enlivening" a sacred image, etc.<sup>2</sup>) and are not restricted to a particular calendar period.<sup>3</sup>

All Siberian hunting societies have propitiatory ceremonies to ensure successful hunting and an abundance of game and fish. Before a hunt, the shaman and the hunters pray to the "spirit of the dark forest", offer sacrifices and call the strongest animals-lords, totems and ancestors of their people (among the Buryat, the bear, the eagle, the Siberian tiger, the snow leopard; the ancestors of the Mongol peoples include the Blue Wolf, the Red Deer, and the Father Bull).

<sup>2</sup> The Koreans, for example, will hire a shaman when a member of their family has constant bad luck and misfortunes; when a young person dies, the shaman must appease their soul and prevent their turning into an evil spirit that may hurt the whole village (Menges 1983).

<sup>3</sup> Some calendar-based shamanic initiations in Southern Siberia (among the Tungus, the Buryat) are considered to be "a result of influence from the religions of Far Eastern civilizations" (Hultkranz 1979: 120, with References).

In the past, the northern peoples celebrated the beginning and end of every hunting season for days, and the offering of various objects, food, alcohol, sacrificial animals, etc. were invariably directed by shamans. Almost without exception, every sacrifice was followed by a *kamlanie* in the evening to see whether the spirits had accepted the offering benevolently. This applied to family as well as to large tribal and village sacrificial rites, at which several shamans could perform *kamlanie* simultaneously. According to Siikala (1984: 74, citing Hultkranz), in Northern Siberia this type of sacrificial ceremonies has replaced "the primitive hunting rites".

According to Jochelson's account of the Yukaghir (1926: 210-211), "[t]he soul of the shaman ... approached the house of the Owner" to ask for the souls of animals for the future hunt. "If the Owner of the Earth loves the shaman he gives the soul of reindeer doe, if he does not love he gives him the shadow of a bull." Returning with the soul of a reindeer (which means that the hunters will have good luck throughout the season), "the shaman rises to his feet, beats his drum and dances with joy ... sings to his spirit-protectors, who helped him. ... Then the shaman approaches the head hunter and hands him the soul, for only shaman can see it. The shaman places it on the head of the hunter ... tying it with an invisible bandage" and explaining where on the following day he must kill the reindeer brought by the shaman. "If the Owner of the Earth gave a bull, the hunter will only kill that bull, and there will be no more game" (Siikala 1984: 72).

Depending on the occasion, as well as on the judgement of shamans, the rites are performed in huts, yurts or other **places sacred to the clan and the village**, which are believed to be inhabited by a spirit protector (at the top or at the foot of a mountain, on the bank of a river or lake, by a spring, rock or ancient tree, etc. – for details, see Pentikainen 1998: 19-34). Among the Tuvan, the veneration of springs "was intertwined with the cult of the trees growing around ... especially ... whose growth or shape differed from the usual. ... Trees of this kind were called *shaman trees*. ... If such a tree stood near a spring, under the tree shamans made their ceremonies" (Hoppál 1997). The Nanai perform such ceremonies in front of a *toro*, a tree with a carved image of a human face (Булгакова 2001: 41). The result of every ceremony has always depended on the abilities of the shaman. The **different types of shamans** are determined by their origin and individual powers to contact different levels of the Universe. Every type has a particular domain and authority of activities, as well as a specific name. The different types of Tuvan shamans are a typical example in this respect:

(1) The true and most powerful Tuvan shamans (both men and women) are hereditary shamans – descendants of eight to ten generations of shamans. (2) Shamans who originated and obtained their shamanic gift from the spirits *iersu* (keepers of earth and water). (3) *Sky* shamans originating from Uli-Khairakan, a deity connected with Tengri (the Sacred Sky) as well as with the belief that those whose heads are struck by lightning can become *sky* shamans. (4) *Albis*, a high type of shamans originating from

the evil spirits *albis*, inhabitants of sandy and desert places; people who encounter these spirits fall ill and may lose their sanity; *albis* shamans recapture the soul of the ill person, thus saving their life; those saved will then become shamans themselves, and they are called *sexless shamans*. (5) Shamans originating from the evil spirits *aza*, who are dangerous and lure people in different forms (in the form of a human, a fox, whirlwind...); only *aza* shamans can return the soul of the "attacked". Before and during their ceremonies, the different types of shamans stress their origin, appealing to the ancestor spirits who give them power. (Кенин-Лопсан 2000: 80-84)

Shamans are divided into **white and black** depending on the type of spirits they contact and the parts of the Universe they can travel to. Among the Yakut, white shamans serve the sky spirits, do their rituals only in the daytime, and their symbol is the *singür* (drum). In the past, they conducted the rites and invocations performed before a hunt. Black shamans serve the dark spirits incarnated as dark-coloured animals, perform their rituals during dark nights (without a moon), and their main ritual accessory is the gown/cloak (Hoppál 1997, with References). Among the Ket, great shamans correspond to white shamans, and operate only in the upper world (Alekseenko 1984: 94). The Mongols associate white and black shamans with the eastern and western spirits *tenger*. Black shamans serve the eastern, dark *tenger*, and are therefore believed to have the power to cause illness and human death. They are much feared by the people, who sometimes killed them, and this has led to their extinction in some places. Among the Votyak, white shamans are almost the only shamans now to be found, while among the Yakut, black shamans predominate. The Buryat say that the white and black shamans "fight with each other, hurling axes at one another from distances of hundreds of miles" (Czaplicka 1914). This differentiation and division of shamans into black and white is not found in all of Siberia, where the number of shamans in the community can vary. Among the Nenets, for example, back in the past every clan had its own shaman of a particular type (Хомич 1981: 14). Some communities have only a single shaman, serving as both a "white" and a "black" one. The latter "helps men no less than the white shaman does. He is not necessarily bad, though he deals with evil powers, and he occupies among the Yakut a higher position than among other Neo-Siberians." It is universally believed that "[t]he more powerful they are, the wider is the circle in which they can practise their art" (Czaplicka 1914, with References).

The journeys and overall activity of shamans are unthinkable without the help of the so-called **spirit helpers** and **spirit protectors** invoked in all rituals together with the other spirits inhabiting the Universe and its directions. The concept of the existence of sky spirits sent by the supreme force to protect people, of underworld spirits, of spirit helpers of shamans, etc. (Alekseev 1984: 276; Massenzio 1984: 204), as well as the mytho-narratives about them are the product of *folk beliefs* that transcend the sphere of shamanhood. Although scholars classify spirit helpers in different ways, they agree that they have the same, animistic, Siberian and Asian roots. Some scholars distinguish two basic types

of spirit helpers: spirits which are substantially under the shaman's control and which serve as his familiars, and spirits which maintain a certain independence but are available when he needs to call on their aid. There are also very powerful spirits which are beyond the control of shamans (Hoppál 1997). Such spirits are the above-mentioned sky spirits *tenger*, the masters of the cardinal directions, who are invoked for help in rituals for rainmaking or sending lightning back to the sky. For the purpose, the Mongols have special shrines (*oboo*) dedicated to *Tenger* and the mountain spirits.

Many spirit helpers are in the **form of an animal or a bird (zoomorphic or ornithomorphic)**: a bear, an elk, a wolf, a deer, a hare, a seal; an eagle, an owl, a goose, a diver, a swan, a crow... The horse is known as the shaman's spirit for the Yakut, and for the Ostyak and the Vogul who use the horse to journey to the heavens. For the Lapps fish may appear as the spirit helpers, and for the Tungus the spirit helpers may appear in the form of snakes (Ojamaa 1997). For the Yakut, the most powerful spirits are those of bulls, stallions, elks, and black boars, while dogs and wolves are spirit helpers of weaker, inferior shamans. For the Yakut again, the most important of all spirit helpers is the *yekyua* (literally, "mother-animal"), in which the shamans incarnate their *kut* – that part of the soul which, according to the Yakut, is common to animals and humans. "It is said that the shamans incarnate their *kut* [which is done only during the time they are actually shamanizing] in certain animals, e.g. in stallions, wolves, dogs, and that these animals are thus the *yekyua* of shamans. ... If one of these animals kills another of its species, then the corresponding shaman will die" (Czaplicka 1914, with References). There are similar beliefs among the Mongols, too.

The bearers of the shamanic tradition, as well as researchers, distinguish between the different spirits (and shamans) most often on the basis of origin. Their "classification" or "ordering" makes the vast and diverse sphere of invisible substances more perspicuous – which, however, is not to say that we should picture the spirits as being lined up in rows next to the shaman... They are able to fly everywhere in an instant, to see and feel from afar, to move between the past, present and future, guiding shamans during their "soul journeys". The concepts that the shaman is their master (shamans ride them, sit on their backs) and can therefore control and incarnate them (by turning into a bear, wolf, deer, fish, tiger, etc. – Rouget 1985: 21, with References; Gilbert 1984: 22) actually attest to the purpose and concept of the shaman's *ideal identification* with them. It is questionable to what extent this undertaking is voluntary, who is the "master" and who is the "servant", and whether it is the shaman who incarnates into a spirit or vice versa. What is important here is the belief that it is the shaman who gets *chosen* by a powerful spirit helper (animal double or animal mother), which then becomes his or her spirit guide; the shaman usually takes its form during his or her journeys to the otherworld. In my view, the desire to acquire the unlimited abilities of spirits and the shaman's personal transformation into them attest to the depersonification and, ultimately, the subordinate position of shamans.

As their power grows, shamans acquire more and more spirit helpers and forms of their incarnations, which are not zoomorphic only. The power of Yakut shamans depends on the number of their spirit helpers; great shamans have the largest number of spirit helpers, and their spirits are more powerful than those of average or weak shamans (Alekseev 1984: 269, 276).<sup>4</sup> The Tungus, Yakut, Nanai, Altaians believe that deceased members of the shaman's family can also become his spirit helpers. Generally, among many peoples, the **spirits of the ancestors** are invoked in all rituals along with Father Heaven and Mother Earth. The Mongol peoples believe that one of the souls of humans (*suld*) remains on earth perpetually after death as an ancestral spirit helper and protector of the clan, residing with its relative or in a natural place such as a rock, a spring, or a tree. These spirits, kept in the so-called *ongon* (specially created "house"/bag for spirits), are one of the most important assistants of shamans. *Ongons* come in many different forms; they can be carved out of wood, painted on leather, or made out of metal. The Buryat have black and white *ongons*, which generally have human faces. *Ongons* may be made by ordinary people to "house" one of the "souls" of their ancestors or relatives as a protector of the family. But they can be enlivened only by the shaman, who calls the spirit to occupy them. The *ongon* is honoured by being placed in the sacred place in the yurt or hut and fed offerings. The Yakut "install" the souls of those who died a premature or violent death, and of sorcerers in wooden "bags" similar to the *ongons*. They, too, are placed in a prominent position in the home, or in a sacred corner, and are fed by the shaman with the smoke of meat thrown into the fire (Alekseyenko et al. 1998: 143). Shamans themselves normally have a large set of *ongons*, which are passed down from generation to generation because the spirit is believed to continue to live in them. The *ongon* spirit is believed to be a carrier of the hereditary, collective memory of all the shamans it has been associated with in the past (Czaplicka 1914; Mongolian Shamanism – Introduction 101. 1997).

In most rites, **shamans travel** across or below this world, or ascend to the Upper World. Every "soul journey" and field of action is governed by the cosmogonic ideas about the Universe and its structure. The concept that **the Supreme Creator/Sacred Sky is inaccessible to common people as well as shamans is universal in Siberia** (for example, "Khanty *Turum* is inaccessible to common people and it is not possible to bring sacrifices to him directly ... even shamans are unable to converse with him" – Barkalaja 2000, with References). Shamans can ascend to the **Upper World** through the smoke hole of the yurt (the vertical axis represented by the smoke rising from the place of the fire also represents the World Tree which shamans ascend to the Upper World), often after

<sup>4</sup> Native American medicine men also have a hierarchy based on abilities and field of action. The most powerful among them are those belonging to the "fifth class", who have five spirit helpers which are able to bring back people from the dead (i.e. to return one of their lost souls – Hultkranz 1957: 246).

they have metamorphized into a bird. In some shaman rituals, such as the initiation of shamans in Buryatia, a tree (*toroo*) will actually be erected extending beyond the smoke hole. The *toroo* tree has nine steps carved into it, and as the shaman climbs higher and higher, the drumming and the encouragements of his audience bring him to an ecstatic state. As he ascends the tree, he describes his journey to the Upper World. Soul journeys into the world of spirits have specific and recurrent **names for the different movements of the body**. For example, movements forward and upward mark the beginning of a “flight”, irrespective of the direction – towards the Upper or towards the Lower World. During their journeys, shamans can repeatedly change their form or gender depending on the spirits that possess and guide them. Upon these transformations, they may look and move incoherently or, conversely, walk, dance and even describe what they see to their audience. Shamans need to travel to the **Lower World** when they must retrieve a soul or escort the dead to the kingdom of the dead. They reach the Lower World by way of the World River, through caves, whirlpools, springs, etc., or, in other words, by following the way of the spirits. Such journeys are the most dangerous and difficult ones, and can be undertaken only by great and powerful shamans. Some peoples have a special group of shamans who escort the souls of the dead. Among the Amur Nanai, the highest position in the hierarchy is held by the *kasa tai* shaman, who has the power and authority to conduct the souls of the deceased to the kingdom of the dead. This is done in an annual ceremony at which the shaman dispatches at a go the souls of everyone who died in the past year. They travel by sledge, accompanied by the shaman and his spirit helpers – birds and dogs (Булгакова 2001: 41; Alekseyenko et al. 1998: 183). Among the Nenets, these are “*sámšana* shamans ... specialized only in escorting the dead to the world of the dead” (Niemi 1998: 72).

Many Asian and Siberian peoples believe that humans have **multiple souls**, usually three, each of which has a different fate after death. When a person loses one of their souls, they may obtain its return through a shaman. For the Samoyed, women have four souls, and men five; the Yakut believe that humans possess three souls: *tyn*, which is common to humans, animals and plants; *kut*, which is common to humans and animals, and is composed of three elements (earth, air, and a mother-soul; and *siir*, the psychic soul/force, which is common to humans and animals. The Altaians have similar conceptions (Jochelson 1905-1908: 102-103; Czaplicka 1914).<sup>5</sup> Unlike ordinary people, a great Gilyak shaman may have as many as four souls (one from the mountains, another from the sea, a third from the sky, and a fourth from the underworld – Czaplicka 1914). According to the Asian (and Mongolian) concept, the multiple souls are hypostases of the three worlds in humans. The *suld* soul lives in a physical body only once, and

<sup>5</sup> The belief that humans have four souls, each with a different function and fate after death, is also found in North America. For more on the multiplicity of souls and a detailed analysis of the different types of souls, see Hultkranz 1953: 30, 119-124, 464-480.

does not reincarnate but takes residence in nature after death. The *ami* soul is related to the ability to breathe and may leave the body during illness; after death, it returns to the World Tree (in the Upper World) where it roosts in its branches in the form of a bird; the womb goddess Umai dispatches *ami* souls on spirit horses to enter a new body at the time of birth; *ami* souls tend to reincarnate among their relatives; the *suns* soul carries the collected experiences of past lives within it; it is an inhabitant of the Lower World between incarnations but may return as a ghost to visit friends or relatives. The ruler of the Lower World (Erleg Khan) determines when and where it will reincarnate, but if a soul was extremely evil during its life on earth he may extinguish it forever. The *suns* may temporarily leave the body and go to the Lower World; a shaman must then undertake a dangerous journey and negotiate with Erleg Khan for its return; when the soul is found it is placed in the shaman’s ear or inside the drum for the return trip, then shaken out back into the body of the ill person (Mongolian Shamanism – *Introduction 101*. 1997).

Many Asian peoples believe that animals and plants also possess multiple souls, which reincarnate after death. These concepts underlie a number of rules regarding hunting and the killing of game and of domestic animals, whose observance ensures the return of game and a good relationship with the animal spirits: animals should never be killed except for food or fur, and it should be done in a quick and humane way to prevent them from suffering; game must be shared in the community and not hoarded; when a large animal is killed or a large fish is caught, the hunter or fisherman may cry over its death to appease the animal spirit. The idea that one must avoid injuring and offending the souls of animals, as well as the taboo on killing animals without reason, is probably Buddhist in origin. It also underlies the manner in which animals are sacrificed among the Mongol peoples, who believe that the head, throat, lungs and heart are collectively the residence of an animal’s soul (*ami*) and should therefore be removed from the body in one piece (Mongolian Shamanism – *Introduction 101*. 1997).<sup>6</sup>

The Siberian and Asian concepts of the human soul are at the heart of beliefs about illness and especially about severe illness, which is believed to be caused above all by *soul loss*. And it is precisely the **shaman as healer** who must retrieve the lost, travelling soul, because there is always the threat of its being captured by spirits as it travels while the ill person sleeps (Alekseyenko et al. 1998: 183). Hostile ancestor spirits and less powerful nature spirits can be expelled and “cured” by singing or waving a ritual fan over the patient, as well as by sucking or pulling gestures that draw them out of the body. More

<sup>6</sup> In Mongol sacrificial rituals, the shaman rips open the sacrificial animal’s belly, plunges his hand and squeezes the heart or twists the aorta, thus killing it in seconds (Rudolf M. Brandl. 2000. “Schamanenopfer an den Himmel Innere Mongolei 2000”. RMB Video, Ed. Re Göttingen, ISBN 3-927636-VHS PAL). For this information and for the video material, I thank my Finnish colleague R. P. Pennanen and, indirectly, Prof. Rudolf M. Brandl.

powerful spirits or hostile shamans require going into trance, while the most powerful may need sacrifices to make them go away. In exchange for the human soul, the spirits are promised by the shaman and given by the healed person the soul of an animal or sacred implements; it is absolutely necessary that the healed person keep the promise given by the shaman and give the agreed gift to the spirits. The shaman may use a knife, a red hot iron, a bow and arrow, or other implements to drive away the disease spirit. An *ongon* or mirror may be used to catch a spirit in order to keep it from jumping into another person when it is expelled. In such cases the shaman travels part of the way to the Lower World and then sends the spirit away. Among the Nanai, the shaman will ask the patient's closest relative to make a wooden figure of the evil spirit causing the illness, and then "transfer" it from the patient's body to this figure (Alekseyenko et al. 1998: 185, 188). Shamans can also heal with herbs. However, soul retrievals are by far the most dangerous work for shamans because they have to travel *outside their bodies* for long distances and they are vulnerable to soul loss themselves during the journey. In such cases the shaman may lose consciousness or even die during the ceremony.

Shamans travel to the different levels of the universe during rituals in a state of **trance**. In his extensive monograph *Music and Trance*, Gilbert Rouget offers a detailed review of the use of "soul journey" and other relevant terms in ethnological literature. He notes the inconsistent and incoherent use of terms which he argues represent *different states in rituals* (for the use of *trance* and *ecstasy*, *obsession* and *possession*, see Rouget 1985: 3-28). *Ἐκστασις – ἐνθεος – ἐνθουσιασμός* (*exstasis – entheos – enthousiasmos*) are terms burdened with doctrinal, theological and philosophical connotations that should be considered carefully before applying them to rituals. In Bulgarian literature, the meaning of these terms, which originate precisely from the Balkan region, has been defined and discussed for years in studies on Thracian culture.<sup>7</sup> As regards shamanhood, I entirely exclude the use of *Ἐκστασις* and *ἐνθουσιασμός* because of their many different doctrinal and theological connotations that have changed over the centuries, as well as because I believe that every description of peculiar psychosomatic ritual states requires sound justification of the terms used. Here, and generally about shamanhood, I use the term *trance* in a non-specific sense, as a general, "metaphorical" term associated with the so-called *transcendental function* of trance. In psychology, the transcendental function of trance is treated as a manifestation of energy facilitating the passage from one psychological condition to another, as a link between the *real* and the *imagined*, as a bridge between rational and irrational data. The *transcendental function* psychologically connects humans and God or humans with their highest potential through the formation of symbols (Самюелз et al. 1993: 184-185, 153).

<sup>7</sup> For more on *ecstatic* mysteries in which "every participant strives to reach god" (to reach a higher state) and on *enthusiastic* mysteries in which participants introduce god within themselves "through internal moral tensions", see Фол Ал. 1986: 147.

Identification with the spirit/deity, the very fact that "an objective substance or form of life is ritually transformed through some process" (Юнг 1999: 124-125), may also be a manifestation of transcendence in rituals. Not all shamanic rituals require going into trance; some may involve only fortune-telling or spirit invocation. Among the eastern Khanty, for example, the shamanic journey tends to be a "state of inspiration" in which the shaman "sees and hears the spirits ... in a state of full consciousness"; at the end of the ritual the shaman describes his or her journey, gives advice, answers different questions, and foretells the future (Кережи 2001: 75, with References).

Typically, shamans use various **stimulants** on their soul journeys, such as hallucinogenic plants, *fly agaric*, and alcohol. This fact is noted by almost all researchers. One description by Barkalaja (1997) contains interesting evidence about intoxication with the *amanita* mushroom, in which the mushroom itself appears and travels as a spirit helper of the shaman. Another technique of boosting the shaman's psychosomatic powers involves drinking liquid mixed with *tenger*, i.e. with the "soul" of objects struck by lightning, most often powdered stones or meteorites. The Mongols call such objects *Tengeriin Us* (Heaven's hair). Lightning itself is a sign of *tenger* or an indication of a site of high spiritual powers. The question of the use of stimulants and hallucinogens is often discussed in the context of the problem of the shaman's psychosomatic state. According to some scholars, shamans suffer from hysteria, epilepsy or other nervous disorders. Others deny this, without excluding the possibility that some shamans may be psychopaths, schizophrenics or mentally unstable individuals. "The shamans existed alone in a world between common reality, daily life and the beyond. ... To be floating in a no man's land like that demands strong mental power – that is why I think that neurotic persons would not be fit for the career of the shaman" (Gilbert 1984: 27). As regards stimulants, Shapovalov (Шаповалов 2001) identifies two forms of trance, "magical and shamanic". According to him, the similar concepts of narcotic substances and their widespread use in Africa, America and Oceania are not rooted in shamanistic but in magical tradition; narcotic trance in shamanhood is a relict: it is "pre-shamanic and magical". Shapovalov also bases his arguments on the widespread use of the fly agaric among the northern Siberian peoples who practised "household shamanism". Conversely, the Khanty in Western Siberia ate the fly agaric "strictly ritually" – only individual persons, including storytellers, did so. According to other observers, the "true", traditional way of entering trance is "not with the help of narcotics but through singing, physical movements, biological predisposition and long practice. ... It is typical of the advanced, later forms of shamanism which eventually replaced narcotic trance" (Кулемзин, Лукина 1992: 118-120).

Shamans travel to the spirit world and seek to gain power over spirits for different purposes. Not infrequently, shamans use their powers to help their own clan against rival clans and families. The community relationship is fundamen-



tal in shamanic rites. The Nganasan believe that "that together with the shaman's soul and helping spirits the souls of all participants took a trip to the world of spirits" (Lintrop 1996b). There is similar evidence for the Nanai: "If some of the other people who are present possess some shamanistic skills, they are supposed to be able to follow the shaman's flight path" (Pentikainen 1998: 33).<sup>8</sup>

Shamans themselves embody and symbolize their clan; their power is believed to guarantee the well-being of the whole community. Especially telling in this regard is the evidence that a relative of the shaman had to be sacrificed if the shaman returned from the otherworld with a missing bone, which was considered an omen of death among the community. This unique evidence about shamanic initiation comes from Ksenofontov as cited by Kortt:

The initiation represents a procedure ... involving the whole community. Ksenofontov writes that by the Jakut "he who wanted to become a shaman had to submit to a special procedure *ettëni*, i.e. the dismemberment of his body. This procedure is implemented by the souls of deceased shamans, the forefathers of the shaman candidate." In the re-joining of the bones, i.e. in the revivification of the body, special attention is given to the completeness of the bone count: "If a bone is missing one of the close blood-relatives of the shaman candidate must die... For every missing bone the spirits demand a human sacrifice from among his relatives." Similar conceptions also prevail among the Burjat and Tungus and possibly also among other Siberian peoples. ... It becomes clear that a relationship exists between the skeleton of the shaman candidate and his community. The report of a Jakut informant confirms that ... "If a shaman apprentice has a bad, insensitive body the evil spirit, it is said, tries to take him away (i.e. to kill him). The shaman teacher must in this case (in order to save him) sacrifice someone for every major bone from his circle of relatives (e.g. a person for the skull, etc.)." By the Nganasan shaman, "In the ceremony as well as in the trip beyond the souls of all those present (i.e. the relatives) accompany the shaman. The latter, in his return to this world, must bring all the souls back with him. ... Not a single ceremony is undertaken without counting all the family members of the shaman. ... Their presence strengthens the shaman." "The sitting men frighten the 'evil' (i.e. the foreign) spirit away with their cries so that he doesn't abduct the soul of the shaman" ... From this evidence it is clear that not only the shaman initiation, but also later shaman ceremonies must be understood *as the affair of the whole community*. ... The shaman initiation represents not only a dangerous but even a deadly procedure for the whole community. ... "In the old times, it is told, seven people of the kin died at the becoming of a major shaman" ... "With many of the summoned, nearly all of the close relatives are lost ... for every bone of his body a blood-relative must die as the price." In the person of the shaman the community (at least the paternal line) is initiated, i.e. broken and joined together again, by which the basic idea of the initiation as perfected rebirth ... concerned the shaman not as an individual but as the embodiment of his community. Only a great shaman,

<sup>8</sup> According to Grim (1983: 12), for Native American Indians "the shaman is ... an incarnation of the spirit ... and this is felt by everyone. The state of many participants is now near to that of the shaman himself and only a strong belief that when the shaman is there the spirit may only enter him, restrains the participants from being possessed in mass."

who in his kin has a whole line of shaman ancestors, is dismembered. ... Many shamans are powerful for the reason that there are more bones in their body than people normally have. ... The death of the shaman ... is considered a very serious and important event in the life of the people..." It was clearly of vital importance for each community to have its own shaman: "The kin group which, for whatever reason, had no shaman found itself in an unfavourable situation." (Kortt 1984: 291-298, with References)

Shamanhood is also regarded as a kinship institution among the Norwegian Lapps, where the shamanic tradition was alive at the beginning of the eighteenth century (Pentikainen 1987: 30, 34). A number of studies on the Nanai, among which one family/clan may have several shamans, have shed further light on the kinship basis of shamanhood and on the importance of hereditary transmission (the information below is from Булгакова 2001: 32-41). Nanai familial spirit helpers are usually inherited patrilineally. In order to increase their power and abilities, shamans strive to acquire more spirit helpers – and do so by stealing them. This is also motivated by the concept (found among the Nanai and their kindred Evenk) that "with time and old age, powerful spirit helpers will leave" the shaman. Spirit helpers are stolen most often from blood-related shamans who do not live and "work" in one and the same place but "travel along the same paths in the invisible world". Spirit helpers may be stolen in sleep, more often during shamanic rituals, from relatives who have turned to the shaman for help unaware that they have spirits from the same clan. The relative whose spirit has been stolen may become even more ill or die, and it is certain that he or she will never become a shaman. Weak, novice shamans are most vulnerable to theft and death, especially during initiation. If, however, a shaman succeeds in recapturing his "abducted spirits" (through *kamlanie* or in a dream), he will take revenge by starting a long-lasting feud and in-clan *shamanic wars*. Such rivalry and hostility between the shamans themselves and between the spirits of different clans exists on principle (Barkalaja 1997). In this context, the evidence that among the Shor, "there cannot be two living shamans from the same generation ... or more than one shaman in the same community; if this happens, then one of them must die" (Потанов 1947: 161), provides further insight into the individual essence and concept of the shaman as a chosen one.

The unity of *clan/community/ethnic group/shaman* is also represented in the ritual accessories of shamans, which are strictly personal and the making of which is part of their initiation. All objects carried and worn by the shaman represent the specific characteristics of the phenomenon in the relevant ethno-cultural tradition; not infrequently, they are "multiple" forms of one and the same fundamental contents. The shaman **costume** is the "dwelling-place" of the spirit helpers, his or her double, and a sign marking the shaman out as "other". The making of the shaman costume, as of the shaman drums, is a matter for the entire community or clan (Kortt 1984: 298). The cloak of a "great" shaman symbolically represents a wide range of ancient conceptions of the universe as a whole.

It contains stylized images of the spirit helpers from different spheres and directions of the world. The Yakut call this dress "shaman's horse". The costumes are ornamented with different iron objects (plates, bells, chains, etc., Fig. 2). Among the Nenets, the iron chains symbolize the paths to the Lower World, while the bells are universally regarded as a dwelling-place for the shaman's spirit helpers (Alekseyenko et al. 1998: 109, 184). These visual representations and the shaman costume as a whole "characterize the abilities and properties of each shaman, the helping spirits he has, the weapons and tools he uses" (Lintrop, 2001: 504). As a rule, the costume is worn next to the skin and indicates the shaman's rank. The Buryat tell black from white shamans by the dress; the cloak of white shamans is light-coloured, while that of black ones is blue. Among the Altaians, not all shamans have the right to wear the cloak and the owl-skin! (Потанин 1883: 53). Among the Northern peoples, the shaman costume is not an obligatory and inseparable part of shamanic rituals, and there are many cases in which shamans shamanize in the dark, naked to the waist. Referring to the interpretation of this as a form of "ritual nakedness" – a practice which is not found among the Ob-Ugric peoples, for example – Lintrop reminds us that "Inuits and Chukchees were usually half-naked in the warm parts of their dwellings ... and a shaman had to differentiate himself from ordinary people by the means of amulets or belt" (Lintrop 2001: 504).

The belief that shamans may have several costumes depending on the number of their reincarnations is common to different Siberian peoples. Describing the Evenk in the region of Lake Baikal, Basilov notes that shamans wore a "bird's" dress when travelling to the Upper World and an "ox's" dress when travelling to the Lower World. "The Selkup used the dress of the wild deer when journeying up, and that of the big bear when going down to the nether world" (Pentikainen 1987: 32). The symbolic meaning of the shaman's accessories and the different types of shaman costumes made from a combination of animal skin, metal and fabric, are much more complex in Middle Asia. Bird, reindeer, bear and other cloaks are made from whole skins or from pieces of skin symbolizing the zoomorphic or ornithomorphic spirit helpers into which shamans incarnate during their journeys. The semantic unity of *costume/spirit helper/shaman* is at the core of the different incarnations themselves. For example, Nganasan shamans are most often "elks". Their costume is made from elk hide, with an iron figure of deer antlers on the back, while the upper front part of the boots is reminiscent of elk feet. The fringed sleeves of the costume symbolize bird wings. The costume may also feature bear figures (a she-bear and a he-bear) which shamans can tie to a sledge during their journeys, goose heads to help them go to the Upper World, and bird tails to help them dive when healing people. When the shaman finds the soul of the sick person, he or she seats it on the bird tail and fastens it to the tail with a chain so that it would not get lost on the way back. Among Mongol shamans, the dwelling-places of helper spirits include the costume, the aforementioned *ongons*, the drum, the ritual fan (*dalbuur*) used by

Mongol and Korean female shamans to drive out spirits from patients, different types of masks, the metallic circular mirrors (*toli*) attached to the costume, and especially the "mirror" over the chest. "The large circular bronze ... mirrors represented the eternal interaction of the two cosmic principles (heaven and earth) ... yin and yang, and also the entrance to the world of the dead, world of the ancestors" (Alekseyenko et al. 1998: 184).

Another essential element of the shaman costume is the **boots**, which often have iron pendants on the upper front part symbolizing the leg bones of a mythical deer. "In the context of the symbolism of the shaman's costume as a whole, the right boot was associated with the positive ('sunny') world, and the left boot with the world of evil spirits" (Alekseyenko et al. 1998: 157, referring to the region of the Taimyr Peninsula).

The shaman's cap/**headdress** is usually reminiscent of a crown consisting of a metal base with metal "reindeer antlers" attached at the top; it may also contain symbols of bird-spirit helpers, and differs for the different types of shamans. Most Siberian shamans have long ribbons or streamers hanging from their headdress, which *restrict their sight* irrespective of whether they are in trance or not. Very often, the rites themselves are performed in a smoky setting (Lintrop 1996). Opening inner sight by covering the eyes is not specific to shamanic practices only; it is also typical of many divination rites and, generally, of contact with the *otherworld* in different parts of ancient Europe and the world.

The accessories of the shaman include various other ritual objects, which are specific for each ethnic group and constitute an integral part of shamanic rites. The shamans of the Northern peoples usually make these objects themselves, but only after getting permission from the spirits. Among the typical accessories of the shaman are the so-called "**horse-staves**" or "**horse sticks**" (approximately eighty centimetres long) which shamans "ride" on their journeys. The upper part represents a stylized horse-head, the middle part forms the knee-joints of a horse, and the lower end is fashioned into a hoof. Little bells and other objects are tied to the horse-staves. Among the Buryat, the cloak, the cap and the horse-staves are the chief appurtenances of a shaman. The horse-staves "are usually made of birch-wood; no one but a shaman who has passed his fifth consecration is allowed to use iron horse-staves" (Czaplicka 1914). Buryat shamans use these staves to summon black spirits (Niemi 2001b: 136). Novice shamans are allowed to use only wooden horse-staves, which are cut for them the day before their first consecration. They are cut from a birch-tree growing in a forest where shamans are buried; "The wood for the horse-staves must be cut in such a way that the tree shall not perish" (Агапитов, Чангалов 1883: 43-44). In Southern Siberia, the image of the horse is closely associated with the Upper World, the sky and the sun, and in many respects echoes the image of the mythical deer in the cultures of Northern Asia. At the same time, the functions and general symbolism of the horse sticks largely coincide with those of the shaman's rod and drum (Alekseyenko et al. 1998: 108, 112).

The shamans of some Siberian peoples also use a **rod** during their rites. Among the Evenk, "this rod was used in place of the drum in spirit journeys ... when accompanying the soul of the deceased along the 'icy' road to the underworld" (Alekseyenko et al. 1998: 111).

Another typical element of the shaman's costume which has different functions is the **mask** (Fig. 3, 4). In Siberia, the custom of wearing a mask when performing shamanic rites was already beginning to die out by the mid-nineteenth century. Among the Nganasan, the so-called "wooden face" mask is a spirit helper assisting shamans on their travels upwards and downwards, as well as women in childbirth. When healing, shamans place the mask in a special place in the patient's hut and, if necessary, leave it there for some time. During a spirit journey, the "wooden face" masks are tied to the tent poles of the yurt to the right and left of the shaman if he or she is heading upwards, or placed to his or her right and left on the ground if the shaman is heading downwards for the world of the dead. "Wood masks were used among the Maritime Koryak ... to purge *kalas* (evil spirits) from their winter houses" (Arutiunov, Fitzhugh 1996). Buryat shamans also use the mask when foretelling the future or appealing for success in the hunt. Among the Evenk, "after the shaman's death, the mask was sometimes kept in the family to serve as a protector" (Alekseyenko et al. 1998: 148-149). It is universally believed that a dead shaman "would be very dangerous if possessed by evil spirits". According to evidence from the Northern Pacific coast, the faces of dead shamans were covered with masks to prevent evil spirits from possessing their bodies. "Similar death masks were used to cover the faces of deceased people in Siberia in the 19th-20th centuries. The Koryak, Even, Evenk and Yukaghir used simple hoodlike leather masks ... to cover the face of the deceased in funeral rites" (Arutiunov, Fitzhugh 1996).

Shamans keep all their accessories in a **sacred sledge**, a wooden box-like object which they are allowed to use only after their fifth consecration. The sacred sledge is usually decorated with ribbons, bells, strips of skin, and has various figures, zoomorphic or anthropomorphic, carved or painted on its broad sides (Агапитов, Чангалов 1883: 43-44). If a shaman has no successors in the family, the sacred sledge, together with all his other accessories, is left in the tundra near the place where the shaman is buried (Хомич 1981: 22). The Ket hand it down the male line of the family and regard it as a family fetish. There is evidence that back in the past the Buryat buried shamans with their dress, and in Northeastern Asia, with their masks (Czaplicka 1914; Alekseyenko et al. 1998: 124).

The **shaman's hut** is another invariable part of shamanic rites. Among the Evenk, the men of the family erect a shaman hut exactly as instructed by the shaman, where he performs his rituals in the event of great need, danger or death. The shaman's hut contains the typical symbols and elements of passage, which transform it into a sacred space – metal and wooden figures of spirits placed in

particular places, with a fireplace in the middle whose fire cannot be allowed to go out during rituals, etc. (Alekseyenko et al. 1998: 125). During rituals, "the shaman sits in the northern corner of the hut, on a reindeer or bear skin that has been placed over a sacred piece of wood or birch or spruce twigs; he must sit in a space above earth, not on it" (Pentikainen 1998: 34).

The concepts of the **functions and essence of shamans as mediators** are manifested in and inform their costumes, accessories and behaviour, as well as the attitude of others towards them. It is believed that only shamans are able to enter and reside in different existential dimensions from various directions, and that their presence and rites will transform, irreversibly and positively (apotropaically), every profane dwelling. The Tuvans, for example, believe that the evil spirits *aza* can take the form of a whirlwind and invade only those yurts where shamanic rites have never been performed. The shaman's state of *in-betweenness* is manifested also in their everyday lives, in the way they are perceived and regarded by the community – namely, as being "other": "Generally in the features of a shaman there is something peculiar which enabled me, after a short experience, to distinguish them from the other folk present. ... The eyes of a shaman have a look different from that of other people ... they are very bright (*nikeragen*), which ... gives them the ability to see 'spirits' even in the dark" (Bogoras 1907: 116; emphasis added).

Among most Siberian peoples living in small villages with a limited number of huts, the shaman's home is usually isolated, on the outskirts of the village, near the forest or on a hill on the bank of a river. The surrounding society "often looked upon the shaman as a strange and difficult person, both because he was an individualist, and because he ... lived in a dangerous world in a very different manner from that of a common member of the society" (Gilbert 1984: 26). One of the forms of the shaman's differentness is the **ritual change of sex and androgyny** found among Siberian and Central Asian shamans. Such evidence can be found even in early descriptions of shamanic rites among the Chukchi, Koryak, Itelmen and Asian Eskimo, the Yukaghir, Yakut, Turkmen and other peoples. According to Czaplicka (1914), "The transformed shamans are considered very powerful also, though they exist merely in Koryak traditions."<sup>9</sup> The change of sex, which is more common among male than among female shamans, "is in obedience to the commands of Spirits" (Jochelson 1905-1908: 52); it takes the form of partial or full change of dress and, occasionally, of behaviour as well. By order of the spirits, a male shaman may wear women's clothes and accessories for a certain period time, for example for several years, yet still fail to obtain complete transformation. He may then implore his spirits

<sup>9</sup> For details on androgyny and bisexuality as an expression of the mediatory functions of shamans, see Jochelson 1905-1908: 53; Bogoras 1907: 452-455; Башилов, Ниязкылычев 1975: 134-135; Маразов 1992: 317.

to permit him to resume men's clothes, but remains obliged to put on women's clothes during shamanic ceremonies. Every transformed shaman has a spirit-husband who is considered to be the real head of the family.

According to the myths of origin, shamans are predestined to be *here* and *there*, Up and Down throughout their life and after death; judging from the notions of and attitude towards them, shamans belong to this world only physically. If a Siberian shaman wants to depart from life and someone assists them to do so, "it is not considered to be a crime. ... In earlier days, shamans could not be buried underground like ordinary people. They were buried unattached to the ground, so that the shaman's spirit was free to travel between the layers of the universe" (Pentikainen 1998: 37, 39). **Shamans' tombstones**, a symbol of *the upper*, of *the mediatory*, are revered as sacred by the community similarly to the sacred places dedicated to spirits. In the old days, the Olkhon Buryat burned and buried their shamans by the road in a mountain pass, at the foot of a hill or mountain, by springs, on the way from their summer to their winter camp and back. The burial site, which was believed to protect the area, was prepared and tended by the shaman's relatives who marked it out with a pile of stones, a wooden pole, a tree or a bush on which they hung ribbons and horse mane hair. Unlike ordinary people, shamans "went" to their burial site (*boo*) mounted on a horse, their bodies supported by a youth sitting behind them; the horse would be killed immediately after the shaman's body was burned (Жамбалова 1999: 80-85). Scholars believe that burials with horses, including those on the territory of the Altai Mountains and Tuva, originated in pre-Mongol times and have their roots in the culture of the ancient Türks (Худяков 2001: 7, with References), among which shamanhood was a late phenomenon (see chapter "Sound and Ritual Along the Route of the Bulgars").

The Balagan Buryat believe that the greatest white and black shamans become spirit protectors of the clan after death. Their bodies are burned or placed in coffins, which are put on trees in a neighbouring forest or on a mountain – whence "they are called the old people of the mountain". In Yakut belief, great shamans at death "change into heavenly beings" (Czaplicka 1914). The custom whereby novice shamans visit the tombstones of their predecessors to obtain their blessing, the concepts of the origin and death of shamans, attest to a *sui generis* form of "heroization" which in these communities is only conceptual, not *doctrinal* or *theological*. Without going into the concepts of possession and the well-known view that shamans govern the spirits, I will note that it is obvious that **shamanic rituals are dominated by the presence of a spirit** – manifested through the shaman's songs, unintelligible or incoherent ramblings, inadequate and unusual movements or, in other words, through a psychosomatic behaviour that does not belong to this world. The idea of this otherworldly presence and origin is also found in the myths and legends of the origin of shamans of different peoples. One legend has it that "the first Tuvan shaman was a

woman killed by the arrow of the khan" (Кенин-Лопсан 2000: 80-84). The Mongols say that the sky spirits of the western direction met in the Pleiades and decided to send *the eagle* to the earth as *the first shaman*. According to another Altaian legend, "shamans receive their heads (the seat of *sür* – unusual psychic powers) from heaven" (Czaplicka 1914, citing Troshchanski). The central figure in Koryak creation myths is Big-Raven, the Koryak's mythical forefather, protector and *powerful shaman* (Krupnik 1996); it is Big-Raven who taught people how to hunt and fish, how to make fire and protect themselves from evil spirits. Eventually, Big-Raven and his family "turned into stone". Such creation myths are quite likely to have led to the popular belief that "powerful shamans could turn themselves into *stone*" (Кенин-Лопсан 2000: 85).

## UNTUGUN AND THE "MUSIC" OF SHAMANS

Every folklorist has encountered the problem of naming and etymology in studying rites and rituals. Traditional names of objects, musical instruments, acts and so on, almost always carry implicit, inherited ritual meanings for the community that uses them. The name of a particular musical instrument can tell us a lot about it: what kind it is (ideophone, membranophone, chordophone, aerophone), how it is made, whether it is "own" or "foreign". The traditional perceptions and beliefs of every nation, ethnic group, tribe, clan are also expressed in their instrumental organology and traditional music. This also holds for the different regional names for shamans and their ritual accessories. Even today, the names used to refer to traditional Bulgarian instruments are a marker of regional identity. A typical example is referring to the *gadulka*<sup>1</sup> as a "fiddle" (*tsigulka*), i.e. as a "foreign" instrument in the areas of Bulgaria where it is not traditional. In the same line of thought, the most commonly misused term in all Bulgarian publications on shamanhood/shamanism is *tupan* (pl. *tupani*; two-headed skin drum). Although reading dictionaries of musical instruments is not the favourite pastime of non-musicians, anyone who wants to enter the world of sound and instruments needs to have at least some basic knowledge of them. There is a group of instruments known in musical organology as *drum instruments*. As there are many different kinds of drums, writers on the subject always specify exactly what kind of drum they are talking about. Based on the type of sound-producing medium and the way sound is produced, the *tupan* belongs to the family of *membranophones* (from Latin *membrana*), which in different folk cultures are made from terrestrial, amphibian, marine or even human materials (Blades 1974). *Tupan* (most probably from Ancient Greek τύπανα/τυμπάνου, see chapter "Përke") is one of the Bulgarian names for a two-headed skin drum with a specific way of producing sound and a traditional playing style in Thrace and on the Balkans. It must be noted that contrary to what some Bulgarian authors write about the shaman's drum ("Their *tupan* is a single-headed skin drum" – Калоянов 1995: 17), there is simply no such thing as a single-headed *tupan*. And if they find it convenient to use the word *tupan* for the shaman's drum, they ought to at least put it in inverted commas.

<sup>1</sup> A rebec-like, bowed, stringed instrument popular in the Balkans; known among the Greeks as lyre.

Shamans in the so-called shamanistic communities in Siberia do not use the *tupan* but a single-headed frame drum with another *ritual* profile. As a construction, this type of instrument is found throughout Asia, Africa and Europe, including in all Mediterranean cultures. It is an ancient instrument. Judging from extant ancient paintings, terracotta figures and especially from the Ancient Egyptian tambourine (*saru*), its structure, way of holding and of producing sound have not changed significantly over the centuries. It has different names and different secular and ritual functions in the different parts of the world. In the Eastern Mediterranean region, Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula, in the Turkic, Arab and Persian lands, including in Afghanistan, the membrane is stretched over a frame of various sizes; the frame may have bells, rings, chains and/or metal discs hanging from the sides; the skin may be plain or coloured. This instrument is known as *duff*, *tar* (in Arabia), *daff/def* (Turkey, Iran and farther to the east), *daireb/daira/doira* (the Middle East and Central Asia), *bendir* (North Africa). In Bulgaria it is called *daire*, and in Greece *tambourine*, *dairès*, *dèfi* (Doubleday 1999: 101-102; Marcuse 1975: 131-139; Anoyanakis 1979: 132-134). According to Marcuse, in Europe this type of membranophones originated in East Mediterranean-cultures (Marcuse 1975: 131-132).

In structure, the shaman's drum is similar to the tambourine, and in the way of producing sound – to all membranophones, where the sound is produced by striking the membrane with the hands or other objects. However, it cannot be called either by the Russian word for tambourine, *buben* (pl. *bubny*), as it is in Soviet and Russian literature, or by the Bulgarian *tupan*. It is known under many different names among the different peoples in Siberia. Many of them (the Even, Evenk, Negidal, Ulch, Nanai, Udege, Oroch and others) call the shaman's drum *untugun* (or, derivatively, *untuun*, *ungtuvun*, *khunktuun*, *yntyun*, *khuntun*, etc.). I accept this widely used authentic name for the instrument and use it as a general term, similarly to the term *shamanhood*.

The *untugun* is a single-headed frame drum. Its body is often fastened together with metal clamps and bars on the inner side. Marcuse (1975: 138-139) thinks that the Tibetan "frame drum on a handle" and "double drum" (more correctly, two-headed skin drum) may be prototypes of this instrument in Northern and Central Asia. The earliest evidence about the shaman's "sieve-like" instrument and its ritual use among the Samoyed comes from the English traveller Richard Johnson and dates from 1556: "And the Priest doeth beginne to playe upon a thing like a *great sieve*, with a *skinne on the one ende* like a drumme: and the *stick* that he playeth with is about a *spanne long*, and one end is round like a ball, *covered with the skin* of an *Harte*. Then he singeth as wee use heere in Englande to hallow, whope, or showte at houndes" (Marcuse 1975: 138; emphasis added).

Among the different peoples, **the *untugun* varies in shape and size**; it can be oval or round, from thirty centimetres to one metre in diameter. In Eastern Siberia, these instruments are larger but with a shallower frame, oval, sometimes with a handle; in Western Siberia they are round, with a deeper frame but smaller in diameter. Although they are similar in their conceptual and ritual meanings and func-

tions, the details of the *untugun* are remarkable for the variety of forms and related concepts among the different peoples.

Among the majority of Siberian peoples ... [at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries], the *buben* [tambourine] was used together with other shamanic accessories. The Great October Socialist Revolution [the 1917 communist coup in Russia] opened up a bright road for the Siberian peoples [?!] ... It put an end to centuries of oppression ... and exploitation of the local population by kulaks and shamans. The reorganization and collectivization in agriculture, the introduction of new equipment ... and health care ... the general high growth of culture [?!] destroyed belief in the power of shamans, lamas and other mediators... (Прокофьева 1961: 435)

This sort of texts "in tune" with the political demagoguery of the communist regime were the price researchers had to pay if they wanted their studies "to see the light of day" in those times. The section on "Шаманские бубны"/"Shaman Tambourines" in the publication quoted above offers detailed information about the make, structure, occurrence, images, concepts and interconnections of these instruments in the vast historical and geographic area of Siberia. The study contains accurate drawings of shaman's drums from different regions, and a map showing the occurrence of the instruments and drumsticks/beaters as well as their different names. The data below are from the quoted study.

#### OCCURRENCE, NAMES, AND SHAPE

**WEST SIBERIAN TYPE:** round and oval, thirty to forty centimetres in diameter; found in the basin of the Ob River and its left tributaries, and in the tundra to the west and east of it; found among the Nenets (*penzer*, *pender*, *penderko*, *tadibepenzer*), Khanty (*penzyar*, round; *koem*, oval; *ai penzer*, round and small; *tinez*) Mansi (*koip*), partly among the Enets (*peddi*, round; *fendir*, oval).

**EAST SIBERIAN TYPE:** round, up to one metre in diameter; found along the middle reaches of the Ob River to the estuary of the Vasyugan and Vakh rivers, and along the Taz River.

**Sayan-Yenisey variant:** round, approximately one metre in diameter; found among the Ket (*khas*), Selkup (*pingir*, *nungá*, oval; *vargan*, women's drum), Sym Evenk, Vakh Khanty, eastern Tuvans, Tofalar (*tüngür*, *dungur*), partly among the Kachin (*tür*) and Buryat (*khese*, *ketse*; *kisen*), Mongol (*diüngür*, *bar*, egg-shaped; *khengrik/khenrine*, almost round), Manchu (*dzhemchik*).

**Shor variant:** large, slightly oval; found among the Shor, partly among the Kachin (*tür*), Sagai, Beltir, Teleut, Chelkan (two kinds: *tezim kalaach* and *ochin kalaach*), Kumandin (general name: *tüür*).

**Altaic variant:** similar to the Shor variant, known under the general name *tüngür*<sup>2</sup> borrowed from the Mongols; found among the Altaians and Shor (*tüür*,

<sup>2</sup> The name *tüngür* and its derivatives is universal in Middle Asia: Manchu *tunkun*; Mongol *diüngür*; Altaian *tüngur*; Yakut *tüngür*, *tünür*, *donküür*, etc.

*mars-tüür*), Chelkan, Kumandin (*tüür*), western Tuvan (*tüür*, similar to the South Altaian), Kizhi, Telengit (*tüngür*, *chalu*), Tubalar (*tür*, *tüngür*, *chalu*).

**CENTRAL SIBERIAN TYPE:** oval, medium-sized, approximately thirty to seventy centimetres in diameter; found in Central and Northern Siberia, to the east of the Yenisey River.

**Evenk-Yakut variant:** found among the Yakut (*tüngür*, *diüngür*), Dolgan, Evenk, and partly among the Yukaghir (*yalkhil*).

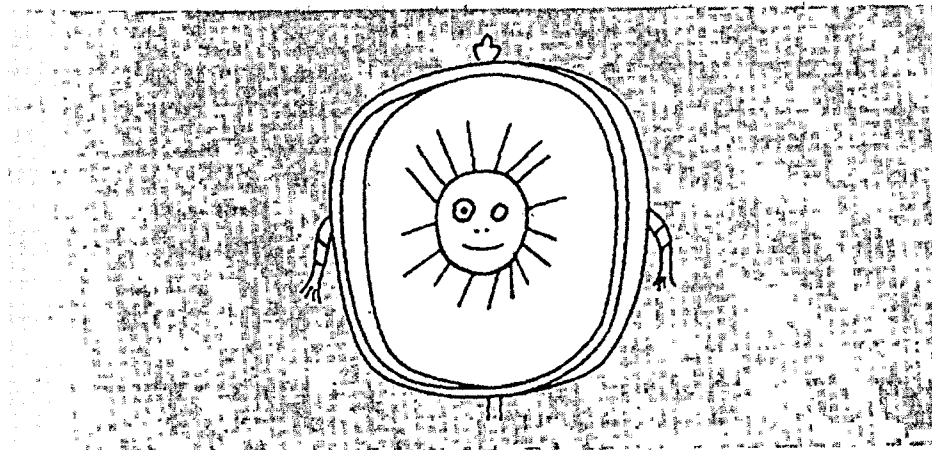
**Nganasan-Enets variant ("hybrid form"):** rounder and smaller than the previous variants; found among the Enets (*peddi*, round; *fendir*, oval), Nganasan (*khfendir*, similar to the Enets one), northern Khanty, Obdor Nenets.

**FAR EASTERN TYPE: oval, medium – and small-sized,** from thirty to sixty centimetres in diameter; found among the Nanai (*umchufu*, *unchufun*), Ulch, Even (*untu*), Buryat (*khese*, *ketse*; *kisen*), Dolgan (*diüngür*), Trans-Baikal Evenk (*untugun*, *yntyun*, *nymkhanki*, *khunktuun*, *nylkhangku*, *khuntun*), Oroch (*dali*, identical to the Nanai one), Negidal (*ungtuun*, *ungtuvun*), and partly among the Yukaghir (*yalkhil*), Nivkh (*kyatso*), Chukchi (*yarar*, *yayar*), Eskimo (*syaguyak*), Koryak, Itelmen (*yayay*), Ainu (*achok*, *katsyo*).

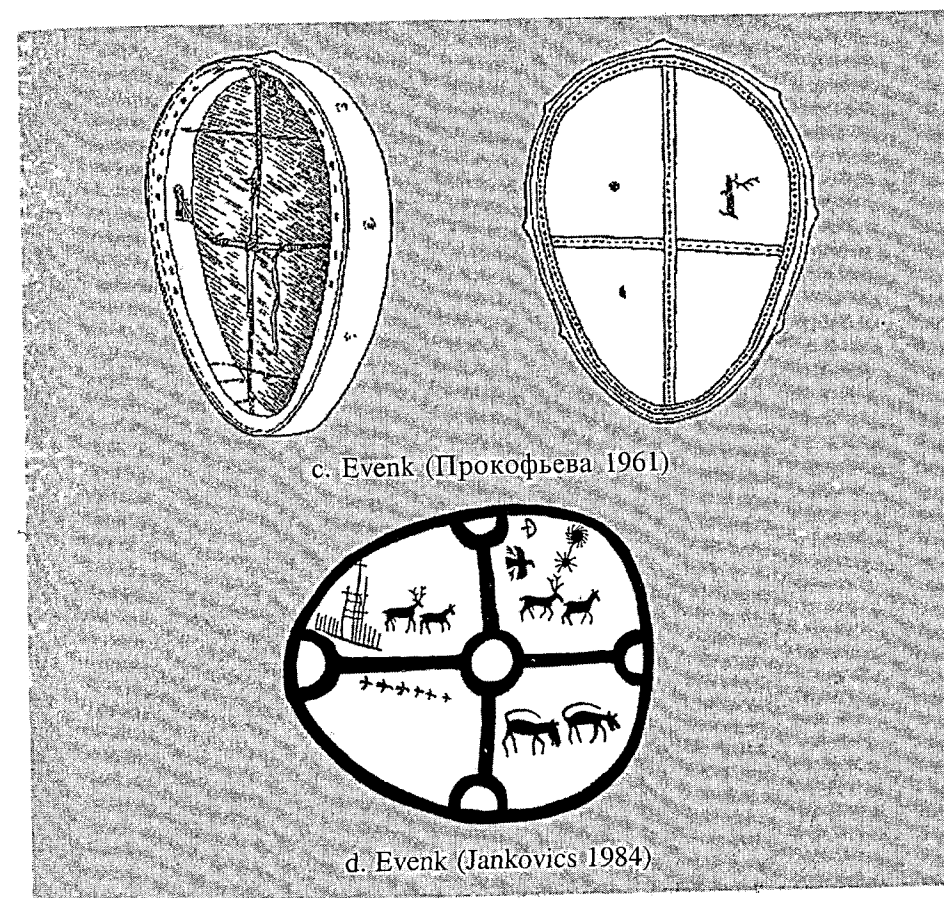
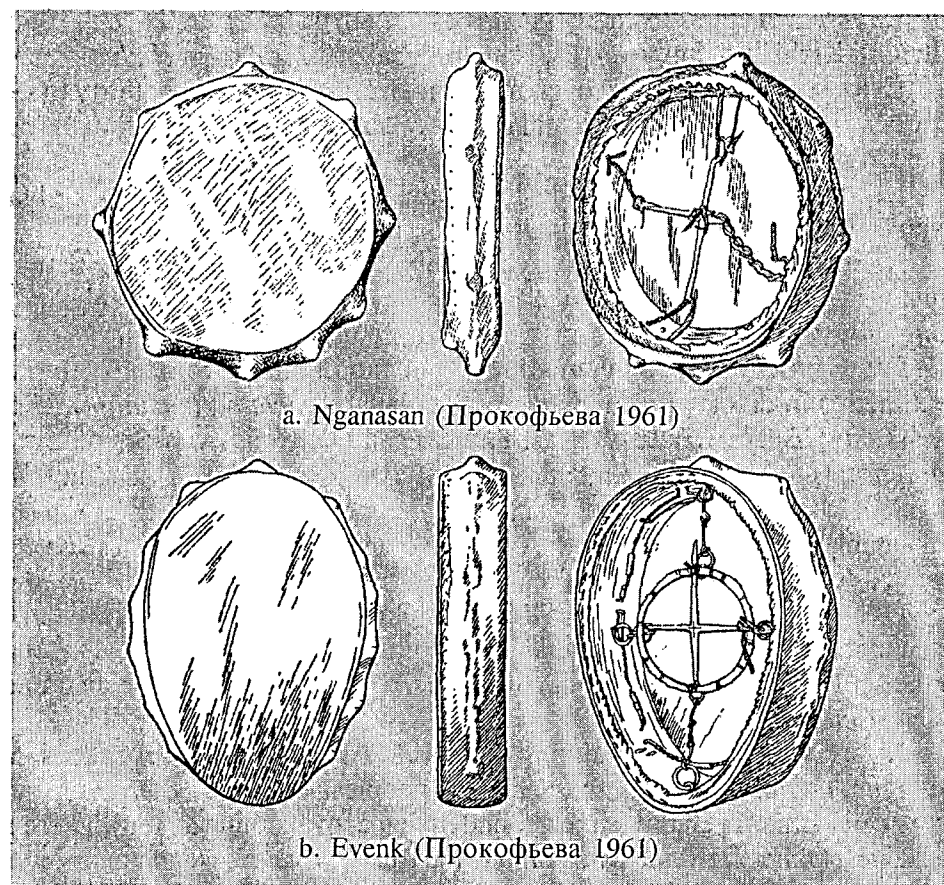
**Oval, pear-shaped,** found in the Trans-Baikal region, the Amur River Basin, along the coast of the Sea of Okhotsk; instruments of this type are also found to the south, in Manchuria; among the Oroch (*untu*, similar to the Nanai one), Udege (*unechukhu*).

**Amur variant:** found among the Ainu, Nivkh, Udege, Evenk, Nanai (*untugun*, *ungtuun*, *khunktuun*), and other peoples.

**Trans-Baikal variant:** almost round in shape; oval; found among the Trans-Baikal and Okhotsk Evenk, partly among the Buryat, Even, Yukaghir and Koryak (*yaryar*, *yayar*, *yayay*).



Shaman's drum, Far Eastern type, Chukchi (Jankovics 1984)



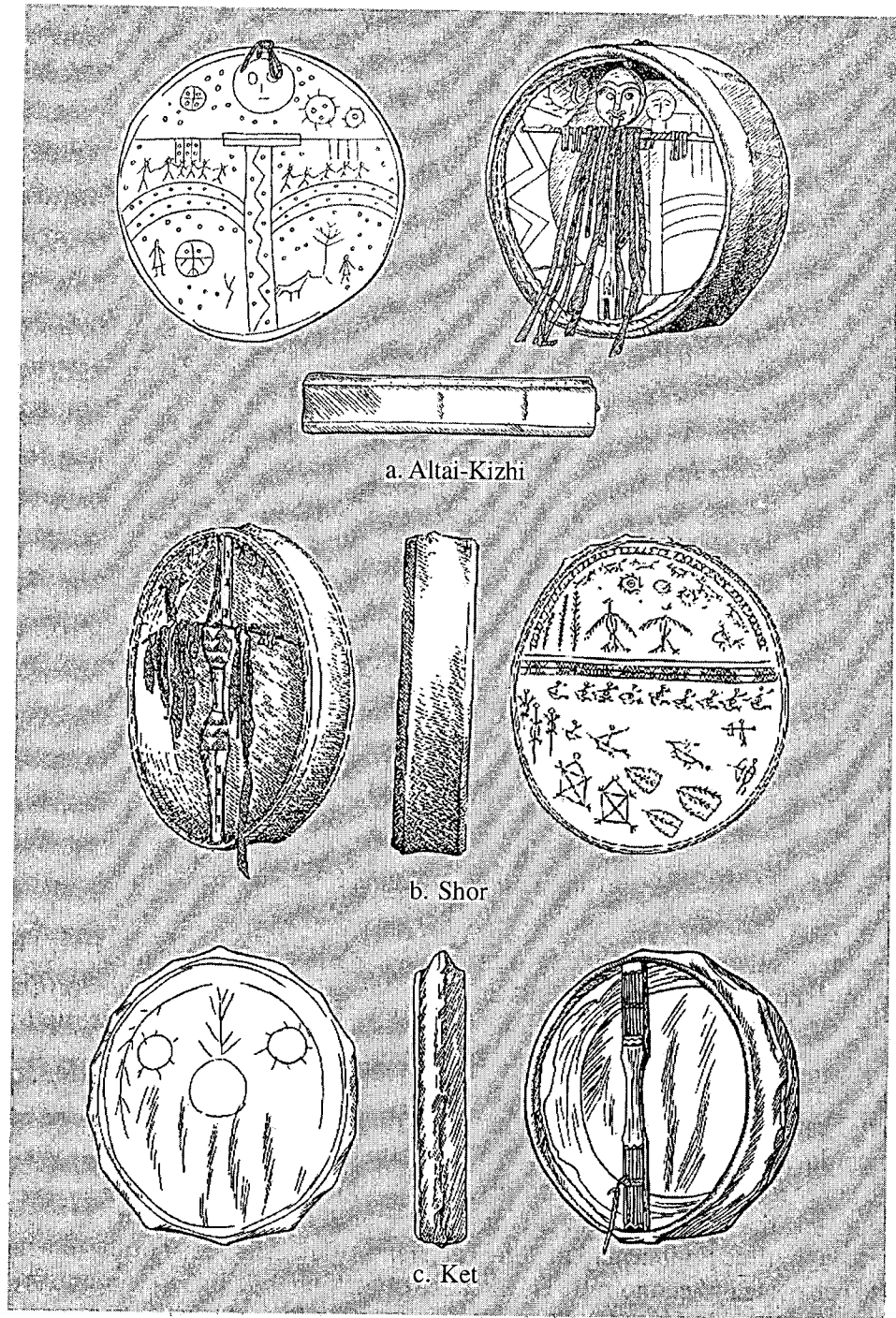
a. – d. Shaman's drums, Central Siberian type

The *untugun* or shaman's drum is a ritual object whose true "image" sounds and exists as a "cluster of meanings", to use Mircea Eliade's phrase. It is an assistant and semantic double of the shaman. The shamans of some Siberian peoples have two drums, as well as two costumes, which are almost identical in appearance. Among the Chelkan, for example, the *tezim kalaach* is a "high" drum received from the sky spirit, while the *ochin kalaach* was received from the spirits of the ancestral mountains. Enets shamans have one drum for the Northern and another for the Southern Sky; the older and more experienced they are, the larger their drum (Jankovics 1984: 155). A Selkup shaman may also have two drums, "one for his journey up, another down to the Land of the Dead" (Pentikainen 1987: 32).

Among some Siberian peoples, **the *untugun* is made by the shaman's relatives**. In line with a well-known mythical code, men make the wooden and metal parts of the instrument, while women make the skin (as well all fabrics used in the community). Among the Samoyed, however, women are generally

regarded as unclean and therefore cannot take part or help in the making of the drum (Islavin 1847: 112). The head, the outer and inner side of the drum are structured and decorated in different ways, and each attribute and structural element has its own specific ritual meanings. The membrane of the drum is from the skin of a wild, and more rarely of a domestic, reindeer or elk, or a bull (among the Yakut). Maritime communities use skin from the underside of a walrus or fish. According to one banal "materialistic" view, the choice of skin corresponds to the "ancient economic structure of the particular people" (Прокофьева 1961: 436). I would add that the choice of skin for the shaman's drum is determined above all by the inherited totemic and mythical concepts of the people in question, which also permeate its "economy". The practice of making the skin, bones or horns of a sacrificial animal "resound" is an ancient practice whose origin and application transcends the sphere of shamanhood by far.

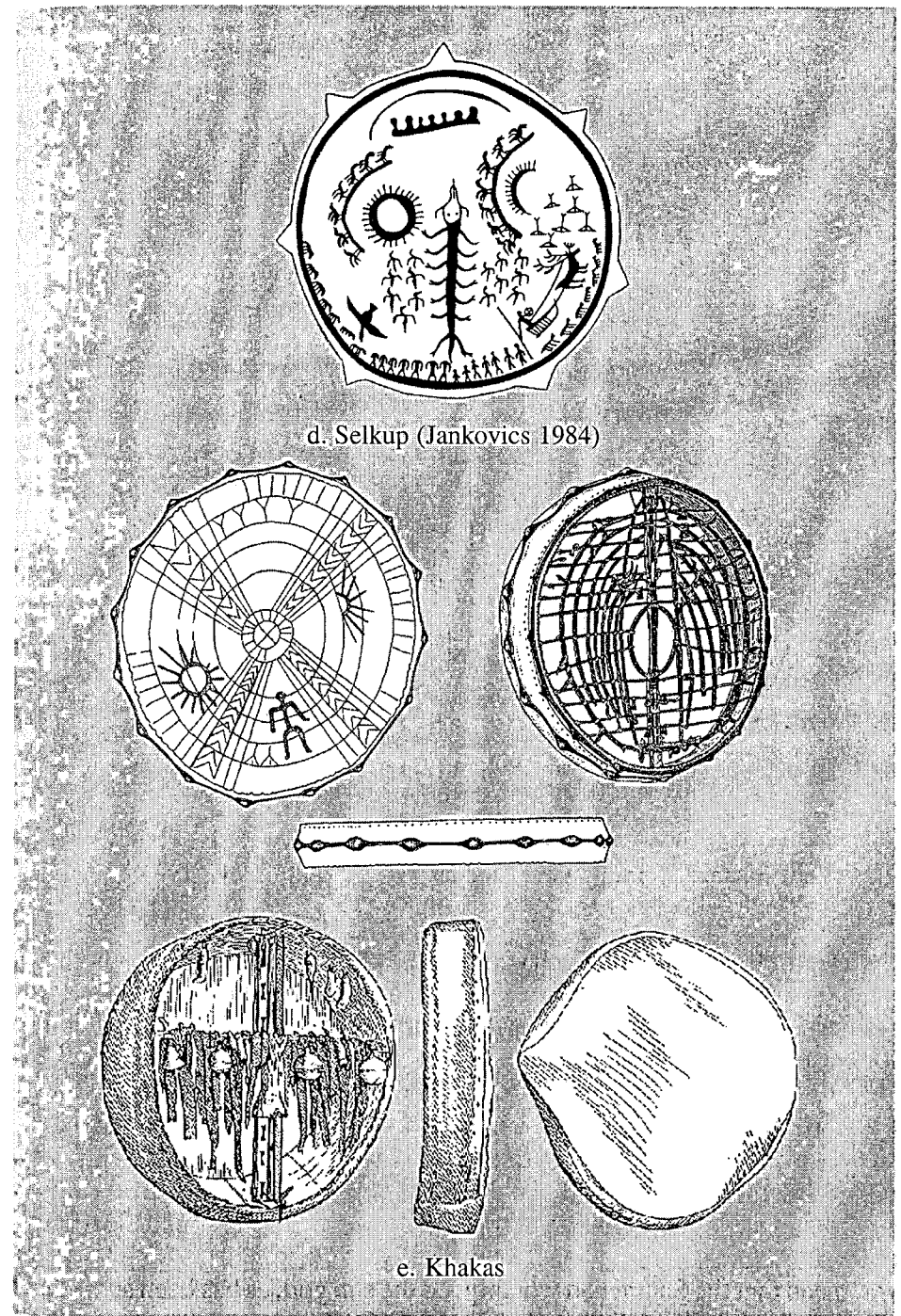
Depending on the local tradition, the membrane of the shaman's drum may have various **images** on the underside or surface, or on both sides. These draw-



a. Altai-Kizhi

b. Shor

c. Ket

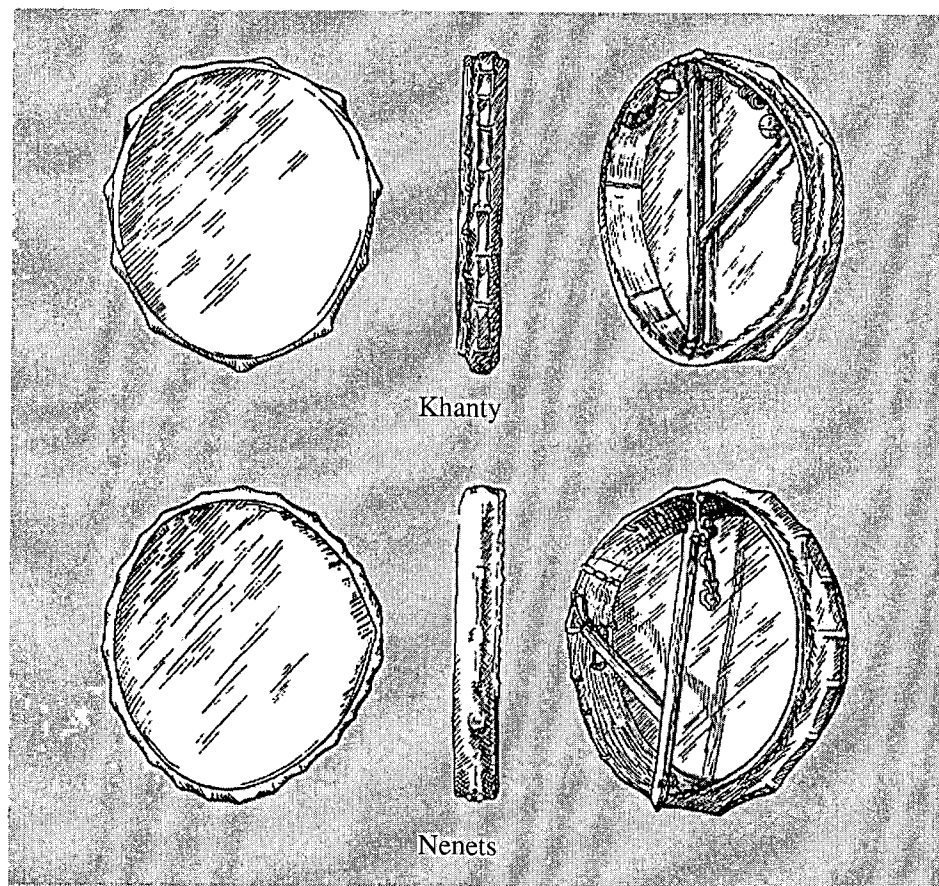


d. Selkup (Jankovics 1984)

e. Khakas

a. – e. Shaman's drums, South Siberian type

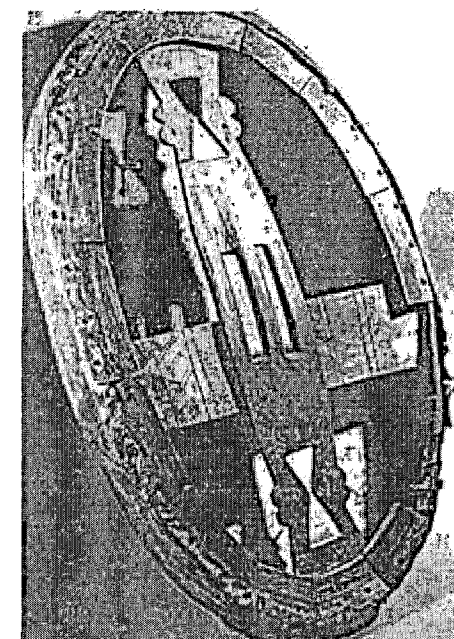
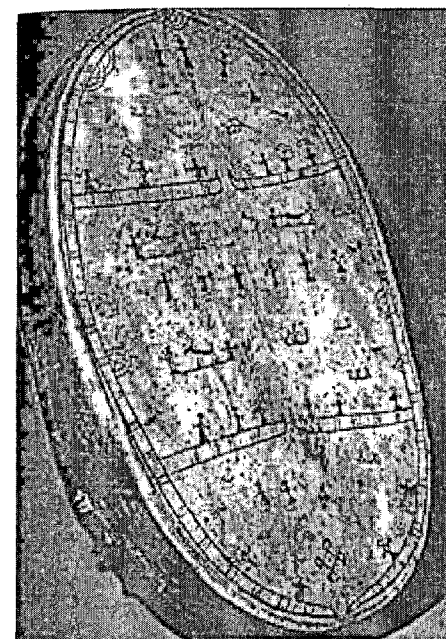




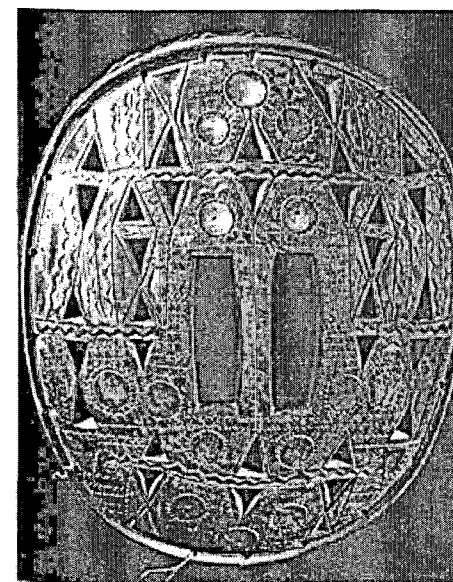
Shaman's drums, West Siberian type (Прокофьева 1961)

ings are strictly specific for each people. They are drawn by the men of the clan on the instruction of the shaman/shamaness, and are passed on from generation to generation. Men's and women's *untuguns* differ above all in the drawings on them. One cosmogonic symbol typically represented on the **face** the drum is the *world tree* (as a mediator between the different worlds), which reflects the idea of the three-tier structure of the world. "The centre of the world" may be indicated by a small circle at the centre; among the Saami, the natural centre of the *gobda/runebom* (a kind of shaman drum no longer in use) is the sun. According to Pentikainen, "Saami folklore knows totemistic mythology" and the representation of the sun as well as of heliocentrically oriented figures "does not, however, mean that the Saami had worshipped the sun god, as has been supposed by some scholars until now" (Pentikainen 1987: 30, 33).

The drawings on the drum skin are usually divided into **three sections**, symbolizing the upper world (the sky), the middle world (the earth) and the lower world. Typical of Uralic drums are pictures of planets, stars, the Milky



*Noita*, front and back, with handle (Swedish Lapland – Racz 1972, No. 182, 183)



*Noita*, back, with typical solar images and handle (Swedish Lapland – Racz 1972, No. 186)



*Noita*, front, with metal *arpa* and drumstick (Swedish Lapland – Racz 1972, No. 179)

Way, the World tree, human and animal figures (Jankovics 1984: 153-160), which are thought to be simplified celestial, star maps of the Northern and the Southern Sky. On Shor drums the moon is represented on the right and the sun on the left of the upper part (in the Upper World); this corresponds to their revolution and direction of movement in the period from spring to autumn, a period in which shamans can travel because the sky has not "frozen" yet. The figures of spirit helpers from the Upper World are also represented in this part ("the higher a spirit helper lives, the more powerful it is" – Кимеева 1998: 137). The upper part of Altaic drums may depict the sky, a rainbow, the sun, stars, the moon, horses, geese, a *kam* (a shaman ancestor) mounted on a horse. Generally, on all Siberian shaman drums celestial bodies are always depicted in the Upper World and help orient shamans on their journeys in the "cosmos". According to a number of authors, these drawings reveal one of the most important meanings of the shaman's drum as a *symbol of the universe*. "According to the Kets, the drum represents the universe, 'the whole earth' as they say" (Jankovics 1984: 150). Pictures of the shaman's *ancestor spirit* or *spirit helpers* (often depicted across the whole surface of the drum skin), whose form the shaman takes during his or her journeys in the otherworld, are also common on Siberian shaman drums. The Shor depict various figures in the Lower World, such as horsemen who are Erleg's servants, frogs, "a monstrous fish, the largest and most vicious underworld creature ... a snake with an iron head" and nine feet, which helps the shaman recapture the soul of a sick person (Кимеева 1998: 138). The **colour** of the drawings has important **symbolic meaning** for some peoples; typical colours and colour combinations are white and red, white and black, and green and yellow. "The Chukchi believe that a change in tone-colour of the drum while it is being played signifies the coming of gods to them" (*The New Grove Dictionary...* vol. 12, (U), 1980: 400). The Mansi decorate also the inner side of the frame, most often with a bear in black in the Lower World and a reindeer in red in the Upper World. The drums of the Ket and of the Selkup are bordered with a painted edge; the lines inside the edge symbolize the seven heavenly rows/sections (Jankovics 1984: 153). This is also how the world is structured according to the Ostyak, who believe that there is one world of the dead, one of humans, and five worlds of the gods (of the seven sons and daughters of *Father Heaven* and *Mother Earth* – Lazar 1997: 243).

The figures on Siberian shaman drums vary in complexity and density. Along with traditional cosmogonic concepts, the presence of particular scenes and figures reflects the strength and powers of the particular shaman, showing which high spirits the shaman may invoke during shamanic rituals as well as whether he or she can descend to the underworld. The presence of images of certain animals indicates that the shaman can cure some diseases with their help (Кимеева 1998: 138-139). No less important is the fact that some shaman drums are not always decorated (those of the Nganasan, Enets, Yakut, Dolgan, Evenk, Yukaghir, Nivkh, Nanai, Tofalar) or are not decorated at all (in Western

Siberia, those of the Khanty, Mansi, Nenets – Прокофьева 1961), a fact which however remains unexplained. For the shamans themselves, the inner side of the drum is its "heart"; the figures depicted there and their esoteric meanings are known only to the shaman and to the maker of the drum. The Lapps carved them with a knife and their contents were passed on from generation to generation as a sacred tradition of the clan (Pentikainen 1987: 30). Some drums have metal pendants on the inner side; they may vary in number and personify the shaman's spirit helpers. On the drums of the Khanty, Nenets and other peoples, they are attached to seven iron bars symbolizing the seven heavenly circles. Altaic drums have little bells, jingling trinkets, and other rattles of iron and bone attached inside round the rim. According to Potapov (1968: 220), the drawings on the inner side of Tuvan drums are permanent and recurrent while those on the outer side differ according to the message "from above". The inner side probably preserves the clan's tradition and its unchanging symbols, while the outer side represents that which is individual and unique about the particular shaman.

All shaman drums have a **handle** on the inner side, usually made of reindeer horn; the handle may be decorated with little bells and carvings portraying the shaman's spirit helpers or the spirit of the shaman's drum. The handle of Altaic drums is anthropomorphic. Drums with an **external handle** attached to the outer, lower side are found only in the far Northeast (and North America) among the Chukchi and the Eskimo (Прокофьева 1961: 435, 448).

The object used to produce sound from the shaman's drum – **drumstick/drum rattle/paddle** – also varies in shape and name. Drumsticks are made of wood or bone; they may be covered with reindeer hide and decorated at one end with a carved image of the shaman's spirit protector, and drawings on the inner side (of a lizard, a snake; Fig. 6, 7). Some peoples believe that the drumstick itself is a snake, and its handle the snake's head. The drumstick of Koryak shamans is made of thick whalebone, wider at the end with which the drum is struck, and this end is covered with the skin of a wolf's tail (Jochelson 1905-1908: 54). The drumstick is also used in divination and healing rituals, which are similar in many places. Among the Norwegian Lapps, it was customary for the head of the family to use the drum (*runebom*) for divination: "Holding the drum in his left hand and the drumstick in his right, he would place a small object, called an *arpa* (or triangular piece of reindeer bone decorated with metal rings and ornaments) on the face of the drum and follow its movement on the drum's face. He might predict a number of things on the basis of this act" (Pentikainen 1987: 30; see p. 59).

The shaman's drum is a **ritual object-mediator, a syncretic symbol** of the shaman, of their family, and of the cosmogonic concepts of their people. It is the shaman himself or herself. Shamans' identification with their drum begins from the period of their initiation and lasts till the end of their lives: "When an aging shaman leaves on his or her final trip, he or she often tries to drown the drum –

the shaman's soul – in a swamp” (Pentikainen 1998: 37). Within two years after they have made the drumstick for their future drum, Evenk candidate shamans see in a dream the reindeer “whose skin will cover their drum” (Василевич 1969: 251). Buryat novice shamans are not allowed to have a drum and may play only the *Jaw's harp*. Among the Ammasalik Eskimo, “if he [the candidate shaman] wants to provide the rhythm for the chants ... he uses two wooden sticks struck one against the other” (Rouget 1985: 126, with References). According to Bogoras,

The beating of the drum, notwithstanding its seeming simplicity, requires some skill, and the novice must spend considerable time before he can acquire the desired degree of perfection. This has reference especially to the performer's power of endurance. The same may be said of the singing. ... After the performance he must not show any signs of fatigue, because he is supposed to be sustained by the “spirits”, and, moreover, the greater part of the exercise is asserted to be the work of the spirits themselves. ... Indeed, all the shamans I conversed with said that they had to spend a year, or even two years, before sufficient strength of hand and freedom of voice were given to them by the spirits. (Bogoras 1907: 424)

Tuvan novice shamans were taught how to shamanize and dance (how to compose their own melody, how to recite and chant to the beat of the drum) by a powerful and experienced shaman, such as the “bull-shaman” (Кенин-Лопсан 2000: 85). According to Lintrop,

it is not enough to merely recognize the places and beings of supernatural world. To gain full control over the vision, it must be described in words – to sing or retell it. ... Individuals who are acquainted since early childhood with shamanic tradition have naturally more necessary knowledge for expressing in words their visions than other people. It is during the initiation period that the devotee acquires most of his songs – descriptions of helping spirits and journeys. A son often applies the melodies of his father's or grandfather's shaman songs. (Lintrop 1996)

The spiritual sphere and specificity of shamanic rites is represented in every single *component* (song, speech, dance/pantomime). In this unity, the shaman's drum is least thought of or functions as a *musical* instrument. The explicit and hidden meanings vested in the shaman's drum and other accessories come alive in shamanic ceremonies. The drum beats “awaken” the spirits, summoning them, addressing them, appealing to them; “Sometimes the shaman must pray and beat the drum a long time before the spirits come; often their appearance is so sudden and so impetuous that the shaman is overcome and falls down” (Czaplicka 1914, citing Sieroszewski). The drum invariably accompanies the shaman on his or her journeys to the various worlds. “Usually the shaman conducting the ceremony must, with the help of his drum, guide each reindeer's spirit individually to the lower or upper world, directly to the addressee, that is to the deity the reindeer was offered to” (Barkalaja 2000). “Among the Xingan Tungus the shaman vigorously strikes his drum three times and raises it in order

to indicate he is ascending into the upper world. He strikes it three times and lowers it when he is descending into the lower world” (Rouget 1985: 19, with References). Among some Siberian peoples (the Chukchi, Koryak, Itelmen, Asian Eskimo, Nanai), the so-called nuptial spirit helpers, which may also appear in *animal form*, are especially important; the shaman may have sexual intercourse with them both while awake and asleep. Among the Buryat, for example, this is represented in shamanic rituals by an *increasing speed of drumming* accompanied by body movements symbolizing sexual intercourse. “According to some myths, during their soul flights the shamans ride on the drum like a man rides on a woman”<sup>3</sup> (Pentikainen 1998: 37). During their soul journeys, shamans “ride” a flying horse, reindeer, elk, symbolized by one or two rods or by the drum. Ostyak and Evenk shamans may bestride the drum and ride it as if riding an elk. Some peoples (Nganasan, Dolgan, Yukaghir, Yakut) have specific oval horn-like drums that are similar in structure and symbolic meaning. “The Nganasan shaman imitated the elk by means of the drum scraping the ground with the drumbuttons like the elk scrapes the ground with its forelegs” (Ojamaa 1997, citing Dolgikh).

According to Jochelson, there are twelve raised representations of horns on the drum. Sieroszewski says that they are always found in odd numbers, 7, 9, or 11... There is a great similarity between the Yukaghir and the Yakut drum, not only in the iron rattles, iron cross, and general shape, but also in the small protuberances on the outer surface of the rim, which according to the Yakut represent the horns of the shaman's spirits. (Czaplicka 1914, with References)

With this horn-like drum Nganasan shamans “could perform rites without wearing ritual costume”, similarly to the rod which “was used in place of the drum in spirit journeys to the afterlife” (Alekseyenko et al. 1998: 108, 111). This mutual replaceability is based on the fact that one and the same symbols and concepts are visibly and invisibly reproduced in different ritual objects and acts. Multiple symbolism is a principle of expression in shamanhood, giving rise to multiple variants of all shamanic accessories which can therefore acquire additional meanings.

**The time at which shamanic rites** are performed depends on their purpose and on the shaman himself or herself. If the shaman is not strictly a “white” or a “black” one, the preferred time is in the evening and at night, since “the force of the shaman's spirit is stronger, when all this takes place in darkness”. The *kamlanie* is always performed around a fire, outdoors or in the shaman's yurt, and commences with the heating of the drum over the fire in order to

<sup>3</sup> The dimensions of these concepts also transcend shamanhood. In a Sumerian text the goddess Inanna bestows drums to her people of Uruk. “A nude erotic scene depicted on a clay plaque from Larsa (c.2000-1600 B.C.E.) shows a male playing a lyre and a female holding (and shaking?) a frame drum while they have sexual congress” – Doubleday 1999:106. (For more on the identity and symbolism of the “drum-deity”, see chapter “Pèrke”).

“animate” it. The heating of the drum is followed by a “light tune with the drumstick. ... The beats gradually become stronger” (Taksami 1998: 23). The timing, kind and content of the **songs** that follow depend on the purpose of the ceremony, the shaman himself or herself, and of course on the will of the spirits. Generally, there are **two types of songs** in shamanic rites. Among the Nenets, these are “magic songs” and “shamanistic narrative songs” (songs which contain stories about the shamans and mythological entities – Niemi 1998: 72-77); among the Nganasan, there are short, “dialogous” songs involving guessing or divination (common to all Nganasan shaman séances), and long songs consisting of more than 100 lines, which are “distinctively monologous ... less understandable than short ones ... containing the lines referring to the inner reasoning of the shaman/helping spirit. ... On the base of published materials I may confirm that these sorts of guessing or divination were common to all Nganasan shaman séances” (Lintrop 1996b).

Shamanic songs, as all ritual songs of the Siberian peoples, are characterized by **improvisation**. Whereas shamanic songs have more or less fixed words, they are free in tonal structure and do not have a fixed melody (Нувик 2002). The initial melodic motif is repeated over and over again, often in a different form. The melodies do not have a strophic structure, and the length of the melodic lines is different from that of the text lines. The vocal intonation is often untempered. “Among the Buryats... unlike the shaman’s invocation song which ‘obeys musical rules’ the song for the journey is a formless and continuous sequence of sounds, intersected by moans, sighs and cries” (Rouget 1985: 338, with References). **The singing is accompanied by constant drumming**, which often drowns out the melody and the words. Acoustically, this is also due to the way the sound is produced: most Siberian shaman drums are large in diameter and have a deep, resonating sound; shamans often hold the drum against their chest or above their head, which makes the drumbeats resonate strongly through their upper body. Shaman’s drums are mostly beaten at the centre, but “the Eskimo as well as the Chukchee beat the lower part of the drum. ... The Koryak drum also is struck from below, and is held in a slanting position” (Czaplicka 1914, with References). The frequency and speed of the beats are not “metronomic” but change constantly, accelerating or slowing down depending on the direction and situation of the shaman’s “journey”. In other words, the tempo in shamanic vocal and vocal-instrumental performances likewise varies and does not follow any rules. Here *melodic and rhythmic improvisation* means freedom of choice in combining the different components, such as song, rhythm, movements and sequence of songs. Irrespective of the shamans’ creative freedom, these components are traditional in origin and essence, and specific to the people to which they belong. Those present at a shamanic séance who know how it will proceed may repeat or intone without words every line of the shaman’s incantations. “Each helping spirit of a Nganasan shaman had the melody of his own. So the people knowing the tradition well could decide on the basis

of the melody, which helping spirit was actually acting” (Lintrop 1996b). As regards **the words**, improvisation means that shamans are free to invent their *own lines* while drumming depending on their “conversations” with the spirits. During shamanic ceremonies they often speak in a “secret” language which sounds incoherent and unintelligible to the others. Among the eastern Khanty, the shamans’ speech as well as whole strophes of their songs are unintelligible even for older people in the community (Кережи 2001: 78, 81). This applies especially to travel songs, when shamans describe their experiences and sights in the Upper or the Lower World.

An informant told me that the song had been highly figurative and artistic, “like a poem”, and the appropriate words were “given” to the shaman. Even though the words of the song were intelligible, the informant was not able to make out its content and meaning. “*Only shamans and a few old men can understand the songs*”, he commented. The old men listened to the song with great concentration and asked the shaman to repeat certain parts of it. The song was discussed for about ten minutes, then the shaman resumed singing and drum-beating. In like manner, the cycle was repeated several times. (Barkalaja 2000; emphasis added)

**The sequence and choice of songs** depends entirely on the shaman’s condition, i.e. on the world in which he or she is in at the moment. Chukchi shamans often end their séances with the same song with which they began them. For the Nganasan shaman, the choice of a particular melody is determined by “the necessity of winning over of this or that spirit” (Gračeva 1984: 196-197). Generally, **the vocal performances in shamanic rites do not have a fixed order and sequence**. This “*one-man show* ... includes episodes drawing upon the most varied musical styles: songs, recitatives, invocations, spoken passages, dialogues, imitations of animal cries or sounds of nature and other onomatopoeias, and voice disguises” (Rouget 1985: 129-130; emphasis added). The shaman’s psychosomatic behaviour itself is “improvised and does not follow a strictly fixed pattern” (Жорницкая 1997: 207, according to data and field studies from different regions in Siberia). Shamans primarily “play out extensive dialogues and scenes” of events “along their journey” (Нувик 2002), employing various vocal devices to express their transformations (whistling, falsetto, hoarse and nasal sounds, animal sounds like growls, grunts, snorts, etc.). This is also confirmed by Triinu Ojamaa in the following description of an almost four-hour-long Nganasan spell consisting of three episodes (= three journeys of the shaman) and designed to find out how long the shaman’s “patient” would live:

All the melodies performed during the spell belong to the shaman’s helping spirits and guardian spirits. These melodies could be considered to be the personal melodies, as they are named after the spirits’ names. In the present time the Nganasan don’t associate the genesis of songs with the spirits. The songs are considered to be created by the shamans themselves. ... The same melody may have different functions during the practice. In the exposition of the show the melodies act as call signs, i.e. the singing of

these melodies is expected to fetch their owners. According to the Nganasan shamanistic ritual, the call signs are syllabilized in a nonsensical way. Some peoples, such as the Ostyak, have the instrumental call signs which are performed on string instruments. ... [The] 1st travel episode is accompanied by the song in the melody of ... the song of the she-bear, which works as the travel song. ... The Nganasan shamans cast spells in the sitting position. Standing up is the sign that the journey is going to begin. In the 1st travel episode the shaman imitates the elk. The expressive transformation starts with the walk on the spot that is accompanied by the bows (i.e. the shaman in the shape of the elk tries to find the right path), and ... imitates the grunts of the elk. ... Next, the shaman imitates the flight of the swan and the uttering sounds of the swan. ... After the travel episode the shaman sits down and starts telling the stories about what he has seen on his journey. ... In the 2nd travel episode the shaman imitates the bear. ... His movement is accompanied by ... meaningless words, or the shaman's words as the comment says. ... After the bear dance the shaman starts imitating the elk. The walk on the spot becomes more energetic, and finally becomes the run on the spot. ... These movements are accompanied by the imitating of the coughs of the elk ... In the following episode the shaman says that he walked along the crooked path, and that he needs flyers, i.e. the birds as the helping spirits who could lead the way when he happens to lose it. Next there is the most long-lasting and the most emotional journey which starts with the finding of the right path like the previous episodes did. It goes like this: the shaman bows and straightens his back, and looks around searching with his arm concealing the eyes. Then he beckons forward with his arm whereas his look is irresolute; next he retreats; then he picks his steps forward again. His movements are unrhythmical, and the practice resembles a pantomime. Then he stops short and hits the ornament worn round his neck (it is the figure of the helping spirit) with the drumstick for he had been shown the way. Then he gives the drum to the assistant and goes down on one knee, rocking his body to and fro; then he stretches his arms out with the palms upward, and starts beckoning. ... When singing the shaman rocks himself unrhythmically. His gestures are hesitant and his glances back are anxious. ... Next the shaman sings that he is a bear ... and he imitates the roaring of the bear (to drive away the evil spirits). ... Then the shaman in the shape of the bear becomes the shaman in the shape of the goose, and its flight is expressed by the imitating of flaps of the wings, by the sudden lifts of the heels, and by making circles by the hips. ... Then the goose becomes the bear again, and the roars of the bear and the shamanistic words are uttered alternately. ... While the movements of the birds and the animals are imitated only in travel episodes, the sounding imitations appear in some other kinds of episodes, too. ... After the show the shaman has to gather all the helping spirits together, and "put them to sleep". The movements by which the shaman expresses his transformations are widespread among Siberian peoples, i.e. the different peoples imitate the same objects in the same way. (Ojamaa 1997, describing a spell performed in 1990)

Shamanic rituals are a typical example of **ritual syncretism**, of unity of inner vision and behaviour, as well as of the **non-autonomous functioning of the sound component**. Shamans combine song, rhythm, movement, speech in different ways every time, depending on the purpose and function of the particular ritual and journey. In shamanic rituals, "the relationship between the rhythm of the shaman's dance movements and that of the singing and possible drum

accompaniment is not always straightforward or simple. ... Although the dance and musical performance can take place at the same time, their individual rhythmic structures may be quite independent of each other" (Niemi 2001a: 156, referring to the Selkup).

In some cases, the shaman may alternate and associate a particular rhythm with a particular moment of his journey: "The drum was held alternately up towards the sky and down towards the earth; while the drum-stick was held up, he beat free rhythm, whereas while it struck the drum from below, each third stroke was stressed. ... Thus the shaman beat the drum, alternating different rhythms, until he began to sing, using free rhythm for accompaniment" (Barkalaja 2000, referring to the Khanty).

Generally, "thinking" in terms of definite, repeated rhythmic stereotypes is not typical of Siberian shamanhood and, where and if it occurs, it is considered to be accidental and improvised. When I heard very short but clear rhythmic configurations with unequal parts (of the 7/8, a, b type) in some performances, my Finnish colleague Jarkko Niemi, a long-time researcher of the Nenets, was adamant that such instances were purely accidental. In his observations on the Buryat and Tuvan, Tim Hodgkinson writes the following: "We also noticed that the accents produced by a shaman playing the drum followed no clearly discernible pattern. ... A musicologist in Novosibirsk tried to convince us that the shamans were deliberately playing in constantly varying meters of 13, 7 or 9. ... It seemed to us that this was most unlikely, and conversations with shamans later confirmed our view that accents are used freely during shamanic drumming" (Hodgkinson 1996).

In practice, shamans rarely shamanize alone. They often have an **assistant**, a figure that somehow remains overshadowed by the shaman in most studies on the subject. The assistant/assistants may be a member or members of the shaman's family or audience, or a young, novice shaman (Хомич 1981: 15, 24-26). The initial contact with and the melody calling the spirits are often performed by the assistant. The assistant's functions and tasks indicate that in many cases the shaman cannot perform the *kamlanie* by himself or herself. ("After the shaman has entered his trance by chanting and drumming, his assistant takes the drum and continues the drumming, both for maintaining the shaman's state of ecstasy and for controlling the behaviour of the audience" – Rouget 1985: 129-130, with References). Khanty shamanic rites also show that the two figures operate in partnership ("one of the renowned local shamans ate amanita while another beat the shaman's drum/*Khanty kuijyp*" – Barkalaja 1997). Korean shamanesses have an assistant too; they differ from Siberian shamanesses in costume, ritual accessories and ways of music-making: "Dressed in a voluminous red robe with rainbow-coloured sleeves and a red belt, she steps into a shrine. Holding a folding fan in her left hand and brass bells and a cymbal in her right, she starts chanting, all the while jumping and dancing, to the beats of a

*chang-gu* (an egg-timer-shaped Korean traditional drum) played by her man-partner" (*Introduction to Korean Folklore*; emphasis added).

The Nganasan shaman's assistants (*tuoptusi*) are also from his or her family:

[In shamanizing séances observed in 1976] the original call to the beings of the spirit world came ... from his assistants – **tuoptusi**. In two cases these were wives, in one a son and a brother, and in another one just a son. Each of them began by singing a wordless melody belonging to one of the most intimate spirit-helpers ... [in one séance] ... representing a reindeer serving the shaman... Then **tuoptusi** the brother addressed the shaman as a reindeer and gave him a task. The shaman received the mission by means of a drum ... [and] began his singing as a reindeer. ... [H]e imitates [?] individual songs of the "spirit" world beings. [In another séance:] One of "the spirits" appeared ... in the form of a certain melody. Then the change of the drumming rhythm made the **tuoptusi** interfere ... in order to prevent the spirit from making the shaman's behaviour dangerous for himself. ... Thus, the **tuoptusi** was compelled to act on his own, begging the spirit to go away and leave the shaman alone. (Gračeva 1984: 196-198)

The assistant's involvement at crucial moments of the shaman's journey – by singing and drumming, as well as by preparing the shaman's drum itself before a séance – presupposes skills that place the assistant in a "high" position parallel to that of the shaman, although the assistant's position is not strictly regulated and constant. *Ritual substitution* and *duplication*, i.e. the representation of identical or similar contents at different levels in concepts, objects and acts, are a principle in shamanhood, which suggests that the *assistant* may well serve as the shaman's *ritual double*. In the same context, the participation of female assistants in shamanic ceremonies is part of the general question about the role of women in this traditional culture as well as about the **antagonism between the masculine and the feminine principles** found in various rituals of the Siberian communities.<sup>4</sup> Among the Saami, for example, the family drum (*runebom*) was taboo for women, who were forbidden to touch it so that it would not hurt them and even avoided "the holy corner" of the hut where the drum was kept. During seasonal migration, families first took their *runebom* to their new settlement – by a different path or in the last sledge. "Women were not allowed to follow the path by which the family's men had taken the drum to its new place" (Pentikainen 1987: 30). Tuvan and Mongol shamans perform during healing rituals the so-called "throat-singing"; this form of contact with the spirits is taboo for women as it is believed it may cause infertility (Levin, Edgerton 2001). The term "throat-singing" (from *khöömei/khoomii*, the Mongolian word

<sup>4</sup> Among the Khanty and the Mansi, for example, only men may climb to sacred sites, which are *taboo for women*; in community-wide sacrificial rituals, women are forbidden to eat of the heart and tongue of the reindeer dedicated to the supreme god (Numi-Torum) as well as to step onto the spot splattered with the blood of the sacrificial animals (Barkalaja 1997; Leete 1997).

for throat) refers to a peculiar kind of "short songs" without words performed in different parts of Asia and by different peoples (Mongol, Tuvan, Uralic Bashkir, Karakalpak, Kazakh; by epic singers in Uzbekistan, in Buddhist monasteries in Tibet, Japan and China, in northern India; for more on throat-singing in Tibetan monasteries, see Tran 1999: 130). "Throat-singing" is a singing technique in which a single vocalist produces two distinct tones simultaneously: one tone a low, sustained fundamental pitch similar to the drone of a bagpipe, the other one or a series of overtones which resonate high above the drone and may be musically stylized to represent such sounds as the song or the whistle of a bird. In shamanic throat-singing the overtones "represent" the shaman's contact with the spirits, and the drone his or her physical presence on earth. Some Mongol shamans throat-sing also when climbing the *toroo*, at the same time beating the drum (Tran 1999: 130; Levin, Edgerton 2001; CD: Tuva. *Voices from the Land of the Eagles*. PAN 2005 CD © 1991 Paradox).

As regards the "music/music-making" in shamanic rites (which I deliberately put in inverted commas), I would like to generalize and make several important points. **The first applies to the specificity of shamanic rites, which can only provisionally be associated with "music" in the modern sense of the word, especially as understood by "outsiders"**. The typical improvised character of the sound, drumming and movement, the thinking in terms of "lines" and motifs as well as the freedom in combining them take a seemingly chaotic form that is adequate to the course of the ritual itself, to its high degree of unpredictability and individuality in the different, successive performances. Precisely this syncretism is represented also by a specific vocal expression which personifies the different "images" and situations along the shaman's journey's – quite often through an untempered sound. Generally, improvisation – vocal, instrumental and physical – is a distinctive feature of shamans.<sup>5</sup> Almost without exception, the shaman's improvisation is associated with his or her people's folk conceptions of the otherworld and the idea of the shaman's flight to the Upper or the Lower World. In fact, the situation of "flying" clearly reflects the shaman's relationships with the spirits whose appearance wholly *determines and shapes* his or her behaviour. This ideal coincidence of substances is expressed not only physically but also through the sound transformation of the shaman **singing "spirit songs"**. According to evidence about rites in the basin of the Irtysh River, cited by Barkalaja (1997), there are cases "where it was not the shaman who sang at the ritual, but the mushroom spirit, or the shaman merely repeated the songs sung to him by the spirits of the mushroom". The concept of

<sup>5</sup> In South America it may be a feature distinguishing shamanic from other types of songs in one and the same community: "Araweté dance music contrasts with shaman's music by having fixed rhythmic form with short texts, repetitive melodic line, and a division in two parts" – Seeger 1988: 36.

the melody or sound of an instrument or vocal as the “voice” of the otherworld is a well-known *folkloric reality* found among different ethnic communities and in different periods of history, which is certainly not limited to the sphere of shamanhood.<sup>6</sup>

Various aspects of the tradition of the Siberian peoples and shamanhood itself allow looking for a more ancient and wider cultural and territorial context. Referring in this connection to the Tibetan Bon religion, Tran writes the following: “The central technique of shamanism, found also in Tibetan Bon, is the use of a religious ‘flight’ to the world beyond, which is induced by means of music: drumming and singing. But although this technique seems consistent with shamanic ideology, it seems possible that the more basic and historically earlier practice is simply the use of music to call spirits to the shaman, the idea of flight being a later elaboration” (Tran 1999: 135).

In parenthesis, one may add here Tolbert’s observations on the similar functions, concepts and means of expression of shamans and **lamenters in the Finnish-Karelian tradition**. Laments (including laments in the Siberian “bear-feasts”) are rooted in the “matriarchal cult of the bear Mother. ... It is certain that laments are very ancient phenomenon and most likely antedate shamanism.” The two phenomena are based on the same *animistic and mythical concepts*, expressed also by a similar stylistic intonation. Tolbert points out that the “transportation” of the human soul through laments is performed by an *ambivalent figure* which antedates and transcends the sphere of shamanhood in her role and functions. The lamenter is a mediator who in a “trance-like state leads the souls of the dead to their new home ... brings back messages ... and acts as a messenger between the worlds”. In lamenting, “the pitches are not fixed ... rhythm is very irregular, following the irregularities of the improvised lament text. ... The pitch, mode and phrase structure may become stable only after several minutes of lamenting, a feature that has also been reported for Eurasian shaman singing. ... The flexible, unstable structure of the lament (an inversion of the straightforward performing style of other Karelian musical genres)” is an expression of successful “transportation” and contact with the otherworld, believed to be “a mirror of this world”. Tolbert stresses that the laments themselves are an expression of great inner power and mastery, ridiculing Ortner’s view “that women, because of their biological reproductive role, are perceived as closer to ‘nature’ while men are seen as closer to ‘culture’” (Tolbert 1990, with References).

I would like to return to the specific “musical” aspects of shamanic rites by quoting Malm’s words regarding Arctic incantations with short verses and non-

<sup>6</sup> Seeger 1988: 34, 36; Rouget 1985: 113, with References; for similar concepts in Romanian folklore, see Diculescu 1995; for similar concepts among the Bulgarians, see Фол В., Нейкова Р. 2000: 224-225.

sensical syllables: “A musical event is most meaningful when it is heard *in its own cultural context*. Because music is not an international language... Fortunately, music does seem to be a universal need” (Malm 1977: 209; emphasis added). No matter how the ritual contents and their possible parallels are interpreted, **the musical stock and intonation in rituals are always a part and product of the particular traditional context/culture**. And the ritual behaviour of Siberian shamans is an expression of **the specificity of the “musical thinking”** (in terms of structure, form, expression) **of the particular community**. At the same time, the existence, to one extent or another, of universal features in shaman performances on a territorially wider plane is determined by **the single nature of the shamanic rites themselves and their sound symbolism** among Siberian communities. According to Niemi’s observations, Siberia is a region with its own musical style:

There are some universal features in the music cultures of Western Siberia that are common to Arctic and Sub-Arctic cultures in general: (1) musical expression centres on solo singing, with group performances rare or not intended to be thoroughly coordinated musically; (2) ... musical instruments are almost non-existent or of very marginal importance (the Khanty and Mansi are an exception to this<sup>7</sup>); (3) the tonal range used in the melodic structures of the songs tends to be quite limited; (4) the musical pulse, i.e. the organization of the musical beats, can be simple, complex or almost absent; (5) when sung, the spoken language turns into a kind of sung language, with specific rules of versification and musical coordination. ... In the absence of a musical pulse, the language used in the songs becomes one of the most important factors in structuring the musical expression. It is also important to realize that, due to the absence of musical instruments with physically fixed and stable tonal models, the pitch structures are not intended to be exact in the Western sense. (Niemi 2001a: 154)

Similar observations have been made about the Nganasan singing style:

[T]heir songs (with the exception of ritual songs) are solo songs ... both the melody and the text have a strongly improvisational character. ... A low tessitura, unchanging dynamics, and lack of metrical organization – these are the features that make the Nganasan manner of singing similar to speech. This impression is deepened also by the circumstance that singers often switch smoothly over from song to speech and then again from speech to song. (Ojamaa 2003: 6)

<sup>7</sup> For more on the “primitive” musical instruments of the Nganasan (whistles, whirligigs, bows), see Ojamaa 2003: 6.

The shaman song of a female shaman Salyander  
(Niemi 1998: 178, No. 49)

$\text{♩} = 252$  "cbl"=cbl-fl

A - la - ra - (xa) ye - xci xe - xe - xe - xci,  
 B ta - lya - ya - da" ye - xci xe - xe...  
 A nyo-y(i)-du(ng)' ko - ba ne - lo - rye - ya - myi-(xci) xe - xe - xci,  
 B nya - d(a) - ma - da(m)...  
 A nyo-y(i)-du(ng)' ko - bam' ne - kal - nga - dam' ye - xe - xe - xe - xci,  
 B syiw-do(m)' par-nei ye - xci xe - xe - xci...  
 B syun - s(a) nyc-w(a)" ye - xci xe - xe - xe - xci,  
 B ta - lya - ya - da" ye - xe - e - xci,  
 A syiw - do' nga-ngei nya - ta - n(a) - wa" ye - xe - xe - xe - xci,  
 B nge - wa - ko - myci xe - ci,  
 B syi - byim-chye - da" ye - xeci xe - xci...

Seven parne-spirits  
come here (for help?)  
come (here)!  
Seven youngest parne-spirits  
come (here)!  
Come (here)!  
A burbot's broken skin  
is my helper (also).  
I took it in my hands.  
Seven parne-spirits,  
the youngest,  
come to me!

I have seven helpers  
Make my head  
lighter.  
There is also a heavenly father (helper),  
to me words  
tell, please, (father).  
The burbot's broken skin  
I grabbed into my hands.  
It becomes of no need for me, I beat it,  
I take it into my hands.  
Heavenly father, tell me,  
(promise me) your word (sincere)! ...

Selkup shaman song (Niemi 2001a: 165)

$\text{♩} = 120$

A B C  
 kŷ - zy mæn - ba (na naj), kŷ - zy - nō jæn - nū - (co) ε - n'e - jay.  
 B<sup>1</sup> C  
 kŷ - zy qor - qaj my - ta mēl' - ty my - ta kŷ - mōy.  
 A B<sup>1</sup> B<sup>1</sup> C  
 kŷ - zy par - qaj i - ma, a - š'a tok - ka - ten - ty - qan - ty, my - ta mēl' - ty my - ta my - ta (ja jig)  
 B<sup>1</sup> C  
 koj - my - ten - ty - ya - ŋ(y), qor - qy il' - ty ja my - ta mēl' - ty my - ta(m).  
 A B B<sup>1</sup> C  
 šō - zy n' aj' my - ta (naj), mēl' - ty - co (co coj), tu - pa - ten - ty - ya - ny (na).  
 B<sup>1</sup> C  
 il' - tga my - ta mēl' - ty ta - gal' - ty mē - tō, il' - tga mēl' - ty, my - ta  
 C  
 ta - gal' - ty mē - ty.

The formative role and importance of words in Siberian songs and rituals can also be seen in the **detailed descriptive character and development of the plots** – in the long storylines in which shamans describe their journeys, in the sung invocations and appeals to spirits, in the long bear-songs. Generally, in



the past as at present, various invisible forces are invoked, and orally transmitted myths and legends about the origins and creation, about high and low spirits, etc. are played out and chanted in Siberian communal and clan rites and offerings. Khanty bear songs, for example, describe how the bear was let down on earth, its life in the forest, the arrival of a hunter (who, too, is a mythical personage), the hunt and the killing of the bear, how the bear is taken to the village and offered food and drink to propitiate it, etc. (Lintrop 1996c). Detailed recreation of mythical situations and concepts is an essential part of Siberian folktales and shamanic rituals describing every "event" along the shaman's journey; in them shamans may also engage in long monologues-dialogues with the spirits. The bear-feast is "stylistically" and functionally very similar to shamanic rituals – in calling spirits for the welfare of the whole community, in its dialogues, pantomimes and dances for success in hunting and fishing and protection from illness, in its improvised sound. Bear-feast songs for calling spirits and deities also describe in detail various deities and spirit-mediators "present" at the feast. "Spirit songs" are performed not only by shamans but also by storytellers and singers among the Nanai, Nivkh, Yakut, Dolgan and other peoples (Новик 1999: 7). The structure of the different songs for calling spirits is the same: "all consist of three main parts, where the names and epithets of the spirits are enumerated in the first, the appeal is made in the second, and the sacrifice that will be offered to them is announced in the third part" (Новик 2002).

Many authors note **the similarities between narratives about the shaman's journey and narratives about epic heroes**. "Sayan-Altai epic heroes, similarly to shamans ... have a mediatory function and the ability to travel to other worlds." Altai magic tales, as well as shamanic rites (in Southern Siberia), begin and end with specific, stereotype verbal formulas. Stereotype verse expressions and alliteration are a distinctive feature of the songs and tales of all Siberian peoples. Both **storytellers and shamans create their tales and songs during the performance itself**. "Entering the epic world, a storyteller, similarly to a shaman, relates events in the first person ... himself turning into the character" of the story; according to informants, the storyteller "sees and knows everything" (according to information about the Buryat, Садалова 1997, with References; Новик 1999, with References; Taube 1984: 350). Because storytellers are imagined as "travelling", it is believed that interrupting the story will incur the wrath of the spirits or heroes. In South Siberian Turkic legends, storytellers who forget certain details or episodes or interrupt their story may be punished by the spirits or *bogatyr*s (heroes) with death. Similarly to shamans returning from the otherworld on a grey goose or white hare, at the end of the story storytellers return from the world of tales on a white hare or swimming out of water. They are believed to be clairvoyant and are called "masters of the spirits" in some parts of Siberia (Садалова 1997, with References). **The tale genre and shamanhood in Siberian traditional cultures have inherited common conceptions and behavioural models represented in their ideas, stylis-**

**tic devices and expressive means**. In shamanhood as in the other verbal genres, the content is expressed in "song or in mixed recitative-song form ... and this type of monologic chants usually have a formulaic character. ... Among the Evenki, the rhythm and melody of shaman songs are set by an introduction to the song which is then repeated many times as a refrain. It is precisely these *introductions/refrains* that also organize the musical fabric of sung monologues in the *epic genres* of Evenki folklore, where every hero or group of characters have their own leitmotif" (Novik 2002; emphasis added).

A specific phenomenon found among the Chukchi, Nganasan, Enets, Nenets, is the so-called "**soul melody**" or individual/personal songs, which everyone composes for themselves. According to information from the 1970s, every Nganasan has a "self-portrait" song of their own, destined to accompany them and bring good luck all their life. Someone singing somebody else's melody is believed to be appropriating part of the owner's vitality of their innermost being (similarly to the stealing of spirits among shamans) and can expect punishment from its owner. Individual/personal melodies "have no firmly fixed text. Its owner improvised a text corresponding to a situation arising during its performance ... allowing considerable freedom for improvised music and rich melody ornamenting" (Gračeva 1984: 195). This type of melodies is characterized by "uneven length of the melody lines, the absence of regular meter, speech-like rhythm and intonation, and the abundance of quasi-glissandos and glissandos. ... The texts are composed by the owner of the song, but the melody may have been inherited from one's parents" (Ojamaa 2003: 13).

The adult individual song (Niemi 1998: 121)

♩ = 164 "c#1"=c#1:♯1

A B      A B      B      A B

te - ta - rei man-tei -nyi -wei,      Nga - lyu - mye-rei man-tei -nyi -wei'.

-syi - wei nye-myei se - ra nye-myei,      nyo - nei syo-dow' xa - na - ya -dow'.

nya - byi nyo-ngei he -we - xa - now'.

ta(-xa)-de - bya-row" yi -ryi - ko - row",      pyir -cha - ko-row" xi - no" lyi - ngow,

The adult individual song of X. Ch. (Niemi 1998: 128-129)

The musical score consists of five staves of music in treble clef, 4/4 time, with a tempo of 162. The lyrics are in Chukchee with English transcriptions below them. The first staff includes a tempo marking and a note about the key signature: "♭ = 162 'd1' = eb1-f+1".

ya - ne - lei      mu - no - nga      (e),  
 A  
 Sye - lya -      kyi - n(à) -      xa - na.  
 A  
 xub -      ta - d(à)      mung-go-tam' (ei) ya -      ngeci,  
 A  
 ma - xci      su - sa - xc - (y)im',  
 A  
 sya -      n(à)      nge-da - ba - nyi'      ya -      ngeci.

This is your man singing  
 at the Selyakin Cape.  
 I take my gun with me,  
 A long-barrelled one, from dried "back" (?).  
 My gun is already raised up,  
 I shoot, and all of a sudden it utters:  
 – From me you have already shot not a single time,  
 for your family you have hunted wild reindeer.  
 This time, too, I give you one wild reindeer,  
 nothing more shall I kill!  
 My own land is the Yenisei plain,  
 and everybody knows that I am called Chyor.  
 Kheyoma raised me up,  
 with Yadne woman.  
 I won't forget my own grandmother.  
 I have my wife from the family of the Tokhe...

The Ostyak also have such personal/individual songs describing the owner's village, family, events from their life, etc. (The information below is from Lazar 1997: 244, 256-257, 279). They are sung by men and women without a special occasion, most often when visiting someone. The Eastern Ostyak **do not have calendrical feasts or songs for childbirth, marriage and death.** They

have long epic songs – about the creation of the world, sung during the bear-feast, songs about the forest spirits, songs for sacrifices, songs calling spirit protectors before and after fishing and hunting. Figuratively speaking, the Ostyak do not think in terms of rhythm but in "types of motifs and lines", and their *melodic and rhythmic variants*; their songs do not have a strophic structure but are rearranged and *changed in every performance*; "the instability of certain pitches is usual ... during singing ... the tonality, the basic pitch and the final pitch also may change, intervals may grow wider or more narrow". The Ostyak also have mythical songs, which are sung only in the evening ("such songs are forbidden to be sung in the daytime, as in the world of the gods and spirits everything is reversed. ... Singing during that time would disturb their rest, and the singer would be punished for that").

Many Siberian (and not only Siberian) peoples believe that in the world of the gods and spirits everything is reversed and opposite to the world of humans. Such worldview conceptions are probably at the root of the *rich meaning and "openness" of the sound and the specific intonation in shamanic rituals*. **Varying pitches, abundance of melodic and rhythmic variants, absence of regular metre, use of different timbre "devices" (such as hoarse, husky, "panty" and "snorting" sounds and glissandos), uneven length of the melody lines, absence of "themes" and of an elaborate musical phraseology as well as of local musical styles, are a common musical-expressive feature of shaman songs and, generally, of singing in Siberian shamanic communities.** Also very important is the fact that musical communication in Siberia took and still takes place in *small communities* (especially in the Arctic and Sub-Arctic regions), where men have a central role in the so-called "music-making". Among the Nganasan, as well as among other peoples, "[i]t is common that the most outstanding singer of the region is also a shaman, and Nganasan shamans are usually men" (Ojamaa 2003: 5, 9).

The above-mentioned features are characteristic not only of small Siberian hunter-communities but also of some state formations, such as Mongolia, which is still largely *nomadic*. Mongolian folksongs are typically characterized by *pentatonic scales, quarter-tones/enharmonics, wide pitch intervals*, and glissandos whose performance is primary and much more important than reaching a particular, tempered pitch. The Mongolians have *two main types of songs*, which they call "long songs" (melismatic and richly ornamented, often accompanied by a string instrument) and "short songs" (syllabic, sung without ornaments). These two types *differ only in their style of performance*, and not in their specific verse repertoire. This means that one and the same song may be interpreted and performed both as a "short" and as a "long" song. In Mongolia, the so-called *throat-singing* (also based on a pentatonic scale) is practised not only by shamans. Most men in Western Mongolia and Tuva, mainly nomadic herders, can throat-sing, "although not everyone is tuneful" (Levin, Edgerton 2001). From the Amur River to the Urals, the stylistic and sound-producing equivalent of throat-singing among the Mongol peoples, including the Tuvan, is

the widespread *aman huur*, *khomus* (jaws/mouth harp) made of metal or bamboo. The *khomus* has one basic tone, and lots of overtones which can be varied using the oral cavity, tongue, lips and throat. Whereas the *khomus* and metal mirrors are used by weaker shamans, powerful Tuvan shamans/shamanesses use the *dungur*, the old shaman drum which is now used only by Buddhist monks (Кенин-Лопсан 2000).

For various historical and spiritual reasons, **the shaman's drum is not used in all Siberian societies**. Some Ostyak shamans use the zither to call spirits and enter into trance. The zither is also used in bear-feasts (Iso Karhu... 1980: 147). Nineteenth-century observers note that many Buryat shamans did not have drums (Агапитов, Чангалов 1883: 42-44) and that the majority used the jaws' harp (*khur*). There is similar information about the Itelmen (Czaplicka 1914, citing Krasheninnikoff). Some Altaic shamans use the *kabys*, a traditional two-stringed instrument. After the Kalmyk migrated to the lower reaches of the Volga River, their shamans shamanized without using any musical instrument (Бадмаева 2000: 66). Shaman's drums have never been used in Turkmenistan (Zeranska-Kominek 1998).

The picture and the style of musical performance changes progressively as we move from the north to the southern regions and Middle Asia. This is due not least to the complex social-political and demographic history of this part of the continent, which has developed at a different pace. Although it, too, has been inhabited for centuries by traditional nomads (such as the Kazakh, Turkmen, Tuvan and Mongols) and semi-nomads (like the southern Uzbek, who adopted a sedentary way of life only in the last century), **the musical picture in Middle Asia is very different from that in Siberia and the Arctic Circle**. For centuries, the Silk Road has been populated by various string and wind (flute-like and reed) instruments, professional performers of different narratives and vocal genres, various melodic forms and tone scales, distinctive musical-regional instrumental and vocal styles. The Chinese musical-stylistic (*suite*) and conceptual influence can be traced in Central Asia to this very day. An advanced string-instrument tradition with traces of fifteenth-century court music exists in the regions with a sedentary agricultural population (Bukhara-Samarkand, the Fergana Valley, the Khorezm region). The Arab-Persian metric models and maqams among the Turkmen, Persian melodic motifs, Chinese musical canons, etc. are the result of later influences. The migration of *musical ideas* also led to the formation of *a new class of professional musicians* in this part of the continent. One of the main formative factors was Buddhism and its spread along the Silk Road, which led to a wide proliferation of Near Eastern and Central Asian string instruments. In this social and musical environment, traces of shamanhood can be found in various syncretic forms, narrative texts, extant relics and concepts, etc. (Beliaev 1975; Malm 1977).

The possibility of gaining information about the origins and roots of a traditional phenomenon from the local musical style and its concomitant concepts

is vividly illustrated by the example of the professional musicians and storytellers known as *bagsy*. According to Beliaev and other scholars, the word *baxši/bagsy* originated in China and has different meanings among the different Turkic peoples. Among the Turkmen, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, urban Uzbek and Tajik in Afghanistan-Turkestan, it is the term for *professional musicians and epic singers*. "Among the Kazakhs, the Kirghis and the Uighurs the *baksy* (*baksa/baxši*) also denotes 'shaman', 'fortune teller', 'witch doctor'... Whether Turkmen *baxši* were originally also shamans is a moot point" (Beliaev 1975: 171). The *bagsy* were strongly influenced by Islam.<sup>8</sup> Turkic Muslims regard epic stories as God's Word and the words of storytellers as sacred. Some scholars think that their mythic narratives are based on the concept of the shaman's journey. (The information below is from Zeranska-Kominek 1998.) The calling of the Turkmen *bagsy* – a musician, poet and reciter – is often preceded by many years of training, worship and sacrificial offerings at *the grave of one of the two patron saints* of poetry and music (Baba Gammar and Asyk-Ayдын). Spending the night there after an *initiatory vision*, he embarks on a new road in life (that of an epic reciter or musician), which he follows with the help of the saint. The figure of the *bagsy* is connected with and formed by a number of sacred parameters: sacred places, the great journey or road (*yöl*) leading to God; epic tales and their recitation; performance of songs and a system of their organization, etc. Upon entering the *yöl* the *bagsy* often *takes opium*; he has the freedom and right to *select and organize the songs in his repertoire himself*; their duration and sequence is always *improvised* too. The sequence of the songs is based on two basic rules: the melodies move from the lowest to the highest level in tonal space, from the narrowest to the widest tonal range, thus symbolizing the *bagsy's* journey (*yöl*). The songs are structured in so-called "register segments". There are songs with one, two, or three segments, which, accordingly, have a narrow, medium, or wide range. The songs consisting of only one segment are performed first, which practically means that every next song is more complicated than the one before it. One of the distinctive features of the *bagsy's* vocal performance is the wealth of "sound effects" (similarly to those of the shaman). The music is created *during the performance itself*, which lasts several hours.

This type of stylized and even professional expression of the idea of *passage* is universally rooted in an archaic prototype, inherited and explicated at different religious levels over the centuries. At the same time, the specific *transposition of musical themes and system of performance* (in terms of progressive build-up and widening of the range) distinguishes, *conceptually and stylistically*, the figure of the *bagsy* from that of the shaman. The roots and origins

<sup>8</sup> "Basilov ... considers that historically Sufism incorporated Central Asian shamanistic rites into the *zikr* ritual. ... In Tajikistan male and female *baxsi* healers use the drum to call spirits and reform divination. The tradition reflects a syncretism of Central Asian shamanism and Islam" – Doubleday 1999; for the influence of Islam on the *beksy saryni* and the use of "prayer sentences" from the Koran, see Байтенова 1997: 183.

of the Turkmen *bagsy* are also worth pondering not least because of the fact that until the end of the twentieth century there were not “even conceptual studies on the mythology of the Turkmen. ... Yet oral folklore and even the works of mediaeval poets (from the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries) offer plenty of evidence” that the Turkmen had a mythological system. The history of the Turkmen tradition as a “synthesis of cultural investments of the Turkic- and Iranian-speaking ancestors” (Эсенов 1997: 212, 213) presupposes deeper and more complex investigation also because of the nature of “musical thinking” in these parts of Asia. Transposition of musical theme-motif (up or down by a third, fourth, second, or fifth) is typical of the *bagsy* as well of the vocal and instrumental style of other peoples (for example, the Uzbek and Karakalpak – Узбекская народная музыка. Т. I, II; Т. III, Т. VIII, 1957; 1959). The case of the *bagsy* is a typical example of how inherited and probably “recreated” shamanhood can be detected in some specific musical features and ritual contents in Middle Asian national traditions.

At the end of this chapter, I would like to return to an already familiar aspect of shamanhood – namely, the unity of *shaman/community* (family, clan, village) which “resounds” in the shaman’s initiation and subsequent rites. The figure of the shaman projects and “enacts” his or her community’s system of concepts and mytho-narratives, turning it into a tangible and accessible reality for the audience at every shamanic ceremony. And even though the shaman is an *individualist*, every shamanic ceremony or ritual is as much his or her work as that of the audience. The concept that the more the people who support the shaman’s journey and repeat his words, the better, is universal in Siberia and Middle Asia. The people present at a ceremony can help the shaman fall into trance by repeating parts of his or her song, while *drumming* and shouting. The Mongols, for example, believe that the *yohor* dance around a *toroo* tree or the walking around the sacred *oboo* (cairns erected to mountain spirits) can raise a spiral of energy to carry the shaman to the Upper World.<sup>9</sup> The evidence that shamans get support from and have a close relationship with their audience attests indisputably to a **ritual unity of action of the elect one and his or her social group**, of the individual and the whole. Evidence about such a relationship and joint journey during shamanic ceremonies has been offered by Kortt, who suggests that the shaman’s whole kin group is reborn through his initiation and that the shaman appears in the world of the spirits as an embodiment of his entire social group (Kortt 1984: 293, 299). The shaman himself symbolizes the whole kin group just as the shaman’s drum (along with the shaman’s costume and ritual accessories) symbolizes the shaman himself and his family.

The sequential unity of **kin group=shaman, shaman=shaman’s drum, shaman’s drum=kin group** is bound in a semantic circle by similar, probably original

<sup>9</sup> The *yohor* circle dance is performed around a site hit by lightning in order to send it back up to heaven (Mongolian Shamanism – Introduction 101. 1997).

**fundamental concepts** manifested in different ways and at different levels in shamanic rites. For example:

In earlier times, each Khanty family used to have its own drum. When a shaman was called in to resolve some crisis, he commonly made use of the family drum. As a result of the repression campaigns of shamanism during the communist regime (Leete 1996) the number of drums preserved in households has fallen considerably. *The guardian spirit of the family dwelt within the drum*. If the drum broke up while it was beaten, an ill fate was in store for the owner... (Barkalaja 2000; emphasis added)

According to Jochelson (1905-1908: 54-56), “The Koryak shamans have no drums (*yyai*) of their own; they use the drums belonging to the family in whose house the shamanistic performance takes place.” Bogoras has similar observations on the Chukchi:

Each family has one or more drums of its own, on which its members are bound to perform at specific periods: that is, to accompany the beating of the drum with the singing of various melodies. Almost always on these occasions one member at least of the family tries to communicate with “spirits” after the manner of shamans. Sometimes he even tries to foretell the future, but he receives no attention from his audience. This is done in the outer room and in daylight, whereas the “shaman’s”, or professional shaman’s actions are performed in the inner room and at night. Besides this, every adult Chukchee will occasionally take his drum, especially in the winter, and beat it for awhile in the warm shelter of the sleeping-room, with the light or without it, singing his melodies to the rhythm of the beats. (Bogoras 1907: 413)

Descriptions of the so-called wolf-festival, typical of the ritual practices common to both Reindeer and Maritime Koryak, contain similar information about the shaman’s drum:

After having killed a wolf, the Maritime Koryak take off its skin, together with the head, just as they proceed with the bear; then they place near the hearth a pointed stick, and tie an arrow, called *ilhun* or *elgoi*, to it, or drive an arrow into the ground at its butt end. *One of the men puts on the wolf-skin and walks around the hearth, while another member of the family beats the drum*. The wolf ... does not serve as food. ... He is dangerous, not in his visible ... but in his invisible, anthropomorphic form. According to the Koryak conception, the wolf is a rich reindeer-owner and the powerful master of the tundra. ... The Reindeer Koryak ... regard this animal as a powerful shaman and an evil spirit. (Jochelson 1905-1908: 89-90; emphasis added)

This type of evidence points to an *older, not individual but kin-bound hypo-layer of shamanhood*, to the generative cultural anthropological level, even to the conceptions of the “ideal” time when the **spirit** was manifested in everybody and everything: “At the present day only the shamans can pass from one world to another; but in the ancient days of Big-Raven ... this was possible for ordinary people ... men could transform themselves either into the form of animals, or into that of inanimate objects by donning an animal’s skin or some

covering of the shape of the object into which they desired to be transformed" (Jochelson 1905-1908: 115-116, 121). Actually, the thesis that the "great" and other types of shamans originated from "family shamanism" is suggested by Bogoras (1907: 413), and later defended firmly Jochelson (1905-1908: 47): "There is no doubt that professional shamanism has developed from the ceremonials of family shamanism." Khomich (Хомич 1981: 18) speculates that "originally (before the formation of the contemporary Siberian peoples) there was a single category of shamans, and the different types of shamans did not appear until later. ... This thesis is supported by the fact that the participation of shamans in burial and subsequent cleansing rites was not obligatory and is not mentioned in eighteenth-century sources."

Nineteenth-century descriptions of clan and family rites indicate that among the majority of the Palaeo-Siberian peoples, they were **not necessarily performed by shamans**. The clan's sacrificial rituals, the "feeding" of *ongons* and other propitiation rites were conducted by the head of the family or clan. As noted earlier, unlike the "classical" agricultural communities, including those in the Circumpontic community, the Northern and the majority of Middle Asian shamanic peoples **do not have a system of annual, calendrical rites** performed by a specific social and/or age group. Their main ceremonies were the **seasonal** family and communal sacrificial ceremonies performed in autumn and spring. Thus for example:

Krasheninnikoff who travelled through the land of the Kamchadal in the middle of the eighteenth century, says that "among the Kamchadal there is only one great annual ceremony, in November, and the chief rites at this ceremony belonged to old men". The same author says: "Among the Kamchadal there are no special shamans, as among other nations, but every old woman and *koekchuch* (probably women in men's clothes) is a witch, and explains dreams." (Czaplicka 1914, citing Krasheninnikoff)

The Altaic Kalmyk offer sacrifices to the clan's guardian spirit in spring. The shaman has the same functions and performs the same actions as the old man, who *pronounces a long prayer* extolling the spirit and asking for the well-being of the herds by beating his drum (Atkinson 1858: 382-383). Among the Yakut, the two ritual figures – of the shaman and of the "old man" – have different but overlapping forms. The two annual seasonal village-wide ceremonies, in spring and autumn, are dedicated to the white and to the black spirits. The spring ceremony is conducted outdoors under the direction of the *elder* (the father of the clan/family), and the second, in autumn, is conducted at night under the guidance of male and female shamans (Czaplicka 1914).

Khanty sacrificial rituals are conducted by *the oldest man* in the community, who prays to and calls the spirits, and directs the offering of the sacrifices. Similarly to shamans (or vice versa?), the *old man* recites long epic texts and the "history" of the sacrificed animal/animals. During the *kamlanie* in the evening he heats the drum over the fire, moving it clockwise, *tests the sound and then hands it over to the shaman* (Barkalaja 2000). In the Ob-Ugrian bear-feast "the

shaman plays an important role only when he is its *host*" (Линтрон 2001: 119; emphasis added). Neither Khanty nor Mansi shamans have specific ritual costumes and images on their drums. In one of his latest publications, Lintrop writes that the "Ob-Ugrian peoples are staying in the *very periphery of Siberian shamanism*. ... Among the Northern Mansi and Western Khanty the central institution for the transmission of religious tradition was a *bear feast, not a shaman*" (Lintrop 2001: 503-504; emphasis added).<sup>10</sup> This *peripheral* state seems evident also in the Khanty bear-feast songs which, unlike those of other Siberian peoples, differ significantly from shamanic songs: "The songs of this type are almost the only examples in Siberian native musical cultures, where we can witness the phenomenon of *musical thinking*. ... The stable melodic form yields quite clear basic motive types, which are organized into a regularly repeating two-part motive group" (Niemi 2001b: 132, 136; emphasis added). Even some Mongol ceremonies performed in honour of the mountain spirits around the times of the equinoxes and solstices at special shrines called *oboos* (tall piles of rocks and tree branches roughly conical in shape) are usually conducted by the *elders of the local clan* or tribe. Zhambalova describes a "peculiar type of shamans" among the Olkhon Buryat, who conducted ceremonies at sacred sites: they are "uninitiated, do not have a *buben* ["tambourine", i.e. shaman's drum], costume and other accessories ... but have the right to perform sacrifices and organize a feast. As a rule, they are elected among the *authoritative, experienced elders* ... mediators between the gods and the believers, proficient ... in invocation and hymns, knowers of the tradition and myths" (Жамбалова 1999: 81; emphasis added).

The parallel acting of *elders or old men and shamans* in the traditional rituals of some Siberian peoples may mislead scholars into assuming they are more or less identical. In Zhambalova's above-quoted study the definition of old men or elders as shamans or as shamans "but not quite", obstructs recognition of *an earlier in origin* level and type of ritual behaviour which has been preserved and exists parallel with the rites of individual shamans. A behaviour which functions in traditional rituals *only in a community-wide context*. Of course, there are different opinions on this point. Kuzlasov (Кызласов 2001: 83-90) claims that in the Khakas mountain (or highland), the communal prayers to the Sky without the *participation of shamans*, the prayers and night vigils in caves are *Manichaeian* in essence. Gumilev (Гумилев 1967) considers such phenomena in Central Asia to be earlier relicts of Tengriism (see chapter "Sound and Ritual Along the Route of the Bulgars"). The *old man* is a "classical" ritual figure found in many other traditions as well. In the Bulgarian ritual system, this figure exists to this very day – but the *other one*, that of the shaman, is completely absent.

<sup>10</sup> For the differences between the bear-feast and shamanhood, see Кулемзин 2000; for the "bear cult" as an antecedent of "shamanistic concepts" among the ancestors of the Buryat, see Бадмаева 2002: 5.

## BACK THROUGH TIME

### PÈRKE

*The country formerly called Pèrke was renamed Thrake,  
after a nymph proficient in sorcery and herbs...*

(Arrianus. Bithyn. Fr. 13. – TM: 306)

Πέρκη/Pèrke is the other name of ancient Thrace and here it is a symbolic introduction to antiquity. Pèrke is also an early sacred designation of the Son of the Great Mother Goddess, found in old written data. It is an ancient toponym (meaning “hill”, “mountain”), which has been Bulgarianized in a number of derivatives over the centuries (such as Perin/Pirin; Persenk/Perpelik/Perperek, etc. – Фол. Ал. 2002: 162-163). In historiography and Thracology, “Thrace and the Balkans” is a term denoting a specific political, ideological and territorial entity that is part of the Circumpontic cultural-historical community. The term reflects the similarity and unity in the development of cultures on both sides of the Sea of Marmara and around the entire Black Sea, including the Thracian civilizations from the Late Chalcolithic to the mid-first millennium BC. This unity is manifested in “their [common] ideological characteristics, economic structure, socio-economic and socio-political systems” (Порожанов 1998: 43-44, with References). That is why the question of whether shamanhood existed among the ancient Thracians<sup>1</sup> and Greeks applies indirectly also to the class societies in the Circumpontic community as a whole. This question is especially pertinent to the time after the eighth century BC, which saw the rise of polis-based societies, the Hellenization of Thracian culture and a flowering of Thracian states in the mid-first millennium BC.<sup>2</sup>

The theories, Bulgarian as well as foreign, about the existence of “shamanism” on the Balkans equally concern the ethnically pre-Greek Pelasgian/Thracian population, the territory named Hellas after the Trojan War, and the polis population of the Balkans after the eighth century BC. These theories have been

<sup>1</sup> The Thracians belong to the Indo-European cultural and language family, and to the geographical and ethno-cultural territory of the Eastern Mediterranean. The Thracians first recorded their presence in the sixth century BC, but they were introduced into historiography by earlier ancient Greek observers. From Homer's epics (Europe's oldest literary monument, officially dated to the eighth century BC) to the end of Antiquity, evidence about the Thracians is found in the works of a number of authors (Фол Ал. 1997: 108-109, 141; p. 141 on the Thracian diaspora and boundaries; 2002: 206).

<sup>2</sup> The state system, ideology, culture and history of Thrace and the Thracians are fundamental subjects in Bulgarian Thracology, which is a leader in this field of research. Here I will use its findings on the ethno-cultural and socio-political characteristics of the Thracians.

around for more than a century. The existence or non-existence of shamanhood in ancient Thracian society and in the Circumpontic community seems to be a *purely academic* problem involving researchers' subjective interpretation of the available sources (folkloric, archaeological, written and pictorial) and knowledge about shamanhood itself. Bulgarian scholars admit the absence of any evidence that “shamanism” existed “in early Hellas... in Thrace” as well as the arbitrary nature of the term and concept of “Thracian religious reality” (Богданов 1991: 90, 117; Маразов 1992: 309). Even so, some of them have “discovered” traces of “shamanism” in this area – operationally, by applying a structural (“morphological” and “functional”) approach identifying features that are *typologically similar* to shamanhood. The functional approach treats shamanhood as a “specific technique typical of various epochs” (Маразов 1992: 309). Although Bogdanov explicitly points out that he views “shamanism as an ideology” (citing Eliade), he nevertheless compares and analyzes structures (“because of the unclear historical situation, we are not speaking about a definite shamanism ... but about a shamanic structure ... a widespread practice of communicating with otherworldly forces” – Богданов 1991: 79, 81, 90, 91).

The structural approach shows that one may always detect shamanic schemes in different types of ethno-cultural heritage and that any researcher may piece together a shamanic structure on their desk as long as they have the relevant literature (a successive attempt at this is made by Musi 2001). Such an undertaking does not require intensive inquiry into and reflection on specific ethno-territorial characteristics and contents of a different order, a process indispensable for every *professional ethnological study*: on the way of life and livelihood of a particular community, on its stratification, state-administrative system and military organization (if there is such), on its theological faith (if there is such), ritual musical tradition (as an infallible mirror of faith), etc.<sup>3</sup> In other words, any attempt to identify and compare “pure” – and, moreover, ritual – structures ignores a wide range of problems that have kept scholars busy for years. I am afraid that this approach is scientifically outdated and that it, figuratively speaking, raises questions with no answers. I am also afraid that it is an intervention into the *very essence of shamanhood* – an intervention done, moreover, from an ill-informed standpoint that one-sidedly manipulates the public sphere. The danger of creating a *literary* instead of a *cultural-historical conception* of the essence of various territorial and spiritual spheres is one of the motives for my study and my objections. And since I do not have the right to reflect upon shamanhood “structurally”, I will reverse the question: Why is it *impossible* to say that shamanhood existed in ancient Thrace and Greece? If one

<sup>3</sup> When studying the development of “human societies in the History of the Ancient World ... the influence of all factors (geographical, demographic, socio-economic, ideological) is integral and interdependent. Taking only one of them into account, or assuming that only one of them is important ... leads to extremes in scientific thinking” – Порожанов 2003: 10.

has carefully read the distinctive features of shamanhood and of the communities that gave rise to it, then the subsequent exposition on the distinctive features of Thracian spiritual life can be read and thought of as its “negation” – as *non-shamanhood*.

**Classical shamanhood is not a ritual technique but a traditional ritual shaped by the faith of a particular community.** It is part of the synchronically and diachronically spread faith on a particular territory. Let me repeat: similar or equivalent elements of a material, spatial and temporal nature, designated by some as “technical devices”, exist and function in different types of ritual systems, in different ages and in different ethnic communities. That is also how houses are built... In my view, the existence of some typological similarities between the Balkan material and spiritual heritage, on one side, and shamanhood, on the other, does not give us reason to claim that shamanic rites were practised in the ancient Thracian, and Greek ethno-cultural context. Faith and spiritual life on the Balkans and the faith and spiritual life of the Siberian and Middle Asian shamanic peoples involve a *different type of behaviour, and different cultural and historical problems*. The Balkan spiritual continuity is formed by a different type of oral, written and religious “steps” occurring within a *different historical time frame*. The universally accepted hypothesis of the “archaic nature of shamanism” is based only on archaeological evidence that is *late* compared to the finds discovered on the Balkans. And unlike ancient Greek and Thracian society, Siberian societies do not have a clear political and ideological history situated in *linear time* – from the age of the Ancient World to the Late Middle Ages, when they became subjects of Russia.

The most important *differences* between the Siberian classical “system of beliefs” (as Hoppál 1999: 58 puts it) and the Thracian faith-rites can be found in the essence of their cosmogonic and spiritual concepts, and in the way the latter are represented and enacted in rituals. Before proceeding to examine some of them in detail, I will present one of my main arguments against the existence of shamanhood in ancient Thrace and Greece, including among the ancient Bulgars: classical shamanhood is not an ideology of *statehood* and *states*.<sup>4</sup> In Southeastern Europe *statehood* appeared in the second half of the fourth millennium BC, and according to the latest chronology, at the end of the fifth millennium BC. In the period of Classical Antiquity (around the sixth century BC), “Thracian society was an early class society of the pre-classical slave-owning type. ... It would remain such until ... the beginning of the second century AD, when the Thracians became subjects of Rome, and later citizens of the Roman

<sup>4</sup> *Statehood* evolves into *states* when “the economy produces surpluses and there is intensive trade; society accumulates material and spiritual assets; private ownership and property acquire an active role; custom law is codified; social stratification is based not only on social division but also on class stratification; ideology is expressed in written monuments and documents; spiritual accumulations are expressed in literature” (Порожанов 1988: 181-183, 188-189; 2000: 9-10, 13).

Empire”. State-formation processes among the Thracians peaked in the first millennium BC (in the sixth-fourth centuries), when an early class state was created in European Thrace (the Odrysian Kingdom – Порожанов 2000: 17, with References).<sup>5</sup> One distinctive feature of Thracian statehood is *metal mining* (mainly copper and gold) and trade in metals. Raw metals and metal artefacts are a certain indicator that this society produced surpluses and had trade “most likely directed by the king” and accumulation of treasures connected with its ideology (Порожанов 2003). *Statehood* requires and preconditions qualitative social changes, a different type of – namely, “religious” – thinking and relations between ideology and the institution of power. In this connection, the numerous temple complexes on the Balkans attest to the existence of a *socially differentiated ritual system* among the Thracians (Фол В. 2000: 120) which is not found in the Siberian shamanic communities. **Shamanhood is dominant among the clan-based, unstratified Siberian communities whose belief in *anima mundi* is not associated with the idea of statehood, the ruler and the sacred organization of society as a whole.** It is precisely in a political, economic and social-ideological respect that **communities with classical shamans and the communities of the ancient Greeks and Thracians have a different stratification and class characteristics, a different political and ideological history.** Classical shamanhood is a traditional phenomenon among the so-called “mobile”, nomadic societies with permanent (winter) and temporary settlements and homes. On principle, this type of societies “do not have palaces and temples. Although they have an ideology, they do not have a separate and distinctive spiritual elite specially connected with the latter. They do not have a developed *written culture* and *literature*. ... Mobile societies do not have *surpluses* of people who can engage in the society’s non-material sphere and create their own creative class or social group” (Порожанов 1998: 103-104; emphasis added).

Seasonal nomadic communities, which may be part of a clan-ruled and organized “empire”, and sedentary communities which, too, may be clan/neighbor-based and institutionalized as part of a state, *have different types of ritual systems*. As a rule, class-stratified societies organized in a *state* have a calendar system of rites, a well-developed ideology justifying “the ruler’s social function” (Порожанов 1998: 182), his divine essence and origin, and not infrequently, a hierarchy of worshipped gods (not spirits!). Such an ideology may have a doctrine and even literature. Let us recall the Siberian bear-, whale- and wolf-festivals (with or without the participation of shamans), which *are uni-*

<sup>5</sup> One of the terms denoting the state organizations of Thracian class society and of Southeastern Europe in the second half of the second and at the beginning of the first millennium BC is *chiefdom* (Порожанов 1998: 186, 188). For more on chiefdoms as an early “incomplete type of state”, see also Йорданов 2000: 51. All data about statehood and states, and about the socio-economic characteristics of societies in the Circumpontic community are from Порожанов 1993, 1998, 2000, 2003; Porozhanov 2003; Йорданов 2000.

versal. They are held at the beginning and at the end of the *hunting season*, when the families are in their *permanent (winter) settlements* – and it is no accident that these festivals involve rituals similar to the so-called “agricultural rituals”. It is precisely this type of rituals, as well as their “improvised performance” that indicate the existence of “musical thinking” in Western Siberia (this last in Niemi 2001a, 2001b).

One of the fundamental differences between Thracian ideology and shamanhood lies in the **concepts of the supreme divine being**. In early Thracian Antiquity (Late Chalcolithic), as in the Eastern Mediterranean region at that time, there was a “pure form of sun worship” (Фол Ал. 1997: 122). Ancient Thrace, too, had a solar ideology in the Early Bronze Age, represented in its megalithic culture: solar disks, rock sanctuaries, etc. “As a rule, rock sanctuaries in Thrace are located on high ground or on cliffs towering over the landscape”; this tradition lasted for thousands of years (Фол В. 2000: 85, 132). Following the creation of the earliest Thracian state formations, the “rock-faith descended” to the plains, where it inspired the construction of tumuli, temples, architectural complexes of the palace-sanctuary-sepulchre-*heroon* type (Фол Ал. 1997: 353; 1991: 255-256; Фол В. 2000: 43-44). There is ample evidence of this in many sources and archaeological finds from different periods.<sup>6</sup>

(The information below is from Фол В. 2007: 341-342, 265.) **Sun worship is an early, pre-Hellenic form of ethnic/oral Thracian Orphism**, a faith born in a megalithic context as a synthesis of East Mediterranean and above all Egyptian ideas/images.<sup>7</sup> Here “Thracian” is not an ethnic but an anthropological attribution. Orphism was a faith of non-literate communities in ancient Southeastern Europe, found in its most distinct form in European and Asian Minor Thrace. It is precisely in European and Asian Minor Thrace that we find various types of sources which best reveal the essence of oral Orphism. The latter is also found in Hellenic communities in the northern part of Hellas, in Thessaly, Boeotia, Phocis, including Delphi and the Parnassus Mountains. During the Middle Ages, “the pagan faith/rites, superficially Christianized, were preserved, maintained

<sup>6</sup> For the sacred forest and sanctuary of Dionysus with a permanent oracle, priests and specific rites, see Suetoni. Aug. 94, 6 (TM: 285); for Achilles’ island, temple, ancient statue and oracle, see Arr. Peripl. 21,22. (TM: 306-307); for the temple of the mountain Demeter in Phrygia, see Xantos. Lidika, Fr. 7., Scol. Apoll. Rhod. 2, 724. (ИИТ: 191); for the Satrians and the Oracle of Dionysus located “on their most lofty mountains”, where there was “a prophetess who utters the oracles, as at Delphi”, see Herodotus. X, 7, 111, 1 (ИИТ: 250); etc.

<sup>7</sup> All data about Thracian Orphism are from Фол Ал. 1986; 1991; 1994; 1995; 1997; 2000; 2000b; 2002. Terms such as “faith-rites”, “memory-knowledge”, “types of behaviour” and “religiosity” among the Thracians are introduced and justified by Alexander Fol in the works cited above.

and innovated” in the oral, non-literate environment of Bulgaria and Byzantium, i.e. in the lands where the influence of literary centres was weak.<sup>8</sup>

Thracian Orphism is a *kinship ideology* of early class Thracian society – an aristocratic religious doctrine connected with the status of the king as high priest and his divinity. In the more advanced state organizations in Southern Thrace during and after the fifth century BC, it was practised by members of *king-priest families* (Фол Ал. 1991: 15, 225; 1997: 157, 122, 373; 2002: 44; Порожанов 1998: 188; Фол В. 2000: 109). This doctrine is initiatory in character, and it is designed to “initiate man into the mystery of the Cosmic birth”; it is based on the belief in the “immortality of intellectual energy, visualized and conceptualized in the cosmogonic ... mystery of the sacred marriage of the Great Mother Goddess and her Son – the Sun/Fire”. This mystery is visualized through the rituals in which the Son (in the form of a sacrificial animal, usually a bull) “unites his blood with the powerful womb of the Earth” (Фол Ал. 1986; 2002: 44, 242; Фол В. 2000: 134). The Orphic king himself is an incarnation of the Son, of the dying and resurrecting Orphic God. After his death, he turns into an *anthropodaimon*, into a divine, doctrinally initiated “mediator between man and God... The belief in immortality makes the anthropodaimon equal to God, and the Orphic king equal to the Son. ... Because of the daimons (sing. δαίμων), divination becomes possible and the priests are successful” (Фол Ал. 2000: 268, 19, 63). The supreme Orphic deity, the Son of the Great Mother Goddess, is known from ancient sources by the Thracophrygian name Sabazios/Σαβάζιον. Even though the Orphic faith-doctrine was professed by an esoteric male society, it “was not alienated from popular belief, for otherwise society would have disintegrated” (Фол Ал. 2002: 229). The Orphic aristocracy, especially the Odrysian one, kept the tradition of megalithic rock sanctuaries, while complementing and updating it doctrinally: in Thracian submound temples, “the penetration of the ‘womb’ (the centre of the floor of the structure under the mound) by the sunray is visualized by means of a column”. These sanctuaries form a complex together with the surrounding necropolis.

After the eighth century BC, in the period of mass Hellenization of the northern regions, **Thraco-Pelasgian beliefs were revised by the so-called reform of Delphi**. The latter personified the solar and chthonic energy in ancient Greek as *Apollo* and *Dionysos*. These two cosmogonic ideas correspond to different ritual acts (Фол Ал. 1986: 147; 1997: 122). According to Macrobius, Sabazios was celebrated in a round temple on a sacred peak; the temple roof was open; at the centre below the round hole there was an altar-hearth; the rays of the sun (and its zenith) fell exactly on the altar; Sabazios was then called

<sup>8</sup> For details on the orally transmitted beliefs, the cultural-historical continuity of the ethnic faith (in ancient political formations) which cannot be studied on a territorial basis within the present-day political boundaries of states, see Фол Ал. 2004: 49, 64; Фол В. 2007: 342.



“Apollo and the priests divined his will” from the sunlight. When the Sun was “in the lower hemisphere of the earth” (says Macrobius), the priests divined from the play of the fire in the altar-hearth. “In this nocturnal ritual the god Sabazios was called Dionysos. ... This is the dual Thracian god – the god of the two ways to knowledge” (Фол Ал. 1997: 349-351). The essence of Dionysos consists in the concept that “knowledge ... being divine, cannot be attained without ‘mania’, without becoming possessed”. This applies “both to the god himself ... and to his ‘Bacchi’ ... whose bodies he enters during his ‘orgia’/mysteries” (Фол Ал. 1997: 347, 349; 1986: 147, 168). Euripides writes that “this divinity is a prophet, since what is bacchic, and therefore manic, has much mantic in it” (Schol. in Eur. Hek. 1267. – ИТТ I: 113). The Bacchic Dionysian mysteries were held at night, and they were exoteric. “Whereas the Orphic esoteric (aristocratic) mysteries were conceived of as *ἔκστασις* of initiates to the Son Sun/Fire (Apollo/Dionysos), the Orphic exoteric (Orphic-Bacchic) mysteries were conceived of as *ἐνθουσιασμός* of the Son into believers” (Фол Ал. 2002: 242). According to Ancient Greek descriptions of the *Samothracian mysteries*,<sup>9</sup> the mystes “saw” the mystery, the sacred marriage of the Great Mother Goddess and her Son, and the “birth of the son”/king. “The mysteries were conducted in mountains and caves ... by priests ... the sacrificial animal was usually a bull ... a zoomorphic image of the *masculine principle*” (Фол Ал. 1991: 225; emphasis added). In the East Mediterranean region (including Egypt), in the Thracian and ancient Greek cultural-linguistic communities, the God-Bull is one of the strongest identifications of God. Eating raw, bloody meat was believed to induce possession, i.e. His entry into believers.

The *enthusiasm* states and “madness” were painful for the prophets of Dionysos, and often led to excesses – as noted also in the poems of Orpheus himself, a “poet and seer” (according to Philochorus, Schol. in Eur. Alk. 968. – ИТТ I: 106). Twenty-five centuries after Euripides, this has been observed and described in the *nestinari*’s state of possession and prophetic gift as “pain” and as a “burden” (Фол. В., Нейкова Р. 2000: 155-167, see Appendix to this chapter). Possession as pain, the induction/entry of God, spirits, saints into humans is a *ritual universal* in different traditions. It takes similar psychosomatic forms but has different ethno-cultural contents and motivations.<sup>10</sup> Failure to take into account the specific ethno-cultural context can lead to simplistic comparisons as found, for example, in the opinion that the *nestinarstvo* is “a form of Greek shamanism ... because it is well known that many Finno-Ugric shamans ... groan, roam and howled” (Laitila 1987: 112). The *nestinarstvo*, however, is not a “Bulgarian form of shamanhood” (as Калоянов 1995: 76 claims) but a relict of the Sabazian mysteries. **Typological similarities between**

<sup>9</sup> Samothrace was the epicentre of Thracian Orphism. The island’s indigenous population was Thraco-Pelasgian (Фол Ал. 1986: 95).

<sup>10</sup> For the differences between *possession* and *obsession* in ritual behaviour and in the “global, official” religions, see Rouget 1985: 23, 126.

**different societies are not necessarily an indicator of similar ways of thinking or similar ideological spheres.** For example, sprinkling blood, hanging the head and skin of the sacrificed animal *in a high place*, and eating raw meat are found in sacrificial rituals in different parts of the world and in different historical periods. Another universal feature of this type of rituals is the fact that all offerings are performed upon a command from above (from spirits, saints; received in a dream, vision, etc). The mythical prototype of the *returning God* or totem animal is also found in different types of rituals. Similar ritual practices may perform different “tasks” at different levels in the ritual systems of peoples with a different history and different – animistic, mythological, gnostic – worldviews and “dimensions”. The system within which they are practised determines the types of behaviour, the ritual mediators and concepts of the “journey” through divine space as *conceptually different*. Being a specific relict of Thracian antiquity, the *nestinarstvo*, too, illustrates the fundamental difference between some *prima facie* similar ritual practices in different ethno-cultural zones and ritual situations.

The Ob-Ugrians (Western Siberia) believe that if the legs of the reindeer *jerk* during the *sacrifice* and the prayer this is a good sign denoting that the animal is already *running towards the herd of the god*. If the reindeer drops to its *right* side (to the west) this, too, is considered an auspicious sign; if it falls to the *left* (to the east), an inauspicious omen (Barkalaja 1997). “Reindeer are placed with their heads to *the sun* [*to the south*]. Not to the night.” Everyone must partake of the meat, *eating it raw first*, and only then start cooking it. Reindeer sacrificed to the gods of the Upper World are not considered to be dead, unlike those sacrificed to the gods of the Underworld (Leete 1997; emphasis added). In the votive rites of the Bulgarians, too, all animals are placed with their heads “to the sun” before and during their sacrifice. At the *panagyra* (festival) of SS Kostadin (Constantine) and Helena in the village of Bulgari (Mount Strandja, Southeastern Bulgaria), the heads of the animals are also placed in this direction after they are sacrificed – they are placed to the side and *above the ground*, on a board or other “elevation”, *facing the sun* (in this particular case, to the east); the *lower* part of the legs are left *touching the ground*. The concept of the “blurred”, surmountable boundary between “this” and the “other” world is identified with the peculiar physical behaviour and state of the sacrificial animal: “the meat of the sacrificed animal is not washed” but cleaned by hand only; if *the body of the sacrificed animal twitches after “the removal of the head”*, this is considered an auspicious sign, the explanation being that the slaughterer was “light-handed” and the animal was sacrificed painlessly. A sacrificed bull must fall to its *right* side (i.e. to the south). Instead of a prayer “offering” the sacrifice, pronounced by the elder of the sacrificial ceremonies among the Khanty, the Mount Strandja ritual is accompanied by an instrumental melody with two functions – “of struggle/sacrifice” – played on the *gaida* (Bulgarian bagpipes) and the *tupan*. Before it is cooked, *the meat is tried raw*, an

act symbolizing “the induction of God into” (for details, see Фол В., Нейкова П. 2000: 133, 220-224). Some of the meat and/or liver of the sacrificed animal is eaten raw before it is cooked in many parts of Asia as well. Whereas the sacrificed animal in the Mount Strandja ritual does not “run towards the herd of the god”, there is a relict of a typologically similar concept in the ritual: the so-called *manastirsko stado* or “monastic herd”, in which the animals dedicated to the saint are set free “to breed”. Similarly, on the day of the sacrifice the Chuvash and many Caucasian peoples dedicate the animals to be sacrificed the following year (a stallion, a ram, a young bull) and set them free to graze at will throughout the year, allowing them to go wherever they want to (Еропов 1995: 212). In Siberia, spirits may be promised a reindeer if they fulfil a prayer. There are sources which indicate that this tradition, as well as the idea of the sacrificial animal “coming willingly”, is very old on the Balkans as well:

[O]n the island of Achilles [today Serpents' Island] ... is his [Achilles'] temple and his statue, an archaic work. This island is not inhabited and goats graze on it, not many, which the people who happen to arrive here with their ships, sacrifice to Achilles. In this temple are also deposited a great many holy gifts ... offered to Achilles in gratitude ... [S]ome of the men who reach this island, come here intentionally. They bring animals in their ships, destined to be sacrificed. Some of these animals they slaughter, others they *set free* in Achilles' honour. But there are others ... who have no sacrificial animals, but wish to get them from the god of the island himself... They ask permission [from Achilles' oracle] to slaughter the victims chosen from among the animals that graze freely on the island ... [in exchange for a price, and negotiate with him] until at last, the oracle agrees that the price is sufficient. And then *the victim doesn't run away any more, but waits willingly to be caught*. (Ариан, *Peripl.* 21, 22. – ТМ: 306-307; emphasis added) There is similar evidence in *Philostratorum* – about the sacrificial altar of Rhes/Rhesos in the Rhodope Mountains (ТМ: 383, III 16-17), etc.

In the oral Thracian tradition, as in the Hellenic non-literate ethnic communities, blood-sacrifice symbolizes the sacred marriage. Through the blood that penetrates the Earth, “the Son will become one with the Great Mother Goddess and will be reborn” (Фол В. 2000: 133). In Thracian doctrinal rites, **the sacrificial animal is thought of as a semantic double of the Orphic king**. The sacrifices in bear-, whale-, and wolf-“ceremonies” return the totem animal/ancestor, which descended from the Sky, to its creator. The Siberian peoples believe that the bear is a direct descendant of the *Heavenly Being*, which was “out-lawed” and deprived of the latter’s support upon its descent to Earth, and that the killing of the bear “restores its divine status” (Линтруп 2001: 119). This mythical plot – of the union of the heavenly messenger with the life-giving *earthly being*, visualized as a sacrifice and followed by the restoration of the messenger’s status – is also found in different parts of the world and in different periods, including in theological communities. Among the Palaeo-Siberian peoples, however, the bear-feast and the mythical plot itself are not based on a

*theological* system. Sacrifice in Siberian rituals **does not personify the supreme God and is not a substitute for the kingship institution**, nor does it return the *doctrinally immortalized king* who himself is also the priest conducting the ritual.

The weakest point of structuralists who equate Thracian ideology with shamanhood lies perhaps in the concepts of the **entity** or **wholeness** and **multiplicity** of the spiritual substance in humans (and animals). In Thracian mysterial as well as doctrinal faith-rites, the concept of “multiple souls” and their rebirth is absent. According to the Siberian and Middle Asian concepts, neither ordinary people nor shamans can return as an “entity” or a “whole” after their physical death. The concept that great shamans “are able to awake the dead” (Pentikainen 1998: 32-33) is a metaphor of rank and power, and it is based on the different ethnic variants of the belief in the **“transmigration” and rebirth** of souls after physical death. Shamans can return *one of the souls* through which they will, for example, increase their power from spirit helpers and *ongons*. Unlike the Thracian aristocratic community, where the believer prepares for passage into *Orphic immortality*, the idea of immortalization of intellectual/spiritual energy as an *entity* is absent among the classical shamanic peoples.

The religiosity and beliefs of the Thracians about the otherworld are contained in Herodotus' well-known account of the Getae, “who believe in their immortality” (ИТТ I: 211, № 93; 221, № 4, 1) and in Hellenicus' *Barbarian Customs*: “[B]oth the Terizoi and the Krobyzoi immortalize, saying that the dead *go to Zalmoxis* and will return ... they offer sacrifices and arrange feasts...” (Hellan. Fr. 73. ИТТ I: 188). According to Plato, Zalmoxis/Zalmoxis and the Thracian physicians of Zalmoxis believed in the *immortality of the soul*:

Zalmoxis ... our king, who is also a god, says further, “that as you ought not to attempt to cure the eyes without the head, or the head without the body, so neither ought you to attempt to cure the body without the soul; and this ... is the reason why the cure of many diseases is unknown to the physicians of Hellas, because they are ignorant of the *whole*...” For all good and evil, whether in the body or in human nature, originates ... in the soul ... And therefore if the head and body are to be well, you must begin by curing the soul; that is the first thing. And the cure ... has to be effected by the use of certain *charms*... (Plato. *Charm.* 155-157. – ТМ: 106-107; emphasis added)

On the basis of such accounts, some scholars interpret Zalmoxis and Orpheus as “archetypal [?] figures of a shaman in ancient Thrace”. Unfortunately, such propositions are based on purely typological comparisons (“Healing is a main social function of shamans. And this is crucial in defining Zalmoxis as a prototype [?] of Getic shamans” – Маразов 1992: 318, 326-327; “Orpheus is regarded as a sorcerer-healer because shamans heal with similar [?] charms” – Богданов 1991: 83). The only typological similarity between the quoted data and shamanhood is the concept of *the soul as the prime cause* of “illness”. This similarity is only typological because there are a number

of serious differences both in the ways of “healing” and in the concepts of the soul – as an entity or wholeness and as multiple souls in man. In Orphic healing, as described in the ancient Greek sources, there is no evidence of a *soul journey* or even of a metaphorical flight to the otherworld. There is no evidence that the Thracian healers, similarly to shamans, chased and followed spirits, that they looked for a soul captured by an evil spirit in the field of the universe, that they used knives, arrows, heated iron... The difference between shamanic healing and the restoration of order in the human body and soul through chanted, melodized speech is, so to speak, a conceptual one. And those who have read ethnomusicological studies on the meaning of the different vocal sounds will know that monotonous chanting is not a cure but a cosmogonic approach, one of the ways of ritual arrangement/ordering of space and of entering its different fields.<sup>11</sup> In Plato, this idea is introduced in the views about the *ethos of harmonies* and cosmic pulsations, about rhythm in speech/poetry in the “ideal Republic”. The Orphics believed that “ignorance was the illness of the soul” (Фол Ал. 2002: 186) and that overcoming ignorance was a way to immortality, a way to “Memory-Knowledge”; according to Plato, too, “charms” (“incantations” – ТМ: 107) consisted in the articulation of *rational principles* (Платон 1979: 251, № 156, 157). The recitation of creation legends and eschatological myths in different traditions probably had a similar “ordering” and apotropaic function too. Zalmoxis, who probably lived before the end of the sixth century BC, is one of the most reliable reference points in establishing the chronology of Thracian and Hellenic Orphism (Ал. Фол 1986: 89; 2002: 65). The principles of organizing the *whole* or *entity* (of space and of the body) through *μουσικά* (through *sound – speech – gesture/movement*) were a tradition in the lands north of Greece, where “the *disciples* of Zalmoxis ... are said to be so skilful that they can even give immortality” (Платон 1979: 251, № 156; emphasis added).<sup>12</sup>

The idea that humans have *multiple souls* or that the dead will be *reborn* is absent in the Bulgarian folk tradition too, including among the successors of the old Bulgar states (in the Northern Caucasus, in the Volga Region; see chapter “Sound and Ritual Along the Route of the Bulgars”). Generally, the idea of the

<sup>11</sup> For more on the meaning of diaphonic songs where the higher tonal level symbolizes entry into “higher levels of the ritual space”, see Кауфман Д. 1998: 66, 68.

<sup>12</sup> See Diog. Ath. Semele. Fr. 1. = Athen. 14, 636 A. (ИТТ I:148) for “a wise healer singing hymns to the gods”; Plato (1981: 61, № 364, 365) for “begging priests and soothsayers” (at the temples to the gods) who “go to rich men’s doors and make them believe that they by means of sacrifices and incantations have accumulated a treasure of power from the gods that can expiate and cure with pleasurable festivals any misdeed of a man or his ancestors ... They produce a *bushel of books* written by Musaeus and Orpheus ... and these books they use in their ritual ... They call these sacrifices initiations that will deliver us from evils in the other world [emphasis added]”. According to Alexander Fol (Ал. Фол 1986: 174), this text indicates that “late Orphism” was a belief in salvation.

afterlife as an extension of life on earth is very persistent. This makes it all the more difficult to distinguish between the Thracian and the Old Bulgar substrata in the inherited tradition on the Balkans. The two ideological spheres – the Thracian and the ancient Bulgar one – obviously overlap in their concepts of the afterlife as a state of *immortality* (where the “departed” serve God).

In the period of Hellenization, Thracian religious thought and concepts were revised by Pythagoras and ancient Greek writers. Actually, oral Thracian Orphism was transformed into an exoteric ritual system, including a Hellenic one (Фол Ал. 2002: 251).<sup>13</sup> In literary ancient Greek Orphism, the belief in immortality “passed into the Hellenic belief” in the salvation of the soul atoning for its sins before the god of the underworld kingdom; in the myths, Dionysos-Zagreus himself is a son of Persephone and Hades (Фол Ал. 1986: 174). Because of their “stay” with Hades, Orpheus and Zalmoxis are defined as “archetypal [?] figures of a shaman in ancient Thrace ... they perform a *katabasis* and an ascent” (Мапазов 1992: 318-319; 337-338). Ritual death, *katabasis* and “ascent” are a universal component of all initiatory and mystical rites of passage. Although one may draw purely theoretical conclusions about the *katabasis* by reading the ample literature on the subject without doing any fieldwork, taking the *katabasis* out of the ritual context and ideological sphere in which it “occurs” is a manipulation. Shamans as well as all divine or semi-divine figures can travel through the different worlds, and often have androgynous features and specific attributes; this is one of the textbook truths about initiations, as every beginner ethnologist knows.<sup>14</sup>

The *katabasis of Orpheus* has inspired many to presume that “shamanism” existed in Thracian and ancient Greek culture. The original sources on the former have given rise to many interpretations and creative impulses. The story of the ill-fated Orpheus (after the death of Eurydice) drew tears of compassion in the nineteenth-century provincial Bulgarian cultural community. Similar sentimental stories were also much beloved of organ grinders in different parts of Bulgaria. In this connection, we cannot ignore the works of one of the elite twentieth-century researchers, Åke Hultkrantz, who has written hundreds of pages on the subject of Orpheus and Eurydice and the so-called “Orpheus tradition” (a general term for narratives – tales, legends, myths – containing and united by

<sup>13</sup> For more on *Hellenization* as the organization of sedentary society in poleis, on the adoption of the Greek language by the Pelasgian-Thracians and other Palaeo-Balkan peoples from the thirteenth century BC onwards, see Порожанов 1998: 97-99; for more on the development of a literary “Orphic mythology” and the role of “pre-Greek Cretan and insular Mediterranean faith in approximately similar god-identifications”, see Фол Ал. 1994: 267-268; 1997: 348-349.

<sup>14</sup> For more on the impossibility of equating Orphism with “shamanism” and “the journey to and back from Hades” with the *katabasis* of shamans, see Фол Ал. 2000: 62, 245-247.

common motifs). Hultkranz was too scientific and intellectual for his times to become as popular among the general public as Eliade, although the three eminent scholars – Eliade, Dodds and Hultkranz – worked at roughly the same time of the twentieth century. Hultkranz is one of the authors who support the thesis “that shamanization has provided the pattern for the Orpheus tales ... that in its North American form with the receptacle-motif the Orpheus tradition derives from the shaman ritual” (1957: 240-241<sup>15</sup>). He attempts to trace and prove this by conducting a *literary investigation of narratives* based on a vast corpus of folkloric material. “Orpheus’ experiences and actions on the journey to the land of the dead and on the return trip have their precise counterparts in the experiences of the shaman in his search for a lost soul” (Hultkranz 1957: 248). Commenting on the similarities in the different variants of the relevant tales (in the North American tradition, in Asia and in Siberia), Hultkranz supposes that “the American and the Asiatic-Oceanic Orpheus tales – which latter are of course parts of one and the same tradition – are outgrowths of one and the same historical narrative” that reached North America by way of the Pacific Ocean and Bering’s Strait; “It is my opinion ... that in such widely separated quarters as North America and Europe the Orpheus tradition has had a common *structural* origin, viz, the shamanistic act in connection with the curing of soul loss” (Hultkranz 1957: 23-35, 183-205, 198, 204, 260; emphasis added).

Hultkranz is either not familiar with or ignores Thracian religiosity and its rites. Foreign as well as Bulgarian authors defending the thesis about the shamanic structure of the story of *Orpheus and Eurydice* ignore the fact that it is the product of ancient Greek *mythographic revisions* laden later with strong folkloric connotations. Incidentally, the first attempt to identify Eurydice as an archaic mythical prototype of an “underworld goddess” and to connect her ideologically with the katabasis and figure of Orpheus was made more than one hundred years ago by Maas.<sup>16</sup> What Hultkranz fails to see in the material he cites is that the Orpheus/Eurydice *narrative relationships* may be manifested and expounded on any territory, irrespective of whether initiations with katabasis, shamanhood or some high doctrine are found on the territory in question. The fact that they spread transcontinentally precisely as a *type of narrative* does not even rule out the possibility that the story may have been introduced much later precisely on the territories where Hultkranz believes it originated. For those very reasons, the comparison and equation of figures containing purely typological parallels – “travelling to and back”, “performing a katabasis and an

<sup>15</sup> Hultkranz explores the subject in detail in his 1953 and 1957 monographs. He expressed his views on the shamanic origin of the “Orpheus tradition” in a lecture in Stockholm as early as 1949 or, as he himself claims, two years before Eliade’s monograph on shamanism.

<sup>16</sup> Maas E. 1895. *Orpheus, Untersuchungen zur griechischen-römischen altchristlichen Jenseitsdichtung und Religion*. München (from Hultkranz 1957: 188).

ascent” – is simply a student exercise. Neither the travel through different worlds nor the “ascent” and “descent” of Orpheus, Zalmoxis or other Orphic figures are evidence of “shamanism”, irrespective of whether or how many Eurydices were expecting them in the netherworld... The various mythographic versions of the death of Orpheus from the fifth century BC onwards are interpreted in a similar way, where his “killing” by lightning and tearing to pieces by the Bacchantes is compared to the ritual “killing of the shaman” by the spirits (Мапазов 1992: 312). Let me add here that one of the typical Orphic practices known from a number of archaeological finds is *dismemberment of the dead*, a circumstance which brings them close to the mythical prototype of Zagreus/Dionysos who is torn to pieces by the titans.

Regardless of whether they are “travelling” upwards or downwards, shamans in Siberian communities always know *a priori* that they **can reach only certain levels of the universe. Not only do they never reach the highest level of the sky and the supreme deity**, but they also never intend to. This “*a priori* knowledge”, together with the concepts of the *multiple souls*, predetermines the specificity of their katabasis – both in rituals and upon initiation. While “healing”, the shaman “indeed” takes and pursues one of the patient’s souls to a certain “point” in the Lower World through a ritual and the so-called *soul journey*; only some Mongol and Turkic shamans are able to negotiate with Erleg Khan himself<sup>17</sup> (son of the Sacred Sky). “In reality, shamans did not have direct contact with god” (Күлемзин 2000: 5). In this connection, the propositions that “Orpheus was probably a supreme shaman who was able to turn into a deity” (Богданов 1991: 84) and that there is a resemblance between Hermes (who, together with Orpheus, were supposedly “deities with shamanic features” – Богданов 1991: 83)<sup>18</sup> and the shaman are simply alogical. **The shaman is not a substitute for a deity and is never identified with God or with the Son of God**, be he underworldly or heavenly (for examples of this from the Tungus and the Buryat, see Massenzio 1984). The supreme Orphic deity Sabazios/Dionysos (as well as the Thracian way of communicating with God) is conceptually different from the unpersonified abstract essence of the *Sacred Sky*; this applies also to the Hellenic Supreme God, the Thunderer, and the entire cohort of courtier gods who were involved in the intrigues of the polis and its *politics* for centuries. In the Thracian doctrinal ritual system, only Orphic kings were entitled to direct contact and identification with God. In the rock-megalithic environment and submound temples, the king – the doctrinal Son of the Son Sabazios – is also “the priest at rites” (Фол В. 2000: 30, 93, 95). We find this also in Polyaeus’ account about King Cosingas who, according to the Orphic

<sup>17</sup> The same concepts that shamans can travel only to a particular place “on the way” to the world of the dead are found among North America Indians (Hultkranz 1957: 246).

<sup>18</sup> For more on the ithyphallic Hermes as an Orphic deity (the fourth Kabeiros) and his connection with the Orphic mysteries, see Фол Ал. 1986: 72, 129, 152.

faith, is identified with the Son of the Great Mother Goddess and has the right to “ascend” to Her. Some authors equate this with “the universally valid for shamanism ascent with the help of a ladder or rope” (Маразов 1992: 319, citing Eliade):

The generals of the Cebrenii and Sycaeoae, two Thracian tribes, were chosen from among the *priests of Hera*. Cosingas ... was elected to be their *priest and general*. ... Cosingas built a number of long ladders, and fastened them one to another. He ... had decided to climb up to heaven, in order to inform Hera of the disobedience of the Thracians. The Thracians ... were terrified by the idea of *their general's intended journey* ... They implored him not to carry out his plan, and they promised with an oath to obey all of his future commands... (Polayeni. Strag., VII 22. – TM: 347; emphasis added; for more on Hera as a Hellenic hypostasis of the Great Mother Goddess, see Фол Ал. 1991: 26, 238; 1994: 88)

Various ancient sources mention the existence of a *society of priests* on the territory of the Thracians and the Balkans who served at temples and sanctuaries.<sup>19</sup> In other words, in ancient Thracian culture the priestly status was architecturally bound, and the entity of *God – Temple – Priest* was an emblematic sign of the religion maintained by a particular institution.

In some Bulgarian analyses of mytho-narratives, “Apollo’s homosexual inclinations”, “Orpheus’s misogyny” and “Orpheus who learned male love” are explained as a “distant memory [?] of the sacred sex change among shamans” (Богданов 1991: 85, 86). This is a misunderstanding. The unidirectional interpretation of *sacred sex change* → *misogyny* confuses ritual form with literary form. Androgyny is not a mundane emotion but a ritual status, and shamans are hardly aware that they are supposed to be “man- /woman-haters”. It was customary for shamans to have sexual intercourse with their nuptial spirit during their ceremonies, conveyed by means of physical movements. At the same time, a spirit may demand a change of dress or of some accessories in the shaman’s costume, but not necessarily a change of the shaman’s sex (Басилов 1975: 135). This transformation is not a *universally obligatory ritual feature*; it is strictly *individual and unpredictable* – it may occur on one and the same day, during one and the same shamanic rite, at different ages, twice or several times in the shaman’s lifetime, and it may last for an unpredictable period of time (see chapter “Rites and Concepts”). The connection between the *universal idea of*

<sup>19</sup> A temple and class of priests/prophets are mentioned by Pompeius Trogus in his account of the attack of the Gauls on the Delphians (Pompei Trogiex. Histor. Philipp. XXIV 7, 8. – TM: 249-250); in Aristophanes: “... the Thracians call Sabazio Dionysos and their *priests Sabai/Σαβούς* (Aristophanes. Sikes. Schol. ad 9 – ИТТ I: 156; emphasis added). The sources also mention a polis priestly class that *described* the sacred rites; there is also evidence about the oral/ethnic Orphic rites in Clement of Alexandria (Clem. Alex. Strom. V 46, 4-47, 1.), and in Euripides – about the charms inscribed by Orpheus on “tablets... at the sanctuary of Dionysos in Thrace/Haemus” (Eurip. Alkist. Schol. ad 968. – ИТТ I: 106); see also Фол Ал. 2002: 333.

*the shaman’s vocation* and the concepts of god- or spirit-lovers existing in different traditions has been noted even by nineteenth-century researchers. Here I want to remind the reader that the shaman’s nuptial spirit partner is an *ideal substance* invisible to others, and not a *real figure* from a *doctrinal community*; that the “shaman – assistant” and “shaman – spirit helper” ritual configuration and relationships are fundamentally different from the Orphic “dyad” we know from ancient Greek mythographic and pictorial sources (Orphic singers, those born of Muses, who love men – Thamyris, Orpheus and Calais, Strymon and Rhes/Rhesos, Achilles and Patroclus – are invariably of *divine/semi-divine origin* and genealogy<sup>20</sup>). This is a manifestation of *doctrinal status*, of the initiated Orphic. Judging from the different chronology of the ancient accounts, *ritual duality* (of men and women *always of the same sex*, without evidence about a ritual sex change) seems to have been very typical of Orphic esoteric and exoteric societies.<sup>21</sup> In one scene depicting Dionysos with two Bacchantes on an Attic black-figure vase from the fourth century BC (Fig. 11), the figures of the two Bacchantes are represented and obviously meant to be perceived as *one*.

The subject of ancient “doctrinal and mysterial society” on the Balkans requires investigation of a frequently neglected and difficult to access corpus of written and pictorial sources – about *music* (μούσικα). Here the word is not used in the sense in which it appears in today’s unhealthy sound environment, where “music” is an amateur term for everything that sounds. Ethnomusicology makes a serious distinction between sound, tone, pitch, scale, sound production, voicing/chanting, singing, especially in rituals. In ancient Greek written sources, music-making is associated with an ancient religious context, with the concepts of the divine origins of musicians, singers and sound (vocal and instrumental), with the idea of the ideal entity (syncretism) of the essential elements (the Muses). Hence the musicological term *Music* (i.e. of the Muses) as an adjective denoting the interaction of *music – speech – dance* as a semantic whole in rituals. When used to refer to rituals, *μούσικα* implies the roots and justification of a particular performance (vocal or instrumental) and even of its

<sup>20</sup> For more on their divine genealogy, see Pind. IV. Pyth. Scol. ad 176: “For it is through the Muses and far-shooting Apollo that there are singers and cithara-players upon the earth; but kings are of Zeus” (ИТТ I: 73); 176 b: “And from Apollo came ... the renowned Orpheus”; cf. Pind. IV. Pyth. ad 176-183. – ИТТ I: 72.

<sup>21</sup> Hom. Ilias. II Scol. ad 595: (Thamyris) “is the first man to have loved another male” (ИТТ I: 10); Sim. Epig. Fr. 126: “the immortal singer Anacreon, who composed songs ... about the sweetest love longings of boys” (ИТТ I: 65); (Pseudo) Plut. De fluv. et mont. nom. X: “Strymon, son of Ares and Helike, upon learning about the death of Rhesos, was overcome by despair and threw himself in the river Palestine, which was renamed Strymon” (TM: 294); Arr. Periopl. 21, 23: “[in the temple] they worship together with him [Achilles] Patroclus ... Achilles ... was so constant in his love and friendship, that he did not hesitate to die after the death of his beloved” (TM: 306-307); Stobei. Antolog. VI 20: (from a poem by Phanocles) “[T]he Thracian Orpheus fell in love with Calais, son of Boreas” (TM: 424).

stylistic profile/form in and by the concepts of the relevant community. To judge from the ancient sources, *μούσικα* also means a tangible sound image outlined by the unity of *melody* and *rhythm*, a repeated musical structure (or melodic patterns) and their distinctive stylistic features according to the particular community's criteria.

There is ample evidence in ancient Greek sources of the existence of *Music* knowledge and skills manifested in the vocal, instrumental, and vocal-instrumental musical tradition based on a system of hypo- and hyper-tetrachords (scales, Ancient Greek *μόνην* – Aeolian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Ionian, etc.); of various musical instruments, musical-stylistic, musical-regional and musical-poetic genres with different subjects and functions (such as epic, wedding, lamentatory, festive, Dionysian, or chain-dance ones dedicated to Artemis),<sup>22</sup> etc. The existence of **song cycles**, of **singers/instrumentalists** (Hesiodus, Fr. 192 – ITT I, 57; Solin, 9, 10-22. – TM, 390) and, generally, of advanced *Music skills*, is only to be expected in a sedentary society with a well-developed religious ideology.<sup>23</sup>

It is well-known that the oeuvre of every performer was relatively “new”, that it was based on traditional experience and interpreted inherited *Music* patterns (poetic, melodic, motional). This also applies to the shaman's performances. Let me remind the reader that the sound picture (“the song”) through which shamans enact their “journey” spiritually and physically does not belong to them. And quite often, similarly to individual/personal songs, it is different in form. The concept that it is not that the shaman composes songs but that the spirit appears in song probably also determines the specific sound environment of shamanic rituals, indirectly conveying the idea of the reversed order in the otherworld. Unlike ancient Greek and Thracian society, classical shamanic communities have never had a class of professional musicians/singers or a *wide range of advanced musical instruments*. The available evidence about music-making, musical instruments and genres on the Balkans indicates a fundamentally different musical-poetic and motional “situation” which excludes the specific improvised and untempered sound production and behaviour of shamans and their community. Of course, ancient observers have not recorded concrete

<sup>22</sup> See Aeschil Per. Schol. ad 938, ad 1054 (ITT I: 83-84); Anakreon. Mel. III, Fr. 43 = Athen. Dipnosoph. 10, 427. (ITT I: 63); Hesiod, Fr. 192 (ITT I: 57); Pind. IV. Nem. Scol. ad 67 (ITT I: 77); Eurip. Iphig. 421-438. (ITT I: 115; Diogenes Ath. Semele, Fr. 1. = Athen. Dipnosoph. 14, 636 A (ITT I: 148 – for more on the worship of Artemis at sacred sites by Lydian and Bactrian girls with songs accompanied by the trigon/τριγώνων, and on the performance of ἀλῶς; for more on rhapsodists, i.e. reciters of epic poems, and on *Homerids* or Homeric rhapsodists, see Платон 1979: 438, 440.

<sup>23</sup> Aristophanes's reference (Batpaxoi. Schol. ad. 681 – ITT I: 164) to “Cleophon the [Thracian] maker of lyres”, is also telling; Mavroeidis (1995: 153) provides similar evidence about the making of the aulos. The reference to *makers* of musical instruments indicates that they constituted a professional class; they usually made a particular part/parts of the musical instrument which required special skills. This tradition has been preserved in folklore to this very day.

chants but that which was typical of and *recurrent* in Thracian and ancient Greek *music*, the ethos of the sound and the “type” of musical thinking. Their accounts make no mention of “incoherent speech” and unintelligible “dialogues”, of a “chaotically” improvised sound environment (typical of the shaman's *trance-like* state) either in esoteric or in exoteric communities; the songs composed by singers *were remarkable for the mellifluence of their melody*.<sup>24</sup>

Typically, the ancient sources describe ancient Greek and Thracian *μούσικα* and music-making in the context of various events, indirectly conveying the former's symbolic meaning and *connection with faith and rites*.<sup>25</sup> The representation of a musician's gesture as symbolizing a particular situation can be seen in the cupola of the Thracian Tomb of Kazanlak (fourth-third century BC): to the right of the chieftain are two women, each holding a *salpinx* in her right hand; *their left hand hangs down, index finger pointing to the ground* (Fig. 12). The *deity-instrument-rite* interconnection is conveyed unambiguously in ancient Greek literature. “Many barbarians conduct negotiations with flutes and lyres to propitiate their opponents. Theopompus says in his *Histories*: The Getae conduct negotiations holding citharas in their hands and playing them” (Athen. Dipnosoph. XIV 627 d. – TM: 370). In this socio-political context, the importance of the figure of the musician/instrument is hardly due to their professional ability and skills. They personify a symbolic function and belief in the **unity of instrument/deity**. The carrying of musical instruments (≠ weapons) symbolizes the presence and carrying of the God/Goddess, the divine essence that makes the carrier practically invincible and superior to their opponents.

In the Thracian and ancient Greek tradition, singers/musicians and most musical instruments are of divine or semi-divine origin;<sup>26</sup> they are accessories of deities that are often protectors of poleis. One example of this type of symbolic meaning of musical instruments is the image of a cithara on a Chalcidian coin from the fourth century BC minted by the Chalcidian League (Fig. 13). Because of the concepts of the divine election and mythical origin of singers/musicians (some of whom are believed to be direct descendants of the *Muses*), ancient sources indirectly suggest that they had mantic skills<sup>27</sup> and the right to

<sup>24</sup> See Diod., IV 25, 1-4 (TM: 183) – about Orpheus; Sophocles. Tamyris. Fr. 224. (ITT I: 97) – about Thamyris; Hom. III Hymni Dionys. B 8-12. (ITT I: 49) – about sacred songs in honour of Dionysos.

<sup>25</sup> For details on the structure, making and representations of the *salpinx*, see Ракева-Морфова 1959: 97.

<sup>26</sup> See Athen. Dipnosoph. IV 184 a. about the *syrinx*, *aulos* and *magadis*; about the epic poet Euphorion (276 BC), who says that “Hermes discovered the *monokalamos* [i.e. single-reed] *syrinx*, but others tell it was Seuthes and Rhonaces of the Maedoi [in the region of the Middle Strouma]” – TM: 370.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, the account from the third century AD of Solinus 9, 10-22: “Philip [the father of Alexander the Great] ... lost his right eye ... this loss was preceded by a portentous omen: at his wedding celebrations, the flute-players summoned for the occasion ... sang the song of the Cyclops as if to cheer up the guests” (TM: 390).

copulate with divine and semi-divine figures (through hierogamy). This is conveyed metaphorically in Xanthos the Lydian's "moral" version of the myth about Alpheus, son of Sangarios (a river in Phrygia where there is a temple to the mountain Demeter). He taught Athena to play the aulos (αὐλητικὴν), and was struck by lightning because he raped the goddess (Xantos. Lidika, Fr. 7., Scol. Apoll. Rhod. 2, 724. – ITT I: 191). In shamanic rites, *the concept of an instrument belonging to the supreme sky or another deity is absent*. In Siberia, the Sacred Sky does not "discover" or give someone a musical instrument, and there is no semi-divine lineage of musicians; the Sky is not involved in the acquisition and making of the shaman's drum, which is a product of the shaman/spirit helper relationship. In other words, the "musical" activity of shamans is connected with the animistic spiritual sphere and the world of spirits, and not with a "pantheon" of gods. God and spirit have different statuses in the hierarchy of religiosity and statehood, and they are "voiced", musically as well as ritually, in entirely different ways.

In various written and historical sources on the Balkans, the different deities are represented holding particular musical instruments.<sup>28</sup> One of the most certain and repeatedly noted links is that between the Great Mother Goddess (known in the Classical and Greco-Roman Age as Cybele, Demeter, Hecate, Artemis, etc.) and the reed wind instruments used in Thraco-Phrygian Orphic mysteries (according to Strabo – Aeschil. Edonoi. Fr. 71. = Strabo X 3, 16. – ITT I: 86; Fig. 14): "Box-tree flutes [αὐλούς] ... are nothing ... but Phrygian ... Each of the flutes [αὐλῶν] has a straight tip and plays for the Phrygian goddess" (Kallias. Ped. Fr. 18. – ITT I: 169-170). Musicians (including cithara-players in the Hellenistic Age) are often depicted with their faces turned up (Fig. 15). Plato writes about the auloi as "most divine", which "alone stir and make manifest those who are in need of the gods" (Plato. Charm. Minos. 318a. – Ἐὐὸ II: 101). The aulos is typical of the iconography of Dionysos (Strabo. Geograph. Ὀ 3, 16 – TM: 220).<sup>29</sup> Citing accounts of "Dionysian possession", Rouget associates the instrument with the Phrygian modus (Rouget 1985: 226). Aristotle explains that "among the modes the Phrygian has the same power as the flute [αὐλούς] among instruments, for both are orgiastic and both heighten

<sup>28</sup> Of the worship of Cotys among the Edonians, and her musical instruments: "Also resembling these rites [the sacred rites of Rhea and Dionysos] are the Cotytian and the Bendideian rites practised among the Thracians, among whom the Orphic rites had their beginning ... [The] adorable Cotys among the Edonians ... who hold mountain-ranging instruments..." Of the attendants of Dionysos: "[O]ne, holding in his hands the bombyces [βόμβυκας/βόμβήκας], toilsome work of the turner's chisel ... while another causes to resound the bronze-bound cotylae ... the semblance of drums [τυμπάνου], as of subterranean thunder, rolls along, a terrifying sound ... these rites resemble the Phrygian rites" (Aeschil. Edonoi. Fr. 71. = Strabo X 3, 16. – ITT I: 86-87; emphasis added).

<sup>29</sup> The images are systematized with commentary by Rakeva-Morfova (Ρακεβα-Μορφόβα 1959: 77-122); for more on the meaning, structure and finds of the aulos on the Balkans from the seventh century BC onwards, see Marcuse 1975: 654-656.

consciousness ... fir Bacchic frenzy and all similar emotions are most suitably expressed by the flute, and are better set to the Phrygian than to any other mode. The dithyramb, for example, is acknowledged to be Phrygian" (Aristoteles. Polit. 1342a 33-35 – 1342b. – ITT II: 109).<sup>30</sup>

Whereas the different types of possession in rites may have a different sound expression, both vocal and instrumental, *music-making* and especially *cataleptic trance* are two opposite and mutually exclusive states. To judge from the relevant sources, there is a fundamental difference between possession among the Thracians, the induction of "God into the believer" with the help of a musical instrument (aulos), a song/melody and a mode (the Phrygian mode or scale), on the one hand, and on the other, among the Siberian shamanic peoples where such a "canonical" relationship in "musical thinking" is absent. The expression of a *dream/trance* in a *song/melody* or singing in a trance-like state upon "Orphic possession" is also found in the following well-known and variously interpreted account of Pausanias: "[W]hen it seemed good to the god the following events befell the citizens. About midday a shepherd was asleep leaning against the grave of Orpheus, and even as he slept he began to sing poetry of Orpheus in a loud and sweet voice" (Paus. IX 30, 4-12 – TM: 313; emphasis added).<sup>31</sup>

The association of particular musical instruments with particular ritual situations, especially in ancient societies, seems to elude the majority of non-music scholars. Underlying the *ethos* of a particular string or wind instrument (chordophone or aerophone) and its name are different ritual and even ethno-cultural patterns of behaviour. That is why the translation of αὐλῶν/αὐλούς/αὐλοὶ into English as *flute/flutes/flute-playing* or into Bulgarian as *флейта/флейту/свирене на флейта* (ITT I: 83-84, 169-170; ITT II: 96, 101, 102, 109, 165), is irresponsibly inaccurate, as is that of ἀλητηῆρα τὸν Σαβάζιον

<sup>30</sup> As regards the scales which are mentioned in ancient Greek sources and which spread to Europe precisely from the Balkans, I want to draw special attention to the following error in the section on "Siberian Folk Music" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (vol. 12, 1980: 399): "*Anhemitonic pentatonic scales* ... are the most frequently observed in the music of Siberian peoples, though semitonal pentatonic scales and *diatonic scales are occasionally used* [emphasis added]." Songs in *diatonic scales* have a *tempered* melody developed within the full ambit of two tetrachords (hyper-/hypo-) with specific and stable intervals which determine the *modus*. This phenomenon is not found in communities with classical shamanhood. Parallel with the absence of diatonic scales, according to Makarov (Макаров 1997: 206), "The peoples that have retained shamanic cults (such as the Yakut, Samodian and other Palaeo-Asian peoples) have a *pre-pentatonic thinking* [emphasis added]." Pentatonic scales, distinguished by specific hiatuses, are obviously confused with the so-called *pentatonic sound*, which is still *not a modus*.

<sup>31</sup> Interpreted by Marazov (Μαράζοβ 1992: 313) as follows: "Actually, the shepherd who was asleep by the grave of Orpheus received the shamanic [?] gift from the bones of the singer."

(Aristophanes. *Ornites*. Schol. ad 874 = ИТТ I: 160) as the *flute-player Sabazios/φλεΰμυα Sabazui* – and, unfortunately, other such like. Ethnomusicologists have been pointing out this misunderstanding for years (Ракева-Морфова 1959: 94; Anoyanakis 1979: 161; Rouget 1985; Mavroeidis 1995: 154; Neykova 2003; etc.). It ought to stop for the simple reason that linguists do not have the right to invent musical contents when translating texts. In musical organology, the aulos and the flute are two structurally different musical instruments which have different connotations and carry different concepts in the ritual tradition.

The “*spirit – breath – musical instrument – life – death*” semantic row underlies the early uses of the aulos in the doctrinal and Bacchic Thracian and ancient Greek faith-rites as well as in the later folklorized concepts and uses of the wind instrument as a mediator. Precisely this ritual-symbolic use of reed instruments, including in sacrificial and burial rites, is known even from Etruscan finds and representations (sixth-seventh century BC) of the *subalo* (double aulos) and the Roman aulos *tibia/tubia duplex*. According to Plutarch, the *tibia* and *tumpanum/tympanum* were played during Roman cremations and funerals “so as to drown out the cries of the sacrificial animals” (Marcuse 1975: 657, 659). Plutarch’s explanation attests to a decline and distortion (or ignorance?) of the concept of the transcendent magic/divine function of sound together with the sacrificial animal. In Thrace, “Mariandynus made famous the playing of laments on the flute [αὐλῶδία] ... There are also Mariandynian flutes [αὐλοὶ] which are specially designed for laments” (Aeschil. *Per.* Schol. ad 938. = ИТТ I: 83-84). These musical meanings have been transmitted over the centuries. The resounding “body” of the tympanon (τυμπάνου/τύπανα) and the aulos is probably the ritual prototype of the contemporary Bulgarian *gaida* and *tupan*, which are played to this very day at panegyric sacrifices in Mount Strandja, but not for the reason given in Plutarch’s profane explanation (Фол В., Нейкова Р. 2000: 213-226).

Reed wind instruments were played quite often together with membranophones. A well-preserved red-figure krater from the fourth century BC shows a goddess holding a tympanon with bells/jingles in her left hand while striking the membrane with her right hand; behind her is a satyr with an aulos (Fig. 16; 17). At the same time, the scenes depicted on ancient vessels often show another type of tympanon – held by men, with distinctive graphic signs. Among the gifts to the ruler unearthed in archaeological excavations in the area of the village of Starosel in Bulgaria is a skyphos depicting on one side “a scene of two conversing young men” (to quote Китов 2002: 12, 16). I must say that I cannot “hear” any conversation in this scene, but I see in it a symbolic message depicted through stylized figures: the man to the left holds in his left hand a tympanon with a dark cross-like sign with four dots between the arms of the cross; the same dots occur on the cheeks (right and left) of the two men. Such images are also found on the figure of Dionysos himself (Fig. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22). In all likeli-

hood, musical instruments with this type of graphic signs were probably used in esoteric male communities – as symbols of the initiated, as symbols of belonging to the Orphic (mysterical, doctrinal) community.<sup>32</sup> The tympanon is also associated with another Orphic element in a number of scenes on vessels which show figures holding it above a *column*, one of the aniconic symbols of Sabazios the Son<sup>33</sup> (Fig. 23, 24).

Although there are many pictures of the tympanon from ancient times, it is difficult to say if it was a one-headed or two-headed instrument. According to Marcuse, the Greek tympanon (later the Roman *tympanum*) “was still a woman [?] instrument. Generally it was provided with two membranes, was held in one hand, upright on its rim as theretofore, and struck with the fingers of the other hand. Probably introduced from the East in connection with the cult of Kibele” (Marcuse 1975: 131-132). In some Bulgarian texts, the tympanon is translated as *tupan*.<sup>34</sup> Stockmann thinks that some of the Neolithic drawings in Çatal Hüyük represent a “small round drum ... with one skin” (found in the same region in later times as well) and a drummer playing the drum (Stockmann 1986: 13-14<sup>35</sup>). The tympanon and the contemporary *tupan* (two-headed skin drum) on the Balkans differ from Siberian shaman drums both in structure and in ritual uses. They are not decorated with the images typical of shamanhood (of the universe and its stratification, of spirit helpers, etc.), nor are they regarded as a “carrier” to other worlds – as a horse, elk, reindeer, etc. The classical relationship between the shaman and the shaman drum (as well as the relevant concepts and rituals in making the shaman drum) are entirely unknown on the Balkans. The way the instruments are held and played is entirely different – the scenes on vessels and stone carvings found on the Balkans show the tympanon held upright in the left or right hand; there is no drumstick.

In the Hellenistic age, string instruments played a key role in religious and other rites. **The lyre and the cithara in the depictions of Orphics are typical Hellenic accessories**, whereas “the Thracian instrument of the pre-literate

<sup>32</sup> Another distinctive feature of the representations of such figures is their nudity (“a direct indication ... of heroism, of ... anthropodaimonization” – Фол Ал. 2002: 238), unlike the shaman’s “dressing up”, donning the signs of the spirits.

<sup>33</sup> In rock mysterical rites, the column, including as an “urn-grave”, represents a mountain peak touched by the sunrays at sunrise in the sanctuary (Фол Ал. 1997: 353; 2002: 218, 247; Фол В. 2000: 59).

<sup>34</sup> For example: “Нали блесна разпуснатостта на жените и биенето на *тъпани* [τύπανισμός] и тези чести викове *Сабазуй* ...” (Aristophanes. *Lys.* Schol. ad 387-390 – ИТТ I: 162), translated into English as “Has not our women’s lewdness shown itself in how they beat their drums for Sabazius” (<http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/aristophanes/lystrata.htm>).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. (p. 14), with a sharp critique of archaeologist James Mellaart’s inadequate opinion about the drawings: according to Mellaart, the drawings “reveal no hints of musical activities”.



Orpheus was the Phrygian aulos [αὐλούς]” (Фол Ал. 1986: 173). “Amphion and Zethus, sons of Zeus and Antiope ... Amphion had a lyre given to him by the Muses, with which he charmed the stones into place while building the walls [of Thebes]” (Hom. Ilias. XIII. Schol. ad 302 – ИТТ I: 35; emphasis added). The mytho-narratives about the organization of space through music and about the divine origin of some musical instruments suggest that there are a number of similarities between the mythical founders/singers and the demiurge as a cultural hero (Pind. IV Pyth. Schol. ad 176; ИТТ I: 73; for more on musical instruments, see Athen. IV 184 a, XIV 636 F.; TM: 370). In the written versions from the Late Hellenistic and Early Imperial Age, Orpheus also appears in this category (“Orpheus once playing the cithara together with the Muses drew together trees by his songs, drew together the beasts of the fields” – Eurip. Baxhai. 556-575– ИТТ I: 115, emphasis added; “Men say that he by the music of his songs charmed the stubborn rocks upon the mountains and the course of rivers. And the wild oak-trees ... stand in ordered ranks close together, the same which under the charm of his lyre he led down from Pieria” – Apoll. Rhod. Argonautica. I 25 – TM: 132). The Finnish folk texts about Väinämöinen are typologically similar to the ancient Greek literary descriptions of the “Orphic as charmer”:

The song of Väinämöinen’s kantele music was used as a kind of incantation, now for fishing, now for hunting. Chr. Ganander wrote in 1789: “Fowlers, hunters, and woodsmen asked Väinämöinen to play his harp, so that its sweet music would call forth all the game” ... Väinämöinen ... who, with his “fisherman’s words” or “hunter’s words”, plays the kantele and sings, until the animals of the forest and water, birds and fishes, arrive to listen to him. (Rahkonen 1989: 4, 5, with References; emphasis added)

Unfortunately, Väinämöinen, too, is associated by some scholars with shamanhood, which they claim existed on the territory of Scandinavia during the Neolithic (“Before the Proto-Finnic period, in Paleolithic times” – Tolbert 1990: 46). Väinämöinen is claimed to have been a “shaman in the Iron Age fishing and hunting cultures. Later, in the myths of creation, he appears with Ilmarinen as a cultural hero, as a great singer, kantele player and seer” – Talve 1997: 227, 237; emphasis added). Väinämöinen, however, is not Lapp but a “central figure” in Finnish epic poetry, and his role as a shaman is highly implausible (“The central figure in epic poetry was the ancient sage Väinämöinen, a shaman whose origin was closely connected to the creation myth” – Asplund 1995: 23; emphasis added). At the same time, “[l]ittle is known about the role of the kantele in the actual production of trance. While the kantele is mentioned prominently in runes as a source of power by which people are put to sleep or animals are enchanted ... The kantele may have served a function similar to that of the Lapp shaman’s drum, as a source of sound” (Rahkonen 1989: 6; emphasis added). While I do not want to argue with these interpretations, I must point out that the absence of shamanhood among the Finno-Ugrians

in the Perm region (according to a number of publications as well as according to my first-hand observations) and the “peripheral” shamanhood of the Ob-Ugrians also raise doubts as to the presence of such relicts in the image of Väinämöinen in Finnish (not Lapp) folk texts. Väinämöinen is a rune singer, the creator and first player of the original kantele, whose “nature” and making is a typical metaphor for the powers precisely of cultural heroes.<sup>36</sup>

Here, as in the interpretations of “shamanic archetypal figures” on the Balkans, we have yet another misconception, namely, the equation of two interrelated but fundamentally different realities: a narrative (mythographic) and a ritual one, i.e. cultural hero and shaman. And Talve’s attempt to define them as two levels that emerged consecutively in time is disproved by the tradition itself. In Siberian mytho-narratives, both the shaman and the storyteller are identified with the main hero who is represented, to one extent or another, as a “cultural” hero; in rites, however, they perform different tasks and their functions are not interchangeable. Commenting on the common features and “religious-worldview traditions” in shamanhood and the folktale genre (more precisely, “in the extraordinary figure and position of the Altaic storyteller), Sadalova writes (Садалова 1997: 150) that they should not be equated. The difference between a cultural hero and a shaman, between individual and supra-individual, between cosmic and human, is pointed out by Novik as well: “Unlike myths, which describe the acquisition of essential cultural values (fire, spring water, sacred objects, etc.), during the kamlanie shamans seek in the world of spirits the ‘forces’ and souls that are necessary to the individual, i.e. they achieve individual, and not cosmic (in the sense of universally significant, supreme) acquisitions” (НОВИК 2002). The string instrument in the hands of Väinämöinen also indicates that it is wrong to associate him with shamanhood. The proposition that the lyre was “an ancient tool for inducing ecstasy” (Богданов 1991: 83, citing Meuli and Frazer), and especially that “his [Orpheus’] musical instrument served for conjuring spirits” (Богданов 1991: 87; emphasis added) has no justification whatsoever in ancient mythographic sources. The same author’s attempt to associate the ancient lyre-player with “the authentic [?] properties of shamans’ string instruments, regarded as birds on which the shaman flies to the world beyond” (Богданов 1991: 87, citing Meuli), is just as clumsy. Meuli’s accounts of string instruments and his observations made before 1935 are explicably fragmentary and inaccurate. It is quite obvious that this type of concepts regarding shaman’s drums have been transferred onto string instruments and, moreover, onto string instruments in some “peripheral” Siberian territories; there the

<sup>36</sup> In the different runic versions, Väinämöinen created the body of the kantele from the jawbone of a great pike or from the tailbone of a reindeer, its string from the hair of a maiden, of the Demon’s virgin or of a “good stallion”, and its nails from the teeth of a great salmon or pike (Rahkonen 1989: 3, 9, 12). According to Martti Haavio, the “creation of the kantele” runes are related to the international tale type 780 “The Singing Bone”.

appearance of string instruments is a sign of departure from “classical” shamanic rites with their distinctive “music-making”. Chapter Three noted that similar types of performance are found among peoples where the existence of “shamanhood proper” is still a matter of debate, and in territories where there are *most probably relicts* of shamanhood as a result of ritual and ideological syncretism (for example, among the Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Turkmen professional singers *baqsa*, some of whom are also “healers” – Rahkonen 1989: 5, etc.).

At the same time, trying to prove that a particular instrument was used to induce “ecstasy” is a pointless exercise: “Among all the instruments used for possession music *not one stands out as the rule*. ... The techniques used to induce trance vary – or varied – a great deal from one country or continent to another” (Rouget 1985: 76-77, 129; emphasis added). One telling example is the *nestinar* (*anastenaria*) ritual in the village of Agia Eleni (Northern Greece), where the *gaida* (bagpipes) gradually disappeared from practice after the 1950s, but the Greek *nestinari* continue to keep their faith without asking why the *gadulka* is used in the ritual. There are other similar examples in the Balkan ritual tradition. An aerophone may have been replaced by a chordophone for various reasons, and any proposition about its “authentic”, original use in a particular ritual act in ancient times needs to be proved. Trance induction by means of musical instruments and specific “sound levels” is based above all on the *cultural pattern* of behaviour and cosmogonic concepts of the community where it is practised. In the Thracian doctrinal ritual system, the string instrument (the lyre or cithara) was not the instrument of those involved in Bacchic mysteries, i.e. of those who were in a state of *mania*. The ethos (ἦθος) of the string instrument did not introduce *God into one* but raised one *to God*. This was another “step” in religiosity on the Balkans. In the following centuries, string instruments would continue to accompany narration, epic poets and singers. By virtue of an ancient inherited model, string instruments, together with the process of narration itself, “constructed” mythical space. This raised the initiated singer to God – a belief symbolically preserved in the definition of blind singers/*gadulka*-players in Southwestern Bulgaria as *God’s men* (*Bozhii hora*). This, however, is a different subject altogether.

There are many commonalities in the spiritual and symbolic sphere of peoples that may otherwise differ significantly. No one has the right to claim ownership of the katabasis and “flight”, isolation, “fantastic image” or vision, the voice of the otherworld, mediation – let alone of the singing and dancing accompanying a particular form of contact with the otherworld. No one has a copyright on prophecy and clairvoyance. Whereas it is true that identifying typological similarities is useful as a student exercise, if they are *taken in themselves* they may lead to dangerous generalizations. Typological approaches ignore the specific ethno-cultural levels, and the processes of their cyclic construction and passage to a higher level. They disregard the specificity of the

indigenously regional or the ethnic as a *different type of culture*. Frazer, Meuli, Dodds and, to a large extent, Hultkrantz and Eliade all fell into this trap; and, I would say, so have the contemporary views about shamanhood and “shamanism” on the Balkans. It seems that those who have “discovered” that the phenomenon is supposedly “inter-national”<sup>37</sup> hardly care that traditional rituals (including shamanhood) are not a bag full of mummified remains but an ethno-cultural “mode” and way of life. It is precisely this “mode” – together with the musical language, which is most conservative and resistant to various ideological and national-political onslaughts – that reveals the specificity of a particular type of traditional culture.

Neither the Thracian nor the ancient Greek ideology, which was both informed by the Thracian one and viewed as “foreign”, is an ideology of a shamanic community. Irrespective of how people regard the *Other* in the various political configurations on the Balkans, the dynamics with which history is written in these lands is fundamentally different from the flow of time and thought in Northern Asia and the Arctic Circle. Irrespective of how we view musical organology, religiosity and Orphic “memory-knowledge”, the methods of sculpture or temple construction, irrespective of the epoch from which we choose to pick and compare figures – if we are not helpless structuralists but insist on keeping in mind the context in which beliefs and faith shaped, generally speaking, different types of *behaviour*, we must not forget that:

- The Siberian peoples *do not have an early political and ideological history* of the type of the Thracian or ancient Greek one; they do not have a well-developed institutionalized religious system.
- Classical shamanhood is an *oral* ritual phenomenon which *does not have sacred books and writings*.
- Shamans *are not consolidated and coordinated in an institution* (unlike the Orphics, Buddhist, Christian and other clerics); classical shamans do not have a centralized “managing board”, guild, college,<sup>38</sup> etc.
- Classical shamans *do not build or enter temples and submound temple facilities*. They achieve their sacred mission through inner vision and soul *journeys*, not through established temple ceremonies.
- The Siberian shamanic communities *do not have a social hierarchically stratified ritual system* of the type found on the Balkans in ancient and later times. They do not have a *doctrinal* ritual system supported by and supporting the authoritarian *status of the king-priest* and the concepts of his divinity.

<sup>37</sup> “Sarmatians and Scythians, as well as probably their neighbour Slavs, were shamanists, and so were the Thracians and Hellenes they found on the Balkans” (Калоянов 1995: 69).

<sup>38</sup> Contrary to what Bogdanov claims (Богданов 1991: 71-86) about ancient Thracian society: “an *association* of man shamans of an aristocratic character”; 83: “the shaman ... united with other shamans in a special *college*”; “*the college of shamans*”; “*the shamanic college of priests of the Mother Goddess*”, etc. (emphasis added).

• Shamans do not found or practice “mysteries”; they are not “kings” and spiritual leaders of *doctrinal societies*.

• In the Siberian shamanic societies there are no mystery-initiated *aristocratic strata*; shamans pass through individual stages of initiation; they do not undergo doctrinal or warrior initiation, which was compulsory for aristocrats in the Thracian and other sedentary agricultural societies. In this connection, the proposition that “shamanic initiation is simply a higher stage in aristocratic” initiation (Мапазов 1992: 341) is alogical; here I can only ask where is the *aristocratic* initiation and class in the indigenous Siberian communities in which there is no vertical social stratification?

• In the classical shamanic societies (*not* the late Central Asian ones), there is no *class of professional musicians* or *well-developed musical instruments* of the type found in Thracian society.

• The idea of the dual (solar-chthonic) God, the Son of the Great Mother Goddess who conceives by him and gives birth to the Orphic-king, the idea that underlies the ideology of Thracian Orphism, is fundamentally different from the belief in the unpersonified supreme heavenly being and in the animistic sphere – of spirit mediators, spirit helpers, malignant spirits...

• The “memory-knowledge” about the Universe and its mysteries – the object of Thracian mysterial and doctrinal rites – situated in a literary and archaeological environment, is Orphic, not shamanic. And the Thracian priest cannot be equated with the Siberian shaman, in the same way as the shaman’s drum is not a *tupan* or the *aulos* a flute...

#### APPENDIX.

#### NESTINARSTVO

(from Фол В., Нейкова Р. 2000, with References)

The *nestinarstvo* is a Palaeo-Balkan substratum of the solar ideology of the *Dionysian-Sabazian fire rites* that existed in the Thraco-Phrygian contact zone (the Balkans with ancient Anatolia/Asia Minor). It is documented in sources from the Hellenistic, Roman, and Late Ancient ages. The etymology of the word probably comes from the Greek *anasta*, meaning “serpent” (as one of the forms of Sabazios, but also of Zagreus, represented as a serpent with bull-horns) or from the Greek */en estia/* in the fire-hearth, which, too, does not change the Zagrean-Sabazian meaning of the ritual. Visualized worship of God by the initiates through “things carried through fire” – sacred objects-mediators or the image of Sabazios himself – is typical of the ancient mysteries. In the first century BC, Strabo describes the temple of the Great Mother Goddess/Artemis at Castabala/Κασταβαλα, where the priestesses “walk with naked feet over hot embers without pain”. In a magic papyrus from Late Antiquity, “the guardian of the threshing-floor, the three-headed and ox-eyed [wide-eyed] Persephone, walks quickly through the fire”. At the beginning of the fourth century AD, Iamblichus reports that there are many who possess divine mantic, tell the future through *enthusiasm* and *theophory*, introduce and carry God into them-

elves. “Many, through divine inspiration, are not burned when fire is introduced to them...” Fire rites in the mysteries of Sabazios and of the Great Mother Goddess were most probably Christianized before the tenth century through the pair SS Constantine and Helena (as mother and son). Fire rites have remained a carrier of the pre-Christian idea of deities and a successor to the Orphic *paredria* to this very day.

Because of the specificity of the socio-economic and ideological situation in Southeastern Thrace, significant elements of the ancient mysterial rites have been preserved as a *folk tradition* – in the so-called *nestinarstvo*/Greek *anastenaria* among the population in the Mount Strandja area (Southeastern Bulgaria) and among the descendants of *nestinar* families in some settlements in Northern Greece (who were resettled there after the 1920s). In the Mount Strandja area, *nestinarstvo* is part of the folkloric system of the so-called *panagyri* (sing. *panagyri*), major village-festivals in honour of patron saints ensuring the well-being and fertility of the village and its land stock. The *nestinari* (sing. *nestinar*) themselves are spiritual and physical leaders of the ritual act, through whom the saints express their wishes and “orders”.

The *nestinari* (Greek *anastenari*) have the following distinctive features: **contact** with the saint (through inner vision, in a state of trance or, as the local people call it, *prihvashtane*/possession); **prophecies** and predictions of global or community-wide importance (about the fate of the village or the country); **treading on, trampling out** embers (spread in a large circle in the village square), which in late folk tradition was motivated by the belief that this would “trample out”, i.e. eliminate, all diseases and evil in the village, and “redeem the sins of all”. **This specific element, namely “trampling out”, categorically distinguishes the *nestinarstvo* from the various forms of fire-walking (*passing across embers*) in the rest of the world.** The *nestinari* were greatly respected in the community and they were sought for advice throughout the year. In the past, they practically governed the village/villages. (For details about the ritual, its sacred topoi and objects, *nestinar/panagyri* instrumental melodies, the musical instruments, the form in which the ritual is practised in Northern Greece, etc., see Фол В., Нейкова Р. 2000).

## SOUND AND RITUAL ALONG THE ROUTE OF THE BULGARS

Considering the contents of traditional ritual and musical culture, I have serious reasons to disagree with the proposition that shamanhood and "shamanism" existed on the Balkans – as a relict in the ritual system of the Balkan peoples "brought" by the ancient Bulgars and known also to the ancient Thracians and Greeks (from literary and pictorial sources) as supposedly indicated by dubiously "shamanic" archaeological finds. I think that such a "transposition" of structures and ethno-cultural values to the Balkans cannot contribute to the study of shamanhood itself or of indigenous Balkan traditions.

The majority of Bulgarian publications touching on shamanhood are by historians and art historians. They view "shamanism" as a specific technique typical of different periods of history and, from this perspective, they find – on a "structural plane" – shamanic structures and "figures" in ancient Thrace, Greece, and among the Bulgars. Actually, the problem is not that some authors think differently but *how* they think. I have always wondered how someone could draw categorical conclusions about global ideological forms (for example, about the existence of a particular ethno-cultural worldview or *religion* among the ancient Bulgars) from fragmentary and unverified evidence, such as a handful of images carved in stone or separate objects whose provenance and ethnic origins are not clear. The pseudo-scientific character of such theses is intensified by a naïve and at times incompetent interpretation of the actual finds and rituals, as well as by their crass politicization:

- Among the Proto-Bulgarian population ... there was also shamanhood, a formed religious system [?] and worldview. ... The religious beliefs of the Proto-Bulgarian rank-and-file people [?] ... reflect the earlier, pre-class and early-class forms of religious life. Animism, animatism, totemism practically meant a step back [?] in the social-ideological development of society. The people's aspirations and sympathies [?] were directed at these earlier religious forms [?] because they reflected the periods in which class struggle [?!] existed in much milder forms. ... We already have quite ample written and mainly archaeological evidence about the existence of the shamanic institution ... A dozen-odd [?] graffiti-drawings give us an idea about shamanhood... (Аладжов 1999: 23, 24, 37)

- The numerous graphic drawings found in early Bulgarian settlements ... reflect the aesthetic [?!] views of the people. ... In Middle and Central Asia and especially in

Southern Siberia ... we find the closest and immediate analogues of Bulgarian shamanhood... (Овчаров 1997: 20, 71)

- The *kukeri* danced [?] with weapons to the beat [?] of the music and bells (*hlopataři*), and imitated [?!] an imaginary battle with the evil forces [?] ... The masks of the participants represent animals. ... All these [?] peculiarities reveal the shamanic character of the dances, especially considering that we have analogues [?] in Tibet, China, Siberia and Mongolia. ... The military and shamanic character of *rusalii* dances is more than clear. ... The dances of the *rusalii* contain an obviously ecstatic [?!] element and are related to the ancient mysteries and Asian cults and shamanism [with which of all these?]. ... The religion and nature-philosophy of the ancient Bulgarians are connected with shamanism... (Александров Д. 1999: 222, 224, 225, 270), etc.<sup>1</sup>

I am well aware that the overwhelming majority of Bulgarian researchers in other fields will not hesitate to base their hypotheses on rituals involving music even though they know little if anything about *ethno*-musicology. Nor can I expect them to be able to read notations or, more precisely, note transcriptions of the so-called shamanic *kamlanie*. I am sure they have never even heard of it. Simply put, its sound is very different from the idea and concept of *song* and *instrumental* music in the folk heritage on the Balkans. Here, as everywhere else, the specific sound and tone represent the specific spiritual contents of a particular territory. Any ritual that is claimed to be in "shaman-like" style, irrespective of whether it is purportedly found in archaeological material or as a relict in late tradition, presupposes the existence of *musical thinking* and of a specific type of *sound symbolism*. As I have written before (Фол В., Нейкова П. 2000: 174), every "shamanophile" ought to bear in mind the "magic" and active *ritual group*, the colossal *figure* of the *Player* (musician) as well as the fact that Bulgarian musical folklore developed as a *system* with various applications and principles of expression, and has a strict *family-ritual* and *calendar basis*. Compared with the peoples practising shamanhood, it carries *another, different* type of ritual musical *thinking* and music-making, *manner* of playing and performance, etc. The Bulgarian traditional musical-expressive *style* (as a "phenomenon of a cultural-genetic character" – Фол Ал. 1997: 411) is fundamentally different from the "musical grammar" of shamans. And it is not free, unpredictable sound invention and intoning but the *repetition* of constant melodic "figures" and tunes in a strictly fixed order that emanates the actual ideas, concept of the sacredness and successful performance of the rituals. Mythemes, religious concepts and their "personifications" are organized in a

<sup>1</sup> *Kukeri*: An ancient male masquerade ritual, a substratum of the Dionysian mysteries; the men taking part in the ritual go round the village, jumping up and down to the sound of bells of various shapes and sizes tied to their waists; there are no musical instruments or songs during the village rounds; hence, speaking of "music", and especially of a beat, in the ritual is a sign of ignorance. *Rusalii*: An ancient male ritual performed in Southwestern Bulgaria until the first decades of the twentieth century. Known as *kalush* among the Vlachs in Northern Bulgaria and in Romania.

system of *acts/symbols*, which functions also through a number of calendar-based rituals. The annual calendar ritual system of the Bulgarians is a legacy of the ideology of *statehood and the state*, including of the model of classical kingly initiation rites – a subject studied extensively in Bulgarian ethnology. A different type of relicts of initiation rites is preserved in mytho-narratives and stories, in the behaviour and acts of *ritual groups* (male and female) in Bulgarian folklore. Unlike the sound “rights” and freedom of spirits, the vocal and instrumental repertoire, i.e. the *voice*<sup>2</sup> of *ritual groups* is fixed in terms of performance, irrespective of whether it repeatedly performs one and the same melodic motif/formula or a two- or three-line non-measured song. Figuratively speaking, the “spirit” behind the voice of ritual groups has long since “frozen” in a *constant melodic form* and has no right to another melody. In the Bulgarian folk tradition this is, so to speak, an “overmastered” situation in which the melodies have been taken to a higher level – that of a *constant and regulated position*. It is precisely in this position that the ritual figure (used here as a general term) is very far from the idea of ideal transformation or identification (with a “spirit”, for example). By virtue of an old *principle of behaviour*, the ritual group *physically* moves around the area which it consecrates – by dancing, traversing the path and walking around the area – thus enacting the mythical subtext of the ritual act.

Unlike shaman’s drums, Bulgarian *tupani* are not decorated with images of spirit helpers. The Bulgarians’ concepts of a parallel world and of the ideal substances in it are embodied in the belief in the magic functions of musical instruments in principle – as a means of contact with and a substitute for a supreme deity (Фол В., Нейкова Р. 2000: 167-175). For example, the *kaval* is believed to enable shepherds to take their flocks “safely at night even through the most dangerous places, even through the playfields of the *samodivi* [evil wood nymphs] themselves ... such *kavali* are associated with a devout belief ... they are passed on only to heirs who, moreover, are almost made to swear that they will not sell them”.<sup>3</sup> In some parts of Bulgaria *kaval*-players were deeply respected and revered, unlike the players of the “humiliating” *gusla* or *gadulka* (Маринов 1984: 598, 599). Such “discrimination” in tradition can be based only on an obsolete mythic concept of the power of the “magic language of pipes” and their divine origin. In songs along these “lines”, the dead call out and speak from the grave upon hearing the sound of the *kaval*. Let me point out once again that Siberian shamans do not have a wind instrument (aerophone) or the *player – musical instrument – sound semantic triad* with the specific functions and forms found on the Balkans.

<sup>2</sup> *Voice* (Bulg. *glas*) in Bulgarian folk terminology means the melody of a song and the overall complex in diaphonic songs.

<sup>3</sup> Analogous beliefs are also found in the Northern Caucasus: “Performance of the ‘sheep’s melody’ ... would bring back a scattered flock, while playing the ‘wolf’s melody’ made wolves attacking the flock freeze on the spot” (Джуртубаев 2004).

The Bulgarian traditional ritual system has never lost sight of the “otherworldly” realms, the contact and constant interdependence between “this” and the “other” world. Humanity has long been concerned about the *otherworld* which, as we know well, it has contemplated, conceptualized and “attacked” from different directions, including through sound. The three-part vertical structure of the Universe itself, which is constantly pointed out as specific and typical of shamanhood, is a universal Indo-European model. We find evidence about the stratification of and gradual “passage” through the *otherworld* in various ritual acts and concepts, songs, artefacts and other objects in Bulgarian folklore (see chapter “Tură/Teiri/Tangra: *Dues in Actu*”).

In the vocal heritage and rites of the Bulgarians, the concepts of the *otherworld* are “clothed” in sound in various forms – depending on the function and specificity of the ritual content, on whether the melody is performed by men or women, on whether it is vocal or instrumental. These concepts are reproduced in different kinds of ritual songs, instrumental melodies, ritual silence, etc. Generally speaking, the idea of the *otherworldly* is manifested directly and indirectly in the *ritual sound-mediator*. It is wrong, however, to assume that the latter represents specifically a particular situation, that it necessarily evokes a sense of sorrow, mysticism or joy; that similar oral/song storylines are conveyed through similar tonal configurations – or, in other words, that every *ritual* song represents a specific sound “picture” of the *otherworldly* dimensions. This last is indeed a specific feature of the shaman’s journey, and probably also of the *bagsy* and laments in the Finno-Karelian tradition. Similarly to oral lore, Bulgarian ritual melodies may be “narrative”, recitative, piercing, monotonously circling/chanting; they may consist of two or more melodic lines phrased within a particular range and having a particular length, just as they may be a laconic musical expression/motif symbolizing an implicit idea.

The utilitarian transcendent ritual sound, which is occasionally called the *voice* of the “otherworld” by the performers or the text of songs, is above all a preserved *musical symbol* of the content of a particular ritual dimension and behaviour. Outside the concrete ritual situation, it loses its meaning and may die out together with the dying tradition. This type of ritual *voice* is recognized and realized through the context as well: song texts in which various figures and situations represent inherited archaic concepts and mythemes, the ritual act itself and its contents, through temporal, territorial, and physical parameters. This can be illustrated by several examples.

Some of the most revealing examples of the meaning and role of ritual sound are found in Bulgarian girls’ rituals. In Western Strandja, for instance, the voices of the girls accompanying the *Enyova Bulya* ritual<sup>4</sup> are described by

<sup>4</sup> *Enyova Bulya*, literally “Enyo’s Bride”, is a ritual performed on *Enyovden* (lit. Enyo’s Day, 24 June) by girls of marriageable age who are not yet married; on the evening before, the girls leave posies (each with something to show which posy belongs to which girl) in a big

some of the performers as *umereshki*, i.e. “funereal”, and the songs consist of laconic musical phrases. The “singing around” one or more basic tones, occasionally ending with a variable *finalis*, and the multiple repetitions account for the “openness” of these ritual tunes – as a semantic expression of *passage* or *transition*. Such vocal performance and sound is in tone with the character or “ethos”/ἦθος of this ritual – of consecration and divination as well as a ritual for rain – if we look at it through the eyes of its performers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The concept of the *otherworld* is found in the very act of singing while standing with face turned to the sun, as well as in the sacred acts of going round the village, fields, graveyard, etc. while imitating flight, of going three times around a spring, house, well, cattle-pen, church with the so-called slow *hodeno horo* or “walked chain-dance”,<sup>5</sup> of stepping over herbs and/or ill people, in the concept of the “transcendent” and other powers of the *group*. The songs have fixed texts (about *Sveti Enyo*/Saint Enyo, *Sveta Marina*/Saint Ma-

copper bowl full of water, which is then left overnight outdoors, “under the stars” as they say (in the yard, under a tree or under a rosebush). A key figure in the ritual is the so-called *Enyova Bulya*, a little girl, most often aged one or two (whose parents are alive; in some villages, however, she must be an orphan), which the girls carry on their shoulders while going round the village, the cattle pens, the fields, the graveyard, etc. She is dressed in bridal costume, waving and flapping the oversize sleeves of her chemise while she is carried around. The girls stop at particular places (at a well, by the river) and ask her what the year will be like (plentiful or poor), to which she replies only by nodding or shaking her head; and the girls divine the future from her reactions and “answers”. According to some old accounts, the girls would hold the child above a well, threatening to drop her into the well if she did not answer their question. In Southeastern Bulgaria, married women would lay out on the ground the herbs they had gathered at dawn, and then the girl carrying the *Enyova Bulya* would step over the herbs (thus ensuring, according to popular belief, that they had healing powers). After completing their rounds (in some villages, on the morning after), they take the posies out of the copper bowl one by one, singing improvised songs to each and thus divining what sort of man each girl might marry. The ritual was accompanied by special songs and dances (for details, see Нейкова 1992).

<sup>5</sup> “The slow *hodeno horo* in a circle ... carries the consecrating and sacred-transcendent character of women’s rites from the period after the decline of ecstatic cultures. ... Following the Christianization of Bulgarian folk culture, it was gradually introduced into most female calendar and marriage rites, but remains most typical of the rites around the spring cycle, associated with *Lazaruvane*, *Velikden* [Easter], *Gergyovden* [Saint George’s Day]...” – Илиева 1980.

*Lazaruvane*: a spring ritual performed by young and unmarried girls of marriageable age, which was preserved in some Bulgarian villages until the mid-twentieth century. The *lazarki* (sing. *lazarka*, the performers of this ritual) are girls entering womanhood; a girl who has not taken part in this ritual does not have the right to marry. The ritual commences with the first of the so-called *lazarichki nedeli* or “*lazarka* Sundays” – the nights before Sunday three to five weeks during Lent, ending with the so-called *bash Lazaritsa*, *Golyama Lazaritsa* or “*Lazaritsa* proper, *Big Lazaritsa*” on the last Sunday before Easter; on these nights the *lazarki* meet at the graveyard, called *obrochishte* or “votive site” in many villages, after the first cockcrow; there they light a fire, sing *lazarka* songs and dance. Depending on the local tradition, *Golyama Lazaritsa* coincides with the day of *Vrubno Vuzkresenie*, i.e.

*rina*, *Domna Tsaritsa*/Queen Domna, the *Zmeitsa*/Dragoness, *Chumen Enyo* (Plague-Stricken Enyo) with a distinctive mythical substratum. Elsewhere, I have tentatively called them “contact” songs. They are “praying” and “sacrificial” songs, articulating and singing the words without strain. This type of songs are found in other traditional Bulgarian rituals as well, and they are invariably connected with a specific act, dance steps (typically, often not in synchrony with the rhythm of the melody), direction of movement, place of performance, etc.

Sound transcendence is a distinctive feature of *women’s ritual behaviour* and songs during the so-called “*passage*” or “*transitional period*” – from the beginning of Lent to Ascension Day. The majority of them are antiphonic and repetitive, blurring the boundaries that mark a beginning and an end, and creating a sense of musical and spatial infinity. Such ritual songs are thought of as mediative, effective, and penetrating.<sup>6</sup> The slow women’s dance-songs of “Kriashen (Christian) Tatars”, performed outside the village on the day of the Holy Trinity, are essentially similar: “Circular movement (with hands held), moving with small steps while intoning, is in essence *not a dance and song* but a vocal-choreographic complex containing the imprint of *past sacrality*. ... The *collective incantatory intonation* that can be heard far away is characterized by passive articulation, by an *instrumental, metallic overtone* ... also manifested in the *drawn-out vowel phonemes awa, ewey*” ... This type of *strained sound* and its apotropaic character is *typical of the most archaic calendar ritual songs*” (Альмеева 1997: 188-189; emphasis added).

A specific musical-stylistic “representation” of the sacred can be found in some diaphonic *lazarka* songs from the Ograzhden region (Southwestern Bulgaria) which are distinctive for their loud “shouting”, their strained and piercing sound. The idea of *intermediacy* is vested in the ritual act itself, in the characteristics of the ritual space and the verbal mythemes. Until the mid-1950s,

Palm Sunday, or *Lazarovden*, i.e. Saint Lazarus’ Day. On that day the *lazarki* go round the village houses or another place, singing and dancing. In many villages, this ritual was performed only in the presence of women; in Southwestern Bulgaria, on *Golyama Lazaritsa* the *lazarki* sing at the grave of a young person who died recently (up to a year before the ritual) and dance with the children born during the year. The biblical legends about the resurrection of Lazarus are “terra incognita” for the performers of this ritual; in science it is regarded as a relic of initiation rites (for a detailed description and analysis, see Нейкова 1986, 1988).

<sup>6</sup> A similar ritual-musical ethos is contained in a *lazarka* dance-song from the village of Logodash (near Blagoevgrad), performed in the past in the village square on *Golyama Lazaritsa*. The numerous repetitions of the melody represented a specific ritual content (“the girl-warrior”) and accompanied a “peaceful” chain-dance while the newly married women handed out ritual bread (*pogacha*) – it was believed that those who had not participated in this part of the ritual could not go to *umereshka*, i.e. a commemoration or funeral. The song is made up of more than 100 verses and tells the story of a girl who joins the king’s army in her father’s place. This story, which contains elements of the archaic kingly *initiation rites* involving *ordeals*, appears in different versions in different parts of Bulgaria (Нейкова 1986).

<sup>7</sup> For more on the “E, U, I” vocal levels in Bulgarian diaphonic songs, see Кауфман Д. 1998.

the *lazarki* performed three songs in *one and the same voice/tune* at the graveyard at night during Lent (during the so-called *lazarichki nedeli*). They sang them standing on the threshold of the church and facing east. The first song contains the storyline of *transportation of souls across a bridge*, representing the concept of *passage/transcendence* and of the existence of *an intermediate dimension/state* after death (Нейкова 1986, 1988): “The dancing and singing of the *lazarki* around the fire in the graveyard [after singing the three songs mentioned above] ... is reminiscent of the morning dance around a fire lit near a dead person in Romania, known as *zarole*. ... The *Lazaruvane*, which is based on a ritual with a commemorative function ... constitutes initiation into death, into sacrifice which was performed at Easter. It is part of a large cycle of spring rites dedicated to the dead ... culminating and ending on Ascension Day” (Кайфман Д. 1982: 18).

The transcendent and probably “transporting” function of these *lazarka* voices is also contained in the songs performed at the grave of a young person up to a year after his or her death by the *lazarka group* on the day of *Golyama Lazaritsa*. These rituals and ritual songs were not accompanied by any *soul journey*. The behaviour of the women’s groups and men’s bands that symbolizes *transcendence* (including in the form of “flight” – as in the case of the *Enyova Bulya* flapping the shirtsleeves of her chemise, or the *nestinari*) cannot even be compared to two of the most specific features of shamanhood: the departure of the soul from the body and the soul journey in the Upper and Lower World.

Among the Bulgarians, the idea of *passage* or *transcendence* appears in a different ritual situation and intonation form. The songs of the *ritual groups* have a *constant and repetitive melodic structure* as well as a strictly defined time and place of performance, which is a “law”. In her above-quoted account of “Kriashen Tatars”, Almeeva (Альмеева 1997: 188) adds that “elderly performers *refuse to sing the drawn-out dance- and other calendar-songs*, knowing that because of their advanced age they will be unable to reproduce the specific timbre of the *sound-ideal* [emphasis added]”. The similarities in the musical thinking and vocal style of ritual songs of the Bulgarians and “Tatars” stem from the similar ethno-cultural context and historical characteristics.<sup>8</sup>

In folk tradition, the unity and synchrony of elements like music, word/verses, and dance are associated with the concept that they function precisely as *one* in rituals – with their specific structural-intonational form and modus/scale, verbal contents and movements. In the case of the Bulgarians, the *constancy* and specific style of this behaviour is also preserved in the process of their transmission from generation to generation – based on the belief that the *voice/melody* is a *norm* whose observance determines the successful performance of rituals, the future crop, the length of people’s lives, the benevolence of the God of many

<sup>8</sup> According to A. Trofimov (А. А. Трофимов 1993b: 187), “Kriashen Tatars is the name of an old Chuvash population in the Volga Region.”

names... At the same level, the *otherworld* is represented in the **instrumental sound** – not as an objectified “reversed” content of worlds but as its *musical symbol*. One example here is the musical-instrumental “leading away” of the sacrificial animal in the Strandja *panagyr* (see chapter “Pèrke”), in which the sacrificial ritual is accompanied by a strictly fixed bagpipe melody. Irrespective of whether it sounds like a personification of a saint/deity, *playing* – as an *enthusiastic* mediative contact – similarly to singing, becomes part of the *performance* of rituals, while instrumental *melodies* become a *synonym* of the ongoing ritual act.<sup>9</sup>

The musical-folklore and ritual heritage of the Bulgarians is the product of a long ethno-cultural historical synthesis and it definitely contains ancient Bulgar elements as well. As a way of sound production and construction, as an essence, structure and concepts of musical instruments, as a vocal *musical phraseology* based on a *system of scales* (moduses), i.e. in its present sound and “form”, the Bulgarian vocal and instrumental folk style is the product of a consciousness which does not contain any traces of the “order” of shamans. Also emblematic in this respect are the differences between the *tupan* and the *shaman’s drum*, which originated in entirely *different historical epochs* and have entirely different ethno-cultural histories:

- Unlike the Bulgarian *tupan*, the *shaman’s drum* is a *single-headed skin drum* decorated with *images and ornamental objects*; all shaman drums have a handle.
- The rules and concepts associated with the making and maintenance of shaman’s drums are foreign to the Balkans; so far there is no evidence whatsoever that they were known to the ancient Bulgars and Thracians.
- The close relationship between *shamans and their drums* is not typical of the *tupan* and the *tupan-player*, including in the present-day Greek territories.
- The Siberian peoples have *men’s and women’s shaman drums*, a distinction which is not found in the Bulgarian tradition of instrumental folklore.
- Unlike the style of performance on the Balkans in general and of the Bulgarians in particular, there are no constant rhythmic stereotypes in the performance of shamans. Whereas the Bulgarian instrumental style is characterized by the observance of specific rhythmic patterns, the concept of such *necessity*, importance and role of rhythm is not found in shamanhood. This is an especially important difference in the rituals and relevant musical tradition of the shamanic unstratified Siberian peoples, theological communities, and “classical” agricultural societies.

One reliable indicator of ethno-cultural identity in the Bulgarian, ancient Bulgar or any other community, is the ritual system as a form of *faith-behaviour* (whose precepts are followed, even if only “by tradition”, to this very day) and its sound in *ritual space*. Musical folk traditions are one of the faces of any community. As part of the folklore of a particular people, shamanhood, too,

<sup>9</sup> For more on the functions and essence of instrumental performances, see Фол В., Нейкова Р. 2000, Part Two.

preserves the latter's specific spiritual and musical-expressive features. The images on shaman drums, the concepts associated with them, the style of performance and, generally, the "personal" meaning attributed to the drum, symbolize the very essence of shamans and shamanhood, their knowledge and powers. As noted earlier, shamans are required to know the mytho-narratives, songs, spells, incantations, etc. – that is, the stock of the folk music and tradition – of their people. Thus, **shamans themselves focus and emanate their community's conceptions** of the universe – through speech, "music", gestures... To put it otherwise, **the shaman is expected to perform a number of key social and ritual functions which, in stratified (ancient and later) agricultural societies, are assigned to and performed by the calendar-based ritual system and ritual groups** (female or male). I believe this is the fundamental principle encapsulating the essence and uniqueness of the *shamanhood* phenomenon in its "classical" form. I completely agree with Hultkranz that shamanhood is "a typical phenomenon of hunting cultures in general ... developed around the shaman" (Hultkranz 1973: 36; 1984: 32; emphasis added). The evolution from the *individual figure* of the shaman with his or her unpredictable psychosomatic behaviour and soul journey to the "canonized" behaviour of the ritual group that consecrates space by walking, singing, playing a particular musical instrument and/or dancing, the evolution from *object* to *non-object*, from visible enactment of a concept or vision to its "invisible", not physical but symbolic representation, from the conception underlying the *shaman's drum* to the conception underlying the *melody, rhythm and ethos of scales* on the Balkans (which have deep theological and doctrinal roots, as attested also by written sources), is absent in classical shamanic communities. Total disregard of this factor is the main "stumbling block" for Bulgarian researchers who "discover" evidence and relicts of shamans in a non-shamanic (contemporary and ancient, Bulgar and Thracian) social and ritual context that represents an entirely different ideological level.<sup>10</sup>

The ethno-cultural memory and worldview of sedentary Bulgarian farmers *require another type of ideology and ritual system*; that is why in their tradition there is no figure that has the specific features distinguishing shamans: the specific form of initiation, contents and functions of ritual accessories, sound-expressive language, psychosomatic behaviour, etc. The definition of typologi-

<sup>10</sup> For example: "A number of elements typical of the shamanic ritual can be found in the acts of the *rusalii*, (*kalushari*), especially in those connected with magic healing (seizures, incantations, dances, accessories, etc.)" – Овчаров 1997: 25-26; 73. Both the *rusalii* and the *kalushari* are men's *ritual groups* with a *musician*, with specific ritual dances performed to instrumental melodies in a strictly fixed order and on command. It is believed that the *kalushari* can heal the so-called *rusalska bolest/illness*; the ritual is fixed in time – it is performed only at the beginning of June, and follows a strictly defined procedure. The author obviously does not make a difference between *rusalii* and *kalushari* and lacks *field* knowledge in this sphere.

cally and functionally similar elements among different societies as evidence of the "existence of shamanism" indicates a fondness for the term rather than serious research efforts and capacity to peel back the layers of memory. The latter are easily "recognized" only by choreographers looking for strong "folkloric" sensations on stage, and by some armchair scholars.<sup>11</sup> Using the term "shamanhood" or "shamanism" without real evidence of its actual existence is an unjustified manipulation. Even Eliade who, to quote M. Hoppál (2000), "never saw a living shaman and did no field work of this kind", *repeatedly* warns that "the existence of one or more shamanic elements in an Indo-European religion is not enough to assume that ... it had a shamanic structure" (Елиаде 1996: 408; 19; 43; 458).

The implicit assumption throughout this book is that similar animistic, mythological and other ideas can be articulated, sung and recreated at different worldview and musical levels – among different peoples and in different types of rituals. One can find in the expressive systems of folk traditions things that are similar in form but *different in ethno-cultural content*. Sometimes the trans-continental conceptual and ritual similarity of certain elements is a good basis for analysis of how they acquired their unique role and functions in a particular community. This is part of the question concerning the preservation and gradual "transposition" of archaic prototypes in traditional memory. They are contained not only in petrified and archaic forms, but also in the movement of *living* cultures. As noted earlier, coincidence of faith-rites and official state religion is not found as a synchronic phenomenon in them, including on the territories inhabited by ancient Bulgars/Bolgars and contemporary Bulgarians...

The social and political fate of the ancient states of the Bulgars is not a prime concern of ethnologists. The historiographic evidence used below is designed only to help us elucidate presumable levels of their *culture* as *faith-behaviour*.<sup>12</sup> Before I address this question, I would like to remind readers of a basic rule which I hope has become clear by now: "CLASSICAL" SHAMANHOOD IS NOT AN IDEOLOGY OF STATES. In itself, it is obviously an archaic, extremely resilient folkloric phenomenon which is found in societies without "deep social differentiation" (Олех 2001: 27) or in societies organized as chiefdoms (such as, for example, the Mongol Empire). The next social step "upwards", i.e. to-

<sup>11</sup> "The representations of shamanic ecstasy which we find in the Ancient Greek, Thracian and, generally [?], Balkan mythological and folkloric material ... it is easy to recognize [?] that a particular motif has originated from a shamanic structure ... underlying primarily ecstasy and, less so, enthusiasm" – Богданов 1999: 147-158.

<sup>12</sup> For more on history as "learning about the behaviour" and the idea of statehood of the Bulgarians, manifested as "constant occurrence and return", as a "synthesis of behaviours (=cultures)" through which a particular territory becomes "a country, i.e. a cultural-historical space", see Фол Ал. 2000: 220-222.



wards statehood, preconditions and requires another type of ideological forms and ritual system. It is probably *recognition of the need* of the latter that drove the Mongol rulers to turn to Lamaism in the thirteenth century, and later, after their invasions to the west, to Islam.

In its various stages of existence, the ancient Bulgar state was built by one main ruling centre. The problem of the ethno-cultural consolidation of a heterogeneous formation (containing other ethnic, non-Bulgar components), of its constant "materialization" and maintenance as a state was a central problem upon every successive territorial transposition of the Bulgars.<sup>13</sup> In chronological order, the territories which the Bulgars migrated to and conquered are Northwestern Pamir and Hindu Kush, the region of the Northern Caucasus and the Sea of Azov, the Volga Region and the adjacent lands to the east and west, and the Balkan Peninsula. The roots of Bulgarian statehood and of the Bulgarian economic model are sought by historians in the lands of ancient Baktria, where the Bulgars probably had "an established state-administrative structure" in the second century AD (Цветков 1998: 150). "The place of the Bulgarians (registered on the map of Central Asia as early as the first millennium BC) is where Indian written sources mention the people called **Bolkhi/Bolkhiki**, Arab sources the land **Balkhara** and the state **Bulgar**, Sogdian sources **Blgar**, and Tajik sources **Palgar/Falgar**. Judging from the Latin *Anonymous Chronograph*, this place had its centre in present-day Balkh, the ancient Baktria, in Northern Afghanistan" (БЪЛГАРИТЕ 2000: 7).

According to Armenian chroniclers and geographers, a mass of Bulgars settled in the region of the Caucasus around the third-fourth century. An account by the Syrian Mar-Abasa-Katin (third century), cited by Smirnov, suggests that Bulgars settled in this region earlier: "The Bulgars living north of the Caucasus invaded Armenia in 149-127 BC" (Смирнов 1951: 9, with References). The permanent ethnic stabilization of the Bulgars probably began after they migrated to the region north of the Caucasus. I want to remind the reader, however, that such a thing as an invariable, static ethnic structure is non-existent in historical reality. In the case of the Bulgarians too, both the ancient and the contemporary population is heterogeneous, being in a **constant process of consolidation**. In the period under review, one can hardly speak of the existence of ethnic, linguistic and racial homogeneity in the different state formations; it is also well-known that the ruling ethnic group (which gave the formation its name) was not always the largest one. Historiography provides evidence about the last and most powerful formation of the Bulgars before they migrated to the Danube River region, recorded by Theophanes and Nicephorus as "Old, Great Bulgaria" (παλαιά Βουλγαρία Τστρον ἐστὶν ἡ μεγάλη/ μεγάλη Βουλγαρία

<sup>13</sup> For more on *statehood* and *state* as forms of organization of society, on the process of evolution from the former to the latter, a process directly associated with the characteristics of the social structure, law, ideology, writing system, economy, etc., see Порожанов 2000.

– Златарски 1994: 100); little is known about the period before that. Great Bulgaria is also known as Kubrat's Bulgaria, named after Khan Kubrat (c. 584-642), who overthrew dependence on the western Turkic peoples and succeeded in uniting the Azov and ante-Caucasus Bulgar clans. This formation was located in the lands between the Caucasus and the Dnieper River (in the region of the Sea of Azov and along the Northern Black Sea coast, including the Taman Peninsula); significant territories to the east, north and west of the Sea of Azov were under the control of the Bulgars in this period (seventh century). The *Geography* of the Armenian Anania Shirakatsi (Ananias of Sirak) from the second half of the seventh century mentions the name *Bulgar/Bulkar/Blkar* (Златарски 1994: 103, with sources). Traces of this name (and of *Balkh*, the capital of the Pamir-Hindu Kush Balkhara/Balgara) as well as of the ethno-cultural heritage of the Bulgars are found in *Balkaria* in the Caucasus (БЪЛГАРИТЕ 2000: 27).

Modern science has identified three main, diachronically manifested, ethno-cultural heritages in the Northern Caucasus: ancient Caucasian (indigenous), Alanic, and Turkic (ancient Bulgars, Khazar, Kuman). According to Miziyevev (1990, 1994), the ancient Bulgars in the Caucasus were successors of the Scythians and the Huns, according to Smirnov, of the Scythians and the Alans, while according to experts in Khazar history, the Khazars and the Bulgars were practically one and the same people speaking one and the same language. The contemporary **Balkar and Karachay** are a substratum of indigenous Caucasian, Iranian, Turkic peoples, "one and the same ethnic community" with the same language, way of life and customs (for details, see Пахаев 1988). They are "very close to the Danubian Bulgarians" anthropologically, while their language is very close to that of the contemporary "Tatars" (more precisely, to that of the Kipchak sub-group – Булгари 1998: 37, with References). Many authors share the opinion as to the Bulgar origins of the Balkar and their related Karakachai, which is based on archaeological finds and facilities (including ancient Bulgar runic inscriptions), traces in traditional culture (such as felt articles, elements of women's traditional costume and traditional food, the name of the Supreme God – Teiri, unknown among the other Caucasian peoples), place-names found in Danubian Bulgaria as well, preserved names of some branches and tribal groups of Bulgars, etc. (Miziyevev 1994). Part of these finds were discovered in the ancient North Caucasian town of Humara (on the right bank of the Kuban River), the largest military-political and cultural-economic centre of Caucasian Bulgars and the Khazar Khaganate. The constructions found on the site of the town (as well as other archaeological sites), the skillfully cut and tight-fitting stone blocks in the foundations of buildings, indicate that the ancient Bulgars were masters of stone architecture. "This skill of ancient Bulgarians, reflected in the monuments of Balkaria and adjacent regions, has been in a quite full measure preserved at modern Balkarians, and especially in Cherek canyon. Maybe this is why other Balkarians call them 'hunachi malkarlila', that

is, Balkarian masons." Another specific feature of the material culture of the Bulgars was the construction of frame dwellings of whole-tree logs (preserved among the Karachay) which is unknown, for example, in the Eastern Caucasus. There is written and archaeological evidence indicating a long-lasting Bulgar presence and self-consciousness in the Northern Caucasus, where "a large part of the population continued to call themselves Bulgars" even after the disintegration of Great Bulgaria (Miziyeu 1994; Мизиёв 1998; *История Кабардино-Балкарии*<sup>14</sup>).

The evidence of a sedentary way of life, of agrarian livelihoods and crafts, of maintenance of an administrative and military system within a particular hierarchy, i.e. of long-lasting presence on a particular territory, attests to more than a constructive behaviour only. In the early Bulgar states, these factors required an *adequate type of a family- and calendar-based ritual system* which, as is well-known, "best represents the peculiarities of the people's worldview, of its ethnic mentality" (Хрущева 2001: 23). It is precisely in this respect that there are fundamental differences between the traditions of the classical shamanic Siberian and Middle Asian peoples, on the one hand, and the traditions of the peoples now inhabiting the ancient Bulgarian territories, on the other. One especially important peculiarity is the existence of a *calendar-based ritual system* in the lands of the ancient Bulgarian state formations and their successors. The "archaic" (as Kuchmezov puts it) North Caucasian culture contains an abundance of ritual poetry, calendar-based song cycles, mythical concepts and legends, names of ancient pagan protectors and rites of worship, musical instruments, the *Nart Sagas* (known to all Caucasian peoples), etc. In the Caucasus, the concepts and acts regulating society and its transitions and passages are "multiplied" in a calendar-based ritual system that is quite close to that preserved on the Balkans, where we have a mysterial ritual passage of the group and an "ascendant" status of the individual in society leading to other rights and activities in the ritual sphere. The Balkar had many calendar rituals devoted to ancient deities, and most of those rituals were preserved even after the adoption of Islam. Kuchmezov (Кучмезов 2001: 66-79) has studied numerous archaeological sites and rituals to learn more about the cultivation and processing of farms crops in ancient times (for more on the Kuban or so-called "Black Bulgars", see *ibid.* p. 71), proceeding from the assumption that developed agriculture and "stable economic models" are found only among peoples with established ruling structures and powerful military organization. Last but not least, the musical folk tradition of the Caucasian peoples (including the Balkar and the Karachay) is specific, highly-developed and rich in genres, including polyphonic ones, and it is one of the most interesting and remarkable phenomena of East European culture.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* for more on archaeological finds from the eighth century and later, on seventeenth-century inscriptions containing "unique Bulgarian-Balkarian language parallels", etc.

Legend has it that Khan Kubrat bade his sons to stick together. Khan Kubrat's bidding probably attests to a consciousness about the importance of the unity of territory and the form in which it could be preserved and ruled: through *centralized state power*. This strategy obviously continued to be applied over the next centuries, including in Great Bulgaria (sixth-seventh centuries), as indicated by the political and ideological policies of the successive Bulgar rulers. In the seventh century, the state was torn apart by the Khazars, but over the next centuries the Bulgars succeeded in expanding its territory – in the Volga Region and on the Balkans. The so-called Volga Bulgaria, with Bilyar and, later, Great Bolgar as its capital, was established in the lands of the ancient indigenous Volga peoples (Cheremis/Mari, Votyak/Udmurt, Mordvin, etc.) and survived under that name until the thirteenth century. Its stratification, state, social and military structure and hierarchy have been reconstructed from written and archaeological sources, including ancient coins (Денисов 1959; Валеёва 1983; Давлетшин 1990; Закиёв, Кузьмин, Юманди 1993; Мифтахов, Мухамадеева 1995; Исхаков, Измайлов 2001, etc.). The presence and culture of the Volga Bulgars led to the development of agriculture, metallurgy and trade along the Volga River and in the direction of Central Asia, crafts, the art of war, construction of defence facilities, irrigation and canal systems, cities and other population centres, etc. In 922 AD Khan Almush adopted Islam as the official state religion. Significant preconditions for that were the existing close trade and political contacts with the East and with Middle Asia, and the prospect of securing military-political support from Baghdad and overthrowing the dependence on the Khazars (which was achieved in the tenth century). The adoption of Islam "reinforced feudal relations subjected and united the various local rulers (the feudal elite) under centralized state rule" (Браславский 1997). Scholars consider the Bulgar state in the Volga Region to have been a key factor for the consolidation of the various non-Bulgarian peoples during the Middle Ages. Its historical contribution to the development of the local "national traditions" is formulated in a similar way by generations of scholars in contemporary Chuvash and Tatar science (Смирнов А. П. 1951: 3; Кондратьёв 1991: 107; Трофимов 1993; Нуриёва 2001, Ильина 1997, Файзрахманов 2000, КЧЭ 2001: 19, etc.).<sup>15</sup> Their conclusions are based on various archaeological finds as well as on "the Bulgarian lexical layers in the different languages and the architectural monuments in mediaeval Russia" (Нуриёва 2001; Ильина 1997).

<sup>15</sup> The official scientific view is that the main distinctive features of the Chuvash people were formed in Volga Bulgaria in the eighth-twelfth centuries, and that many elements of Chuvash material and spiritual culture come from "the old Bulgarian state" (Кондратьёв 1995: 241); that the Chuvash have preserved the oldest Bulgarian language (Ашмарин 1902, Катанов 1920, Егоров В. Е. 1971, Федотов 1980, etc.; most recently, Кондратьёв 2001; КЧЭ 2001). It is universally accepted that the Bulgars and the Bulgar heritage in the Volga Region and Northern Caucasus are of Turkic origin and Turkic ethno-cultural identity.

Uniting many tribes in the Central Volga Region, the Bulgarian state played a not insignificant role in their ethnogenetic process. Without the history of the Volga Bulgars, one cannot write the history of the Kazan Tatars, the Chuvash, Mordvin, Mari, Udmurt and Komi. ... The Volga Bulgars are the basis on which the Kazan Khanate was formed. (Смирнов А. П. 1951: 3)

The Chuvash people was formed in the period between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries on the basis of a union of Bulgarian and Suvar tribes ... and part of the Finno-Ugric population. The Bulgaro-Chuvash are at its core. (КЧЭ 2001: 19)

In 1236 Volga Bulgaria was conquered by the Mongols. It became a province of the Blue Horde founded in 1243 by Batu within the Mongol Empire. Although it lost its political independence, the Bulgar population enjoyed a significant degree of economic and ideological autonomy. The culture of this Mongol-ruled territory had enormous influence on the ideology and development of the Blue Horde itself, which reached its height in the first half of the fourteenth century (Фахрутдинов 1984; Давлетшин 1990; Казаков 1997).

In the thirteenth century, the newly founded Ulus of Jochi/Blue Horde **did not have a universally accepted official religion**. ... Islam was adopted for a number of reasons: the desire of the Muslims themselves to restore the caliphate, secondly ... the Mongol elite, owing to the weakness of its own religious traditions, adopted Islam for political reasons – in order to succeed in preserving the conquered territories which had different ethnic components. ... A. Khalikov notes that “part of the Mongol elite, however, remained pagan. Unlike the Bulgars, who had long been integrated into the urban type of culture, the conquerors were ... nomads ... pagan-shamanists. ... Islam was adopted by a small part of the Mongols who had changed to a settled way of life.” ... After they lost their independence in 1236, the Volga Bulgars, who saw the Mongol invasions as a sign of the “Wrath of Allah”, became even more religious. ... Their religiosity, together with the privileges granted to them, played a crucial role in the Islamization of the Golden Horde and the spread of Sufism... (Гарипов; emphasis added)

As a result of the Mongol invasion, the Volga Bulgars and their territory eventually came to be known by another name – **Tatar**, as they were first called by the Mongols and, after the second half of the fifteenth century, by the Russians as well (the information below is from Булгари 1998: 12; Бушаков, with References). The name *Tatar* is found in Turkic runic inscriptions (from 732) from the time of the second Turkic Khaganate, and later, in the eighth and ninth centuries, in Uighur and Chinese sources. In the eighth century the Tatars inhabited the northeastern part of present-day Mongolia and, after the ninth century, the territory of what is now East Turkestan. Khotan-Sakh documents from the ninth-tenth centuries identify the Tatars as belonging to the Tokuz-Oguz and as Turkic speakers. According to Chinese chronicles, the Tatar (*Dada*, *Datan* in Chinese) tribe inhabited the upper and middle reaches of the Amur River in the tenth-eleventh centuries. At the beginning of the twelfth century, Khabul Khan united the Mongol tribes along the Amur River, which in 1161 were de-

feated by the *Jurchen* in alliance with the *Tatars*; the union was restored by Khabul Khan's great-grandson Temuchin, the future Genghiz Khan. “Chinese historians introduced great confusion in the ethnonym *Tatar*.” Until the twelfth century they regarded the Mongols as *part of the Tatars* (even though Genghiz Khan and his followers called themselves *Mongols*); in the twelfth century they used this name to refer to the entire population from the Great Wall of China to the taiga, whereas in the thirteenth century they viewed *the Tatars as part of the Mongols*; in the thirteenth century Tatars and Mongols became synonymous. In the Mongol campaigns westwards the advance guard of the army was made up of *Tatars*, and that is why the Mongol army came to be called *Tatar*. Some scholars think that at the beginning of the thirteenth century the Tatars were practically wiped out by the Mongols, who kept the ethnonym as a name for any “defeated people” (including the Bulgarian people in the thirteenth century).

Many ancient chroniclers regard the Tatars as Türks, and it is indeed true that many of the conquered Turkic peoples adopted this name. In the thirteenth century again, *Tatars* became an ethnonym for the entire population of the Golden Horde; in Chinese historiography it is synonymous with “barbarians” (Файзрахманов 2000: 92-94; Исхаков, Измайлов 2001: 40-41, 50; Булгари 1998: 10; Смирнов А. П. 1946). “In the Russian Empire the name *Tatar* was used for peoples of different origins, mostly Turkic (Volga, Crimean, Astrakhan, Caucasian, Siberian, Altaic and other Tatars). The ethnonym is also used widely in ethnic and place-names of many Asian peoples” (Бушаков). There is no sufficiently reliable evidence about the language and culture of the ancient Tatars in the period between the sixth and eighth centuries; neither is there consensus on their ethnic origin and identity (Mongol or Turkic), or “a reliable and universally accepted etymology of the ethnonym” (Исхаков, Измайлов 2001: 50; Булгари 1998: 11-12; Бушаков).

The new Kazan period of the Volga Bulgars began at the beginning of the fifteenth century. The old northern fortress of Volga Bulgaria, Kazan (founded, according to archaeological evidence, in the tenth-eleventh centuries – Фахрутдинов 1993) attracted the refugees fleeing from the successive devastating Mongol campaign towards the town of Bolgar in the fourteenth century, and came to be known also as Bolgar al-Jadid (the New Bolgar – Халил 2002: 11). The Kazan Khanate inherited the traditions of Volga Bulgaria (Ильина 1997: 216; Сайдашева 2001: 484-490); in the mid-fifteenth century (1552) it was defeated by the Principality of Moscow, and the tsar added to his title the name of the conquered land (“Tsar of Bulgaria, Tsar of Kazan”), which Russian tsars bore until 1917 (Халил 2002: 12; Яруллина 2003: 57, with References).

During the reign of Peter the Great all Muslim peoples came to be called Tatars. “The residents of Kazan and the Kazan area invariably called themselves Bulgars until the Soviet October Revolution” (Халил 2002: 12; 23). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Bolshevik regime created the present-day Chuvashia and Tatarstan on the territory of the former Volga Bulgaria (in-

cluding the Kazan Khanate). The two republics were founded by a decree of Lenin (dated 27 May 1920), implemented personally by Stalin after 1921. The communist regime actually continued the Russian imperial policy, subjecting the so-called "Bulgarists" to cruel repressions (Булгари 1998: 136; Халил 2002: 28).<sup>16</sup> Communist propaganda asserted that "Volga and Crimean Tatars had come to Europe well-nigh from Mongolia as invaders, and this inevitably gave rise to anti-Tatar sentiments" (Бушаков). The name remains controversial in contemporary Tatarstan to this very day. Tatars and Chuvash still remember that they are descendants also of the Volga Bulgars (whom they call *Bolgars*, *Bulgars*), whereas the Chuvash themselves remember that they are descendants of the Volga Bulgars who were not Islamized in the tenth century. Even though contemporary Tatars have nothing in common either with the "Ghengizars" or with the ancient Tatars, the name Tatar is now used as an ethnonym in official and scientific literature. For many contemporary Tatars it is also a means of the now much-desired political dissociation from the Russian Federation.

The issue of the origins and ethnic identity of the Tatars in contemporary Turkestan is discussed in many scientific publications, but it is not a subject of this book. Here the historical facts about the territory under review and its spiritual contents are of great importance to our subject. It is impossible to study any spiritual culture without knowing how names relate to ethno-cultural contents, for it is well-known that "the history of an ethnonym is not always a history of the relevant ethnic group".<sup>17</sup> The history of the name "Tatar" is an example of the metamorphosis of an ethnic self-designation into an exonym and, eventually, into a new ethnonym. If taken in its authentic, original form and meaning, *Tatar* as a noun and adjective *definitely implies shamanhood* as found in many regions of Asia and among all Mongol peoples. However, the existing written evidence, archaeological finds and, generally, all studies on the Volga Bulgars, indicate that they had another type of social-political structure and spiritual world. In the context of the subject of this book, here we need to look at two main spheres in which the specificity of ancient Bulgar culture and ideology was preserved and manifested: the **urban culture** formed after the adoption of Islam, and the **traditional folk ritual system** which has preserved the distinctive features of the ancient faith-behaviour.

<sup>16</sup> For more on the brutal repressions committed by the Bolshevik regime against Volga Bulgars, see Яруллина 2003. For more on the contemporary Bulgarian National Congress in the city of Kazan, on its creation, official status, organization, statutes, political and ideological positions, main activities and goals, etc., see <http://bolgar.by.ru/bnk.htm>

<sup>17</sup> "By virtue of historical circumstances, the ethnonym of one people may become a name of another people. ... The Finnish name for the Swedish Varangians, *Ruotsi*, became the name of Kievan Rus in which the Varangians were the elite of the prince's guards. ... After the disintegration of the state, the name *Rus* spread and was preserved for the contemporary Russians and other peoples" (Бушаков, with References).

With the spread of Islam (Sufism) in Volga Bulgaria, schools were opened and the Koran and various theological treatises began to be studied. Bulgars began using the Arabic alphabet, which replaced the old runic, according to the universally accepted view, script. "The Azov and Black Sea Bulgars wrote on wax-coated wooden tablets, whereas the Volga Bulgars [in the ninth-tenth centuries] wrote on processed animal skin ... and paper imported from Central Asia" (Мифтахов 2004: лекция 13 – Духовная культура Волжских Булгар). According to Клышторный (Кляшторный 2005: 102), "the widespread use of the East European variant of the ancient Turkic runic script along the Volga River, from the Northern Caucasus to the River Danube Valley, is due precisely the Bulgars". In other words, on that basis they were entirely ready to adopt the Arabic alphabet and "develop a higher written culture of their own" (Бариев 1997). Following the example of Muslim literature and Arab-Persian authors, the Bulgars began creating religious-didactic, vocal and instrumental works. This was also determined by the nature of Sufism, in whose rituals music and the rhythm of physical movements have great religious meaning (Сайдашева 2001: 484; Мухаметшин 2001: 429). Eventually, a new type of **urban musical culture**, including a court musical culture, was formed; it used flute-like, reed, harp-like, percussion and other instruments "constituting the specificity of Turkic culture in its pre-Islamic period and its contact with the Iranian-speaking peoples of Middle Asia". The connection of "the traditional folklore of the Tatars with China and early Buddhism" is manifested also in the musical thinking, pentatonic scales, musical organology and its specific names among the "Turko-Bulgars" even before the adoption of Islam (Макаров 1997: 206-207). The monodic style of performance, which reached its culmination in the period of the Kazan Khanate, was formed and asserted in urban musical life. This process was closely connected with the theological chanting of texts from the Koran, based on metro-rhythmic formulas and the inherited pentatonic basis, on gradual smooth melodic movement, etc. The flowering of **professional music-making and composition** and of **urban spiritual culture** during the Middle Ages, when the **normative literary language** was also formed,<sup>18</sup> is also recorded in written monuments from this period. It is viewed as a "new interpretation of the early forms of urban musical culture of the Muslim Bulgars" and as proof of "the resilience of the deep folk-vocal traditions" (Сайдашева 1997: 191, 192).

The spread of Islam had various effects on traditional culture in the lands of Volga Bulgaria. One problem that has been studied actively in recent years is the so-called "Islamic-pagan syncretism". There are some accounts of "unright-

<sup>18</sup> The earliest extant monument of the ancient Bulgarian literary language is Kul Gali's poem "Kissa-i Yusuf" ("Legend of Yusuf"); we also know from written sources of the existence of a *History of Bulgaria* from the thirteenth century (Булгари 1998: 60).

teous" behaviour on the part of the khans themselves in the period after the official adoption of the new religion. It is commonly known that orthodox Islam was confined primarily to the cities and the feudal elite, while the rural and urban common population practised for centuries folk Islam (a combination of Islamic postulates, and folk concepts and customs – Сайдашева 1997: 190; Мухаметшин 2001: 428). Despite all efforts, the Islamic clergy failed to uproot *Tengriism* and its traces in family and calendar rites in the Volga Region (Уразманова 2001: 398). Even later, in the twentieth century, when collectivization of private property and agriculture (conducted by the Bolshevik regime) destroyed the foundations and mores of the traditional agricultural community, "traditional rites accompanied with songs" continued to be practised in Kriashen Tatar villages until the 1960s (Альмеева 1997: 187-188). According to Saidasheva (Сайдашева 1997: 190), "the agrarian rites of the peoples of Volga Bulgaria and their musical culture" have been preserved precisely among the Kriashen Tatars and the Chuvash; according to A. P. Smirnov (А. П. Смирнов 1946), the largest number of elements of ancient Bulgar culture have been preserved among the Chuvash and the Cheremis/Mari.

In the sixteenth century, Russian colonial policy began imposing Christianity in the Volga Region, but this did not eliminate the pagan elements in traditional culture. The Christianized Tatars (the majority of them were descendants of those who had not converted to Islam in the tenth century) preserved the specific traits of their ritual vocal system with predominant anhemitonic scales and polyphonic singing (pentatonic scales with descending melodic lines, a quantitative principle of musical-verse organization, etc. – Сайдашева 2001: 484, 492). Two centuries after the late conversion of the Chuvash to Christianity (in 1723), their traditional culture was still "conserved", so to speak. The Chuvash preserved their rich *calendar-based ritual system*, based on the ancient Chuvash lunar-solar calendar and different song cycles in a specific regional form, almost until the end of the twentieth century (Кондратьев 2001; КЧЭ 2001; Vikár, Bereczki 1979; Vikár 1996, 1998). "The Chuvash musical-poetic system, a legacy of a highly developed culture, has distinctive, crystalized structures, and that is why it looks highly developed and historically more advanced. ... One of the most distinctive features of Chuvash music is its highly developed pentatonic mode system." The conservation of the specific Chuvash "musical dialect" is explained by the late conversion to Christianity as well as by the absence of a unified economic and cultural centre for centuries, contrary to the case of the Tatars (Кондратьев 2001a: 51-53, 58, 60). More than two hundred deities are known from Chuvash mytho-narratives and rites to this very day, the majority of them by their old pagan names (КЧЭ 2001: 20). The majority of the officially Christianized Chuvash have preserved their old traditional beliefs to this day, while those resettled in compact groups in some regions of southern Tatarstan (Nurlat, Cheremshan, Aksubay, Almetyevsk) still call themselves "non-Christianized" or "non-baptized" Chuvash. The influence of Is-

lam (adopted as the official religion by the Volga Bulgars in the tenth century) is also more tangible among them, and can be found in some of their concepts, names of deities and elements of rituals, etc. These regions, some villages in southern Chuvashia and the traditional culture of the *Kriashen Tatars* (who have not fallen "under the strong equalizing influence of Islam in the last few centuries" – Кондратьев 1991) have preserved specific musical-performance styles and folkloric material which as a whole *attest to the continuity and impulses of a common ancient spiritual system*.<sup>19</sup>

Between 1958 and 1979, several Hungarian expeditions worked in Finno-Ugric, Tatar and Chuvash villages. The materials from these expeditions have been published in collections (Vikár, Bereczki 1971; 1979; 1989) and in Vikár's regional studies (1996, 1998) on Tatar folksongs and music in the Volga-Kama region. During their difficult and extensive fieldwork, the researchers found an ancient calendar-based ritual system, *a developed and well-preserved musical tradition*, a wide range of *musical instruments* (string, wind, percussion instruments) and instrumental melodies, etc. During a field study on the local ritual-musical tradition in August-September 2002, I had the chance to see for myself that an ancient ritual-musical substratum has been preserved in the Volga Region. On the territory of present-day Chuvashia and Tatarstan, there are still villages which have not converted to Christianity or Islam and have preserved their old beliefs to this very day. During my field study in the region, I was fortunate to find that what had been described several decades earlier was still well-preserved, as well as that songs with different functions are still remembered and sung at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Here, however, I have a very serious point to make about the relative nature of the so-called "archaic traits" and their ethnic origin. The contemporary ethno-cultural identity and origin of the **Volga Region peoples** is multi-layered and difficult to analyze. For centuries this territory was a buffer of different migration and ideological waves, an object of different political and economic ambitions, and a centre of cultures of different origins. The processes of contact and ethno-cultural synthesis were especially dynamic in the tenth-thirteenth centuries, but the Mongol-Tatar invasion changed their intensity and direction in the next centuries (Кондратьев 1991: 107). Although it was not crucial, here we must bear in mind also the influence of the Slavs from the fifteenth century onwards, who moved into the Volga Region after the defeat of the Kazan Khanate. In other

<sup>19</sup> The contemporary Chuvash scientific view is that the Chuvash have preserved the oldest Bulgarian language and that the main traits of the Chuvash (Turkic-speaking) people were formed in Volga Bulgaria in the eighth-twelfth centuries; a number of elements in Chuvash material and spiritual culture are also thought to come from the ancient Bulgarian state; the Chuvash language "belongs to the Turkic group of the Altaic language family and is the only living language of the Bulgar-Khazar branch" (Ашмарин 1902; Катанов 1920; Егоров 1971; Федотов 1980, etc.; Кондратьев 1995: 241; 2001a: 47; Андреев 2001: 486-487, with References).

words, owing to the centuries-long spiritual and anthropological synthesis, the designation of a population today as “purely” Finno-Ugric, Chuvash, Tatar or Bulgarian is largely relative, therefore it is more reasonable to study it above all as a form of self-consciousness. The long mutual influences and interactions between material and ritual-musical traditions, especially in the so-called “contact zones” (in some regions of Tatarstan, in the northern Chuvash territories where Mari and Chuvash have been living together for centuries, etc.), have produced an interesting and specific *monolithic culture*. The Tatar, Chuvash and Finno-Ugric peoples have not only distinctive but also common musical-stylistic features which make the region a specific “musical community”. The preservation and manifestation of similar spiritual and material elements among the Mari, Mordvin, Udmurt and especially among the Chuvash and Tatars (for examples and Balkar parallels, see Уразманова 2001: 50, 67) is based on their common origins and on the existence of a “common and ancient ethnogenetic substratum” (Кондратьев 1991: 107). Generally, the latest scientific tendencies view the oral musical tradition and musical-poetic systems in the Volga and Ural regions as belonging to “one and the same musical civilization” (Кондратьев 2001b: 83).<sup>20</sup> Whilst this view may be based on the hypothesis that the ancient Türks originated precisely in this region (Кондратьев 1980: 276, with References; explicitly in Мизиев 1990, with References),<sup>21</sup> what is more important is that the studies of ethnologists and ethnomusicologists have identified a successive stage of ethno-cultural synthesis in these territories.

Based on the existing evidence, the following important points need to be made. The state of the folk traditions (which have inherited ancient Bulgar traits as well) reviewed here, their stylistic and musical-genre specificity, demonstrate fundamental differences from shamanic societies. The system of calendar-based rituals including an abundance of song cycles (which is not found among the Siberian peoples – although they, too, have something like song cycles, the latter are very few), which has been preserved, practised and described for centuries, *does not contain substrate elements* indicating that shamanhood ever existed here. The sound of musical-folk genres (the specific way of sound pro-

<sup>20</sup> For more on the similarities in the ritual songs and traditional cultures (material and spiritual) of the Finno-Ugrians, Chuvash and Tatars, see Кондратьев 1993; 1995; 1997; 2001b; Нагаева et al. 1997; Шутова 2001; Уразманова 2001; Рамазанова 2001; Хрущева 2001; Георги 2001; Миллер Г. Фр. 2001.

<sup>21</sup> According to ethnomusicologists, the musical tradition of the Cheremis/Mari and the Votyak/Udmurt developed under Turkic influence because of its long contact with these peoples (Vikár, Bereczki 1971:32; 1989: 10; 14-15). Vikár and Bereczki regard the Bulgars, too, as being of Turkic origin: “In about the middle of the eighth century, a highly civilized nation came to the vicinity of the Permic peoples, named the Bulgar-Turks, who established a strong empire in the Volga-Kama region. Votyak/Udmurt words borrowed from the Bulgar-Turks ... covered many fields of life, most of them related with agriculture and weaving of spinning” (Vikár, Bereczki 1989:14).

duction, musical organization and form) has nothing in common with the specific performance of shamanic rituals or with the vocal traditions of shamanic peoples. The improvised and often untempered *sound intoning* that is so typical of the latter cannot be heard among the population of contemporary Tatarstan and Chuvashia, including among the descendants of the ancient Finno-Ugrians.<sup>22</sup>

The question of the existence or non-existence of inherited shamanic features is inevitably related to the question of the **origin and ethnic identity of the ancient Bulgars**, a highly controversial and much-debated subject in present-day Bulgaria. In Russia, Chuvashia and Tatarstan, however, the question of the ethnic origin of the ancestors has been resolved easily, as the overwhelming majority of scholars are of the opinion that the ancient Bulgars and the peoples descended from them are Turkic in origin. Some Tatar publications on Volga Bulgaria point out that “the ethnogenesis of the Bulgars differs from that of the majority of Türks” (living in Kazakhstan, Middle Asia and Southern Siberia) because of their early split-away from the latter (Нуриева 2001: 149). The Bulgars are regarded as the first “Turkic-speaking component” in the formation of the Karachay-Balkar people (Хошхожев, Георгиев 1994: 174, 189).

Other scholars support the thesis of the Scytho-Sarmatian ethno-cultural identity and origin of the Bulgars. On the basis of archaeological and anthropological research on the territory of Volga Bulgaria and the Northern Caucasus, in the mid-twentieth century Smirnov argued that the Sarmatians had moved into the Volga Region at an early stage in history, that the Bulgars belonged to the Alanic tribes, and that the region had been Turkicized in several waves (literally “mass penetration of Turkic elements”) in the period of the Khazar Khaganate (sixth-ninth centuries) and later, as a result of Volga Bulgaria’s well-developed trade and political relations with Central Asia and the Arab Caliphate. According to Smirnov, the Mongol conquerors (who, as a rule, were nomadic) brought about only insignificant demographic changes in the Volga Region, therefore one cannot speak of a change of population or culture in Volga Bulgaria. Finds from later times demonstrate a continuity of old building traditions, crafts, an absence of Mongoloid features among this European-looking population, etc. (Смирнов 1946, 1951). The thesis of the Scytho-Sarmatian ethno-cultural identity and origin of the Bulgars is also supported by contemporary scholars, including with regard to the Chuvash people.

The firm belief of Tatar and many other scholars in the Turkic origin and identity of the ancient Bulgars has led to systematic research on the similarities between the Karachay, Balkar, Chuvash, and Volga Tatars, on the one hand, and the Türks, on the other. It is another matter whether such views are accepted or

<sup>22</sup> Individual examples (in Chuvash singing) of improvised, untempered pitches are found, entirely predictably, only in “recitative funeral laments ... in which the musical form is not based on a musical-proper organizing principle” (Кондратьев 2001a: 52-53).

not by contemporary Bulgarian science. The Bulgarian-Turkic similarities, established at different levels, including at the level of language, remain open to further research and interpretation. What is important for the subject under review here is that they are directly or indirectly connected with the *shamanhood* phenomenon. One of the most significant Bulgarian-Turkic parallels noted by Chuvash and Tatar scholars concerns the *structure of the state* (as a synthesis of the nomadic and sedentary ways of life, with a hierarchically organized social system and developed runic writing). They think that the state of the Volga Bulgars, *Tengriism*, and even the pentatonic scales came from the tradition of “the ancient Türks, founded by the Huns” (Файзрахманов 2000: 71, 84, with References; Урманчеев 2001: 467); that “the religion of the Proto-Bulgarians belongs to the ancient Turkic religious system”; that “the cult of Tangra/Teiri among the Karachay, Balkar and Proto-Bulgarians” is “a continuation of the ancient Turkic tradition” (Хошхожев et al. 1994: 171, 174). The question of **Tengriism and shamanhood among the Türks** is examined critically by Gumilyov (Гумильов 1967). Citing extensive and various evidence of the existence of socially differentiated rites and of a “well-developed cult of ancestors” among the Türks, he insists that the “worship of Tengri” should not be confused with shamanhood and that the ancient Turkic priest (*kam*) must not be called “shaman”. “Buryat shamans, as they are commonly but wrongly called, heal and make rain not through the powers of spirit helpers but through prayer to Tengri and to the spirits of the ancestors, who are their protectors and representatives before the deity. ... The analysis of the existing evidence shows that such a system [shamanhood] did not exist among the Türks in the sixth-seventh centuries... The term *kam* and the *kamlanie* itself are first mentioned in the twelfth century, and this suggests that the *kamlanie* among the Türks in Jungaria and Altai emerged later” (Гумильов 1967, citing Банзаров 1891: 37).

Gumilyov (Гумильов 1967) is also one of the few scholars who examine *the soul-concepts of the Türks* to prove that these concepts distinguish the latter from shamanhood. The belief that “the afterlife is a continuation of life on earth does not correspond to animism and presupposes that humans *do not have multiple souls but an individual soul* [emphasis added]”. A similar opinion has been expressed about other territories too: “My own investigations in North America demonstrated quite obviously ... that the *monistic soul-concept* predominates, the closer we come to *high culture*” (Hultkranz 1953: 144; emphasis added). Gumilyov’s thesis is also supported by other contemporary scholars, using different sources from different periods: “In the period of the Great Turkic Khaganate, *shamanhood did not exist* among the Türks; it spread among them from Siberia at a later time, *after the disintegration of the Turkic state ... when Turkic traditional culture regressed* [emphasis added].” The two types of officers – shaman and *kam* (a name later used for shamans as well) – probably existed and operated in parallel for some time (Файзрахманов 2002: 81, 109, with References). According to Chinese sources, “every year the *khagan would*

*lead the nobles to the cave of the ancestors*, where they offered sacrifices ... and in the fifth month they sacrificed horses and rams to Tengri [emphasis added]”. In Central Asia, the public “prayers of the Türks to Tengri” were conducted between what is now 5 and 10 June *without the participation of women and shamans* (after Безертинов 2000: 74-75, with References). Similar evidence is offered by Потаров (Потаров 1991: 264-267) regarding “prayers to Tengri” led by an “elder” (without a shaman) at a sacred tree among the Khakas. During the public prayers and sacrifices to the Sky and the Sun (among the Kachin), “women and shamans were not allowed to take part ... which shows that this cult is not associated with the spirits of the dead or with the ‘primordial’ chthonic/underworld spirits, but with a deity of another order” (Гумильов 1967).

The evidence about the rites of the Türks attests to a type of religiosity that was maintained by the khan institution (not by shamans) among the nobles and the common people (during the “public prayers to Tengri”). In the ancient large state formations in Asia (such as China or Korea), the genealogy of the supreme power and of the territory itself is descended from the *Sky* as an “archetype of universal order”, a “deity of oaths” and patron of warriors. This idea is personified in the figure of the emperor – son of the Sky and its sole representative among humans. It is also represented in the naming of *Tengri* and *Umai* as *Tengrikhan*, *Heavenly Emperor*, *Benevolent Queen*, etc.<sup>23</sup> and even in some Balkar songs addressing “Teiri Khan” recorded in the twentieth century (Хошхожев, Георгиев 1994: 178, 186). The hypothesis about the spread of shamanhood within a politically and socially disintegrated structure (after the break-up of the Turkic khaganates) raises the question of whether it was actually a state or a formation of the *chiefdom* type. It is probable that “native” shamanhood may have existed along with the ritual system of the elite and the single figure of king/priest in some of the multiethnic formations. It is probable that precisely this “native” shamanhood preconditioned the additional spread of the phenomenon and the subsequent syncretic ideological processes in the lands of the Turkic khaganates.

Without taking sides with the proponents or opponents of the thesis of the Turkic origin of the ancient Bulgars, I will note that they left the territory of Pamir even before the creation of the First Turkic Khaganate in the fifth century AD. And that the Bulgarian-Turkic parallels known until now are mostly an Indo-Iranian substratum of the ideology of the common ancestral territory and “pre-shamanic” period of the Türks themselves.

Considering the centuries-long accumulations and synthesis in the rites on the territories under review here, *folk heritage*, along with the various written sources, remains the most reliable source about the ideology of the ancient

<sup>23</sup> For more on the characteristics of the Turkic Tengri and Umai as a divine couple of heavenly rulers, see Исхаков, Измайлов 2001: 49, etc.

Bulgars. In every single formation of a *statehood* or *state* type, the so-called *exoteric, mass rites* functioned parallel with the high kingship ideology, and traces of them are visible in the inherited texts of songs, concepts, and especially in the rites of *passage*. In the age of Thracian rulers on the Balkans, the Orphic *faith-doctrine* was professed within a narrow circle of male aristocratic society, but this doctrine was not alienated from popular belief, for otherwise society would have disintegrated (see chapter "Pèrke"). The re/conceptualization and synthesis of the ancient *religious behaviours* is manifested at different levels in and of the folk worldview, whose values also have a history and transformation *of their own*.<sup>24</sup> One of the things that made me most sceptical about the possibility that shamanhood existed on the Balkans and among the Bulgars in ancient times was the aforementioned Korean shamanhood (see chapter "Classical Territories and Beliefs"). Its survival and "accommodation" on a territory replete with the "systematized, sophisticated and complex teachings" of Confucius, Tao and the Buddha, along with a rich system of family and calendar rites, simply proves that *it is impossible* for a particular ethno-culture to forget its ancient *faith-behaviour*, irrespective of the intensity of the spiritual and social changes in its history. No matter to what extent it has undergone syncretization, "restructuring" and *sui generis* enrichment, the *lofty* spiritual influences cannot erase the prototype (and the figure of the shaman) in the lands where it is an immanent, native and authentic part of faith and rites. And it is difficult for me to imagine that the highly conservative, ancient and rich Bulgarian traditional system would have forgotten the figure of the shaman, i.e. a significant part of itself, had this figure existed at all...

<sup>24</sup> Regarding the Thracian substratum on the Balkans: "the original ritual meaning of the characters in ritual performances has, of course, been forgotten. They have been re-conceptualized in a new way, with another semantic meaning. ... These changes can be observed at least twice – during and after Late Antiquity, as well as after the ninth century. The present semantic meaning of the characters is the product *not of mythological* but of *conceptual* thinking. That is why the significance of ritual reality has become *universal in principle* – for fertility, for rain, for good, for evil. ... Before this level of universals one will find earlier ones, the oldest of which are the pagan realities of the Thracian ethno-cultural substratum" – Фол Ал. 1986: 44-45; emphasis added.

## TÛRĂ/TEIRI/TANGRA: DUES IN ACTU

The ancient religion of the Bulgars remains a subject of heated debate. The majority of scholars think that the religion of the old Bulgarian mediaeval states was *Tengrianstvo* or Tengriism. However, it is wrong to assume that its contents would be the same in the Asian and East European territories where the name of this god (Tangra<sup>1</sup> – precisely a god, not a spirit) is known, or that they would have remained unchanged over the centuries. On the Balkans, in the Volga Region and in the region of the Northern Caucasus and the Sea of Azov, where there has been continuity, gradual development and re-conceptualization of spiritual values and ideas for centuries, the true essence of a supreme deity can be revealed only if it is sought in the specific type of culture and through the normative ideological system within which it functioned – through the system within which one and the same God manifests His supremacy even if **He may have different names in different regions or different periods of history**. It is well-known that in the course of their history, different societies will draw, from an *a priori* established idea of the "divine", the essential ideas that are necessary for the particular society at the time. This holds true for the formation of high, royal "cults" as well as for the "popular" social strata where they turn into *folklore* (literally into *folk lore* or *wisdom*). And that is precisely why in studying religiosity in a cultural-historical context (in an effort to find what is specific to a particular society, people and state), one needs to look at different kinds of sources that reflect the tangible and intangible levels of the culture in question (ranging from music to artefacts, acts, constructions, etc.), thus mutually revealing the principles regulating the relationship between the Cosmos and Humans, and the life of the particular society...

Almost all texts on the religion of the ancient Bulgars are premised on a particular thesis about their origin which, as a rule, claims that all other theses are wrong. One common problem is that they use the method of direct, superficial comparison (of artefacts, concepts, language forms, etc.) to other ethnic cultures, with are assumed *a priori* to be "native". Thus, thanks to the well-

<sup>1</sup> The earliest mention of the theonym Tangra on the Balkans is in an inscription on a marble column found under the rocks at the ancient Bulgarian sanctuary at Madara (near Shumen): "Kana Subigi [Sublime Khan] Omurtag [814-831], ruler by [the will of] god ... was ... and made sacrifices to the god Tangra..." (Бешевлиев 1981: 85).



developed scheme linking the Bulgars to the Türks and the implausible interpretations of some parallels, the spiritual sphere of the mediaeval Bulgars has been credited with having shamanhood. Although the twentieth century saw an unprecedented boom in literature on shamanhood, as well as in debates on the existence of shamanhood among the Türks and Turkic-speaking peoples in Central Asia of different ethnic origins and with different cultures, the contents of shamanic rites have proved hard to digest for Bulgarian non-ethnologists.

In the Northern Caucasus and the Volga Region, the Supreme God Teiri/Turā is thought to be of ancient Turkic ethno-cultural origin and, according to some scholars, “was brought by the Proto-Bulgarians” (Урманчиев 2001: 467, with References; Балкански, Хашходжов 1984: 41-51, with References). As a *continuation of the ancient Turkic tradition*, he is presumed to have been influenced to one extent or another by the “mythological views of the Iranian-speaking peoples, with which the Bulgars had contacts in the region of the Caucasus”. The cult of Teiri spread “in two ways – top-down, through the state-administrative and priestly apparatus, and ‘bottom-up’, in the process of Turkicization of the Alanic and pre-Alanic population connected with the Proto-Bulgarian tribes and other (pre-Kipchak) Türks. This process later continued with the arrival of the Polovians/Kumans” (Хошхожев, Георгиев 1994: 171-172, 174 citing Каховски 1965: 285; Алексеева 1971: 169, etc.). Some contemporary scholars view the “pagan religion” of the Balkar and Karachay as a form of Tengriism, and their mythology and folklore as a “synthesis of ancient Turkic, Alanic and pan-Caucasian components” inherited from the Scythians, Sarmatians, Huns, Bolgars/Bulgars, Khazars, Avars and others (Джуртубаев 2004).

The spread of “global” religions in the Bulgarian state territories did not eradicate the previous worldview, traces of which can still be found in the so-called “domestic Christianity” and “folk Islam”. Despite the progressive destruction of the old value system and rites/norms in the last century, they continued to shape, generally speaking, particular *types of behaviour* in rural patriarchal communities in a specific regional form (among the Bulgarians, Chuvash, Balkar, etc.) until the mid-twentieth century. Despite the early spread of Christianity and, later, of Judaism and Islam in the region of the Caucasus, a number of mediaeval and later observers point out the superficial Christianization and Islamization of the population in the vast region of the Caucasus.<sup>2</sup> Also despite the fact that Sunni Islam became increasingly influential after the second half of the eighteenth century, the Balkar “remained essentially pagan ... and worshipped sacred rocks and trees” almost until the mid-twentieth century. Even though it

<sup>2</sup> Although the question of the influence of Christianity and Islam on the traditions in the territories under review is very important, it is not a subject of this book. This also applies to the Iranian and Zoroastrian substratum which according to some scholars (Трофимов 1993) is significant in Bulgar pagan ideology.

has changed in time, their folk ritual system has strong traces of “deep archaism ... and archaic religious-mythological concepts” which field researchers collected until and after the mid-twentieth century (Малкондуев 1988; 1990: 29; Кучмезова 2003: 134).

The continuity and preservation of the old faith is particularly tangible among the Chuvash. Two centuries after their late conversion to Christianity (1723), their traditional culture proved to be “conserved”, so to speak. Scholars have investigated the “pagan ritual folk tradition” of the Chuvash and the Tatars (as well as archaeological and ancient written sources) in an effort to find out more about the ancient spiritual system of the Volga Bulgars (Кондратьев 1991: 110). Considerable research effort has been directed at identifying numerous typological and functional parallels in the folk cultures of the Volga Region, of some regions in the Northern Caucasus, and of the Bulgarians on the Balkans, manifested at different levels (in the calendar-based ritual system and its song cycles, in folktales, concepts, creation legends, astral myths, traditional costumes, etc. identified with the help of archaeological and ancient written sources). After Denisov’s monographs (Денисов 1959, 1969), ethnologists and musical folklorists have discovered further evidence about the extant spiritual and material heritage of the Volga Bulgars among the Chuvash, Tatars and Finno-Ugrians. In 1970, N. Kaufman (Кауфман 1970) “revealed” the relationship between Southern Chuvash folk music (considered to be the oldest and best preserved in its original form) and folk music in the Western Rhodope Mountains (in Southeastern Bulgaria), whereas some years later Kondratyev (Кондратьев 1995) verified the close “historic-genetic relationship” between the ritual-genre systems in Chuvash and Bulgarian folklore on the Balkans, including with respect to musical organology. In view of this, the question that inevitably arises is to what extent, and which, of the existing relationships may be regarded as a substratum of the common cultural-historical past, and what were the prerequisites for this.

It is well-known that similar mythic and religious ideas, narratives, ritual objects, characters, musical-style traits and so on can be believed, articulated, sung, recreated at different worldview and musical levels in different ethnic traditions from different periods of history. Typological similarities, however, do not necessarily signify a similarity in the way of thinking of different communities or the sameness of their ethno-cultural spheres and origins. Their own profile may be identified best before a particular level of cultural universals because it is not the structure in itself but its filling out with *ideas* and their implications that creates the identity of a culturally-historically (and not geographically) assimilated territory. Uneven metres and diaphony were neither invented by nor are they specific to the Bulgarians, contrary to what some popular publications claim. The *Bulgarian syncretic Music form* is recognized to be unique because of the relationships of its constituent components which account for the specificity of the *musical-expressive style*. There are fire-walkers

in many parts of the world, but they are *nestinari* only in the southeastern Thracian lands of ethnic Orphism... I would like to note here that there are hundreds of scientific publications whose sole purpose seems to be to enumerate and describe various common features, concluding that something or other was supposedly typical of many peoples. This scientific “policy”, which does not look for the specificity of a people (within the very “scheme” of the universal) and well-nigh diminishes the importance of facts by viewing them as universal, is especially typical of Russian-language literature. It seems that by old habit, the latter assumes that subjects may not exceed the roof height of the imperial palace – be it a straw hut... From the perspective of my work, such methods of global comparisons and levels of universals are utterly futile for the simple reason that the specific and distinctive manifestations of a particular idea and its parallels in folklore are of scientific value only if they are sought in the faith and value system that have generated them.

In the especially active, so-called “contact ethno-cultural zones” (such the Volga Region, the Balkans and the Northern Caucasus), numerous components in the sphere of folk tradition are indeed manifested in similar contents and in similar ways. The commonality of the worldview underlying many ritual practices in the territories under review here is the result of a centuries-long process of formation and functioning of the so-called Indo-European ethno-cultural model. Along its route and especially in its later folkloric components I would look not for the origins of a particular people but for the *specific manifestation of ritual behaviours and concepts* as the product of a successive diachronic synthesis of cultures. It is precisely this specificity that can point us to the context of their manifestation and identity and, ultimately, to the need and ability of a particular people to accept and emanate ideas, making them its own.

Thanks to the continuity of the so-called *folk faith* (to which the previous high ideology has been “reduced”), it is possible to identify substratal, “maternal” traces in a gradually inherited tradition even at a late time in history, as long as this faith has not been aggressively distorted by external geopolitical factors. And the traces of the ancient Bulgar faith and religion may be sought as *preserved and recreated* in the sphere of *folk concepts and rituals* of later peoples in these lands (the Northern Caucasus, the Volga Region, the Balkans) irrespective of their different political and ideological trajectories. Many of them remember, and some still worship at sanctuaries near springs and sacred trees, an ancient Supreme God with a common name and similar contents. Do we have sufficient grounds to compare his traces in the different ethno-cultural heritages precisely as a parallelly preserved substratum of a common ideology? To what extent, and which of, the extant “pagan” rituals give us reason to judge about the ancient faith of the Bulgars and its dimensions, about the Supreme God in mediaeval Bulgarian religion? If we approach folk memory in these territories impartially and honestly, i.e. as scientists and not as politicians, (and, moreover, if we do not presume that this memory is ancient Bulgar-

ian only), we will be rewarded with proof of the time-honoured invariable rule that every people remembers itself not through its “history-as-events” (as Alexander Fol puts it) but through the history of its ideas which remain alive in their past and old-new present form. The question of the similarities and relationships between the traditional cultures of the present-day Bulgarians and the peoples inhabiting their old territories should be more rightly approached as follows: what is more important is not the universally known “sign system” of rites (in terms of similar artefacts, acts, topoi of faith, concepts, etc.) but the value system and type of religiosity that generated and transmitted them to the future generations (in terms of continuity of ideas, of ritual behaviours...). If we unravel folk memory, this could help us to place a given event or find in context and even to “read between the lines” of ancient written history, thus extracting more information from the sparse and highly subjective records. The “exploration” of ancient sources, temples and rock-cut sanctuaries of the Bulgars cannot in itself provide a key to the mindset that built the “image” of the Supreme but not single god, to his dimensions/divine hypostases, to the various social “tasks” and contents of the phenomenon of monotheism in mediaeval Bulgarian society. It cannot provide a key to the question, *how does a god become a God?*

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Various observers from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries report that the Chuvash believed in a “Sky God who took care of human affairs” (Миллер 2001: 111); He is “the greatest God” (*Мӑн Турӑ*<sup>3</sup>), “Creator of the Universe”, the source of all human goods (Вишневский 2001: 231-232; Лепехин 2001: 214). The resilience of these concepts was documented also at the beginning of the twentieth century by Mézáros: “The entire system of beliefs and sacrifices of the pagan Chuvash attests eloquently to their monotheistic worldview ... to recognition of a single supreme God ... whom they call *Пӗр Турӑ*/The Only God, *Сӹлму Турӑ*/The Supreme God, *Мӑн Турӑ*/The Great God. Converted to Christianity, the Chuvash call the Russian god *Турӑ/Турӑ* too, and associate him with the ancient pagan faith” (Месарош 2000: 21-26; similarly in Трофимов 1993: 175).

The evidence collected since the sixteenth century reflects the so-called *monotheistic religiosity* of the Chuvash manifested in their ritual system, hierarchy of deities, concepts of the structure of the world and its order, etc. This type of ideology is also known in science as **pagan monotheism** – belief in a supreme but not single god and reproduction/multiplication of his traits and nature in numerous “forms”.

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<sup>3</sup> The Chuvash *Турӑ/Турӑ* is thought to come from the ancient Turkic *Tengr/Tangri* (Ашмарин 1902; Денисов 1959, etc.). The theonym *Tangra* is of Sumerian origin (from *Dingir* – god, with derivatives in Iranian: *tagra*, *tigarna*, *tandra*). This type of names is associated in various ways with fire and thunder in different languages. For more on the occurrence of this theonym and its connection with ancient Indo-Iranian culture, see КЧЭ 2001: 410.

In the mytho-narratives of the Balkar and Karachay, the creator of the Universe is *Ullu Teiri/The Great Teiri, Khan Teiri/The Ruling Teiri, Këk Teirisi/The Sky Teiri* (Джуртубаев, Болатов 1990: 127, with References). Belief in him was still alive at the beginning of the twentieth century: "The common folk do not worship Allah but Tengri, who is the Creator of Goods" (Клапрот 1974: 245). Malkonduev, who studied the Balkar ritual tradition in the second half of the twentieth century, reports that "Teiri, who is not known to the other Caucasian peoples, is a supreme deity with a preserved cosmogonic function ... Teiri/Tengri ... is invoked in every single ritual" (Малкондуюев 1990: 7-22). Nowadays, when Islam has spread also to the highland villages, people think of Him as equal to the new god ("Teiri is a god like Allah"<sup>4</sup>); the two are invoked together in many songs and even in prayers.

The analysis of relevant mytho-narratives and concepts show that Teiri has "reduced and replaced an ancient solar deity (the local creator of the Universe, the Sun-God *Kainar*/lit. *boiling*) ... turning, in the course of the further evolution of the cult, into a polyfunctional supreme god. ... As a result of the deification of Teiri as the supreme god, the cognate and derivative terms for *sea* and *sky* [Turkic *tengiz* and *tengir*, originally meaning "sea", both earthly and celestial sea] became a theonym" (Джуртубаев 1991: 166-169). This "evolution" of the god has been reconstructed primarily from the Nart cosmogonic myths of the Karachay-Balkar: The Sun Teiri created the sun, and the Earth Teiri the earth; humans and seas were created next, but the myths do not say who created them. **The Sky, Sun, Earth and Water Teiri** gave humans goods – water, food (lit. "the growth of the crop from the earth"), light/sun and rain from the sky. "The head of all gods", the Sun Teiri gives his warmth to the earth in summer and sends part of his warmth to the world of the dead in winter "to warm them" (Нарты 1994: 302).

One remarkable aspect of the Nart myths is the primordial tetrad of gods = the four cosmogonic elements (sky/air, sun/fire, earth, water), and more precisely, the ways in which this tetrad is interpreted and manifested in divine personages. One ancient personification of these four primordial elements as well as of the *celestial-chthonic* as an entity is the mythical figure of the **giant**. The story of "the cosmic marriage" – the conjoining of the Sky Teiri and the Earth Teiri (through a thunderbolt) which led to the birth of Debet the giant from the earth – is found only in the Karachay-Balkar Nart Sagas.<sup>5</sup> Debet is the *forefather* of the Nart people and a sky blacksmith; he made the first hammer and tongs and struck iron, whereas the stars in the sky where he is "the black-

<sup>4</sup> Informant Amush B. Mogametovich, born 1927, RN 2005, village of Verkhnyaya Balkaria, Cherek Region, Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria (hereinafter RKB).

<sup>5</sup> For more on the fusion of the cosmogonic primordial elements, and on the marriage of the earth and the sky which led to fertility and to the birth of the Moon (among the Bulgarians on the Balkans), see Георгиева 1983: 14-15.

smith of the solar and the sky people to this very day" were formed from the sparks that flew from his anvil. Debet's heart, blood and soul were made of *fire*, and his body of *steel*; he eats *stones* like bread ("in order to learn what is in every stone") and speaks with them in the Nart forests; *he speaks the language of fire, of water and of the earth*, of stones and everything around (Нарты 1994: 303, 304, 596, 616, 626). The specific contents of the myth of Debet (his power over animate and inanimate matter, his knowledge of the language of everything around, his role as demiurge and forefather, etc.) make him equal to Teiri Kainar. Dzhurtubaev (Джуртубаев 1991: 157-158) interprets these figures as "two stages in the development of one and the same mythological figure".

Analogous stories are found in the Bulgarian myths about giants. The first man was "very big and very tall ... tall enough to touch the sky with his hand ... a giant of a man..." (Маринов 1914: 152). The giants are "the first people ... *who grew from the earth*". The bodily "nature" of these figures and the semantic oppositions *head/sky/upper* – *legs/earth/lower*<sup>6</sup> are metaphorical designations of the *celestial-chthonic*. Their connection with the lower sphere/earth is also represented as *tripping* = *death* ("even if his head is cut off ... the giant *dies only when he trips and falls*"). In a folksong about Krali Marko, the giant "cannot be slashed across the waist but only *across the legs from the knees down*, where our giants generally feel weaker" (Илиев 1891: 244, 247, 252). This evidence corresponds to the Bulgarian concept of the lower world and "its people" who "tie [bands] around their knees" (Маринов 1984: 49), probably also to the Chuvash tradition of tying the legs of sacrificial animals<sup>7</sup> as well as to the finds of skeletons with tied or broken lower limbs in ancient Bulgar necropolises (Бешевлиев 1981: 87; for more on legs as a chthonic indicator encoding the lower sphere in Thracian mythology, see Маразов 1995: 12). One of the heroes in the Karachay-Balkar Nart Sagas, Eryuzmek, who is also regarded as "identical" with the Sun God/Teiri Kainar, is of steel from the waist down; he melts and dies when he violates the order forbidding him to be with a woman (Нарты 1994: 363). Similarly to the giant/Debet, Eryuzmek is a "chief of the Nart" and a hero-demiurge (a theomachist who unlocks waters and restores the cosmic order).<sup>8</sup> According to Dzhurtubaev, the name of the Nart is

<sup>6</sup> For more on an archaic type of cosmogony in the myth of the primordial giant in the Rig Veda, from whose body humans, animals, luminaries, gods, etc., were born and from whose head the sky was born, see Елиаде 1997: 274-278.

<sup>7</sup> For example, at the sacred spring (Chuvash *Komaga shelye*) near the village of Staroe Timoshkino (observed by the author in August 2002). The Chuvash visit this sanctuary for worship in the days around the Christian Saint Peter's Day, whereas the Tatars visit it at Kurban Bayram. According to the local people, this was a "purely Chuvash place".

<sup>8</sup> This type of personification of Teiri (as a hero and a giant) is also mentioned by Movses Kagankatvatsi in the tenth century ("[W]hen concluding an alliance, the Hun tribes in the Northern Caucasus swore by the law of the sky ... and sacrificed horses to some monster, a giant hero, calling him god Tangrikhan" – from Плетнева 1976: 32).

“the second name of the supreme deity, and the cycle of myths about him is a biography of Teiri from his birth to his deification” (Джуртубаев 1991: 164, 172, 173; similarly in Джуртубаев, Болатов 1990).

Another distinctive feature of giants in Bulgarian myths which symbolizes their connection with the sky is their *stone heads and “stony heart ... They were not afraid of thunder: when they caught dragons firing and shooting fire arrows from above, the giants would take stones as huge as rocks and shout: My head is of stone! So how can you hurt me?”* (Илиев 1890: 199-200; 1891: 247; emphasis added). In the Northern Caucasus, the solar/celestial aspect of giants is also manifested in the origination of gold, silver and iron ore as a “rain of sparks and stones” sent by Kainar Teiri (Нарты 1994: 302). Without specifying his sources, Egorov writes that the masculine principle embodied in the Chuvash *Amme Typa/God the Father* was created by “fire stone” (Егоров Н. И. 1995: 116). A typical metaphor for lightning and thunderbolts in Bulgarian folksongs is “struck stone” (Нейкова, Тодоров 2007: № 928, 929). The Balkar say that everything that has been struck by lightning has healing powers.<sup>9</sup> The productive divine function of stone is probably manifested also in the ritual practice of hanging stones on fruit trees so that they will bear fruit (Fig. 30).<sup>10</sup> One Bulgarian legend goes that “a house that has a *thunderbolt arrow* (elongated pebbles or, more correctly, fossils) will not be struck by lightning” (Гъбьов 1926: 153). Stone and lightning/thunderbolts/arrows are typical symbols of the Supreme Sky God (Түра/Türä, who throws arrows from the sky at *Kiremet*, is a “master of the bow” – КЧЕ: 416, see below; for more on arrows “of fire, with a point of flint” which dragons cast at demons and Saint Iliya/Elijah casts at sinful people, see Маринов 1914: 26-27).

In Bulgarian, Chuvash and Balkar myths, giants are associated with creation myths and typical topoi of “passage” – wells, dolmens, with “stones as huge as rocks”, with “old graveyards with large stones ... where they were buried” (Илиев 1890: 202). Among the Chuvash, *öläñ/üläñ* or *öläp/üläp* were “giant-size people, now dead”: “An *üläñ* lifted a ploughman together with the ploughman’s *six horses and plough*, took them to his mother and told her, ‘Look, Mother, I have brought you the ants that plough the earth!’ Along the way, he shook off the soil from his paws every now and then, and that is how big hills (*kurgan*) were formed.” Folk legend has it that this is how many hills, which the Northern and Southern Chuvash call “land of the giant” (*üläñ mäñpi*), came about. The Kazan Tatars call the giant *альн*, and their legend is very similar to the Chuvash one (Месаров 2000: 53; emphasis added). Similarly to Eryuzmek, Uläp is a “strong and good” *hero-giant* who “protects people from enemy attacks and natural disasters, and helps them uproot trees and expand their fields”

<sup>9</sup> Informant Ismail Akkiev, born in the village of Mukkush in 1932, RN 2005, town of Nalshyk, RKB.

<sup>10</sup> Informant Arsen Zhilyaev, born 1958, RN 2005, village of Zayukovo, RKB.

(КЧЕ: 472). A similar “community” of giants was created also by the Supreme Türä in the classical form of a thunderer: “An *üläñ/Uläp*, tired from hunting, lay down to rest in the sky as on a bed and fell asleep. When his four brothers returned they tried to wake him up in vain. Then they hoisted the sky on their shoulders at its four corners and lifted it up high. The giant woke up and set out to look for his brothers, and the celestial vault began shaking beneath his feet ... sparks flew. That is how lightning and thunder were born, while the tears of the weeping giant who was left alone in the sky gave birth to rain” (Егоров Н. И. 1995: 116).<sup>11</sup> This type of Tatar myths and legends are seen as relicts of “the ancient Bulgarian epos” (Урманчиев 2001: 472).

In the above-quoted and other similar material, the figure of the giant is a substratum of the earlier cosmogonic belief in the unity of the primordial elements which preceded personified deities. In the Nart Sagas, the fire/sun element gives birth to successive mythical figures/giants: *Kainar – Debet – Eryuzmek – The Supreme Teiri* or, in other words, cosmogonic element – forefather/sky blacksmith – hero-demiurge – Supreme God. This type of archaic cosmogony underlies the worship of aniconic “images” of the god through and at sacred rocks/stones and rock-cut sanctuaries located, as a rule, on high ground (Fig. 31). Among the Bulgarians on the Balkans, evidence of such rituals is found in pre-Christian archaeological sites and in later forms of folklore.

The same archaic cosmogony underlies the **solar and astral aspects of the Supreme Türä/Teiri/Tangra** preserved at different levels in the folk tradition of the Northern Caucasus, the Volga Region and the Balkans (Fig. 32, 33). The solar symbols in many archaeological finds from the time of Volga Bulgaria, as well as in the traditional culture of the Chuvash and Kazan Tatars after their adoption of Islam, are associated precisely with Türä. Early observers from the seventeenth century report that along with prayers to God and his “retinue”, the Chuvash “pray to the sun and the moon because they have a positive effect on the land and cattle ... that they venerate quite well and entirely consciously the sun and everything that is alive” (Олеарий 2001: 81). The Balkar and Karachay also pray to the sun, the moon and the stars for well-being (Малокондуев 1990: 134; Кучмезова 2003: 43). In the past, the Balkar celebrated Teiri with “songs-hymns”, with dances and music at the ruins of the Teiri-Kıala fortress (in the Chegem Region) built “at the will of the deity” (Малокондуев 1988: 26). The *Teiri-toi* ritual and the eponymous dance “began early in the morning before sunrise and ended in the night, when the moon appeared. ... The danc-

<sup>11</sup> Among the Balkar: “If you want to curse someone very strongly, you say, ‘May Teiri strike you!’” (Informant Mariyan Pupoeva, born in the village of Bulungu in 1932, RN 2005, village of Kashkhatau, Chegem Region, RKB). A similar curse among the Bulgarians unambiguously suggests the God-Sun-Thunderer triad: “May he who shines ‘shine’ [i.e. strike – the two words are homonymous in Bulgarian] you! May he strike you from a clear sky!” (“Да те светне тоя, шо свети! Да те гръмне из ясно небо!”) – when “there is thunder and lightning without clouds ... this is a sign from God, a miracle” (Маринов 1914: 35).

ers, including everyone present and even the severely ill, *prayed to the sun, the moon and the stars* for well-being during the year" (Кудаев 1997: 116-118; emphasis added). At sunrise and immediately before a new moon, the Balkar said that "Teiri's door is opening ... but not everyone is fated to see this. ... Those who pray at this time will have their wish come true."<sup>12</sup> There is unambiguous evidence in Bulgarian folklore that the sun and the moon are regarded as gods ("The sun is a god and that is why nothing bad should be done against it" – Георгиева 1983: 17; "When there is a full moon ... old people show it to children and call it 'Grandfather God'" – Маринов 1984: 49-50, etc.). Such concepts are also found in ancient written sources: "Owing to Scythian madness [the Bulgars] served the Sun as well as the Moon and the other stars" (Theoph. Sym. Historia martyrii XV martyrum - Patrologia Graeca ed. Mugne. T 126 pp. 189, quoted from Бешевлиев 1929: 165); in the dispute between the Christian Kinamon and the Bulgarian Khan Omurtag (814-831, Danubian Bulgaria), where Kinamon says, "Those various ones whom *you worship as Gods* ... And if you point out *the Sun and the Moon* and force me to be amazed at their brightness' ... Omurtag said, 'Don't humiliate ... *our Gods*. For their power is great' ... Kinamon ... 'And the *idols and their altars and sacrilegious temples* shall collapse..." (Theoph. Migne, Patrol. gr. t. 126, p. 29-33, quoted from Златарски 1994: 332-333; emphasis added; the Greek text is quoted in a footnote in Бешевлиев 1929: 165; 1981: 75).

The belief in the sun as a Supreme God raises, on the one hand, the question of the continuity of the ancient Circumpontic religiosity,<sup>13</sup> and on the other, of the "history" of the ancient Bulgar religion – let us tentatively call it Tengriism – and its successive development and enrichment in the Northeastern Pontic region. Moving into the Balkans after the fifth century, the Bulgars brought their ancient astrological knowledge/concepts<sup>14</sup> while "restoring" elements of the

<sup>12</sup> Informant Ismail Akkiev, born in the village of Mukkush in 1932, RN 2005, town of Nalshyk, RKB. According to other accounts, "the door of the God/Teiri eshik" opens only in the night of 22 June; the belief, according to elderly people, that this could happen at night at any time of the year but only to people with "a pure soul" is thought to have developed later (Джуртубаев 1991: 139).

<sup>13</sup> For more on the resilience of the sacred topoi and of the belief in personified cosmogonic elements, professed in a traceable continuity by different ethno-cultural and cultural-linguistic communities in the Circumpontic Region, see Фол В. 2007: 8; for more on the Circumpontic "pure faith in the sun", see Фол Ал. 1997: 122; for more on the solar amulets of "Tengri-Khan" in the Northern Caucasus, worn by the Sabir (ancestors of the Chuvash), see Плетнева 1976: 33-34; for more on the solar aspects of Teiri in the Northern Caucasus, see Джуртубаев, Болатов 1990; Кудаев 1997: 116-118; Малокондуев 1988: 26; for more on the rites in honour of the re-/born sun among the Karachay, Balkar and "their kindred Volga Tatars, Bashkir and Chuvash", see Джуртубаев 1991: 194-196.

<sup>14</sup> For more on the astral concepts of the Bulgars, the solar principle of their ideology related to the Eastern Iranian world and, more precisely, with Mithraism, for spiritual parallels between the Bulgars and the peoples in the region of the Western Pamir Mountains, see Хофарт 2004: 58-112.

indigenous ancient (Circumpontic) spirituality, which preconditioned their ethno-cultural consolidation with the Thracian substratum. A result of this synthesis are the *conceptually similar for the Bulgars and the Thracians ritual behaviours and practices*, the mytheme of the union of the cosmogonic elements and their symbolizations, the concepts of the luminaries as personifications of a supreme being, etc.

Parallel with the myths about giants, some Chuvash creation tales contain another concept familiar from Indo-Iranian religion – that of a **pair of creator gods**, who are equals. The pair is also found in later variants, where the two gods are represented as a *good* and a *bad* god, as a *Supreme God* and his *Antagonist*. According to Artemyev's ethnographic study of the Chuvash in the nineteenth century, they worshipped "two antagonistic divine forces", which they believed were **twin brothers**. Tūrā is the creator of the Cosmos and the Earth, God of the Sky and of the Upper World, of good and of light; Shoitan/Shuitan (from Arabic *shaitan*) is the creator and lord of the Lower World. Tūrā created the plains, and Shuitan the mountains and valleys by "spitting the soil left in his mouth" (Артемьев 2001: 57-58). The two gods created all plants and animals (Tūrā those that are sacredly pure and therefore may be offered as sacrifice, such as apples, cows and sheep; Shuitan potatoes, goats, pigs, fish, etc.); Tūrā created man and gave him a soul (Егоров Н. И. 1995: 113, 117-118). In other variants of the Chuvash creation myth, the universe was created by Tūrā with the help of his **twin brother or firstborn Son Kiremet/Keremet**. The name comes from *karamat* (from Persian into Turkic and Arabic – *miracle*; Ашмарин 1902; Иванов et al. 2000: 82-83); the earlier mytho-ritual Chuvash term was probably *ырă/ырăсем* (holy, sacred) or *киреллĕ* (lit. "necessary"), which they used to refer to the annual village-wide sacrifices in honour of Tūrā.<sup>15</sup> As a "mediator between the celestial and chthonic deities" and lord of the Lower World, Kiremet is Shuitan's double. The two figures are Tūrā's antagonists as a personification of "evil" which, according to Egorov (Егоров 1995: 114-115, 122, 205), originated under the influence of Islam and Christianity (Shuitan is a "devil ... ineptly imitating Tūrā's actions", and his creations are "hostile to man"; unfortunately, Kiremet "fell under the influence of evil and was expelled by Tura from the Upper World"). This concept most likely underlies the Chuvash belief that "the souls of evil people turned into *kiremet*s after death" (from Иванов et al. 2000: 82-83). An analogous antipodal creator is the Karachay-Balkar *Kıyrkiauuzlu Soltan/Shuitan, creator of darkness and chaos*, who "turned into an evil demon, patron of evil spells" (Каракетов 2001: 68-69). The practice of personifying good and evil can be traced back to the Indo-Iranian cultural circle and Zoroastrianism, and it is difficult to date its various folk interpretations with precision. What is more important is that in the territo-

<sup>15</sup> N.I. Egorov's editorial note to Лепехин 2001: 225, to Паллас 2001: 164, and to Вишнеvский 2001: 246.

ries under review, the identification of deities as good and evil reflects earlier cosmogonic conceptions of the unity of primordial elements and beings as mutually generative, necessary and complementary. This is also evident in Kiremet's manifestation as a double of the Supreme Deity in some rites and mytho-narratives, where he is represented as the opposite of "evil". *Travelling around the Earth in a chariot drawn by white horses*, Kiremet brought fertility and good fortune to humans; instigated by Shuitan, they killed him and burned his body to cover up their evil deed. But the wind scattered his ashes and from them grew trees through which the son of God (Kiremet) was reborn. That is how the *kiremets* appeared – they are "evil deities" inhabiting the vicinities of every village and bringing illness, drought, hailstorms, etc. The Chuvash believe that if they had not continued propitiating "the deprived of life in the skies" Kiremet by offering him sacrifices, they would long since have died out (Еропов Н. И. 1995: 118-119; Артемьев 2001: 57-58). In Chuvash folktales, the god is killed and burned by humans, for which they have been punished continuously since time immemorial. Burning and rendering to ashes, however, is within the remit of the Supreme God-Thunderer, therefore what we probably have here are theomachistic motifs re-conceptualized as "punishment" (in Chuvash mytho-narratives, the sky Tùră casts thunderbolts at Kiremet), as well as traces of His cult. In folk rites, which originated after the myth and probably "recreate" the fate of the God, the animals sacrificed to Tùră must be eaten, their bones and innards burned, and their ashes scattered by the wind (from Вишнеvский 2001: 254). The earlier aspect of Kiremet (as a creator bringing good fortune) is also manifested in the veneration of *Kardallg Yrg/Enclosed Good* – a field *kiremet* south of the village of Saldakevo (Nurlat Region, Tatarstan); this sanctuary, venerated in the past by many Chuvash villages, is now venerated by fewer people "for family health" (Федотова).

**Both at the level of myths and rites Kiremet is manifested as a double of the supreme Tùră, duplicating his functions and essence in various ways.** "The great Kiremet is the chief deity of this world and that is why his retinue resembles Tùră's" ("standing face to face with the *kiremet*, a messenger opening the gates of the dwelling, an envoy, servant, cleaner, etc." – Вишнеvский 2001: 233, 247). Early observers as well as the latest field studies have found that both Kiremet and Tùră are worshipped at **sacred places with similar contents and symbols** (in forests, on hills near a gully with a spring, in the field, at sacred trees; among the Balkar, at a "tree of Teiri" – Кудаев 1997: 117). Even today, people describe "the true *kiremet*" as a hill with a sacred oak-tree and a spring at the foot of the hill. As an example, they give the two old sanctuaries, one near the ancient Bulgarian town of Bilyar and the other near the village of Staroe Timoshkino (both in present-day Tatarstan, Fig. 34, 35). The concept of hills as a dwelling-place with high divine and social status is also represented in song texts (for example, "There are two on this mountain, one is God and the other King" – Кондратьев 2001a: 52, 57). Both the sanctuaries of Măn Tùră

and *kiremets* are rectangular enclosures aligned to the four cardinal points; these places "must not be ploughed, mowed, insulted verbally; firewood must not be taken from them nor branches broken from the tree" (Вишнеvский 2001: 247).

Uncle Vanya somehow didn't want to submit to this spring [at the foot of the *kiremet*] and when the *kolkhoz* was gathering hay ... he managed to take much of the hay to the bank of the spring, where he lit it. ... This fellow died a very painful and slow death ... and when his soul finally departed from his body, it repeated over and over again, "I feel so hot ... It's all because of that *kiremet*." You must not do anything at a place like this... (RN 2002, village of Novoe Aksubaev, Tatarstan)

According to Denisov, the motif of the World Tree/Tree of Life was brought to the Middle Volga Region, including in Chuvash textiles, by "the Turkic-speaking Bulgar tribes"; unlike the Eastern Slavs, among "the Turkic and Finno-Ugric peoples in the Volga Region ... the cult of the sacred tree had central place ... and there are more distinct traces of it today" (Денисов 1959: 55, 60, 77, with References). The ethnic attribution of such cults is questionable. The sacred tree as a symbol of the supreme deity is an ancient cultural universal transmitted in different language environments and territories, and re-conceptualized within the value systems of the relevant communities. It is noteworthy that it is not sacred objects in themselves but the ways they are worshipped that can be attributed to a specific ethno-cultural community and epoch. For example, the evidence about *metal images* or "idols" in sanctuaries and temples, i.e. about the ways and degrees of symbolic representation of a Supreme Deity, is much more significant in this respect. Pallas's travel diary from the eighteenth century contains a brief description of the central wooden structure at Chuvash sanctuaries and of a sacred metal object like a triangle pointing up:

At the centre of the *kiremets* there is a sacred wooden structure [with three walls, open to the east] called *kiremet lassi*, in which they ate the sacrificial meat in a standing position; for the purpose, there are long tables with tablecloths inside. At the centre of the room there is a pole stuck in the ground and running through the roof; at the top of the pole is an iron circle, flat at the base and tapering towards the top... (Паллас 2001: 158; 165)

Theophanes' account of the dispute between the Christian Kinamon and the Bulgarian Khan Omurtag ("*the idols and their altars and sacrilegious temples shall collapse*"), quoted above, corresponds to the evidence about the existence of "silver and electron ["a shining metal", an alloy of gold and silver] idols which the Hun-Bulgars worshipped" in Great Bulgaria (Златарски 1994: 49, with the Greek text of the *Theophylacti* in a footnote) and to later, nineteenth-century, finds of gold and bronze sculptural representations in a sacred forest near the town of Bolgar from the time of Volga Bulgaria: "[S]ome of them had three faces and a cubit-long torso with legs to the knees"; according to early twentieth-century accounts, "two gold idols, one of which ended up in the pos-

session of an eminent person residing in Kazan at the time of Alexander I, were discovered” in the ruins of the town of Bolgar.<sup>16</sup>

These and other accounts disprove a popular and often cited opinion about the sanctuaries and their Zoroastrian origins (“The Earth, nature below the Celestial Vault, was the actual temple of believers ... a principle which also determined the choice of a particular landscape as the location of *kiremets* and sanctuaries” – Трофимов – КЧЭ 2001: 207; at the core of “the old Chuvash faith ... is the worship of personified and deified nature [?] ... therefore it [the old Chuvash faith] did not have either churches [the universe itself was the temple] or idols” – Егоров Н. И., note to Олеарий 2001: 84). Could it be that Zoroastrianism is used here primarily as an excuse for the absence of architectural/temple sites, i.e. cultural tourist sites? Such concepts interpret what I thought was an already outdated view that the gods, spirits, animals and so on, “personify nature and its forces”, that the god “personifies the sun” (for example, in Джуртубаев 2004). In the same category is the view regarding “the central and state-wide cult [among the Bulgars] of the one god Tangra” as “primitive monotheism” which is claimed to be “a direct reflection [?] of real reality” (Овчаров 1997: 15, 26). Defining a “cult” whose carriers have left solid stone structures, remains of quite complex fortifications, significant ethno-cultural relicts and other visible traces which were obviously not the product of “spur-of-the-moment improvisation” as “primitive” is, mildly speaking, strange. Such definitions involving “nature” and “primitiveness” are extremely inadequate for the faith and behaviour in the sanctuaries and *kiremets* in question. They mistake effect for cause and the creation for the Creator or, in other words, they paradoxically subjugate the God to that which He has created. He Himself is manifested through animate and inanimate matter (lightning, rain, rock/phallus, sacred animal/bird/reptile...) which symbolizes Him. This direction of manifestation – figuratively speaking, “top-down” – is recorded unambiguously as early as in the ancient Hindu and Chinese sacred texts and even in Siberian animistic ideology. It is also preserved in later folk rites, where the bull is a substitute for the *sacrificed God*; the falling (from above) meteorite is a *tenger*, and other theophanies of this type... The *kiremet* is not a “temple of nature” but a *sacred topos* for the summoning of and communion with a Supreme Deity through symbols. It is one of the “indicators” of the God who, on a territory organized on a sedentary basis, is worshipped in different aspects and through different types of “behaviour”. It is noteworthy in this connection that parallel with temple rites, the Odrysian Orphic kings maintained on their subordinate territory sanctuaries in sacred forests (in woods, on hills and in plains) where they “re-enacted under the open sky the mystery of the birth of the Son” (Фол Ал. 2002: 167).

<sup>16</sup> Казанский сборник статей архиепископа Никандра, 1909 г. Казань, quoted from Трофимов 1932: 26-27. For more on the idol of Teiri cast from lead in the Nart Sagas, see Джуртубаев, Болатов 1990.

The Chuvash and Balkar calendar cycles contain **private/family and public/village-wide rituals** dedicated to Tūrā/Teiri and Kiremet. Before marrying, Chuvash girls offered home-made linen cloth to *kiremets* (Вишневецкий 2001: 238); Balkar brides-to-be prayed for their future family’s well-being at the Raubazā, sacred trees (wild pear, pine trees) venerated by all Balkar. In the village of Verkhnyaya Balkaria, newly married women offered clothes to the Raubazā “as to a human”, hanging them on its branches; the villagers remember that there once was a big notched *stone* under the tree. They prayed and made offerings to the tree when there were important events in the family, such as a birth or death, before setting out on a long journey, for conception, etc.<sup>17</sup> There are eighteenth- and nineteenth-century accounts of the existence of family *kiremets* at which the Chuvash offered sacrifices in the event of illness in the family or among cattle, as well as for well-being (Вишневецкий 2001: 234). At the same time, almost every Chuvash village or several villages together offered sacrifices on a certain day of the year at a “big, common *kiremet*” (Миллер Г. Фр. 2001: 113-115; Егоров Н. И. 1995: 210).

Kiremet was a bad god who is much feared because he punishes people for their sins and *sends to earth* disease, death, fires, hailstorms. ... They offer sacrifices to propitiate him. ... Many villages collect money together and buy a purely white horse, a white bull, a white ram, a white rooster. ... The animals are sacrificed by men, around the tree at sunrise. ... They boil the bull in a cauldron ... and leave the skin and bones around the tree. ... There they offer also cloths, coins, whatever they can... Such a large sacrificial ritual with bulls is performed by several villages together once every few years; it is performed when the need arises, for example when there is infertility ... if many people in the village fall ill and die... (Informant German Larshnikov, born 1955, RN 2002, village of Bolshoe Buyanovo, Chuvashia)

Everyone is afraid of this place [*kiremets*, which are usually located in the vicinities east or northeast of the village] ... A white horse appears there ... it’s a dangerous place... (RN 2002, village of Novoe Aksubaev, Tatarstan)

The concepts of **sacrifices** and their “sending up” or offering in Chuvash rites are well-recorded in historical sources, and have parallels in the worship of sacred places on the Balkans. According to Bishop Israil’s 684 account of his mission among the Sabir in the Northern Caucasus (who are also ancestors of the Chuvash), they offered “sacrifices to fire and water, worshipped some

<sup>17</sup> In 1981 a pine-tree was planted on the site of the old, cut-down tree in the village (informant Amush B. Mukhametovich, born c. 1925 in the no longer existing village of Fardi, RN 2005, village of Verkhnyaya Balkaria, RKB). In the village of Kashkhatau, Chegem Region, people would hang red threads on the branches of the Raubazā when it was in bloom “to ward off the evil eye”; this rite (as well as the offering of *martenits/sing. martenitsa* – amulets made of white and red thread) is well-preserved among the Bulgarians to this very day; as a rule, the tree must not be cut down (informant Mariyan Pupoeva, born in the village of Bulungu in 1932, RN 2005). For more on the Raubazā as a symbol of the World tree, see Джуртубаев 1991: 212.

gods of travel, as well as the moon and all creations they regarded as amazing; they worshipped tall, lush oak-trees, sacrificing horses, eating and drinking part of the body and blood of the sacrificed animals, pouring their blood around the trees and hanging their heads and skins on the branches and trunks” (Иванов et al. 2000: 15-16; Плетнева 1976: 32).

The meat of the animals sacrificed to Tùră as well as to Kiremet had to be eaten, their bones and innards burned and the ashes blown away; only the heads of horses were not burned – their skulls were hung on the oak-tree at the sanctuary together with the skin, mane, tail and legs, facing east (Вишнеvский 2001: 237; Миллер Г. Фр. 2001: 118). The Balkar still hang horse skulls on fence poles to protect the crop from “evil eyes”. As *pars pro toto*, the horse’s head is a symbol of the Supreme God: “Old people said ... that it is absolutely forbidden to hit the head of a horse: the horse’s head is the sun” (Джуртубаев 1991: 41-42). The heads of horses sacrificed in the fields in honour of Kiremet are left in specially dug holes in the ground, while those of horses sacrificed to Tùră are hung on fence poles to protect the fields against “evil forces and evil eyes ... and to stop anyone who might think of working in the fields on a Friday”. On that day Tùră leaves “the uppermost world ... and descends to earth. ... To avoid angering Him, the Chuvash do not light their stoves until noon or go to the field and the forest for wood. ... Non-observance of Fridays as holy days is punished by Him with storms and hailstorms” (Вишнеvский 2001: 232, 237).<sup>18</sup> The evidence indicates that these rites and concepts originated at an earlier stage in history and are probably associated with the observance of, and taboos regarding, holy days and parameters of the God (fire, earth, trees). They also reflect the dual/ambivalent nature of both Tùră and Kiremet, understood as benevolent and malignant – something which is typical also of other deities in Chuvash, Bulgarian and Balkar folk concepts.

The **species and colour of the sacrificial animals** correspond to the rank and essence of the deity to which they are offered. “As a rule, horses are offered to the supreme Tùră” who inhabits the uppermost world, bulls are sacrificed as a mediator between gods and humans, and waterfowl are offered to the water and lower world (Егоров Н. И. 1995: 207); horses are also offered to the Great Kiremet and to a group of male deities from Tùră’s retinue – “one horse for all” (Вишнеvский 2001: 236). The evidence offered by old sources about cyclical sacrifices is significant but incomplete (“The Supreme God ... demands from the Chuvash a ram, a bull every five years, and a horse every ten years” – Вишнеvский 2001: 236). People in many villages remember that only a *white male animal* (a horse, a bull, a ram) may be sacrificed to Tùră and Kiremet – “they [the Chuvash] consider white to be the favourite colour of the God” (Месарош 200: 24).

<sup>18</sup> Until the adoption of Islam in Volga Bulgaria, the Chuvash holy day of the week was Wednesday/*yunkun* (Егоров Н. И. 2001: 254). In keeping with the old tradition, *kiremet*s in present-day Tatarstan are worshipped on Wednesdays.

**The village-wide rites in honour of Kiremet and Tùră are calendar-based;** they are conducted in the transitional periods of the year – after the spring planting and after the autumn harvest in October-November, which marked “the beginning of the Chuvash new year” (Вишнеvский 2001: 238, 251; Месарош 2000: 114-115; Егоров Н. И. 1995: 122, 136). People today still remember that every village offered sacrifices in spring for fertility and a good crop, and “for thanksgiving” in autumn. The Balkar spring-autumn rituals involving sacrifice of rams or bulls are analogous in function and form.<sup>19</sup> In the past, the Chuvash had three village-wide spring-autumn rituals in honour of Tùră, which were conducted at specific places outside the village. The first village-wide celebration of Tùră in spring was *аслă чўк* or *мăн чўк* (“big sacrifice”). The Chuvash believed that around the tallest, lushest and oldest tree at the *kiremet* there “graze the sacred animals of the God – gold-antlered reindeer, winged horses, cows with silver udders... But they grow old and must be replaced with young animals every year.” So people collected money and bought colts, calves and kids. On the day of *аслă чўк* they pleated different-coloured ribbons into their manes and let them loose for a year; the animals were free to graze and roam at will, and chasing them away was tabooed. They were sacrificed on the same day the following year.<sup>20</sup> About a week later the Chuvash performed a “small sacrifice” or a sacrifice in the fields – *кѣзѣн чўк* and *зумăр чўкѣ* – for rain. This ritual was performed on other days as well, if there was a drought (it included carrying water to the village and pouring it on each other, and a feast by the river). Old people would say then, “It seems that Tùră’s horses have grown old, there’s no one to bring water and that’s why there’s no rain. We must give him a colt” (on the day of *зумăр чўкѣ* – Егоров Н. И. 1995: 205, 212). As a rule, the supreme Tùră /Teiri was always invoked if there was a drought. In some southern Chuvash villages, the annual celebrations of Tùră and rainmaking rituals were conducted at one and the same site. Old women tell of sacred places/*kiremet*s at the eastern end of villages (near water and an ancient tree), where a bull as well as white geese were offered in spring and autumn – “always on a Wednesday”. People in the village of Tryokh Izb also prayed for rain at the *kiremet*.<sup>21</sup> Here we may also add Fedotova’s account of the *kiremet* south of the village of Saldakevo, where “the elders would change/

<sup>19</sup> Informant Mashtai Bashiev, born in the village of Verkhnyaya Balkaria in 1927, RN 2005, village of Kashkhatau, RKB.

<sup>20</sup> The Balkar spring sacrificial ritual called *Saban Toi* (at first ploughing) is similar. The bull chosen to be sacrificed the following year was kept in the stone structure at the sanctuary where it would be sacrificed, and “fed by the whole village” for a year (Миллер, Ковалевский 1983: 109; Кудаев 1997: 114-116). The Balkar also believed that “the more the animals sacrificed, the more fruitful the year will be... and they always left part [of the sacrificed animals] at sacred stones and trees” (Кучмезов 2001: 71). For details on Chuvash spring rituals (starting on the day of the spring equinox and the first thunder) with songs dedicated to the supreme Teiri, see Хаджиева 1988; Кучмезова 2003: 13-23.

<sup>21</sup> Informant Anastasiya Y. Nikandrovna, RN 2002, village of Tryokh Izb, Chuvashia.



build a new fence if there was a drought" (Федотова). In Balkar rainmaking rites (on Thursdays), after going round all the houses in the village "the little girls and old men [ritually pure figures] would go to the old graveyard where they shared out the gifts they had collected. The men would bare their chests and pray to Teiri to send rain to earth" (Азматов 1981: 152).<sup>22</sup> The Karachay prayed for rain to *Jangiz terek* ("lonely pine-tree"), invoking in their songs "the symbols of the supremè deity ... the tree of life and lightning" (Джуртубаев 1991: 170; Кудаев 1997: 137-138).

The belief in Tùrà and Kiremet as protectors of the family, clan and village is also contained in the **similar prayers in sacrificial rituals** (offered for well-being, fertility, rain, etc., always facing east). The enumeration of deities in these prayers indicates that they are actually addressed to the supreme God himself – as an entity of multiple "forms" and names which come from and belong to a common mythical core:

In the prayer to Tùrà: O Great God, Mother of God, Thou Who Stands Before the Face of God, Messenger, Mother of the Messenger, Protector of Flocks, Guardian... have mercy, O Ruler of All Things... O Lord of Water and Earth, have mercy, O Sun... O Moon, Thou Who Rests in the Bright Uppermost World, Mother of the Resting One... Bring us happiness and well-being... Fill our yards with cattle, give us fertility. Do not kill the crop of the earth with a hailstorm ... do not blow it away. Do not let magic be sent to our home ... to cast misfortune on us. May our life be happy...

In the prayer to Kiremet: O Head of Kiremet, Mother of the Head, Thou Who Stands Before the Face of Kiremet, Messenger, Gate-Opener, Servant, Cleaner, with prayers for protection against misfortune, disasters, sorrow, grave disease, for health... (Вишневицкий 2001: 240-241, 251-253)

In the Volga Region, village-wide and family rites in honour of Kiremet and Tùrà have been documented since the sixteenth century, and they are still well-remembered by elderly villagers. At the same time, this tradition has undergone serious changes in several stages over the centuries, as a result of which the original function and symbolic meaning of a number of ritual components have been forgotten and are no longer practised. Scholars think that after the adoption of Christianity (in the eighteenth century), the three spring/autumn rituals in honour of Tùrà merged into one. N.A. Aleksandrov (Н. А. Александров 1899: 22-23) is wrong in assuming that "the Chuvash stopped fearing their evil spirits – Keremets after the *Russians burned down their sacred woods or keremets* [emphasis added]". According to my informants, the next drastic stage of changes was in the first half of the twentieth-century, when the ideology of communism and the Soviet Union persecuted religion in any form. In this period *the Bolsheviks burned down village sanctuaries en masse*, and their

<sup>22</sup> In terms of ritual acts and behaviour, accessories, figures, etc., Balkar and Bulgarian rainmaking rites are variants of one and the same prototype.

mass worship gradually died away in the second half of the century. For obvious reasons, this subject is rarely addressed in Chuvash literature.

**In the Chuvash and Balkar spring-autumn rituals, a number of deities are assigned the same multiple functions** in taking care of agriculture and all passages in human life. In the spring-summer season, the Balkar prayed for rain to the thunderers Teiri, Chopa, Eliya and Shiblya ("at sanctuaries dedicated to them"), who are viewed as "synonymous", i.e. as having the same "mythological function" (Малкондуев 1990: 90, 91). Teiri's main double is probably Chopa – called also Chopa-Eliya and Chopa-Ereirei, and in some songs "husband of the earth" – who was celebrated in spring as well as in autumn after the end of the farming season in September-October. The Balkar prayed to him for rain and for help in crucial events in their lives. The existing evidence indicates that this deity is supreme and polyfunctional, a "god of lightning and thunder equal in stature to Ereirei, Gollu, Daule; *he functions as the supreme god* in the pagan pantheon and as the patron god of agriculture [emphasis added]" (Малкондуев 1990: 89, with References; Кудаев 1997: 48-52). The rituals in honour of Chopa included sacrificial ceremonies conducted outside villages, at a sacred stone or rock and, in some regions, in a sacred forest. In some Karachay incantations he is invoked as "*son of the Supreme Teiri*" (Каракетов 2001: 84; emphasis added). As "protectors of the crop" and lords of the celestial elements, Chopa, Eliya and Shiblya are actually three names of one and the same deity (Лавров 1969: 108).

In Chuvash, Balkar and Bulgarian traditional culture, the process of mutual generation and diachronic accumulation of different types of spiritual connotations of a group of deities which actually have the same semantic mythological origin, dates back to the period of the so-called "paganism". This process practically continued with the imposition of the new/charismatic official state religions, which inherited many traits of the old deities. In Bulgarian folk rituals on the Balkans, ritual concepts and figures from the old high religion have been preserved in the form of various Christian saints and their celebration. The mutual influence between paganism and Christianity led to the emergence of so-called "twin" pairs and trios of saints who have inherited ancient pagan concepts. Scientists call this phenomenon and type of folklorized personages "domestic/folk Christianity" (Попов Р. 1991: 34). The rituals in honour of the pairs of Christian saints in Bulgarian folk traditions as well as the village-wide celebrations of the Supreme God and his hypostases among the Chuvash and the Balkar **organize calendar time in two half-years**: spring-summer and autumn-winter.

The concepts of the Supreme Tùrà/Teiri, his social tasks and functions have distinct equivalents in the figure and worship of **sveti Nikola Zimen and Leten or Winter and Summer Saint Nikola (Nicholas)** among the Bulgarians. Similarly to other saints, he has two eponymous age dimensions/hypostases, a Winter and a Summer one, which "personify the two opposite sides of a single

whole"; the former is a symbol of winter, death, old age, earth and water; the latter of summer, life, youth, the sky and solar fire. The former is a white-haired old man, and the latter "a supernatural hero" who engages in "fierce battles with dragons and dragonesses ... has wings and can fly across seas and mountains" and, in folksongs, "drinks from a gold cup" (Маринов 1914: 528, 531). In the Volga Region and the Northern Caucasus, the "forms" of Tūrā/Teiri are not named as young and old, winter and summer. The idea of the Supreme God as personifying two opposite but complementary principles is manifested in the cyclic calendar celebrations, in the contents of the *father/son* pairs (Tūrā/Kiremet, Teiri/Chopa), which also make them opposite in terms of age, etc. At the same time, **the predominant image of the Supreme God is that of a white-haired old man.** In Balkar concepts, he is reproduced in a number of functionally and semantically similar figures with distinctive "supreme" attributes and accessories. For example, the Balkar god of hunting, Apsati, is "an old man with a long grey beard in *snow-white clothes*; from his waist hangs a long *gold dagger*. ... The ties on his feet are of *silver*, and on his hand he has a *ring depicting the supreme god Teiri*." Similarly, Golu, the god of fertility celebrated on the day of the spring equinox, is represented in folksongs as "a good, light and bright ... white-bearded old man in a *gold coat*. He holds a sickle in one hand and a sheaf of wheat in the other." In the Nart myths, Eliya the thunderer is also "a handsome white-bearded old man flying above the clouds and casting thunderbolts" (Малкондуев 1990: 90). He appears "on the peak of the highest mountain ... and is *huge in size* ... when he gallops on his horse there is the *sound of thunder*" (Лавров 1969: 108, with References; emphasis added). In Bulgarian and Chuvash concepts, God is "an old man with a long white beard who looks like a human in every way ... very good ... gentle ... Grandfather God still descends to earth in the form of an old man" (Маринов 1914: 166-167); Tūrā, too, is an old man who "descends to earth among people, walks in the fields, sometimes also during the harvest" (КЧЭ 2001: 409). This *old God* is represented also in Bulgarian folksongs, especially in Bulgarian Christmas songs where the designations of Saint Nikola as *chief saint* and *god* are semantically identical: "a white-haired old man with a white beard", "*the oldest saint, Saint Nikola*" (НПСС № 540, СИБ № 68; emphasis added); "chief saint, Saint Nikola" (СБНУ 3, 1890: 7, № 7; СБНУ 44, 1949: 427, № 840); "O God, Saint Nikola" (ТВ, № 1460; СБНУ 3, 1890: 24); in *lazarka* chants in the Pirov area: "pray to *God Nikola* and Saint Иија [Elijah] ... O God, Saint Giorgio ... and you, Grandfather Иија" (Каравелов 1940: 214-215; emphasis added). Also telling in this respect are the Bulgarian narratives about the theophany of the moon as an old man (Букадинов 1896: 167-168, from the Sofia area; see chapter "On *Vèshterstvo*/Witchcraft and Shamanhood: Differences and Possible Parallels"). In the sphere of these concepts, **old age is a metaphor for power and supremacy, for the eternal, independent position of God, and can be viewed as a category of a theological type.** It is also a

designation of His anthropomorphic "image". This mythical prototype may underlie the Bulgarian family rites in the days of Winter Saint Nikola which include nocturnal village rounds made by *old men* only; their role has been defined as "priestly" (Попов 1991: 41, 43).

According to observations from the early nineteenth century, "in the old Chuvash way of life, the functions of priests were performed by the elders, old men who knew the prayers and subtleties of rituals" (Вишневецкий 2001: 249-250). The elders also determined the days of Chuvash village-wide *keremets*, and the prayers during the ritual were pronounced by the most respected elder ("head/leader of the sacrifice"). In the mid-twentieth century, as L. Vikár and G. Bereczki (1971: 67) found during their expeditions among the Cheremis, there were still "pagan priests – kart" (leaders of rituals and sacrificial ceremonies, who performed *prayer songs* during the ceremony), who were invariably *old people*. Among the Udmurt too, family sanctuaries were tended by old people who, alone, had the right to touch the sacred objects and images ("the wood sculptures of patron deities"). This duty was passed on from father to son or to the closest relative (Шутова 2001: 238). In this connection, I will quote Pentikainen (2001b: 506), who writes that "Mari, Mordvin, Udmurt ... seem to have totally different religious experts than those with shamanic skills, e.g. diviners, prophets or sacrifice priests". The priestly functions of old men/women in rituals is traditional in the folklore of different peoples from the Volga Region, the Caucasus, and the Balkans. Everywhere this type of figures have a calling and contact from on high as the source of their extraordinary powers (see chapter "On *Vèshterstvo*/Witchcraft and Shamanhood: Differences and Possible Parallels").

(All information about Saint Nikola below is from Попов Р. 1991: 25-57.) Both the Winter and Summer Saint Nikola are celebrated as a **patron saint of the family and clan with village-wide rituals** involving the **sacrifice of a calf/bull** at consecrated or sacred places with oak-trees and springs. The saint is venerated as an old man who helps young people to get married; similarly to Chuvash girls making offerings to Kiremet before their marriage, Bulgarian "girls of marriageable age ... always go to church on *Nikulden* [Saint Nikola's Day] ... leaving flowers and offerings to Saint Nikola so that he will help them to get married". The Winter *Nikulden* is "a turning point in the annual cycle", and as **ruler of the winter elements** Saint Nikola is also associated with the first snow (for more on the first snow "at Teiri's will" among the Balkar, see Джуртубаев 1991: 170-171).<sup>23</sup> Saint Nikola belongs to the group of **hail-**

<sup>23</sup> Similarly to the Winter and Summer Saint Nikola, typical "twin" semantic oppositions (*life/death, summer/winter, young/old, planting/harvesting*, etc.) are contained in the pair Saint Dimitar (Demetrius) – Saint Georgi (George). Saint Dimitar, too, is a patron saint of winter, cold, and snow; around *Dimitrovdan* (Saint Dimitar's Day), the Bulgarians say that "Grandfather Dimitar shakes his long white beard and the first snow pours out of it" (Попов Р. 1991: 10).

**storm saints** and is akin to Saint Iliya (a successor of the pagan sky gods of thunder and rain: Zeus, Perun, Tangra, Thor); this aspect is manifested in the spring-summer village-wide festivals and rituals involving sacrifice in his honour – for protection of the crops from storms, in rainmaking rites, in ritual rounds of the fields for rain.

Saint Nikola is **ruler of water/the sea**. He has a distinct parallel in the Balkar concepts and songs about “the sea as the realm” of Чопа (Кудаев 1997: 49, with References) who is equal in functions and contents to Teiri, as well as in the designation and mytho-narratives of *teiri* as sea and as sky. The semantic unity of the *sky/SupremeGod/sun-sea* sequence is also implicit in the Balkar concept of the sun, which descends into the sea after sunset (Джуртубаев 1991: 196), in the Chuvash concept of the sun which bathes in the sea at night (Егоров Н. И. 1995: 119), in the Bulgarian concept that “the sun is a god ... in the morning it comes out of the sea, bathed” (Георгиева 1983: 17), as well as in the Romanian belief that Saint Nikola “governs the sun” (Попов 1991: 30, with References). In the Nart creation myth it is precisely Teiri the Sun who calms the earthquake and the *waves of the sea* by driving mountains into the earth “like a wedge” (Нарты 1994: 302). The symbolic meaning of the sea as well as the function of the *khan/kan* as high priest in the ancient Bulgar religion is recorded indirectly by two Byzantine chroniclers describing the actions of Khan Krum (Danubian Bulgaria) during the siege of Constantinople in 813: “Krum offered sacrifices after his custom outside the Golden Gate, *sacrificing men and many cattle. On the seashore, he wet his feet, poured sea water on himself and besprinkled his troops, who acclaimed him* [emphasis added].” Evidence that Krum had “*offered sacrifices to the sea*” is also contained in an ancient Bulgar stone inscription (№ 3) (Scriptor incertus, 342, 1-15 = Извори VIII, 20; Theoph., 503, 4-14 = Извори VI, 20; – from Бешевлиев 1981: 85). I think that the routine interpretation of Krum’s actions as a “ritual of purification” (in Бешевлиев) is one-sided and incorrect. In my opinion, this account represents one of the ways in which the *kan* entered into contact with the Supreme God and received strength from on high – through one of His cosmogonic manifestations, i.e. water/sea.

The ancient type of religiosity and the unity of traditional ritual thinking in the territories under review here are indicated also by the contents of a ritual sphere known to be highly conservative – namely, of **funeral and memorial rites**. The common worldview concepts and symbols of passage are preserved in acts and ritual practices, in material and spatial parameters and their meanings, in the specific anthropomorphic form of temporary and permanent tombstones and their analogous forms, etc. The concepts of afterlife (or the extension of life after physical death) and the possible places of “residence” in the afterlife are rooted in a classical conception of the Universe and its Order common to the Bulgarians, Chuvash, Karachay and Balkar: the three-tier structure and

internal stratification of the Universe, the cosmic props transcending and linking the different levels (the World tree, mountains), the “being” of the living and the dead in parallel worlds and different dimensions, the rainbow as a boundary between the worlds and a metaphor for god, etc.:

• **Chuvash:** In Chuvash mytho-narratives the universe consists of seven floors – three are above the earth, the fourth is the earth itself, and the other three below the earth. ... The middle world is a quadrangular or octagonal space at the centre of which is the mountain *Ama Tu*, with the World tree growing on the peak of the mountain. ... In some variants, the upper and the lower worlds are seven-tiered. “These concepts have evolved from the initial three-tier model of the world. ... The Supreme Tura, together with his retinue, resides in a gold palace on a high mountain in the seventh sky” (Егоров Н. И. 1995: 116-117; 134). In Chuvash creation legends, when the Earth and the Sky separated after the universal deluge, “the sky took half of that which was on the surface of the earth [mountains, water, fire, trees, etc.] ... and turned them upside down, with branches towards the Earth.” (Трофимов 1993: 101) After death the souls of righteous people go to *the other world* by way of the rainbow created by God. (Месарош 2000: 78)

• **Balkar:** The universe is like a giant egg and consists of three floors (*юч къат*); on each there is life, a moon, a sun, stars ... people, beasts, animals, dragons. ... Across the middle of each of the three worlds flows the Middle River (*Ара суу*), which divides them into worlds of the living and worlds of the dead. Thus, there are six worlds in all (three of the dead and three of the living).<sup>24</sup> The boundary between the worlds of the living and the worlds of the dead is the rainbow (*тейри къыльыч* – celestial, divine sword; *жсан къыльыч* – sword of life) which vertically divides the three worlds. They say that those who jump over the rainbow will change their sex ... because in the world of the dead everything is in opposite form. ... At the centre of each of the three worlds rises the world mountain (eternal, gold). ... Parallely, the Balkar and Karachay imagine the Cosmos as a giant tree (Gold Willow/*Алтын Тал*); when someone is born a new leaf sprouts on the tree and falls when they die. (Джуртубаев 1991: 180-184; 140, 222)

• **Bulgarians:** The sky consists of [vertically] *attached vaults of heaven* (town of Troyan). The earth is attached with a nail to the lowest, *the first sky*. This sky is ruled by Saint Iliya. God lives in the *highest sky*. The place where the souls of the dead go to is in the sky (Teteven area). ... God ... lives in *the seventh, highest sky* ... hell is also in the sky, but lower than heaven. ... (Попов Р. 1999: 269, 290, 291; emphasis added)

The sky ... is a thick hard crust and it has *seven folds* ... the stars are attached to the lowest fold ... the soul [after death] passes first through a *deserted and dark field*, then through a *thorny field*, and reaches a wide and deep river which is *the boundary between this and the other world*. The river is crossed by boat, and the soul then passes through a *gate* (“guard post”) on the opposite bank. ... Heaven is on the *first fold* of the sky, the angels and saints are above, on the *upper folds*, and God is *at the top*. ... When someone dies, their soul ... goes to the sky. ... (Маринов 1914: 7, 224, 232-234; emphasis added)

<sup>24</sup> Here one may recall the Bulgarian concept of “*the six hero-brothers who divided the sky, the earth and the world between themselves*” (Маринов 1914: 518; emphasis added).

The concepts of the stratification of the Universe probably underlie the conceptions about the stage-by-stage passage of the dead to the otherworld. This passage is facilitated by the large spring-autumn memorial celebrations which, too, occur in the course of linear time by the logic of the well-known three-tier model. One of the latter's manifestations among the Chuvash are the three major rites called *breakfast*, *lunch*, and *supper* of the dead – as metaphors for the beginning, middle and end of a cycle. Similarly to the three major celebrations of the Supreme Tūrā, they are *performed in spring and autumn* (two in spring and one in autumn), and are “obligatory” in the first *three years* after death (КЧЭ: 394):

The first time we summon home [literally “into the family”] the dead from the other world, this is *breakfast/mongun* for them ... on the Thursday after the Christian Easter. The second time we invite them to lunch [on the day of the Holy Trinity]. ... We summon them home for the third time in the autumn – in October, in the month of *kerhiz ra yuba*. ... Then we offer them supper, wash them in the bathroom and send them back to the graveyard. ... We invite them three times a year and must sacrifice something ... if we don't do this, they will punish us. ... Everything is done on a Thursday... (Informant Vera P. Mikhailova, RN August 2002, village of Novoe Aksubaevo, Tatarstan)

As a classical period of “decline”, autumn closes the annual cycle of commemorations. In the late folk tradition of the Bulgarians, the chthonic essence of autumn rituals is manifested in and through the contents of particular saints (Saint Nikola, Saint Dimitar, Archangel Mihail/Michael, Saint Petka/Petko), who have retained many pre-Christian elements associated with death, darkness and winter, and are celebrated with memorial feasts in the *October-November* period (Попов Р. 1991: 10, 11, 126-145). By the old Chuvash calendar, autumn commemorations are in the month of *yupa*<sup>25</sup> (which once meant *memorial, commemoration* – КЧЭ 2001: 509-510), which is in the *October-November* period. That is when the Chuvash place on the graves of their recently deceased relatives the so-called *yupa* – permanent tombstones in the form of wooden sculptures, which are placed at full moon, when the moon begins to wane. The monuments are made by the relatives of the dead person – of oak, with a flat upper part for men, and of lime, with a curved upper part for women (Fig. 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41). The Chuvash regard the *yupa* as a stylized representation of the person and treat it as a real dead person, with his or her unique individuality; that is probably also why they will never bury more than one person in the same grave, and leave the monument until it falls and rots away naturally (“Once placed, the *yupa* is never renewed. If you repair it there will be another death

<sup>25</sup> Written as *ioná* in Chuvash (lit. *pillar, column*), pronounced *yubá/yupa* (КЧЭ 2001: 509). Both spelling variants are used in academic literature.

[in the family]”; for evidence of the same practice in the nineteenth century, see Месарош 2000: 204).<sup>26</sup>

And we take the person home [i.e. the *yuba*, after it is made in the forest], we lay out the *yuba* on the bed [Fig. 42] and he lies there while we eat. ... When the *yuba* is carried everybody weeps ... as if it were a real person. ... And someone must sit by its side, we never leave it alone; it must be guarded by a human, not by shaitans. ... The *yuba* is carried out of the house [to the graveyard] like a person. ... The relatives sit in the cart ... and they must have a [small] accordion. ... We arrive at the graveyard as if we are carrying a person. ... The *yuba* lies in the cart wrapped in a blanket. We put a cap on it if it is a man, and tie a kerchief on it if it is a woman. ... At sunrise in the morning [on the next day] ... this is the last [thing we do] for the *yuba* – we go to the river and see the person's spirit off to the other world; we light a fire and walk round it in circles, saying “Go away in peace, don't come back to us... when need be, we'll call you; go away.” We believe that he has gone away when the fire burns out. Then the accordion plays a wedding melody and we leave to the sound of the music. [A wedding melody] so that the person will marry in the other world, and not take someone from this world. ... They immediately start singing a wedding song, and then dance a little ... so that [the dead person] will have a bit of everything in the other world, and we go home... (Informants Roza N. Chentaeva and Vera P. Mikhailova, RN August 2002, village of Novoe Aksubaevo, Tatarstan)

The anthropomorphic form of the monuments, the distinctive male and female form of the upper part and their personification (represented by elements of the traditional costume, images of personal belongings and even of musical instruments, etc.) also attest to the existence of an identical symbolic system among the Bulgarians and the Chuvash.<sup>27</sup> When it is placed on the grave, the *yupa* is fitted out with a cap if it is a man and with a kerchief if it is a woman. An analogous act of “personification” revealing the unity of ritual representations and concepts of passage from this to the other world is found in Vishnevskiy's unique accounts from the nineteenth century (ВишнеВСКИЙ 2001: 237) about the sacrifice of animals to Tūrā and Kiremet, where the animal had to face east and wear a cap. Anthropomorphic images with elements of traditional costume, personal belongings, solar symbols, representations of limbs (arms and legs) and even of horsemen, etc. are also found on many tombstones in the Northern Caucasus dating from the time after the adoption of Islam, including from the present day (Fig. 43, 44).<sup>28</sup> A

<sup>26</sup> The Bulgarians (in the Mount Pirin area) have the same belief about the wooden cross placed on the graves of the dead: “After it rots away it must not be replaced with a new one, for if it is someone else will die too” (Георгиева 1980: 414).

<sup>27</sup> For Bulgarian examples from the nineteenth century, see Енчев-Видю 1994: № 257, 258; for anthropomorphic monuments from the thirteenth-seventeenth centuries from different regions, see Вакарелски 1990: № 36-38, p. 132; later monuments in Любенова 1996: № 8, 61a, 62a, 65, 144, 151, 202.

<sup>28</sup> For descriptions and photos of such images, see Кузнецова 1982. According to her observations, the majority of anthropomorphic monuments in the Caucasus are male. For stelae with figures of humans, animals and birds in Chechnya, see <http://www.chechnyafree.ru/article>

specific feature of the Balkar Khulam-Bezengi tombstones is the depression carved in the middle of their upper part, which "looks like a cup and was probably designed for some kind of ritual libations" (Кузнецова 1982, Fig. 76). Kuznetsova obviously does not know the Bulgarian tombstones and the Chuvash *yupa*, all of which have a small hole on the top – "so that the birds can drink water"; during memorials, a candle is placed and lit there.

Essentially similar to the rituals involving *yupa* (which largely repeat the actual funeral and burial of the dead) as well as to the identification of the *yupa* with the deceased person, is the second, "true" funeral/burial – the so-called *razkopvane* or, literally, "excavation" – among the Bulgarians. It is the final "impetus" towards the ideal state of immortality, and scholars regard it as "the final stage of funeral/burial rites" (Лозанова 1991: 56).<sup>29</sup> Depending on the local tradition, it was commonly performed in the *third, fourth or seventh* year after death, and in the southwestern Bulgarian lands on a Saturday around *Dimitrovdan* (Saint Dimitar's/Demetrius's Day), in *November*, very rarely in spring (Кауфман Н., Д. Кауфман 1988: 38). This ritual was known in the past to the other Balkan peoples as well, and there are different opinions as to its origin. The concepts of the gradual passage of the dead from this to the other world (including the shedding of the flesh) go back to the Indo-Iranian ethno-cultural community, from where they passed into Zoroastrianism (Бойс 2003: 32-36). Another well-known substratum of this ancient religiosity is the concept of the divider-bridge, which the Chuvash build as a real bridge (or repair the old one) precisely on the day of the *yupa* even today (for a detailed description, see Салмин 2003: 102-105, with References). The contents of this ritual practice as well as its distinctive Bulgarian parallels (which I will not discuss here) are part of the subject concerning the Indo-Iranian substratum and processes of synthesis in the traditional ritual system and culture of the Bulgarians, Chuvash, and other peoples. Such phenomena call into question the widely accepted views about the origin of these peoples, and especially the Bulgars = Türks scheme which is "taken for granted" by many scholars. The widespread views as to the existence of "ancient Turkic prototypes", expounded in many Tatar and Russian-language studies, are applied indiscriminately to all Bulgar finds, even *a priori*. This is directly relevant to the monuments and rituals under

<sup>29</sup> (From Кауфман Н., Д. Кауфман 1988: 38; Вакарелски 1990: 175-176; Лозанова 1991: 52-57) The relatives of the deceased would open the grave, remove the bones, wash them with wine, basil and olive oil, and place them in a special box or sack, *putting a cap on the skull of a man and a kerchief on the skull of a woman*. In the different villages, the bones were kept overnight in the house of the relatives or in the local church and reburied on the next day, after one week or after forty days – in the same grave or in a common ossuary (if there was one in the village). The ritual acts in the second funeral/burial were identical to the main ones in the first. According to my observations, in some villages in Southwestern Bulgaria this ritual was practised until the end of the 1970s (as I was told by informants in the Razlog area in 1984).

review here. For example, according to Kakhovskiy (Каховский), who confirms that the funeral/burial traditions of the Volga Bulgars have been preserved among the Chuvash,<sup>30</sup> the Bulgar "pre-Muslim funeral rite belongs to the ancient Turkic tradition". Analyzing Ibn Fadlan's accounts of the Volga Bulgars, he compares them mechanically to similar elements from vast territories and to the tradition of the Middle Asian Turkic-speaking peoples (such as the symbolic representation of the deceased in full dress and armour, the erection of poles or pillars, "opposite" acts owing to the concepts of the reversed order in the otherworld, etc.). Such indiscriminate, large-scale comparisons cannot but lead to the conclusion that "the wooden poles" erected on Chuvash graves (a practice inherited from the Bulgars) likewise belong to the "Turkic ritual" – as a later form of "the initial practice of sticking a spear". The anthropomorphic features of Caucasian Muslim monuments (wooden and stone) are interpreted in the same way by Kuznetsova (Кузнецова 1982) – as "secondarily-imposed Turkic forms coming from the Kuman". Because the Chuvash had "obviously inherited the ancient Bulgar forms" (and well-nigh patented them perhaps?), with respect to the Balkar monuments it was supposedly impossible to speak of "a direct genetic link with the ancient Bulgar ones ... but there is every reason to assume that the ancient Turkic prototypes have played their role in the formation of the main Balkar and Karachay types of stone monuments/stelae". Vakarelski (Вакарелски 1990: 135) who, too, compares features indiscriminately, briefly mentions the Chuvash "wooden statues" which "are essentially conceptually identical to those 'babas' [he probably has in mind the stone babas] and the tombstones of the Ottoman Turks". Smirnov is of an entirely different opinion: "The custom of placing a tombstone in the form of a column called *yupa*, which is genetically related to the stone babas, also links the Chuvash to the Bulgars. The stone babas are well-known in the steppes of southeastern Europe from the Scytho-Sarmatian age. They were especially popular in the age of the Khazar Khaganate among the Sarmatians and Alans, to which the Bulgars belong as well. The lack of stone as a building material in the Middle Volga Region [?] compelled the Bulgars to make such monuments of wood" (Смирнов 1951: 85).

Regarding the grave stone monuments erected to feudal lords in the Northern Caucasus, Kuznetsova (Кузнецова 1982) writes the following: "The common folk had to make do with the cheaper [?] tombstones made of wood." As strange as it might sound to some, wood is a luxury in many parts of the Northern Caucasus, and this environmental problem is not a recent one. Actually, the choice of a particular material in traditional culture is determined by inherited concepts and beliefs, and not by the economic knowledge of observers... An-

<sup>30</sup> Based on evidence from the ancient Bulgar necropolises at Tegesh and Bilyar; *ibid.*, for "the pagan beliefs of the Bulgars" which were preserved in the Muslim necropolises of the local population until the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

other piece of information offered by the same author – about “more archaic as a form, stone stelae ‘clad’ in *wooden cases* [emphasis added] carved out of a whole-tree trunk” (in old Karachay and North Ossetian cemeteries) – has an important implication, pointing to *the tree/wood* as one of the ancient symbols of the Supreme God. Probably this archetype determines his last, “supreme say” in/on the monuments in question.

The main problem in such texts comes from the conflicting positions and failure to recognize that a simplistic, one-sided definition of the components and especially of their origin is counter-productive and cannot lead to adequate analysis. Incidentally, the lovers of “pure cultures” are irrelevant to my study. As regards the widespread view about the Turkic origins and ethno-cultural identity of the Bulgars, I would like to note that the Turkic peoples (before and after the formation of the khaganates) accumulated a significant Iranian substratum which they, in their turn, spread in their zones of influence. It is also well-known that the Persian building traditions and spiritual values had an enormous influence on the Arabs and Türks. After the third century, vast territories in Middle Asia were “part of Sassanid Persia, and before that they were part of Parthia, where ‘pan-Iranian’ cultural elements were predominant” (Чобанов 2006: 25, with References). Precisely Middle Asia was one of the active directions of their spread into the Volga Region. And when speaking of an “ancient Turkic Asian tradition” one ought to set it in the wider context of a culture that was synthesized in its turn. One scholar who insists especially on the connection of the “Bulgaro-Suvar” and Volga Bulgars with the Indo-Iranian and Iranian cultural circle and on the influence of Zoroastrianism on them is A.A. Trofimov, a prominent Chuvash scholar of sculptural forms (including tombstones) and the tradition related to them. Analyzing the common features of Chuvash monuments and the monuments of the Danubian Bulgars, of “the Proto-Bulgarians in the Northern and Western Black Sea region and the early Bulgars on the Volga” as well as their roots in the Ancient East, in Iran and Middle Asia (in the northern regions of Kush Baktria), Trofimov entirely rejects the thesis of the kinship between the Bulgars and the Türks: “The sculptural art of the ancient Türks, Kimaks, Kumaks, which was born in the sixth-seventh centuries in Mongolia and the region of the Altai Mountains ... belongs to an entirely different culture. The parallels observed between the ancient Turkic sculptural forms and the Chuvash obviously come from pan-Scythian and proto-Turkic canonic forms, and some of them also from the Sogdian cultural stratum” (Трофимов 1993b: 153-165).<sup>31</sup> There are similar views about the ancient Bulgarian shrines/temples on the Balkans (in Danubian Bulgaria’s capitals of Pliska and Preslav) which are in the form of rectangles or squares inscribed within each other. “Both types have numerous parallels in Parthian and Irano-Sassanid culture” (Чобанов 2006: 29).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 17 – for more on the monuments from the early period of Volga Bulgaria (before the adoption of Islam) as “established forms formed precisely ... in the region of the Northern Black Sea and the Northern Caucasus”.

I would like to return to the subject of the otherworld and look at some specific forms of the belief that life continues after death (in another dimension) as manifested in two parallel folk concepts: the concept that **life continues at the graveyard** and the concept of **the passage of the human soul to God/“the upper world”**. Among the Bulgarians and the Chuvash, these two possible “paths” represent the horizontal and vertical cycle of life. In the ancient Asian doctrines, the notions of the individual eternal soul which resides in a parallel world are found in the concept of *anima mundi* = *Soul of the World* (a force or spirit that exists in everything and everywhere, and organizes the elements of the universe). As a rule, stratified sedentary communities believe that the *eternal spirit* comes from and goes to the Supreme God.

According to accounts from the seventeenth century, the Chuvash believed that the dead went on living in the otherworld in the same way as they had lived in this world: “They do not believe in the resurrection of the dead or in a new life after life on earth” (Олеарий 2001: 80); this belief was described in more detail by Mészáros in 1909: “I observed the old heritage in purest form in the region of the Vompukas. ... According to old people, the otherworld is inside the earth and there is no heaven or hell. The dead remain invisible to us and *go on living as they had lived in this world* ... at the graveyard, around their mound, together with the other dead people from the village” (Месарош 2000: 198; emphasis added). The accounts about the beliefs of the Bulgarians on the Balkans are analogous: “The actual state of death ... is imagined as *another form of life*” (Вакарелски 1990: 24; emphasis added); “[T]he afterlife is nothing but a *continuation of this life*. ... The soul ... retains the same form, the same image as the dead body ... the same clothes ... and will remain with them forever. ... In the otherworld, too, the dead lived in groups, in villages, as they had on earth. ... Whether there is hell, suffering – *no one can tell me*” (Маринов 1984: 545-547; emphasis added); “[T]he land, the meadows, the forest, the graveyard are guarded by *individual good spirits* ... the souls of *long dead* notable, great and righteous *fellow-villagers*” (Маринов 1914: 242-243; emphasis added). These concepts are represented also in the well-known tradition of burying the dead with their personal and essential belongings (musicians were buried with their musical instruments); the Chuvash would leave in the grave of a dead person his or her personal belongings and tools, as well as wine – “so that they won’t be idle and bored in the otherworld” (Вишне夫斯基 2001: 241).

Another typical constructive expression of the belief that life continues after death are the wooden structures erected on graves – the so-called *chartak*<sup>32</sup> – which

<sup>32</sup> According to Chobanov (Чобанов 2006: 32), who cites Klaus Schippman, this is the name of the rectangular Sassanid temple (ChaharTags in Schippman); *ibid.*, for more on the Iranian prototypes of Bulgarian cult buildings on the Balkans. According to Trofimov (Трофимов 1993b: 163, 167, 169) the so-called “grave hut” (*grobna kushtichka*) in north-eastern Bulgaria (similar structures depicted in Енчев-Видю № 200, 664) is analogous to the Chuvash *chartak*.

can be seen in some villages in Southern Chuvashia to this very day (Fig. 45). The storyline about the construction of a house-grave is well known also from Bulgarian folksongs and, furthermore, “in many parts [of Bulgaria] graves are called the *house* or home of the dead” (Вакарелски 1977: 494; emphasis added; Fig. 46).

One of the most revealing personifications of the Chuvash belief that “life” continues at the graveyard is the so-called *head of the graveyard* (Chuvash *çăva нуçĕ, масар нуçĕ, çăvá ноç*). This “position” is assigned to the first person buried in the graveyard, as a rule “a wise, universally respected *old man*” whom all the dead obey. The figure was well-preserved during my 2002 field study too, except that in some villages the person who became the head of the graveyard was the first person to be buried there, irrespective of gender or age. The advent of death itself is associated with the *масар нуçĕ* – it is he who “takes the souls of those coming after him”; he goes (lit. “rises from the grave”) to the dying person, steps forward with his big knife, slits the person’s throat and carries off his or her soul. The graveyard “is his land”; the grave-diggers must ask him for a place to bury the newly departed, offering him a piece of bread and cheese on the site of the new grave and praying, “O Elder [lit. “старость кладбища” – *масар нуçĕлăхĕ*], give us land!” (Месарош 2000: 46, 201). During memorials, he is the first to be offered the hops drink *çăpá* and they “pray for permission” to light a fire, “to play and dance after the erection of a new *yupa*” (Трофимов 1993b: 146, 179). The *масар нуçĕ* practically holds the position of a *ruler*, manifested also by his *old age* as a mythical metaphor for supremacy and power.<sup>33</sup> A number of concepts and ritual acts of the Bulgarians point to a similar invisible figure – for example, the custom of burning incense and pouring wine on the ground before digging a new grave, which is generally interpreted as an act of offering or purchase.<sup>34</sup> According to field research findings reported by Anna Shtarbanova (2002), in the village of Varvara near Pazardjik (South Central Bulgaria) the custom was to wait for an unmarried young man to die in order to start a new graveyard. Among the Chuvash, the tombstone of the *çăva нуçĕ* is taller than the others and it is usually at the *centre of the graveyard*; this is the *only yupa* which the living replace with a new one “when the old one rots away” (Трофимов 1993b: 146). Typologically and to some extent constructively similar is the monument at the centre of Bulgarian graveyards, from where “they would start to bury” the dead (“a large stone pillar called *menhir* or a sculpted stone cross usually called ‘votive cross’. ... These ... are most often of the same type as the earlier grave crosses but differ from them in that *they are significantly larger in size*. ... Such are found in

<sup>33</sup> This precedent is described in ancient Sanskrit texts – the first king on earth, who was also the first human to die, became the god of the underworld kingdom (Бойс 2003: 32).

<sup>34</sup> This is also known to the Ukrainians: “money is given to the dead to purchase a place in the graveyard” (Вакарелски 1990: 93-95).

most graveyards in Northeastern Bulgaria” – Вакарелски 1990: 140; emphasis added). Similar evidence about a “graveyard monument” as a symbol of the otherworldly community is also offered by Lyubenova: “[This monument] marks the spot called *trapeza* [festive table] where commemorations of the *dead from the whole graveyard*, accompanied with feasts, are organized. It is usually *larger* and more richly decorated than the other tombstones. Not infrequently, it is dedicated to a particular saint. The front surfaces ... are filled with conjuring signs, sacred formulas, a *visual representation* of the saint, and names of the dead” (Любенова 1996: 141, 161, with References; emphasis added).<sup>35</sup>

The *çăva нуçĕ* has functional equivalents also in the Bulgarian concepts of Archangel Michael as a “soul-taker” or “soul-extractor” (Bulg. *dushovadnik/vadidoushnik*, lit. “soul-extractor”/“extractor of souls”) who “orders death” (Вакарелски 1990: 27), takes the souls of people and is “celebrated in honour of death ... so that he will extract the soul more easily”, i.e. less painfully (Маринов 1914: 518). The figure of “sveti Rangel” (Archangel Michael) is based on an earlier substratum of folk concepts, probably of the *man who extracts souls*. Like the *çăva нуçĕ*, Archangel Michael is a “man with a sword in his hand” or “elsewhere this is done by ‘a man with the sabre of Saint Archangel’” (Вакарелски 1990: 27, referring to the town of Troyan, with References). Actually, one of the main “tasks” of these isomorphic “soul-extractors” is to preserve the traditional community *in toto* when it passes over to and resides in the otherworld (“The dead lived in the otherworld, too, in groups, in villages as they did in this world” – Маринов 1984: 547-54; similarly in Genchev about northeastern Bulgaria – Генчев 1985: 193). The occasional Christian burials which I saw in some graveyards of non-Christian Chuvash were explained to me as follows: it is precisely the graveyard that reunites families and clans, therefore many of the officially baptized Chuvash wanted to be buried according to “the old tradition”.

One especially important aspect of the Supreme God, manifested in the cosmogonic concepts and at different ritual levels in the territories under review here, is **his connection with the dead and the ancestors**. Many scholars think that the folk concept of “going to God” and especially that of going to some sort of hell or heaven is a later development and that it emerged under the influence of some charismatic religion (Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Islam...). In an earlier epoch, however, the notion that everyone would simply “go to God” was non-existent, whereas the idea of the fusion of the spiritual substance in humans with the supreme deity goes back to the ancient Indo-Iranian beliefs. In the mediaeval state formations, this direction of passage after physical death

<sup>35</sup> Kuznetsova (Кузнецова 1982) mentions – unfortunately, without providing more information – a “tombstone of the village elder”, a stela of an enviable, unusual height (two metres high and seventy centimetres wide) in the graveyard in the Karachay village of Verkhney Mariy.

is motivated by the relevant cosmogonic concepts, which as a rule are in synchrony with the Kan ideology, with the origin and belonging of high individuals to the upper celestial world. The statehood of the Bulgars, which maintained the territory of a sedentary stratified population, likewise required an adequate ideology shaping its social mores and politics. The divine origin of secular and priestly power focused and emanated the lofty spiritual values of society through the concepts of the Supreme God, and the belief that the Kan is “ruler by the will of God” and the priest/*askal* is “chosen by Tangra”. In this type of ideology, it is only natural that such individuals will return to Him. The following excerpts show that Tangra was believed to predetermine the fate of the ruler and the kingdom as well as the afterlife of humans, which was imagined as a continuation of life on earth:

And people recognized Bu-Ürgan as a boyar or askal [priest] that is a prophet ... and wanted to raise him to the throne. But Bu-Ürgan valued the status of the boyar more than the title of the Kan and said: “People, certainly, are free to choose their rulers, but not from the boyars who are chosen by Tangra...” (Бахши Иман. 2001:17)

Khakan/Kan Kaban ... invited Bat-Boyan ... and Bu-Ürgan to be present at a ceremony of tightening a rope around his neck during the rite of asking Tangra about the time and trends of his reign...

Sulabi, a son of Bu-Timer, took up the helm of the Kara-Bulgars, and received an honour to be present at the tightening of a rope (around the neck) of the new Khakan/Kan, and informed everybody of Tangra’s blessing for his 45-year reign...

... Bardjil ... probably refused to ascend to the throne with the traditional rites out of a fear to be strangled...

[The leader of the Bulgar principality in the Kama River Region] hanged one of his enemies [a Scandinavian called Khud] on a tree near his quarters on the Don River [?] with the words: “Serve, the most brave, to our God Tangra and let him revive you anew but in our land!” This was a great honour, for the Bulgars burned the unworthy opponents on the Hons’/Huns’ custom ... In time, the remains of the Bek [feudal lord, prince] of the Sadumians [Scandinavians; Norwegians, Swedes] fell under the tree and began to be revered by the Cheremish who made sacrifices near them before setting out for war. And the tree and this place received the name “Khud Imen”... (Бахши Иман 2001: 22, 23, 25, 54)

If they see that someone is energetic and knows things, they say: “He has the right to serve our master.” They catch him, place a rope around his neck and hang him on a tree until [the rope] tears; ... a man from Sind, who was quick on the uptake, found himself in this country and served the king for a short time. ... He set off with them [a group of merchants] on a ship and they saw that he was agile and clever. They consulted each other and said: “This man is fit to serve our master, let us send him to our master.” They disembarked on the shore, tied a rope around his neck, tied him to the top of a tall tree, left him and went away. (Займова 2000: 64; Путешествие ибн-Фадлана ... : 74)

According to Beshevliev (referring to the successor of the Bulgarian Kan Krum, Dukum, who was strangled by his attendants), “death by strangulation

with a rope is typical of the Türks and Mongols, who used this method in killing nobles, such as princes and tarkans, to avoid spilling their blood on the ground” (Бешевлиев 1981: 69). In this connection, I want to repeat that the custom of keeping the internal organs in the upper part of the body and the head (lungs, heart, trachea) whole as a seat of the *ami* soul has been preserved in Mongolian sacrifices to this very day, and that it is a typical manifestation of Asian animism (see chapter “Rites and Concepts”). Here any parallels with the Bulgarian mediaeval ideology or even the Bulgarian folk tradition are unfounded. At a deeper level, the “sending off” by hanging (which ensured the “return”/rebirth of kans, leaders, distinguished heroes and even of enemies – to/in the native land), and especially the strangulation of the kan to determine how long he would reign, is based on the concept of the three-tier vertical structure of the world. In the cosmogonic concepts of the Bulgarians, this is represented through a *sui generis* body code – in the sky there is “a world that is the same as this one ... where people tie bands around their neck. On earth, which is in the middle of the world, people tie bands around their waist, while below earth there is another world – a lower world – and the people there tie bands around their knees” (Маринов 1984: 49; for similar Central Asian concepts, see Георгиева 1983: 14, with References; among the Abkhaz, see Лукьянов 1904: 29).

A specific substratum of hanging (as a way of sending off someone to a “high” place and position) is found in Aleksandrov’s account of the so-called “*sukhaya beda*” – literally “dry”, i.e. bloodless, “misfortune” or “disaster” – among the Chuvash, which later came to be thought of as a form of revenge: “The worst possible disaster for the Chuvash is the ‘dry misfortune’ ... to take their revenge on someone [who had insulted them or caused them trouble], they would hang themselves in his yard. In their view, this was the greatest revenge possible” (Александров Н. А. 1899: 32; also in Сбоев 1851: “The barbaric custom of bringing dry misfortune to your enemy, i.e. of hanging yourself in his yard, seems to have died out”). It is only to be expected that there would be folk interpretations of high ideology and practices, especially as regards the rites of passage. Even in late folk rituals, the act of hanging/strangulation encodes knowledge from a more archaic period and points to the ancient ritual practice (among the Bulgars, Chuvash, Balkar, etc.) of “banning” the hanged (up/sky/air), those killed by lightning (*sky fire*), the drowned (lower world/*water*), and those who committed suicide (who “passed”/sacrificed themselves voluntarily) from the graveyard, as well as of worshipping the cosmogonic elements through tombstones. Actually, it points to the question of why people who died in this manner do not belong to the traditional village community. This is also expressed briefly in the ninety-eighth answer of Pope Nicholas I to the Bulgarian Tsar Boris in the ninth century (“You ask whether those who commit suicide should be buried, and whether *sacrifices should be offered for them*....” – Подбрани извори... 2004: 40; emphasis added).

The designation of the head (or of the space around it) as a code for the upper world, as equivalent to humans and as a seat of their life force is closely



related to the conceptions of the human body as a projection of the universe and its levels. There is ample evidence of this in archaeological and ancient written sources, as well as in folk rituals. Here I would note the deformation of skulls practised by the ancient Bulgars, Alans, Sarmatians and others. The graves in the ancient necropolises of “pagan Bulgars” in the Volga Region (from the eighth-tenth centuries) have an elongated section “for the sacrificial complex” to the north of the head, and a total length of two to 2.60 metres; such graves are found also in some late mediaeval Chuvash graveyards (in Novoe Yadrino and Martynkino – Дроздова 2007). A very typical act of designating the space around the head has been preserved in Bulgarian and Chuvash burial rites to this very day. When digging a grave (among the Chuvash), the first spadeful of earth is dug up from the eastern side, where the *yupa* will be placed in autumn; it is put aside and then, after the grave is filled, it is returned to the same spot – *over the head*; in the southern regions it is called *căvan mănpu/earth for the salvation of the soul* (Мецарош 2000: 175, 180-181).<sup>36</sup> In Northeastern Bulgaria (the village of Kalipetrovo), “the first [spadeful of] earth is left aside, and after the grave is filled it is placed *by the grave cross*”, i.e. on the eastern side, over the head (Генчев 1974: 293; emphasis added).<sup>37</sup> That the head is regarded as an equivalent of the person in Bulgarian burial rites is also indicated by the “special attention” paid to the place where the head of the dead person lay (there they put “a heavy stone, an axe, broke a clay vessel or tile after the removal of the body” – Вакарелски 1977: 494) as well as the above-mentioned second funeral/burial (“In villages where there are ossuaries at the church, *only the head* is taken out ... and after it stays some time in the church it is taken to the ossuary, where it is lost among the multitude” – Вакарелски 1977: 497; emphasis added).

Along with the concept of the Chuvash *yupa* as a personification of the dead person, the *yupa* itself symbolically represents the connection of humans with the diving being. Oak (of which men’s tombstones are made) is the tree of God; the *Oak – Tûră/Teiri/Kiremet* semantic unity is manifested at different levels in Chuvash and Balkar rituals. At the beginning of the twentieth century, I.N. Smirnov (И. Н. Смирнов 1904) traced the worship of *kiremet*s directly back to the Arabic meaning of the word *karamat* – “supernatural power of a holy (deceased) person”. The Volga Bulgars associated the worship of the *karamat*

<sup>36</sup> There is a similar expression in the Mount Pirin area in Bulgaria, where people used to say after the second, “true” funeral/burial that “the dead had saved themselves” (Кауфман Н., Д. Кауфман 1988: 38) – probably as a metaphor for passage of the last stage.

<sup>37</sup> In the Mount Strandja area, when the grave is levelled for the first time on the fortieth day after death, when the soul “sets off on a long journey to the other world”, the first spadeful of earth is dug up from the part over the heart; it is put aside and, after the grave has been levelled, it is put back on the same spot (informant Marula Yankova, born 1922, RN 2001, village of Bulgari; for more on the concept that “the soul resides/lives in man in his heart”, see Маринов 1914: 224, 227).

and similar tombstones “with their cult of the dead ... which was preserved even after the adoption of Islam. ... Thus, the word came to mean the spirit of an ancestor who had acquired power in his lifetime and punished his descendants for disobedience. ... It is with this meaning that *karamat* passed from the Bulgaro-Chuvash to the Cheremis and Votyak” (more recently, the same view is held by Trofimov: this type of rituals and the very term “*keremet* ... the main sanctuary in Volga Bulgaria and among the Chuvash ... entered the life and worldview of the Mari and Udmurt” – КЧЭ 2001: 207). The Chuvash believe to this very day that everything that is offered to the sacred tree of Kiremet (bread, fruit, cloths, part of the *kurban*, etc.) goes to the dead: “They say that when the birds, dogs or wolves eat of the offerings, they pass them on to the dead.”<sup>38</sup> This folk concept, as well as Smirnov’s view, expresses the connection of Kiremet (as a dual variant of the supreme Tûră) with the world of the dead and his role as mediator. One of the symbols of their manifestation is precisely the tree/oak. Among the Bulgarians (in the village of Letovnik, near Kurdjali, Southeastern Bulgaria), “it is remembered that when making a [new] graveyard, an oak-tree had to be planted as a guard” (Меламед 2000: 44).

The *yupa* is always placed over the head of the dead person, nowadays in the western part of the grave, and “faces” eastwards.<sup>39</sup> It is made and erected root-end-up – various scholars think this symbolizes the idea of the creation (of the World tree turned upside down) and the very state of death. The *reversed or inverted order* in the other world is an ancient Asian spiritual concept as well. With some reservations, this concept may be used to explain the downward-tapering ancient Bulgar monuments,<sup>40</sup> the representations of an inverted/half-sun in the lower part,<sup>41</sup> of course also the custom of wearing clothes inside out in Bulgarian memorial practices, etc. According to the “logic” of this ritual archetype, the low is a code for the high, whereas things broken, mixed, broken entity in general symbolize *the other order*.<sup>42</sup> The Bulgarians and Chuvash believe that after death the soul goes to God in the *other world by way of the rainbow* created by Him, and that those who jump over the rainbow will change their sex “because in the world of the dead everything is opposite” (Мецарош 2000: 78, 199). The Balkar call the rainbow (which divides the worlds of the living and of the dead) “Teiri’s sword” (*тейри кьылыч*), and say when there is

<sup>38</sup> Informant German Larshnikov, RN 2002, village of Bolshoe Buyanovo, Tatarstan.

<sup>39</sup> In Christian burials in the graveyards of non-Christian Chuvash, the cross is always in the eastern part of the grave, over the feet of the dead person – “because he rises and makes the sign of the cross”.

<sup>40</sup> Любенова 1996: № 34, 63, 64, 82а,б, 145, 148, 150, 163 etc.; Енчев-Видю 1994: № 9, 34, 36, 38, 113, 206, 224, 266, 268, 289, 355, 369, 530, 537 etc.

<sup>41</sup> Любенова 1996: № 34, 63, 64, 82а,б, 145, 148, 150, 163 etc.

<sup>42</sup> A typical example are the untempered and unstable pitches in laments in different territories, which Tolbert (1990, with References) thinks are an expression of successful “transportation” and contact with the other world which is imagined “as a mirror of this world” (see chapter “*Untugun* and the ‘Music’ of Shamans”).

a storm that “Teiri is smiling or blooming”.<sup>43</sup> The *inverted order* explains the finds of broken vessels in Thracian necropolises which are fit for use *there* precisely in broken form. Among the Bulgarians, this is expressed briefly in their explanation for the custom of breaking a clay vessel after filling the grave – in this way “*the dead take everything that is theirs*” (Вакарелски 1977: 494). Early Bulgar necropolises on the Balkans (Меламед 1987: 309) also offer evidence of the practice of deforming weapons and skeletons after death (breaking, cutting off parts of the feet or hands before burial, tying limbs, etc.).<sup>44</sup> Even today old people tell about such acts/deformations which were performed in the past for apotropaic reasons, such as “chasing away” evil or “fighting evil spirits”. These reasons are typical of late folk interpretations, which function “to the benefit of”, not “in the name of”, and which, strangely enough, are repeated in scientific texts as “discoveries” of the authors. Well, if anyone sees evil spirits in their study, let him or her chase them away as they see fit – apotropaically.

**The graveyards of non-Christian Chuvash**, including the mediaeval ones, are always on open **high ground by a river**. The “burials of pagan Bulgars” in the Volga Region are on river banks as well (Дроздова 2007). This phenomenon is also found in various parts of Bulgaria.<sup>45</sup> According to Trofimov’s “visual” explanation, the hill-graveyard supposedly personifies on the one hand “the mythical mountain, and on the other ascent to the sky” (Трофимов 1993b: 66). Without ignoring the Chuvash myth about the Supreme Tūrā who “resides in a gold palace on a *high mountain in the seventh sky*” or the fact that the entire community of the graveyard, headed by the *масар нуслăхĕ*, is located *up*, I must say I have no intention of “climbing” mythical topoi with the help of clichés. In the mytho-concepts and memory of informants, such topoi are not identified as natural hills or mountains but have metaphorical names – of the Creator himself. For example, the old graveyard of the non-Christian Chuvash near the village of Sabakaevo, which is located on an ancient *kurgan*, is called *Улăн мĕмĕл/Hill of the Giant*; memorials are conducted there every *spring and autumn*, i.e. the site continues to function as a sacred, votive site despite the fact that burials stopped there at the end of the 1930s (from Трофимов 1993b: 152). As noted earlier, the Supreme Tūrā is one of the Ulāp giants who, according to myth, fell asleep in the sky and woke up in the same celestial “situation”

<sup>43</sup> Informant Amush B. Mogametovich, born 1927, RN 2005, village of Verkhnyaya Balkaria, Cherek Region, RKB.

<sup>44</sup> The Chuvash tie the front and back legs of the sacrificial animal before sacrificing it with the practical explanation that they “can thus catch it in the other world” (RN 2002, sanctuary near the village of Timoshkino, Tatarstan).

<sup>45</sup> According to Vakarelski (Вакарелски 1990: 138, with References) “most of the graves [in the hamlets around the village of Vakarel, West Central Bulgaria] are on high ground. Some are near ancient tumuli. ... Almost all have thick oak-trees which people don’t dare cut down because the Devil will persecute them wretched fellows [emphasis added]”.

as a thunderer. Probably this is at the root of the symbolic meaning of lightning as an *arrow of god*. In the village of Narastasy (an old Chuvash village in Bashkortostan), the stone from which permanent tombstones are made is called “*celestial stone sent by Tūrā*” during a thunderstorm. Probably this mytheme is re-enacted symbolically also in the ritual firing at funerals (the Chuvash light a fire on the eastern side of the grave and, “while lowering the body [into the grave], *fire in the air*” – Трофимов 1993b: 65; emphasis added).

Regarding the preservation of this type of mytheme, I want to note in parenthesis the “return” of a classical symbol of the Supreme God, a symbol rising above the roofs of Balkar houses built after the deported Balkar were allowed to return to Kabardino-Balkaria in the mid-twentieth century, which differ radically from the old Balkar building traditions. These are the so-called “spear points” – arrow-like forms in different variants, most often painted in blue, which to my knowledge have not been studied among the Balkar to date.<sup>46</sup> Some observations among the Bulgarians on the Balkans refer us to an earlier ritual level of this type of images – to the concepts of ascent to and descent from *above*, conceptualized in the late nineteenth century as an apotropaic act: “The gate [of the yard] often has something like a small roof, and a cross hanging in the middle. Before, as Rakovski reports ... instead of a cross a special spear (‘a pole sharpened like a spear’) hung there, on which the heads of enemies or of animals sacrificed to the gods were stuck to protect the property against attack or evil spirits. This archaic pagan ritual has been preserved in some parts, and old women claim that this is exactly how things should be done” (Ворачек 1984: 104). The arrow-like form of some Bulgarian and Chuvash temporary tombstones which have concrete equivalents in the above-mentioned “spear points” have probably inherited similar, “high” symbolic meaning (Fig. 47, 48, 49).

The colour blue, which is still found in many objects and structures in the Volga Region, to the north and south of the Caucasian Ridge, is a typical and ancient “celestial” symbol. In the folk concepts of the Balkar and Karachay, blue beads and stones personify the dead ancestors and death (Каракеров 2001: 71). “The Bulgars believed ... that the colour of Tengre (blue, white, light) had protective power” (Давлетшин 1990: 58, referring to Volga Bulgaria). Many Chuvash grave structures in Tatarstan, Bashkortostan and Southern Chuvashia are painted in blue; there are traces of blue paint on some older *yupas* as well. This tradition has survived in the new metal temporary tombstones and fences, in the Christian crosses that can be seen, albeit rarely, in the graveyards of non-Christian Chuvash. The same symbol of the celestial principle has passed over into Muslim graveyards in Kabardino-Balkaria (Fig. 50) as well as into votive crosses of the Bulgarians on the Balkans. The symbolic

<sup>46</sup> In his study on some Kuban ornaments on the windows of houses, Ryabchikov (Рябчиков) interprets the rhomb as well as two opposite arrows, represented as one figure, as Scytho-Sarmatian solar signs.

meaning of the colour blue is preserved also in Bulgarian folkloric material from the nineteenth century – in the concepts of the cardinal directions and their colour: “According to folk lore, there are three seas: a black, a white, and a blue one. The sun flows from the white sea and sets in the blue one. That is why the white sea is in the east and the blue one in the west” (Маринов 1914: 7, 40; emphasis added). The sun shines strongest to the south and west. In some folksongs, the direction from which the Sun/solar mother appears is defined as “white south” (Нейкова, Тодоров 2007: № 53). The conception of the southern as white, front, light is also common among many Middle Asian peoples; they associate the northern direction with an ocean and a boundless expanse of water, where the World River flows into the Lower World. The kingdom of death is located in the north and underground (Pentikainen 1998: 37), and the colour of death and of the animals sacrificed to the northern spirits is black (among the Mongol peoples, Ob-Ugrians, etc.) The Bulgarian conception continues as follows: “*The black sea*<sup>47</sup> is in the north, and you have to travel on it by boat to get to the Mount Athos” (Маринов 1914: 40, 50; emphasis added). **I believe that the “lowest”, earlier concepts of black and white/blue may be associated with the north–south polar orientation and function parallelly as a metaphor for the life–death opposition.** In the Strandja village of Bulgari, when a bull (as a rule dark-coloured or black) is slaughtered for an all-village ritual, its head must “face the sun.” (eastwards), the slaughterer must be *left-handed* and called Kostadin; the slaughtered bull must fall on its right side (southwards).<sup>48</sup> According to this rule, the left hand of the slaughterer corresponds to the *northern direction*.

The colour black and the northern direction are associated with the chthonic aspect of some folklorized saints in Bulgarian folklore, with the supreme Tura and Teiri. One of the most prominent parallels of the Chuvash Tură and the Caucasian Teiri is Saint Nikola. In a folksong (from the Sofia area) about how the world was divided among saints, Saint Nikola got the *northern seas* (СБНУ 3, 1890: 35, № 2); among the Serbs, Saint Nikola is believed to “take and send the souls of the dead to the other world” (Попов Р. 1991: 44, with References). There are some significant but very sparse old accounts of the Chuvash early-spring sacrifices (“when the grain is ripening”) in honour of Tură, in which the colour and sex of the sacrificed animals alternated (“they sacrificed a white animal one year, and a black one the following year” – Еропов Н. И. 1995: 205-206). Probably the same solar-chthonic colour symbolism is contained in the Balkar rituals in honour of Teiri performed “at white and black

<sup>47</sup> For the name *Black Sea* as a literal translation of the ancient Greek Αξεινος πόντος which probably is of Iranian or Daco-Moesian origin, see Георгиев 1977: 31 (for this information I thank K. Porozhanov).

<sup>48</sup> Informants Kiro Groudov (1924-2004) and Kiriaki Dimitrova (1925-2008), RN 1999, village of Bulgari.

rocks” (in the region of Babugent), and the sacrifice of an animal with white skin and black ears (in honour of Chopa, of the Sky Teiri and of the Sun Teiri, articulated also in ritual “prayer-songs” – field findings in Хаджиева 2000: 31). People no longer remember why black-and white animals were sacrificed... But at the same level of folklore, in different charms and spells in the territories under review here, white and black continue to be pronounced as metaphors for day and night/earthly and celestial, and this verbal code structured Order and Chaos, Life and Death almost until the end of the twentieth century (Нейкова 2004). Colour symbolism in Chuvash and especially in Balkar rituals also points us to the not yet fully elucidated question of the worship of a number of female deities with similar traits, attributes and functions. That they belong to a common mythical core is especially obvious in the Caucasian Nart Sagas. In Chuvash family and calendar rituals, female animals are sacrificed only to the mothers of Măn Tură and of Kiremet (a sheep or cow “which everyone must sacrifice in their lifetime” – Вишнеvский 2001: 236), as well as to the *kiremet’s water* (a goose or a sheep) which encodes the connection of Kiremet himself to the lower levels of the Universe and his role as mediator. In earlier accounts, the colour of the sacrificial animals is defined simply as “dark”. This requirement, as well as the concepts of the goddess mother, wife or daughter of Tură, Kebe, Kiremet, have been forgotten in most villages. Their reconstruction is made all the more difficult by the confusing and, I would say, vague information about this question, including in contemporary publications.

Without going into the subject of female deities, I would like to note the dark, chthonic symbolic aspect of another folklorized Christian “figure” venerated in Bulgarian traditional rites – the androgynous Saint Petka/Petko. Similarly to Saint Nikola, she represents the idea of the celestial-chthonic entity, of supremacy and omnipotence, and she is venerated as “leader of the saints”. Here we have a typical instance of the well-known phenomenon in which “the traits and attributes of one deity” are inherited by one or more folklorized personages (Попов Р. 1991: 34). In Northeastern Bulgaria, Saint Petka is celebrated after Easter, similarly to the hailstorm-saints celebrated in spring and summer – at votive sites with a village-wide sacrificial feast (*kurban*) and prayer for rain “so that there won’t be a drought in the summer” (Попов Р. 1991: 142, 143). This last, which *is not a prayer driven by necessity* (!) encodes the worship of the Thunderer as ruler of the sky elements and solar fire. The Winter Saint Petka (14 October; the information below is from Маринов 1914: 515-516; 1984: 85; Попов Р. 1991: 145) is celebrated with specific rituals (known as *Gospodeva tsarkva*, literally “God’s Church”, *Kokosha tsarkva*/Hen’s Church, *Bozhi duh*/God’s Spirit, etc.) performed at specific sites: they include sacrifice of *black hens* on a *high hill* outside the village, in a meadow with old *oak-trees* or other trees guarded by a dragon-keeper, near a *votive stone* or old sacred site, *in the graveyard* or at a *crossroads*. The blood of the hens is collected and buried at the top of the hill, at the roots of the tree or

by the votive stone.<sup>49</sup> “The Bulgarians have the custom of sacrificing a black hen to propitiate death, too. If two members of a family die in the same year, old women will slaughter a black chicken at the second funeral and drop it secretly into the grave” in order to prevent a third death. “In Shishentsi, near Kula, they say that the dead were *sometimes buried with a live hen*. But they cannot explain what was the purpose of that” (Вакарелски 1990: 139-140, 90; emphasis added). Birds are mediators. Their behaviour is interpreted most often in the context of the life–death opposition, and it is used to tell the fortune of the household and the house. If a hen crows like a rooster and, moreover, to the west, this is regarded as an omen of death or misfortune (Маринов 1914: 89; Гъбьов 1926: 157-158). The Chuvash say “it is obligatory” to sacrifice a hen to the *yupa* during the autumn rituals, although they no longer remember the earlier meaning of this sacrifice and the requirement that the hen must be black. (“If we slaughter a rooster instead of a hen, we leave money and say, ‘Buy yourself a hen in the other world...’ If you don’t offer [a sacrifice – lit. ‘if you don’t let blood’] they will punish you... It is obligatory to place the *head* of the hen by the *yupa*”).<sup>50</sup> In Chuvash memorials the animals are sacrificed at sunrise on the day before, at the pillar (*yupa*) supporting the big gates of the house. As a rule, it contains specific cosmogonic symbols which are also known from ancient Bulgar and other tombstones (Fig. 51, 52).

North/south orientation of graves is typical of the ancient burial traditions of many peoples. Chuvash burials were *aligned north/south* until the seventeenth century; Drozdova (Дроздова 2007) attributes the change in orientation (west/east) to the influence of Christianity. A north/south orientation (with the *heads* of humans, horses and dogs *oriented to the north*) is found also in ancient Bulgar burials and buildings from the period of the First Bulgarian Khanate on the Balkans. These early graves point to a connection with some late Sarmatian monuments (in the Volga Valley, the North Caspian region and the Caucasian Mountains), leading some scholars to conclude that there were “enclaves of Iranian-language origin among the Proto-Bulgarians” (Ангелова 1995: 5-17).<sup>51</sup> The north/south orientation has been preserved in some Bulgarian graveyards in Southeastern and Western Bulgaria, which local people always explain to me by saying that the graves are oriented to the north because “that’s how they fit

<sup>49</sup> The chthonic aspect of Saint Petka is manifested also in a folksong about *construction of bridges for dead souls*; this song is sung by the *lazarki* in Southwestern Bulgaria at the graveyard before sunrise during the *lazarichki nedeli* (see chapter “Sound and Ritual Along the Route of the Bulgars”). In some villages in the Mount Pirin area, the dead were “dug up”, i.e. reburied, on the day of *Lazaritsa* (Нейкова 1986: 36-50); on Summer *Petkovden* (Saint Petka’s Day), the Bulgarians dye red eggs for the dead, arrange them on the graves, and then give them away in commemoration of the dead (Попов Р. 1991: 144).

<sup>50</sup> Informant Roza N. Chentaeva, RN August 2002, village of Novoe Aksubaevno, Tatarstan.

<sup>51</sup> For more on the predominant north/south orientation of Sarmatian burials in the Northern Black Sea and Volga regions, as well as of nomadic burials in the Eastern Eurasian steppes and Middle Asia, see Скрипкин 2001.

the hill” – even though the hill in question is actually suitable for all kinds of orientations.

The problem of the designation of directions in rituals and religious concepts on the Balkans is especially important in the context of the Thracian ethno-cultural community, Thracian rock-cut and temple architecture, and ancient Bulgar finds. The archaeological evidence shows that the rituals of the ancient Bulgars and Thracians were based simultaneously on two orientations (parallel and meridian), which suggests that they had a belief system justifying the simultaneous application of the two “cycles”. At the same time, the megalithic culture of the Thracians is defined as “solar”, and the entrances of dolmens (the earliest form of grave architecture) and of rock-cut tombs in the Eastern Rhodope Mountains “are always oriented in the direction of the sun ... mostly to *the south, southeast and southwest, more rarely to the west*” (Фол В. 1993: 10-12, 14-15; emphasis added). Thracian submound temples have the same orientation (their entrances are oriented to the south). The mythic contents and “lofty” character of the polarly/meridionally located sites of the Thracians<sup>52</sup> and of the ancient Bulgars (Thracian rock-cut tombs and sanctuaries, and submound temples; the Madara Horseman and the majority of the big structures in Pliska, such as the throne hall of the big palace and the palace itself – Степанов 1999: 66-67, 156-157) indicate that the north/south orientation is associated with the *ideas of the kingship ideology, aristocratic initiation and other sacred rites*, and, ultimately, with the Supreme God. A similar meridional orientation, but to the south, in the burials of Scythian nobles in the sixth-fifth centuries BC is interpreted by some as a “manifestation of religious cults typical of the military elite” (Таиров, Гаврилюк 1988: 144). According to Крупнов (Крупнов 1960: 367), the old orientation in burial rites in the Northern Caucasus (with heads to the west) was changed precisely under Scythian influence.

The simultaneous application of different orientations in the late folk tradition is an expected phenomenon, but their actual meaning and functions have been forgotten. Mészáros reports in the early twentieth century that “the recently converted Chuvash ... dig graves along the *north/south axis, placing the head of the deceased to the south* ... and turning it slightly to the side” (Мечаров 2000: 178; emphasis added). This practice (from the nineteenth century) may be associated both with an earlier substratum and a later Islamic influence (from

<sup>52</sup> In some ancient mytho-narratives, the northern is also associated with the dark and black. One eye of the Thracian singer Thamyras (the son of Philammon and the nymph Argiope) was *white*, and the other *black* (Hom. Ilias. II Scol. II ad 591-602. – ИТТ I: 10) – probably a sign indicating that the mythical singer/lyre-player was a mediator; in Pseudo-Euripides, it is “specified” that his *right eye was white, and his left eye black* (ТМ: 47). The description of the Thracian Boreas, god of the north wind (who wrapped Oreithyia in *dark clouds*), and of his sons with thick *black hair* (Apoll. Rhod. Argonautica I 211-218. – ТМ: 132), as well as the phrase about “the frozen sea of Boreas” (Фол Ал. 1991: 175, in the poem of Nonn. Dion. VI 155-223 Keydell), indirectly suggest that the northern was associated with the dark.

the Volga Bulgars). The southern orientation is known in the Bulgarian burial tradition from the nineteenth century and later in the southeastern parts of the country (the Strandja region): "After washing [the body], they dress it in a new shirt and new clothes, take it inside the house and lay it out so as to face either east or north, but not west or south" (Маринов 1984: 521); "When burying someone, their head must be to the west ... or the south" (informant Marula Yankova, born 1922, RN 2002, village of Bulgari, Southeastern Bulgaria).

There are different hypotheses about the origins of the old grave structures in the Northern Caucasus, where there has been interchange of different peoples, ideas and behaviours (and even of their expression in architectural form) for thousands of years. Some scholars associate them with the ancient Bulgars.<sup>53</sup> The concept of passage to the Supreme God after death, a passage assigned to nobles in ancient times, led to the construction of two types of tombs in this region, some of which functioned until the end of the nineteenth century. They are associated with specific universal concepts, preserved even among people of different religions (the idea of an afterlife, of the entirety of the family/clan, personified constructively as a "home"/house, etc.). In the old highland Balkar villages (such as Makush and Verkhnyaya Balkaria), the dead were buried in **overground and underground tombs built of stone**, by rule family tombs, without a fixed orientation. The underground tombs do not have an overground mound and their entrance is very small, a hole big enough only for a person to crawl through; they are located in groups *in the immediate vicinity of the village* (Fig. 53, 54). According to evidence from these villages, this tradition was ultimately replaced by the practice of burying the dead in sarcophagus-like underground individual stone graves (a practice that has survived to the present day) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. My informants said that the sick and those threatened with death went there *by themselves* (!) to die: "When an epidemic broke out – cholera, the plague... they would go there... as if in a shelter, and die... People lie there to this very day the way they had arrived, but their clothes have rotted away. These underground sepulchres are called *шиакъ/шиакръ* – you would go there by yourself, crawling through ... people would go inside, where the disease itself struck them down."<sup>54</sup>

The overground rectangular, domed (regarded as earlier in origin) and polygonal (hexagonal to octagonal) walled family tombs found among the Balkar, Karachay and Ossetians (*keshene* in Balkar) are considered to be a local late-

<sup>53</sup> For a review of the different hypotheses, see Рудницкий 2001. According to Angelova (Ангелова 1995: 5-17, with References), the complex ethnic and historiographic picture in the region has led to a "significant diversity of grave structures (even within one and the same necropolis), which makes it impossible to make categorical conclusions about ethnic identity".

<sup>54</sup> Informant Zvorzhan B. Ulbashev, born in the village of Shaurdat in 1930, RN September 2005, village of Verkhnyaya Balkaria, RKB.

Kuban heritage (Чеченов 1969: 107; Fig. 55, 56, 57). During the Middle Ages (fifteenth-seventeenth centuries) they functioned parallel with the underground tombs built of stone, with individual pit burials, and especially with the catacomb structures which are very typical of the region and are regarded as "beyond doubt Alanic" (for a review of the different theses, see Скрипкин 2001, with References). Kuznetsova (Кузнецова 1982, with References) thinks that the prototype of these overground tombs, in which "the connection with pagan beliefs can be traced clearly", are the old dwellings. She claims that between the two types of structures, underground and overground, there was continuity "obviously based on the continuing ancient traditions preserving the customs of ancestor worship". This basically means that people must have gotten sick and tired of digging holes and decided to move the commemoration of ancestors above the ground. A constructively ancient form, however, does not necessarily attest to an ancient way of thinking in the community that has inherited it. The emergence of these architectural forms is the result of something entirely different – of the ideology of a state formation. What is more important for me is not their actual ethnic origin but the religious and social symbolic meaning assigned to them. There is ample evidence that such structures located underground or overground were not built because of filial feelings or for ploughers... The underground tombs in the Northern Caucasus correspond also to accounts written by Arab observers about the Volga Bulgars (Al-Massoudi: "when someone *noble* died ... they dug a big underground vault and made the wife and the people from the retinue of the dead man enter it together with him"; Al-Bekri: "When someone dies, they place him in a deep underground vault and make his wife and slaves climb down inside, where they stay until they die" – Бещевлев 1981: 102; emphasis added).

Domed mausoleums (specific to Middle Asian architecture) were also built during the Middle Ages for the elite in the old capital of the Volga Bulgars, Bolgar.<sup>55</sup> According to Rudnitskiy (Рудницкий 2001, with References), the overground tombs concentrated in the region of the Kuban River in the seventh-ninth centuries, were built for *nobles* under Middle Asian and Iranian influence. Because of their earlier Parthian equivalents (deep vaulted tombs) and because of the fact that the bones of those who died earlier were kept in them, Rudnitskiy associates them, as well as rock burials, with Zoroastrian burials and Zoroastrianism, which spread to the region along the Silk Road in the seventh century. The possibility that there were Zoroastrian rituals among the Bulgars in the Northern Caucasus (by the principle of "non-desecration" in which the cleansed bones, isolated from the sacred elements – fire, earth, water – through clay, stone, limestone, are placed in closed ossuaries) which, even if

<sup>55</sup> According to Aidarov (Айдаров 2001: 37-38, 71), the overground tombs in the Volga Region (with equivalents in the Trans-Caucasus, Crimea and Asia Minor), directly connected with the building traditions of Volga Bulgaria, are related "typologically and stylistically to the Muslim East".

hypothetically, could associate them with the overground tombs, is ruled out by a *prima facie* incontestable fact: the pit burials, which attest to the "exceptional resilience" of Bulgarian burial rites, including until the tenth century (Рудницкий 2001). Neither could there have been Zoroastrian elements in the burial rites of the Bulgars on the Balkans (nor in those of the Chuvash), where fire rituals were especially important for the passage of the dead; evidence of this practice has also been found in mediaeval Bulgarian burials (Меламед 1987). The aforementioned second/true burial of the bones cleansed of flesh<sup>56</sup> among the Bulgarians is probably a pre-Zoroastrian/Indo-Iranian substratum. It is entirely possible that during the Middle Ages, this tradition spread to the west by way of the most intensive contact zones in Middle Asia. However, no evidence of reburial (and common ossuaries) has been found to date in the Chuvash folk tradition or in earlier Chuvash and Bulgar necropolises in the Volga Region.

The problems and disputes regarding the Bulgarian presence in the Northern Caucasus come from the failure to recognize that the Bulgarians (as well as Bulgarian folklore) are a cultural-historical amalgam. Focusing research on archaeological sites is unlikely to be productive for the simple reason that the constructive views of a people are best represented in its beliefs and ritual system, which should be the starting point of any investigation. Furthermore, the concepts of afterlife in the other world can have different forms of constructive expression, depending on the community's stratification.

Here I will end the subject of funeral, burial and memorial rites by pointing out one of the most significant factors distinguishing the ritual faith and worldview of the Bulgarians and Chuvash from those of the "classical" (Siberian and Asian) shamanic communities: the *monistic soul* of humans, the irreversibility and "eternity" of their spiritual substance as a single and unique entity. To quote the Kabardinian Zramuka Khuranov (1896-2000), "Man has one soul and it should be a good one."<sup>57</sup>

The problem of ideology and its spiritual "transpositions" in time is especially important in analyzing the inherited ethno-cultural traditions of the Bulgarians on the Balkans, which are the result of centuries-long processes of consolidation of Thracian, Bulgar and non-Bulgar elements. The superimposition of conceptually similar religious behaviours and even of *identical rites* among the Thracians and the ancient Bulgars has produced a specific, monolithic culture. Relying on ancient written and archaeological evidence is not always helpful

<sup>56</sup> The bones were reburied in the same grave or in a common ossuary (if there was one in the village) – a small separate building or the graveyard chapel, where they were placed in bags/wrapped in cloth under the floor, and left there without further care. Such ossuaries are found mainly in the western Bulgarian lands (Вакарелски 1990: 175-176).

<sup>57</sup> Informant Muzarin Fitsevich Khuranov, born 1947, RN September 2005, village of Karagach, RKB.

in "clearing up" concrete relicts in a folk heritage that has bilateral parallels (Нейкова 2004). Worshipping God in a sacred space and at sacred (oak) trees is an ancient cultural universal that survived in folklore until the twentieth century; it is known from the doctrinal and mystical Thracian societies as well as from mediaeval rites in the Circumpontic Region. A number of ancient Thracian temple complexes and menhirs have remained a "cult centre" for the population to this very day (Фол В. 2000: 81, 83-84, 87). The territory of sacred springs and structures in Southeastern Bulgaria (fenced squarely or rectangularly<sup>58</sup> – with a wicker fence in the past and with a wooden fence today), together with the concepts of inviolable trees, the different directions of entry and exit, etc. is similar in many respects to the ancient Bulgar/Chuvash *kiremet*. The location of the sacred site and spring (as elected, "pointed out" from on high), very often on a hill or in a hollow, is a metaphor for the "high" and the "low" and the passage between them. It is obvious that Tangra "came to rest" on the Balkans upon similar cosmogonic concepts, semantic oppositions and acts of ritual "transcendence" (of humans, of sacrificial messages, etc.).

Many rituals in Bulgarian folklore on the Balkans are a *synthesis of diachronically manifested cultures*, and their components make it difficult to draw categorical conclusions about their origins and probable prototypes. For example, a hopelessly open "text" known among the Caucasian peoples and the Bulgars in "nomadic" and in "agricultural" Asia, is the tasting of raw meat of the sacrificed animal, the sprinkling of blood, and the hanging of the head and skin of the sacrificed animal on a high place. The finds in ancient Bulgar burials in which pieces of meat "were, as a rule, left raw" (Меламед 2000: 15, 16) probably symbolize the idea of the "passage" of the sacrificed animal to the *otherworld*, of the *raw as alive*. In line with another ancient cultural universal, male animals were offered to a god and female animals to a goddess; this custom has been preserved to date both in Chuvash rites (Вишневецкий 2001: 250) and in ritual sacrifices to male and female saints on the Balkans. Various sources and finds show that the interaction of cultures in the Circumpontic community (of which the Bulgars became part at the beginning of the first millennium AD, according to the official academic view) continued in the next epochs as well. Despite the complexity of the subject of research, the evidence clearly indicates that the *ethno-cultural consolidation* on the territory inherited by the Bulgarians could hardly have been the fruit only of "centuries of coexistence" of immigrant "nomads" and indigenous "tribes", as Bulgarian textbooks and films suggested to the young generation during communism. The *consolidation of different ritual- and life-behaviours* upon the successive Bulgarian "step" on the Balkans (where *statehood* had shaped the way of thinking and ritual

<sup>58</sup> For more on "initiation in Asian Minor and Mithraistic mysteries ... in sanctuaries in the form of an elongated triangle under a cylindrical roof, a form adopted also in the lands of Thracian Orphism", see Фол. Ал. 2002: 231.

system for centuries) presupposes their “internal” conceptual predisposition and “similar types of historical memory” of their carriers (Фол Ал. 1986: 175).

Since the formal state ideology and the formal state and literary language used throughout Southeast Europe – by that time inhabited by Thracians without an own state – was Greek or Latin, and later on, in the Middle Ages, also Bulgarian ... the certain Thracian-Latin, Thracian-Hellenic or Thracian-Bulgarian bilingualism – related and dependent on the respective state (in our case here – Rome, Byzantium or Bulgaria) – became pointless and was replaced by the Hellenic-Bulgarian bilingualism in the Middle Ages. The latter is particularly well-to-observe in contact zones as the North Aegean coast, as well as about the west coast of the Black Sea. That is why the *Thracian (features)* proved to be best preserved to date in Bulgarians and Greeks of today (from the northern part of present-day Greece). Namely the conservatism of the Thracian society from the third period of Ancient World History [especially in the age of the Late Roman Empire] enabled it – basing upon its traditional popular culture – to fit into the new Bulgarian ethnicity of the Southeast-European Middle Ages. ... Relatively easy and spontaneous seems to have been its integration in the process of transition to the new social-economic relations of the emerging medieval feudalism. ... Thus, the final period of the History of Ancient Thrace and of the Thracians found the best way to merge into the beginning of the History of Medieval Bulgaria, whose society, resp. social relations on that phase proved to be closest and similar to those of the Thracian community. (Porozhanov 2003: 290; 292)

The memory about Tūrā/Teiri/Tangra and the different ritual levels of worship may be defined as a stratum of Tengriism that has survived in hidden and visible forms in the folk traditions of the Chuvash, the Balkar and the Karachay – as well as of the Bulgarians. It is quite likely that in the mediaeval Bulgarian states, this Supreme God united inherited polytheistic functions and personages, which He “returned” to folk faith through a generalized “figure/model” and divine hypostases (multiple gods). It is quite likely that He was manifested as the product of a centuries-long synthesis of ideas and behaviours even in the mediaeval Bulgarian states. Invested with ancient and inherited spiritual contents, He was conceptualized through and in the indigenous value system of the local population as an “own” god, *becoming a God of all* and remaining Supreme in His territories in the next centuries as well... I would like to repeat that as a sedentary social institution and ideology, **the State creates and maintains models of behaviour which integrate the peoples within it irrespective of their size.** Integration means above all synthesis of spiritual values and ritual behaviours which are transmitted diachronically in the memory of generations as “own” ones and which are recognized at different levels in the inherited tradition (of the Chuvash, Balkar and Karachay) as “archaic relicts”. I can give as an example the retinue of deities which surround Tūrā in Chuvash family and calendar rituals, and which have specific titles, functions and hierarchy – a retinue that could have emerged only in the context of statehood:

**Court Gatekeeper** (Алăк усан); **God’s Messenger** (Пўлĕхçĕ) who brings people bad or good fortune “at God’s command”; **Pigambar** (from the Persian for “prophet”, “bearer of good news”) who “protects herds and peoples from wolves and bears”; he has power over domestic and wild animals; **Great Ambassador and Translator** (*Mān Kene*) – mediator between the upper celestial and the middle earthly world, between gods and humans, with power over the plant world and bees, the earth itself and the stratum below it; at Tūrā’s command he, too, governs human destiny; his dwelling is the World tree; **Impregnator of the Earth** (*Хĕрлĕçыр*), with power over the plant world; **Khurban** (*Хăрпан*, lit. “sacrifice”, from Arabic *kurban*) who delivers the offered sacrifices and requests to Tūrā or to “He Who Stands Before God”. Pyulyukhsā, Pigambar and Kebe are hierarchically equal deities, second in rank after the Great Turā and “serving as his deputies”. (Вишнеvский 2001: 232, 245-6; Егоров Н. И. 1995: 122)

In the Bulgarian mediaeval states, Tangra predetermined the divine origin and destiny of the ruler and the “kingdom”, and the “life” of people after death believed to be a continuation of their life on earth. It is He who is the creator and lord of the universe and who, as such, has various tasks and “duties”. The folk belief and “forms” of Tūrā/Teiri/Tangra in the Volga Region, the Northern Caucasus and the Balkans (as the sun, a giant, a hero, an old man...) raise the question of his stage-by-stage construction and inheritance over time. Today many contents of the rituals in his honour “encode” another context and even another religious level. However, they can be decoded thanks to the conservative and archaic character of many of the inherited traditional and ritual components irrespective of the socio-political and ideological fate of the population that carries them.

Our theses about Tūrā/Teiri/Tangra, formulated after months of field research, do not provide unambiguous answers but raise pertinent questions about the essence and dynamic of the spiritual values preserved in the behaviour of *living faith*. This Supreme God does not fit into some scientifically generalizing propositions (for example, that Teiri is the “supreme deity of all Turkic peoples who inhabited the vast territories of Middle Asia and Mongolia in pre-Mongol times” – Джуртубаев, Болатов 1990, with References). Let me remind the reader that among many Middle Asian peoples, *tengri/tenger* is a name for the sky itself or for the *spirit of the sky* as well as for substances/spirits with different functions. The specific development of religious ideas among the Bulgars and among their successors, where Tūrā/Teiri/Tangra is the supreme god, is another status of Tengriism, in which THE SKY- AND SUN-GOD/CREATOR IS MANIFESTED IN A RELIGIOUS, AND NOT IN AN ANIMISTIC BELIEF-SYSTEM. This “profile” of the ideology inherited in the rites in the ancient Bulgarian lands stems from entirely real parameters – the protection of the state, kan, army, subjects, whose generations and subsistence within the boundaries of a culturally and historically conquered territory were the responsibility both of the Supreme God and of the institution protecting/guarding this territory. That is

also probably why Tūrā himself goes round the fields at harvest time. It is precisely the existence of this Supreme God that rules out the possibility that shamanhood existed among the Bulgars, even in an unclear and ancient past. The active participation of this Tūrā/Teiri/Tangra (and his hypostases) in the life of society – from the ways of the ruling elite to the calendar and family rituals of the common folk – as well as his accessibility to different social levels make him very different from the Middle Asian and Siberian concept of “the sacred sky” or *Deus otiosus*, which is only an idea of a life-giving, inaccessible, abstract and non-anthropomorphic being.

I firmly believe that the ritual symbols of the God in ancient Bulgar sanctuaries (similarly to the Thracian ones) were within the power of priests and kans (and not of shamans<sup>59</sup>). **There is no such thing as shamans *per se*.** The shaman is invariably part of a human group that needs his services (Cho, Hung-yoon 1984: 463). In the zones outside “classical shamanhood” (of changing “empires” and unions where different religions overlapped in time) scholars look for the configurations of syncretic ideological forms. As regards religion, rituals and musical “forms”, the lands crossed by the Bulgars from the region of Pamir to the Balkans pose stumbling stones for anyone who wants to carry the burden of “shamanism” across them. Such an undertaking invariably leads to “no man’s” land. And the identification of shamans – at that, with a “*tupan* and drumstick” in rock drawings and graffiti-drawings of unclear origin (Овчаров 1997: 60) are a successive manipulation by researchers of the ancient Bulgar faith-behaviour.

The trail of Tūrā/Teiri/Tangra in folk memory can help us overcome some problems in reconstructing the religion of mediaeval – and later – Bulgarian society. Many of these problems come from the misconception that origin and language in themselves solve the question of faith and rituals in diachronically changing cultures.<sup>60</sup> They come from the inertia of looking for the essence of ancient Bulgarian spirituality solely within the context of Middle Asia and, furthermore, within the context of the widely used – and abused – scheme “Bulgars=Türks”... Such “categorical attribution” of spiritual values and behaviours, and even of ideas, to peoples and especially to countries and “historical” periods, eliminates the dynamics of their movement and continuity, their permanent “return” despite the changing territorial boundaries. When the contents of a Supreme God (even if his name is uncertain) are sought in different ethno-cultural levels, lands and times, his “Bulgar” individuality may also be-

<sup>59</sup>“The Proto-Bulgarians depicted Tangra and built temples in his honour, in which priests (shamans) [??] performed sacrifices” (Гюзелев В., Ваклинов Ст. 1981: 82).

<sup>60</sup>“Neither language nor religion or lifestyle are nation-determining factors. ... A nation determines itself as such through its constructive behaviour (=culture), which is the result of the specific to it interaction between ... ideas-categories ... between values-virtues” (Фол Ал. 2000: 224).

come clear. Then even the advocates of “some sort of pan-Turkic roots” will realize that “the anthropomorphic form of the supreme deity Tangra among the Bulgars is obviously inconsistent with the Turkic tradition, in which Tengri means the Sky”, that “the obvious personification” and anthropomorphic features of Teiri in the Northern Caucasus “are not typical of all Turkic-Mongol peoples” (Талашов 2004; Малкондуев 1988).

The trail of Tūrā/Teiri/Tangra silently invalidates some axiomatic conclusions in “politicized” science which have used sparse evidence to declare the ancient Bulgar-religiosity a spiritual and archaeological “fossil”. Whereas this view may be appropriate in promoting cultural tourism, my informants – Bulgarians (in Tatarstan) and others with clear self-identification as descendants of the Bulgars (Chuvash, Balkar) – who accepted me as a “relative” and part of whom still profess their old faith, have no idea that they have been consigned to museums... Thanks to the despicable political structures that ruled Danubian Bulgaria in the second half of the twentieth century (and whose time, unfortunately, still has not run out), the Bulgars were “assimilated” by and indiscriminately integrated into Slavdom... This paradoxical manipulation, according to which *the models of the state are subordinate to the tribal ones*, is also unfair to “Slavdom” itself, which in Danubian Bulgaria adopted the Bulgar ethno-cultural models of behaviour and ritual system centuries ago. Figuratively speaking, having acquired a newly constructed past and the substratum religiosity of Thracians and Bulgars, Slavdom is now at a loss about the profile of its own demonology... No political conjuncture can disprove the Byzantine chroniclers who distinguished the Bulgars from the Slavs even after the tenth century (long after the adoption of the new official state religion, Christianity), the subordinate economic/tax status of the Slavic clans/tribes as well as the policy of their periodic massacre and resettlement outside and along the boundaries of Bulgaria, especially during the First Bulgarian Empire (Цветков 2000: 75; 76; 2000, with References). Back in those days, unfortunately, this came close to genocide. The pan-Slavic politicized “science” (which holds that the Bulgars were “assimilated by the Slavs” – Иванов et al. 2000: 14; Исхаков, Измайлов 2001: 50-51; <http://slavn.org/23>; Бетрозов 1991: 119; Очерки истории...; Овчаров Д. 1997: 8; 1997: 13, to mention but a few) is welcome for the Chuvash and “Tatars” who are continuing to argue, openly or covertly, about who are the true descendants of Bulgaria and the Bulgars – who have remained in the past and whose sole descendants they claim to be...

I will not even think of renouncing the wealth of my traditional historical memory and its multi-layered “profile”... I want to repeat for the umpteenth time that in the territories under review here and on the Balkans, there has been a **centuries-long synthesis of cultures** and that the unilateral ethnic definition of the surviving traditional memory of a centuries-old state community is not a scientific but a geographical orientation of political interests... Their “bark” has sounded for centuries around the Bulgarian “caravan” on the Balkans, to-



gether with various "academic" theories about its starting point and destination... And even though its "loads" are subject, to one extent or another, to typological and functional comparisons to "distant lands", they are integrated into a monolithic body through/and within a millennia-old state. Any study of the latter's ethno-cultural "landscape" requires serious investigation of its trail and route back in time. Otherwise we will be left with the old armchair advice to "Old Bulgarian Studies" which, for example, were expected "to separate [?] the non-Turkic deities from the Balkar pantheon of gods in order to reach a sound [?] original-Bulgarian basis of gods" because "Proto-Bulgarian folklore" was "completely lost [?]" (Балкански, Хашходжов 1984: 50, 46). Such conclusions in "obituary-like" style can never be invented by a professional ethnologist who knows several things well: the fact that "pure cultures" are dug up only in the autumn and spring (with a hoe), and the law of inheritance in ritual faith-behaviour and its sacred topoi over the centuries, i.e. the fact that spiritual behaviours are not contained in petrified and archaic forms but in the movement and memory of *living cultures*. Nor will a professional ethnologist ever renounce the unique expressions of folklore which carry the traits of different kinds of epochs and keep folklore alive... I envy J. Pentikainen (1998: 40) for what he was told by an old shaman in 1990, namely that "Jesus Christ may be the youngest son of the God of the sky, Num Torum"...

### ON VÈSHTERSTVO/WITCHCRAFT AND SHAMANHOOD: DIFFERENCES AND POSSIBLE PARALLELS

One outstanding problem directly dependent on the contents and decoding of rites concerns the territorial dimensions of shamanhood, including of Siberian shamanhood. In Europe, most publications and debates on the subject are centred around the Finno-Ugric peoples and their descendants (such as the present-day Finns and Hungarians), which are presumed to have had shamans in the past. Or so scholars claim.

Because of their origins and language, the Hungarians often identify themselves as Finno-Ugric and as belonging "undoubtedly to the Uralic language group". This seems to underlie the widespread belief that "the old religion of pagan Hungarians could not have been different from the primitive faith of the Siberian peoples..." (Hoppál 1984: 433). A number of Hungarian scholars from the early nineteenth century speculate "that Hungarians, when arriving to the Carpathian Basin, had a system of beliefs that can be called shamanism, and in consequence they must have had priests (magicians) who were acting in the way shamans did. This hypothesis can be neither proved nor refuted" (Dömötör 1984: 423). According to Hoppál (1984: 435), "It can be established that a shamanistic conception of the world constituted the backbone of the pagan Hungarians' worldview." On the whole, the traces of the so-called *Hungarian shamanism* have been reconstructed mainly from narratives ("folk belief legends"—Hoppál 1984: 435; Taube 1984: 344). The emblematic representatives of the former are four main figures, "a series of so-called half-shamans": *táltos*, *tudós*, *garab onciás*, and *regös* (Hoppál 1984: 433). These terms, which are known from late mediaeval sources, cannot be derived from any Uralic or Altaic term for "shaman". Significant information about the *táltoses* is offered by documents of the Inquisition from the seventeenth century and later: they were born with teeth, with a caul, and/or had a surplus finger (=bone); they were enemies and antagonists of witches, with whom they fought for the well-being of their community; typically, *táltoses* could vanish, change into different animal forms, and had initiatory visions; legends tell of fights between the *táltoses* themselves in the form of a "bull-fight", interpreted as analogous to the fights between different Altaic shamans and, more specifically, between their zoomorphic spirit helpers (Hoppál 1984, with References; Dömötör 1984; Klániczay 1984). According to Klániczay (1984: 414), the majority of the features marking out *táltoses* "seem to belong to indigenous European traditions ... [and] can be accounted

for within the general framework of shamanistic ideas". According to Hoppál (1999: 60, citing Diószegi), "the ones that come closest to Hungarian *táltos* folklore are the parallels from the Altaic Turks, Tuva and Mongolia". More moderate scholars point out that the hypotheses about the connection of *táltoses* with shamanhood can be neither proved nor refuted (Dömötör 1984: 423). Klaniczay hypothesizes that there may have been "a transition from basically shamanistic beliefs to a belief-system, dominated by the paradigm of witchcraft, as a consequence of important modifications in the life-conditions, economic activities and social formations of certain people. If such a transition takes place, it is highly improbable that witchcraft beliefs simply substitute the former shamanistic concepts" (Klaniczay 1984: 415). In his study on the *benandanti* in Northeastern Italy, which are similar to the Hungarian *táltoses*, Klaniczay likewise refers to folk beliefs and narratives as well as Inquisition documents from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:

The *benandanti* were born as such (born with a caul); they started exercising their functions when they became adults, around twenty, after an initiatory vision in which another *benandante* or Angel of God appeared to them, beating a "drum", and called them for their first "soul-journey"; they went on soul-journeys four times a year, at the so-called *quattro Tempora* (the four periods of fertility rites relating to the turn of the seasons, incorporated into the Church calendar); then their bodies became lifeless and had to be left that way for several hours, without being moved or rolled over, so that their souls could return to them; the *benandanti* were protectors of the community and antagonists of witches; they fought with them on remote plainlands, where both the *benandanti* and the witches arrived mostly riding a cat, a rabbit or another animal; a victory of the *benandanti* meant that there would be a good harvest, and vice versa. The *benandanti* were held in high esteem and were regarded as spiritual leaders of their community. They could cure the bewitched, see the procession of the dead and bring news about the fate of dead relatives. The Inquisition was baffled by the *benandanti*'s persistent claim that they were fighting for God and Christ. (From Klaniczay 1984: 404-410, with evidence from other European regions about fights with witches in dreams)

It is not difficult to see that the Bulgarian *vészteri* also belong to the tradition of European witchcraft. *Vészteri* (sing. *vészter*; now more commonly *veshtitsa/veshtitsi*, translated usually as "witch") is an old general term for people who are "*vészti*" (from *vesht* – competent, capable, proficient; Old Bulgarian *вѣдати*, "know") about the esoteric. Some of their characteristics are typologically and functionally identical to the features of the *benandanti* and *táltoses*, interpreted by some Hungarian scholars as shamanistic:

A woman-*veshtitsa* ... lives by rivers in deserted places. ... She can tell everything that is yet to happen, she can cure all diseases, call down the Moon, make rain and even floods or cause droughts ... she can become invisible and turn into different animals (a goose, dog, wolf...) ... When the *veshtitsa* falls asleep at night ... her soul departs, leaving her body as if dead, but breathing weakly. The soul, in the form of a yellow-black butterfly ... flies until first cockcrow ... then it returns to the body and

brings it back to life. If, however, someone rolls her body in the meantime, the soul ... will not be able to recognize and enter it, and the body will remain dead forever while the soul wanders as an unclean spirit. ... When flying ... the *veshtitsa* is seen as fire or as a flame. ... At night, she wanders along the rivers and pools, where she meets with the *samodivi* [sing. *samodiva*, wood nymph], who teach her how and with what to cure diseases. ... All those persons, who use bewitched herbs, charms, magic ... constitute a [special] group ... such people are treated with *respect and awe* ... [they] are *superior to all others*. ... The houses [i.e. clans] which produce diviners, fortune-tellers ... are *hereditary* ... these powers are transmitted through blood... (Маринов 1914: 213-215, 239-240; emphasis added)

The contents and functions of this kind of figures in Bulgaria and the Balkans (called sing. *magyosnitsa*, pl. *magyosnitsi*, *brodnitsa/brodnitsi*, *mamnitsa/mamnitsi*, *zhitomamnitsa/zhitomamnitsi*, *vrazhalitsa/vrazhalitsi*, etc.) have parallels with the *táltoses* and *benandanti*, with the Chuvash and Caucasian witches and sorcerers. These parallels include the following:

- Transcendence (departure of the soul from the body during sleep, *flight*, residence in both *this* and *the other world*);
- Ritual transformation (into an animal, a flame, a butterfly... and back into human form);
- Specific time for magic rites (at night/in the dead of night – as a code for *open* contact time);
- Isolation at special places outside the village with semantic characteristics marking them out as *beyond* (a deserted watermill, a graveyard, remote plainlands, etc.);
- Status and gender: they can be men or women, married or not, more often of post-fertile age;
- Mediation and knowledge of the esoteric (of the future and of the past, of *this* and of *the other* world, of herbs, etc.);
- Dual essence (ability to do evil/good, cast/break spells, etc.);
- Specific attitude of the community towards them (awe, respect);
- Hereditary transmission and signs of their vocation at birth;
- The gift of the elected and its acquisition is associated with suffering, pain, and the idea that they are doomed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Among the Chuvash: "When the time comes, the sorceress/sorcerer must cast spells on someone, otherwise she/he will die. ... If their children are not taught the craft of their parents, they will be sickly and may even die" (Салмин 2002: 8, 10). Among the Bulgarians on the Balkans: "Those who step on the *samodivska trapeza* [lit. "*samodivi*'s table"] falls under their power, and the *samodivi* will not let them be until they agree to become *fortune-tellers and clairvoyants*. Such people become saints and the *samodivi* help them speak with the dead and tell the future" (according to informants from the area of Lovech, North Central Bulgaria) – Попов P. 1999: 286; emphasis added.

**Transcendence and dual essence** is common to shamanhood and *veshterstvo*/witchcraft. There are accounts of residence in both *this* and *the other world* and the so-called **transportations** (*prenasyaniya*) among the Bulgarians from the end of the nineteenth century: "Women who were in delirium for some time during a severe illness become the most famous sorceresses and diviners; after recovering, they believe they were transported to the other world and tell what they have seen there, and it is believed that they have acquired a special power or gift to do magic" (Бассанович 1891: 76-77). The **concepts of sleep as trance** as well as of **transformations** into different animals and birds are typical of the so-called Hungarian shamanism, classical shamanhood, and European witchcraft in general (Jaimoukha 2001: 144; Месарош 2000: 208, 210; Hoppál 1999: 60).<sup>2</sup> Both the flight of witches (in sleep) and the soul journey of shamans (in cataleptic trance) involve departure of the soul from the body, which remains lifeless. "[The following] fall into a deep or long sleep: sorceresses, witches, women-*samovili* [wood nymphs], dragon-men, *who walk across the clouds, underground and in other places in their sleep*" (Маринов 1914: 227; emphasis added). The fact that a *bayachka* (medicine-woman) will fall asleep at the end of the ritual (of expelling disease among the Bulgarians) is interpreted as "symbolic transportation to the other world, to which she must 'take' the disease" (Тодорова 1989: 69).

Both in the spheres of witchcraft and shamanhood, the relevant figures and spirits have a **dual essence**. In Siberia, this applies to the shamans themselves, who are free to decide whether they will apply their gift for constructive or destructive purposes, as well as to the concepts of the dual essence of a being/spirit that is both good and evil. A well-known example of this is the belief that veneration of *ongon* spirits and their dwelling-places will bring good fortune, and that their neglect or offence will bring misfortune; the concepts of disease spirits as harm-doers and protectors – when Nganasan shamans contact and identify them, they get the following answer: "If such a sickness would come to your people, you would call for us and we help you" (Lintrop 1996a, with References), etc. In the beliefs of the Nanai, the dual nature of spirits is manifested also as one-way transformation (from good into evil): "Those who want to lure and steal somebody else's spirit pour blood [of a pig or rooster] on the ground; the spirit, which has never tried bloody food before, remains with the thief but, upon drinking the blood, becomes evil and dangerous even for its new master" (Булгакова 2001: 35). In the Bulgarian folk tradition, too, the *veshtitsal* witch has a dual nature: both a malevolent and a benevolent figure, she can heal as well as "bring various diseases, troubles and misfortunes upon people, and even kill them, as well as vice versa – she can chase away diseases ... troubles

<sup>2</sup> In the night before the day of the Holy Trinity, the Chuvash *tukhatmash* leave their body in bed, "turn into ... a dog, cat, pig; a bird; a tub, cloth ... and set off (on a broomstick of poker) to do magic ... sometimes they create a whirlwind and enter it"; their main meeting-place and place of action was the graveyard – Салмин 2002: 4-5.

and misfortunes ... separate or reunite husbands and wives, transform young men into reindeer and young women into does ... and change them back into human form" (Маринов 1914: 213; the same evidence about the Chuvash in Салмин 2002: 4; Месарош 2000: 209, 213). These parallels attest to the continuity of this type of concepts and ritual behaviour in different territories, evidence of which is also provided by Arrian in the second century: "Thrake was a *nymph proficient in sorcery and herbs* who could *expel suffering* by means of herbs but also *cause suffering*, similarly to Medea, Agamede and the notorious Krokodike" (Arrianus. Bithyn. Fr. 13. – ТМ: 306; emphasis added). These mythical names, however, are associated with oral Thracian Orphism<sup>3</sup> and are quite far from the policies of the Inquisition and the imposition of the "global"/charismatic religions, which reduced *maguses* and *mediator-demons* to "good" and "evil", including in the context of folklore. In the mediaeval patriarchal rural community, where initiations were esoteric, the distinction between priests and magicians or sorcerers and their abilities and acts seems obvious. In other words, it was consonant especially with the community's late normative system, which functioned not "in the name of ..." but "to the benefit of ..." During the Late Middle Ages, witches came to be associated throughout Europe with evil, with the unclean and the "devil" (the source of their "knowledge and power to do magic"), while medicine-men/women came to be associated with good. The attitude of the Chuvash towards the graves of witches is similar to that of the Bulgarians towards presumable vampires (Салмин 2002: 8; Никонова 2001: 146, 147). In the Bulgarian, Balkar, Chuvash and other traditions, a clear distinction is made between **medicine-men/women and witches/sorceresses**, and there is an ambivalent attitude towards witches/sorceresses almost everywhere (also among the Komi, Mordvin, Udmurt, Bashkir, Tatars, Chuvash and others). This "black-and-white" differentiation and distinction of the figures endowed with magic powers is probably a later phenomenon. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Horvath suggested that the Hungarian *taltoses* (men as well as women) had originally been healers and advisers, diviners and sacrificers, and that the differentiation of their functions (including as male and female) occurred at a later period. Among the Finns, healers in the pre-Christian age (known only from the sagas) were also diviners (Talve 1997: 231). The evidence from the Volga Region, where there are great similarities between sorcerers/sorceresses, healers, diviners, etc. among the different peoples (Никонова 2001: 145), also attests to a presumable *single figure* in ancient times which had magic spell-casting, divining and healing powers. "Back in pagan times, the Chuvash healer and sorcerer were one and the same person." Whereas healers could break spells and heal (through incantations), this was more often done by the sorcerer who had cast the spell and

<sup>3</sup> For more on Medea, a "priestess-magus" of the Great Mother Goddess, see Фол. Ал. 2002: 120-121.

could remove it most quickly and easily. In some northern regions, “witches are identified with healers, and both figures are ascribed satanic powers and connections with shaitans” (Месарош 2000: 213, 217-218). The Chuvash priest called *юмăç*, *юмçă* /*йумçă* can see the past, the present and the future; in the event of family misfortune or illness he establishes the cause and shows how it can be removed; the *юмçă* has an especially important, apotropaic function in the rites of passage (birth, marriage, death); it is he who points out the site of the future *kiremet* in a newly founded village; back in the past, no personal or communal sacrificial offering could be made without a *юмçă*, who saw in his dreams what sacrifice had to be offered and where (Никонова 2001: 148). The *юмçă* is an elected one and a medium; he is in contact with the gods, he can cast spells, and send and cure diseases; although he has a special costume, he usually wears normal clothes in an unusual way (Салмин 2002: 18-28).

There is hardly any doubt that the similarities/parallels between shamanhood and European witchcraft come from archaic in origin, parallelly existing *belief systems* diachronically recreated and manifested in a specific way in different ethno-cultural territories. This is probably the reason for the parallels between different figures in the folktales, concepts and rituals of different peoples. In folk tradition, an original *ambivalent* idea may gradually evolve into different personified aspects. Thus, the parallelly manifested (in different territories) symbolic system of folklore has been assigned new meanings and functions over the centuries. That is precisely why the similar phenomena under review here should not be associated and identified through one of the forms that emerged in time – that is, as *shamanic*. According to Salmin (Салмин 2002: 3, 11, 27) “the existing concepts of shamanism are inadequate for the Chuvash *юмăç*... and he cannot be referred to as a shaman”. Despite the similarities of the Tatar *imche/baguchi* with the shaman, “owing to the lack of concrete evidence it is definitely impossible to speak of the existence of different forms of shamanic *kamlanie* among the Türks in the Northern Volga Region” (Никонова 2001: 145). Here I would add Hultkranz’s proposition (Hultkranz 1979: 119, 85) that “In principle ... ‘medicine-manhood’ and shamanism constitute an individually oriented conceptual and behavioural complex” and that the *medicine-man* model in North and South America “is ... somewhat inappropriately called shamanism”. Incidentally, both the parallels and differences between *vështersto*/witchcraft and shamanhood become obvious if we look at their contents at their two main levels of manifestation – in the sphere of concepts and narratives, and of rituals. Thus, we will find that most typological parallels are actually rooted in different original concepts and worldviews as well as different types of ritual systems.

Unlike shamans, Bulgarian and Chuvash *vështeri* do not have *multiple souls*. The accounts of the soul leaving the body and the “geography” of its journeys are not identical with those of the specifically shamanic *soul journey* (which is undertaken by one of the shaman’s souls) or with its “landscape” – as personifi-

cations and specific relationships with the animistic conceptual sphere. The acts of the Bulgarian *bayachki* unambiguously treat the “patient’s” body and psyche at a *sub-existential* level which may be defined provisionally as a *human energy field*. The “healing” ritual itself is designed precisely to transform the latter. Thus, in some rituals it is “destroyed” and “restored” as an *entity* under a new name, through many “otherworldly” parameters, in the “other world” (in terms of place, time, attributes and acts; see descriptions of healing rituals in Тодорова 1987: 62-63). Nor do *vështeri* undergo the typical of shamans stage-by-stage initiation associated with specific family/clan spirits, i.e. with the *animistic sphere*. Witches and medicine-men/women or healers cannot be linked to the so-called *black* and *white shamans* (irrespective of whether they are analyzed as later projections of a dualistic original being), where colour symbolizes the power to communicate with different levels and spirits of the universe as well as the specific time of conducting shamanic ceremonies. In this connection, it is noteworthy that the “classical” time for the “transportations” of figures with magic powers is at **night** (among the Bulgarians, sorceresses “cast spells only at night, when the devils have assembled and can teach and help them” – Маринов 1914: 151; the Mordvin *vedun* flies over the houses in the village like a fireball every night – Никонова 2001: 146).

One of the significant differences between shamans and Bulgarian *vështeri* lies in the **ritual costume/nudity** opposition. These two opposite states practically have one and the same purpose: contact with and entry into *the other world*. Among the Bulgarians on the Balkans, ritual removal of all or some clothes (as a symbolic behaviour and entry into *another state*) is typical of the *nestinari*, of *zhitomamnitsi/vrazhalitsi* (see below), of various healing rituals and incantations, of the midnight excursions of girls outside the village during Lent, of various male rituals (ritual chasing away of serpents and capture of “live fire”, ploughing up of the village fields with twin oxen led by naked twin brothers), etc. The concept of contact and mediation is also expressed in the immediate contact with the earth (unlike the shaman, who sits on a sacred “mediator skin”) – in the ritual trampling of clay, ritual rolling on the ground (in the meadows by girls in chemises during Lent), in some memorial practices, among *vështeri*.

The available evidence about the different types of figures with magic powers on the Balkans, and about the priests/*aksakal* in Chuvash and Tatar rituals, attests to their **calling from on high and contact with a Supreme Deity** which is the source of their extraordinary magic powers. This is also typical of one of the most specific rituals and personages in Bulgarian folklore – the *brodnitsi/vrazhèlitsi* who call down the Moon – which have inherited the old belief that the luminaries and sky deities are a *theophany*.

When there is a *lunar eclipse* they say that the Moon was called down by *vrazhelitsi* with *incantations and spells*. ... The *vrazhelitsi* who call down the Moon must be two – a mother and daughter who have milked [suckled a baby]. Their accessories are a

white copper bowl, magic herbs, and a sieve. According to “eyewitness” accounts, while they chanted over them and sprinkled around water from the bowl, the Moon “came down ... in front of the house ... turned into a calf and shone”, the calf “spread its legs apart” and they milked it, one on one side and the other on the other side [of the calf, i.e. *from two directions*]. “When they milked it dry, the *Moon turned from a calf into a white-bearded old man* ... red as blood – stopped shining brightly ... sat on a chair ... as if *petrified* ... Then the older of the two women ... said, ‘Come on, daughter... it’s clear it won’t rise otherwise!’ ... Saying this, the older woman shat and ate some of her shit ... and then the Moon... rose and slowly climbed up ... to the sky; only then did the Moon begin to clear up and began shining clearly ... Its milk was very curative... a sip of this milk is enough to make any pain go away...” (Букадинов 1896: 167-168, from the Sofia area; emphasis added)

The different forms of the luminaries (as a dappled cow, a calf, an old man) as well as the belief that “the earth stands on the horns of an ox or a buffalo” (Маринов 1984: 53) are part of the Indo-European cosmogonic concepts of “the sky bull”.<sup>4</sup> Similarly to the Full Moon, the Sun can be called down too, but only on *Enyovden* at the time of the summer solstice.<sup>5</sup> “The Sun is God”, and the Sun and the Moon are brother and sister. The Sun is also conceived of as a baby buffalo or a calf (Георгиева 1983: 23, 26). The earliest accounts of the act of calling down the Moon are offered by Aristophanes (fifth century BC), Theocritus (third century BC), Virgil (first century BC), and others (Hristova 1997: 1-25, 103-108).<sup>6</sup> The act of calling down and “milking” a luminary in its apogee (only “a Full Moon can be milked, and that is why they call down only a full luminary/Moon” – Маринов 1914: 183) is equivalent to drawing out and mastering the energy principle embodied in the *Supreme Sky God*. This belief as well as the ability to “call down” and “lift up” this energy principle is a relict of a *high type of religiosity*, of *direct contact* and communion with *God*. This concept is not articulated explicitly in the available sources because of the invariable taboo on articulating secret knowledge and names in esoteric communities. It is implicit in the semantic subtext of the “reverse cycle” of acts which form a complete whole by sending the Moon back up and restoring the

<sup>4</sup> For more on the bull nature of the sky gods and fertility, on the bull and lightning as symbols of the sky deities, on the eponymous designation and bull theophany of the sky god since primeval times, on bull’s horns and their comparison to the crescent, etc., see Елиаде 1995: 98, 105-115, with References.

<sup>5</sup> In some Bulgarian legends, the Sun can be called down “only midway between the earth and the sky ... and then it shines very strongly. ... It was called down by sorceresses who were women without a husband, using the navel of an infant newly born of an unmarried woman, with which they also lifted the Sun back up to the sky. The Sun can be called down only on *Enyovden*; then the witch goes round the village naked, but no one must see her. Her purpose is to steal the fertility of the fields and the cows. The Sun turns into a dappled cow, and the milk milked from it is very wholesome” (Георгиева 1983: 17).

<sup>6</sup> Aristoph. Neph. 749-755; Theocr. II 48-52; Verg., Buc. VIII 69; Hor., Epod. 5, 45; 17; Plin., H. N. XXX 7; Hippolytus, Refut. omn. haer. IV 37.

initial situation (“the older woman shat and ate some of her shit ... and then the Moon ... rose and slowly climbed up ... to the sky”). From a folkloristic point of view, the act of separation of a *Luminary/Deity and Man* may be interpreted also as a new anal “birth”.

In these rituals, the *sky theophany* also has another, predictable purpose – namely, to serve the needs of the army which, as we well know, is part of the institution of the state: “They said that *when there was to be a battle*, they would call down the Moon ... and *feed the army* with the Moon’s milk so that it would be fit and strong and therefore able to defeat [the enemy]” (Букадинов 1896: 167-168, from the Sofia area; emphasis added). If we accept the hypothesis that these rituals are of Orphic origin (for more on the act of “calling down the Moon” as a relict of *Thracian Orphism* – “a sacred act of the Great Goddess-Mother ... Ancient practice was semantically reduced to magic for fertility and healing” – see Hristova 1997: 107-108), then they must have survived in late Bulgarian folklore not least thanks to the similar cosmogonic principles and ideas inherited also from the ancient Bulgars (for the astral nature and theophany of Tora/Tura as an old man or elder, see chapter “Tură/Teiri/Tangra: *Dues in Actu*”). The sorceresses who call down the Moon and the Sun are a substratum of an ancient high type of mediators that can be traced back to archaic cosmogonic and astral beliefs. They *transform* and have *power* over the Sun and the Moon (in the form of a bull/cow or an *old man*, “who sat on a chair as if petrified”) from which they draw celestial energy – through the power of gestures, words and ritual accessories. They do not travel (in sleep/trance) to fight or to look for a lost or abducted soul, *neither do they transform themselves or have an antagonist*. It is this that makes them fundamentally different from, for example, the Hungarian *táltoses* who fight each other in the form of “goats, pigs, birds, bulls ... of different colour” (Klanciczay 1984: 412) and are typologically closer to the concept of the shaman’s soul journey. “The spells with which sorceresses/*vrazhèlitsi* call down the Moon from the sky are *the most powerful ones*. ... They say ... that is when there is an eclipse” (Маринов 1914: 183). The Chuvash believe that there is an eclipse when the evil *vupar* swallows (lit. “gobbles down”) the Sun/Moon; in the northern regions he is known also in the form of a *witch/old woman*, and that is also how the witches themselves are called in some villages (Мечаров 2000: 48).

The sphere of *vèshterstvo*/witchcraft reviewed here is actually based on the idea of the *God-Man*, the idea of the unity of the human soul and body as a sublimating and emanating, transforming and transformed, able and ruling entity equivalent to the Cosmos. The available evidence about the different types of figures with magic powers and priests on the Balkans (both in ancient and later times) as well as about the priests/*aksakal* in Chuvash and Tatar rituals, attests to their calling from on high and contact with a Supreme Deity which is the source of their extraordinary magic powers. In the later folk tradition in different parts of Bulgaria, too, the gift of healing comes from God or a Saint (“*It is*

*God Who sends the orisnitsi [enchantresses]*” – Попов Р. 1999: 290; emphasis added). The Chuvash *юмăç* begins many incantations and spells by invoking the Supreme Tură (Месарош 2000: 267-270, 297-298). “No one becomes a *юмăç* of his own free will; *their abilities are said to come from Tura*; they know everything and *are trusted completely* ... ‘You don’t need to read books to people, for we have our *юмăç* – which is the same as having Tura!’ the Chuvash told the priest. ... Some compared the *юмăç* also to the Orthodox God [emphasis added].” The Chuvash regarded the *юмăç* as a *spiritual leader*, a chosen one and a medium, and said he had turned into a *deity* (Салмин 2002: 18-28). One legend has it that the first *юмăç* was a woman by the will of *Kiremet*, a double and one of the hypostases of the Supreme Tură. In the event of sickness sent by *Kiremet*, it was the *юмăç* who said exactly what wrong had caused it and what sacrifice had to be offered to ensure that the sick person would recover (Месарош 2000: 44). It was he who chose the site of the future *kiremet* in a newly founded village. According to one legend, the Chuvash *юмăçă* Chemen told his relatives “not to bury him in the graveyard but in a special place in the field which he pointed out to them, because after his death he would be Irzam [an evil deity]. His relatives fulfilled his will. In their superstition, the Chuvash revere him as the most evil of all evil gods and offer him the most and the biggest sacrifices” (Фукс 1834, № 5: 281-283). According to another legend, on the site of the city of Чѣбoксарь “there lived two big/chief Chuvash *юмăçă*, Chebak and Sar. On the site of the cathedral there once was a large *Kiremet*, where Chebak lived; Sar also lived in a *Kiremet*, on the site of the present Vladimir Monastery. The Chuvash say that when the Russians began building the cathedral a terrible storm broke out, with thunder, lightning, rain and hail. The wind felled the trees in the *Kiremet*, and the evil spirit who lived in one of them flew out, hissing and shrieking. That is where the name Cheboksary comes from” (Фукс 1834, № 10, 170-171). The “high” relationship between the *юмăçă* and *Kiremet* also underlies the later belief that “diviners, medicine-women and sorceresses are friends with Shoitan, from whom they have received their magic and healing powers”; the witches themselves, who are “accomplices of Shoitan [Tură’s antagonist], turn into *Kiremet*s after death ... and people offer them sacrifices at their burial sites” (Месарош 2000: 38, 40, 42). The *keeper of the Kiremet* in Chuvash villages (who is “a special, revered villager – *Kiremet pkhagan*”, known as the “cleaner, shepherd, guard” of the *Kiremet* – Паллас 2001: 159, 167), who is responsible for keeping the site clean and inviolable, is also a *vështer*:

There was a man there who used to clean and look after the *Kiremet* ... but he died and then no one wished to take on the job. ... They are afraid and don’t want to have anything to do with the *Kiremet* because there is evil there. ... If you take on this duty/job, you must know exactly what you are doing or otherwise something bad may happen to your family. ... The son of the man who used to clean the site told me how his father had passed a silver ring on to him so that he could clean the spring [i.e. the

right to take over the job of looking after the *Kiremet*]. I have no idea who he himself passed it on to. ... He used to tell me, “Do you know that if someone upsets/angers me ... I can break off a twig from the *Kiremet* ... and when/as the twig dries, so will the person dry up and die” ... This is not something that everyone knows how to and can do ... Those who have looked after the site also know how to and can practice sorcery and divination. ... This is transmitted from generation to generation ... (Informant Roza N. Chentaeva, RN August 2002, village of Novoe Aksubaevoo; for earlier but incomplete information, see Месарош 2000: 43-44)

In the Bulgarian and Chuvash folk tradition, not only medicine-men/women but also the **leaders of rites and ceremonies** possess the gift of healing and divination. These are the *юмăç*, the *first-born* Balkar in the Northern Caucasus (*tunguchla* – Джуртубаев 2004: 3; *tunguch* – RN 2005, Kabardino-Balkaria) who have “magic powers”, the hereditary *keeper of the Kiremet* who is a priest, sorcerer and diviner, the Bulgarian *startsî* (sing. *starets*, lit. “old man”, “elder”) “who presided over village votive offerings ... diviners of the past and future ... people possessed by some force”; the same “position ... is sometimes taken by a *staritsa* [lit. “old woman”] who is none other than the *healer or diviner*” (Маринов 1914: 242-245; emphasis added; for more on the *old woman who was a village elder* and who *recognized the dragon* by one nostril and “ordered her fellow-villagers to found a new village”, see Попов Р. 1999: 287).

I would venture to generalize that the institution of the elders and leaders who possess unusual powers in the folk ritual system on the Balkans was inherited from the ancient indigenous and from the ancient Bulgarian faith-rites in which there are no traces of shamanhood. In the narratives about *this and the other world*, there are also other *figures who are mythical in origin* and have unusual transcendent powers that connect them with the sphere of *vështerstvo* (or vice versa!). In Bulgarian epic poems and folktales these are, for example, the so-called *zmeychavi hōřă* or “dragon-people” who are “knowledgeable about everything”, and the *yunatsi* (sing. *yunak*, lit. “hero”). In popular belief, one could tell that a child “would become a *yunak* ... by a great external sign” (a child-born with wings, with a star on the forehead; with a caul, with three or nine hearts...); such children were also believed to have been born through otherworldly intervention – they were believed to have been born “of intercourse between an ordinary woman and a dragon, between a dragoness and a personable young man, between a *samodiva* and ... a *yunak* who is a young man or shepherd, of an ordinary woman but then nursed by a *samovila*” (Маринов 1914: 161, 162).

“The dragon-child ... can be told by ... the wings under the armpits ... [these wings] grow and the child can *fly across the clouds* with them. Its wings shine like *gold*. ... The dragon-man is a very *great yunak*...; when a cloud of hail or whirlwind appears, this will be a *hala* [dragon]; he will lie down and *when he falls asleep, he flies up in the clouds, fights with the hala and defeats it*. He must not be woken up during that time, for if he is the *hala* will overpower him. ... Such *yunatsi* have ... usually *three*

hearts, but there were also [yunatsi] with ... eight, and even with ten... These hearts are asleep and wake up gradually ... the last one is the strongest, the most powerful; when it wakes up the *yunak* becomes invincible and unstoppable, and performs super-human feats..." The *yunatsi* defeat all invisible beings and even the elements themselves; they outrace the Sun; they fly with *their horses* in the clouds and reach the *upper world*; they descend to the *lower world*; they go to the end of the world; they go to the living water and take some of it; the *yunatsi* fight with dragons "and always overpower them, capturing them and making them their fellows and sworn brothers..." (Маринов 1914: 157,162-164; emphasis added)

The unusual origins, the leaving of the body and travel in the *upper* and the *lower worlds*, and last but not least, night-time feats are mythical storylines related to the *initiatory value-ordeals of the hero-yunak* who "passes the path of kings ... in order to do that which none of the mortals can do" (Бочков 1994: 41). The oppositions constituting *yunak*-hood (through the time and place of events – as high/low, day/night, earthly/otherworldly, etc.) and its "global" aspect are manifested in the constant renewal and occurrence of Order, through the recovery of universally significant values and precious things (such as waters, fertility, territories, etc.). In folk epic poems, the "universal antagonist of the hero" is the serpent/dragon; they are in fact equal and equivalent ("The antagonist is the hero-*yunak* himself, his opposite double" – Бочков 1994: 50, 58, 63). "People in the village of Brushlyan [in the Strandja region, Southeastern Bulgaria], also remember a *dragon-girl*. Her name was *Marina* and she was very strong..." The name here is hardly accidental. Veneration of Saint Marina is specific to the region. She appears in *Enyovden* songs also under the name and in the form of *Domna Tsaritsa*, *Dennitsa* (one of the names of the Morning Star), a *dragoness*, a *king's daughter* – all of which are mutually replaceable folk hypostases of the Great Mother Goddess in Thracian religion (Нейкова 1992: 31-33, with References; Фол В. 1996: 32). The genealogy of the Sun in folksongs and of the *son-yunak* in folktales ("the dragon snatched the king's daughter, but her son was a *yunak*. He descends to the *lower world*, finds the dragon, slays him and takes away the king's daughter" – Маринов 1914: 164; emphasis added) is probably inherited from the same line (Great Mother Goddess = Son Sun/Fire). As a rule, high deities are "mother's", and not "father's" children (Tura/Teiri and Kiremet, too, have mothers only).

This type of "magic" figures also have a well-known, specific sign of election: a **ritual extension**. As a universal attribute (as, for example, the surplus bone/bones acquired by shamans upon initiation; the wings of the dragon-man; the wooden spoon of the *zhitomamnitsa*; the "naked tail", as big as an index finger, of Chuvash witches – Мечаров 2000: 208), it has different symbolic meanings and forms. In Bulgarian folklore, the ritual extension is a sign of the peculiar status of figures with a "dragon nature" in the sphere of *vèshteri* and *yunatsi*: "Dragon-people had *tails*. This means that such people were *very strong*." Dragon-children (boys and girls) born with signs "are *stronger* and

*more able* than the others... The dragon-man is *knowledgeable about everything*" (according to popular belief in the villages of Stoilovo, Brushlyan, Gramatikovo and elsewhere – Бонева 1996: 365; emphasis added). Because of the belief in their *ambivalent and peculiar essence*, such figures (resident both in *this* and the *other* world, born with *otherworldly intervention*) were isolated from the normative system of patriarchal farmers: "Although they are respected and revered ... popular belief prohibits such dragon-people from taking part in *rites and religious customs*. Thus, they must not become *polaznitsi*, *koledari*, *sourvakari*, *rinachi* and *kukeri* [male ritual figures] ... sworn brothers... they must not wed and baptize us" (Маринов 1914: 158). There is similar evidence from the nineteenth century about the Chuvash witches (*tukhatmash*) who "are not allowed to attend village sacrifices" (Вишневецкий 2001: 249-250).

Parallel with the mytho-narratives and some conceptions in the Bulgarian ritual system, the idea of transcendence is manifested also through actual physical movement in space. The Bulgarian *magyosnitsi* (sorceresses) will master a given territory "physically" (not statically in sleep) by walking the length and the breadth of the territory, walking crosswise and/or in a circle – a form of sacralization and mastering by changing directions. Unlike the Hungarian *táltoses* and the Italian *benandanti*, they "enact" the contents of the ritual, and do not experience and recognize them through an inner vision (as in the case of the riding of an animal by the *benandanti* or the shaman's drum/animal-spirit). A typical example here is the so-called *brodnitsa*, *mamnitsa* (lit. "deceiver") or *zhitomamnitsa* (lit. "wheat-deceiver"), who steals other people's fertility and well-being.

- Back in the past, they would take the *maksùlya* [fertility] on *Ignazhden* [Saint Ignatius' Day, 20 December]. This means making sure that what other people have will come to your house [fertility of animals and high butter content of their milk]. ... A tailor had a wife. She took a little box, daubed herself with shit [i.e. here we find another form of the anal "principle" of passage to another dimension] and turned into a hen ... cluck-cluck ... and went to the neighbour's house ... and took the *maksùlya*... The tailor watched her ... and hid the box. Clucking around the house, she watched the tailor and he threw her the box. She daubed herself and turned back into a woman... (Informants Zhelyazka Ivanova, born 1919, and Zheyka Todorova, born 1926, Аpx. ИМ, PH. 5. II. 5. village of Lozarevo, near Karnobat, Southeastern Bulgaria, 1989)

- [The *brodnitsi*, *zhitomamnitsi*] [g]o round the fields at night, stealing the crop of the fields and taking it to the fields of another village ... that is why the village field-keepers must begin their rounds early in the evening. ... The *brodnitsa* will go to the fields ... without being seen by anybody, and will take along a bare warp-beam and a spoon... She will strip stark naked, mount the warp-beam, stick the handle of the spoon in her bottom [could this be another form of the extension securing passage to another status?] and ... go up to three times round the fields she will be picking [she goes round the fields three times, crosswise]. Then she will stop, take the spoon out of her bottom, put it in her mouth, and then put it back in her bottom... Then she will

stand in front of the fields, make a sign and say, "Are you here, Enyo! Why don't you ask me why I've come?"<sup>7</sup> When she utters this question the whole field bows down, and only the king of the field remains upright. [The king of the field are the stalks that have two or three ears of wheat each.] ... The *brodnitsa* tramples and plucks the stalks of the King. ... If she is stealing the crop for herself, she throws the stalk in her own field; if she is stealing the crop for the fields of another village, she goes and throws the stalks in the fields of the other village. ... There are many cases in which women and men have been caught red-handed stealing the crop in the fields... (Маринов 1914: 505, 184)

In Bulgarian folktales and "true stories" about witches or sorceresses stealing fertility, the characters undergo transformation in order to achieve their purposes (which can be summed up as acquisition and overmastering): they undergo two-way ornitho-/anthropomorphic transformation and passage to *another* ritual-extistential status, in which the field or birds "recognize" the *mamnitsa*. What is common to some of these figures are their anal ritual gestures and acts, in which the *brodnitsi* (stealing the fertility of the fields) probably engage also in symbolic *anal intercourse*. A notable parallel in this respect is the Chuvash "land-stealing" ritual; it is conceived of as a marriage between a young man and the land-as-bride, which he "leads away" to become his property (for a description of the ritual, see Месапов 2000: 62-63).

The *vrazhelitsi/mamnitsi* came out on the nights of *Gergyovden*, *Enyovden*, *Vidovden* (Vida's Day) the Day of sveta Ana Lyatna or Summer Saint Anne – *Ignazhden*, the Day of sveta Ana Zimna or Winter Saint Anne ("patron saint of sorceresses" – Попов Р. 1991: 149, 154), which points us to the widespread *twin calendar model* (i.e. twice a year, in winter and in summer) in Bulgarian ritual tradition. A similar winter-summer **calendar-based activity** (unlike shamanhood) seems to have been typical also of European witchcraft, the Volga Region and the Northern Caucasus. The Chuvash *tukhatmash* were most active in the period around the day of the Holy Trinity and, moreover, on Wednesdays (Салмин 2002: 4-5). The Italian *benandanti* fought with witches for the fertility of their village four times a year, in the so-called *quattro Tempora*. In the Northern Caucasus, "There was a popular belief among some tribes that on *spring nights* ... witches flew together astride an assortment of domestic and wild animals" (Jaimoukha 2001: 144).

I believe that one of the most important fundamental differences between *veshterstol*/witchcraft and shamanhood is their **different musical-stylistic expression**. Let me remind the reader that the "musical" and physical behaviour of shamans is itself an expression of their vision about the otherworld (of the shaman's journey, of spirits and their songs, etc.); their unpredictable and dif-

<sup>7</sup> In the Sofia region, "the sorceress ... puts a *podnitsa* [clay baking dish] on her back and takes a spoon, sticks it next to the *podnitsa* ... and says in somebody else's field, 'O wheat, come over to me!'" (Арнаутов 1971: 260).

ferent "forms" in rites determine the varying appearance and sequence of the "musical" forms themselves. The flight of witches and, especially, their zoomorphic transformations (in sleep) are known from the relevant concepts and narratives;<sup>8</sup> they do not occur in real-life rituals and are not physically re-enacted and articulated "musically". It seems to me that the expressive devices and sound "masks" in the so-called "ecstasical states" – of, for example, some Chuvash *юмăç* or Mordvin medicine-women (*йевисъ-баба*)<sup>9</sup> – are universal behavioural models of witches or figures with "magic" powers, which are not specific to a particular ethnic group or territory. Generally, "witchcraft" is practised by specific figures with typologically common traits (at the level of universals). But their parallel manifestation does not eliminate the differences between the ethno-cultural traditions that gave rise to them. For the same reasons, I disagree with the thesis of the shamanic origins of the *sieve*, which is said to have been often used by the Hungarian *táltoses* as a drum for telling the future, divination and, especially, in healing rites (during which "the healing woman would beat the sieve with a knife or a wooden spoon over the sick" – Hoppál 1984: 435-438; similarly in Klaniczay 1984: 414).<sup>10</sup> A similar practice (of telling the future, the cause of the disease and various ways of healing with the help of a sieve) existed among the Finns until the mid-twentieth century, but this practice is not regarded as a relict of shamanhood (for details, see Talve 1997: 229). While divination or healing with, for example, beans in a sieve is common in Bulgarian folk tradition, I would never associate it with shamanhood. And, moreover, the sieve is not an *artefact* but a universal ritual "instrument" of divination and magic-making, and a classical symbol of fertility in all agrarian cultures. In Bulgarian rites, the sieve is used to "call down" the Moon together with the *podnitsa* (clay baking tin) carried by the *zhitomamnitsa* when "stealing"; the magic function of the sieve also connects it indirectly with percussion instruments (such as various bells and the *tupan*) which are believed to "chase away" disease. The presence of the "chasing-away element", which is undoubtedly typical of shamanhood as well, certainly does not mean that the conception of the percussion instrument as a means of restoring order and harmony, of cleansing bodily vibrations, has been forgotten. It seems that only doctrinal Asia remembers the high purpose of the vibrating body, whilst various authors

<sup>8</sup> According to Dömötör (1984: 428, with References), "The ecstasy of the *táltos* is not mentioned in the trials. On the other hand, we do hear about witches being in an ecstasical state."

<sup>9</sup> The *юмăç* "sang, danced, wept, neighed like horses, performed various miracles" and when they were in such a state they were able to mediate between the living and the dead (Салмин 2002: 26-27); in Mordvin villages, "medicine-women healed only when they were in a peculiar state of excitation which they achieved by drinking vodka, eating and fumigating themselves with incense ... and then falling into convulsions. Only then did they proceed with their healing rites" (Шабаев, Мальцев 2004).

<sup>10</sup> For more on an analogous healing ritual with incantation in the Strandja region in Bulgaria, see Нейкова 2004: 177-178.



follow by inertia the everyday explanations of late Bulgarian folklore (for example, the thesis that various bells and the *tupan* merely chased away evil). On the Balkans, the “chasing-away” function of percussion instruments is the lowered, accessible level of an archaic *high* concept of *union with the Supreme* and with the *ideal other world*, which “speaks out silently” also through the ideophones in burial accessories (bells of various shapes and sizes). Irrespective of the explanations of the carriers of folklore, the resounding ideophones and membranophones in rites are an act of *entry and possession* – even as a *not consciously recognized substratum* readily explained away in pragmatic terms as something that is of purely utilitarian benefit, such as the agricultural rites “for health”. It may be worth reminding the reader at this point that shamans, too, summon and gather the spirits in their drum, and then “heal” and chase away evil. At the same time, the *tupan*, which is widely used in the rites of the Bulgarians and on the Balkans in some areas of Southeastern Thrace and Attica, still “remembers” the metamorphosis it has undergone – that it was once used “to sift the grain from the chaff” – i.e. its form as a “sieve”. The sieve is used as a percussion instrument in many eastern cultures. The so-called “frame drums” (which, according to Marcuse 1975: 133, made their way into Europe from the East) are often called *sieve drums*. Among the Siberian peoples, the sieve has never been used as a shaman’s drum. Similarly to the relationships between *rhythm and trance*, between which there is no causal and constant connection and which “operate at the level not of nature but of culture” (Rouget 1985: 91), the use of a musical instrument likewise follows the ethno-cultural model that gave rise to it.

Even though it is emblematic, the drum is not a law for shamanhood, and if we are obsessed with the thought of finding inherited shamanic traits on the Balkans we do not have to “import” them from Europe in the form of sieves. Such an ambition would eliminate the past century as linear time, sending us back to the ideas of Mészáros at the beginning of the twentieth century and to the Hungarian academic view of witches as descendants of shamans. If we ignore the absurd even for their time commentaries on the empirical material, we could extract some valuable “pure” information from the latter, including a unique piece of evidence about the combination of *vèshter* and musician in one person: “Quite often, magic is practised by bagpipers ... who are idle and have more time for that ... it is even very likely that the wedding bagpipers who are also sorcerers/healers are direct descendants of the ancient shamans”. To support this view, the author cites Dr. Gyula Sébésgén, who “proves that the present-day [Hungarian] folk singers, with their hat with a feather, drumstick and drum are nothing but late descendants of the shamans in Hungarian pagan faith”. In the early twentieth century, Mészáros firmly believes that “the ancient Chuvash shamans ... eclipsed by Islam, Buddhism or Christianity”, had turned into sorcerers, medicine-men and healers whose shamanic attributes had “vanished without a trace” together with the “practice of ecstasy” (Mecapov 2000: 205,

206, 207). He does not ask himself why the selfsame sorcerers and healers, as well as “the bagpiper’s prayer” (before the wedding procession sets off), invoke Tùra, or who is He (Mecapov 2000: 207). Of course, it is thanks to external observers like Mészáros that we have invaluable evidence about rites and rituals from the fifteenth century onwards, evidence which they interpreted according to the possibilities and knowledge available in their time.

The various ritual states of intermediacy, contact and “passage”, as well as the similarities among the phenomena under review, are subject to interesting comparisons on a wide scale. Such comparisons can be productive if we bear in mind the system within which those ritual states are manifested and function. In this connection, I shall return to Klaniczay’s diplomatic, albeit ambiguous, attempt to preserve the “rights” of European witchcraft (“as a typical belief-system of agricultural societies”), of Hungarian shamanism, and to conceptualize the tradition as a changing and moving memory:

I am fully aware that all this cannot be called shamanism proper, not even the Hungarian *táltos*. ... Instead of seeing in the Hungarian *táltos* the only accepted, though not uncontested specimen of Central European shamanism, it seems to me more appropriate to speak about various surviving elements of shamanism in Central and Southern Europe, transformed and fit into the new belief-system in several distinct ways. The general framework in which this integration and transformation of shamanistic beliefs takes place is given by witchcraft beliefs ... in Central Europe and the Balkan peninsula, which, of course, does not mean that all these shamanistic motifs could be isolated and made to construct a pure shamanistic layer in these folk-beliefs. Neither can we postulate or reconstruct the kinds of shamanistic beliefs these peoples perhaps had before the emergence of the witchcraft beliefs. (Klaniczay 1984: 414-416)

This attempt is not convincing because of the “comfort” of an old approach that is difficult to overcome and probably remains a problem for the Hungarian academic community even nowadays. Introduced in the nineteenth century and followed by the generations after Mészáros in the twentieth, this approach has given rise to the misunderstanding regarding shamanhood/shamanism among Hungarian scholars based on shamanistic elements identified by structuralists. The interpretation of the data about the Hungarian *táltos* as evidence of transformation of the traditional shamanic “protecting function” (which “is put into service ... of agricultural fertility” – Klaniczay 1984: 415-416) is an invariant of the “food needs” which according to Frazer shape behaviour in society. It was not until recently that M. Hoppál called this into question, citing G. László (1990: 169)<sup>11</sup> who “quite logically pointed out that obvious differences which separate *táltos* and shaman must be taken into account as well as correspondences”, and that the study of these differences “is still a task which has to be completed” (Hoppál 1999: 64-65).

<sup>11</sup> “*Oseinkrol*”. 1990. Budapest: Gondolat., 158-171 (quoted from Hoppál 1999).

While "discovering" common structures in different ethnic traditions is a matter of good intention and good general knowledge, the real problems and challenges for the researcher arise in the quest for what is *individual and specific* in a particular ethnic tradition. The typological parallels of different ethnic traditions noted here are by no means exempt from the main problem in the subject under review, the problem of how to interpret the available data. The data presented here (as well as other data of this kind) presuppose an interdisciplinary analysis, and the subtext of many of them has not been commented thoroughly as it is presumed to be obvious to anyone trained to decode it. As an ethnologist, I certainly do not underrate the significance of the similarities between different traditional heritages. However, as anyone with experience in this field knows well, the existence of parallel ritual and musical structures is not necessarily proof that the beliefs of different people are genetically and functionally related. Among the hundreds of folksongs from different parts of the world one can find similar or identical melodic lines and tonal configurations which show beyond doubt that the subjects of different countries sing and play music without being afraid that they may be accused of treason. I have come across many typological similarities in the concepts and narratives about European witchcraft, shamanhood and Bulgarian folkloric materials, between shamanic and "classical" agricultural societies. The truth that in this narrative sphere there are psychological structures and expressive elements common to different peoples has been established thanks to psychoanalytical science from the first decades of the twentieth century and some subsequent joint studies with anthropologists. In other words, the interpretation of similar animistic, mythical, creation and other concepts and stories is given *a priori*. Similar ritual objects, "figures" or musical stylistic devices can serve different epochs, different ritual contents and worldview levels. Yet it is not the structure in itself as something given consisting of matter and form but the ideas infused into it that determine and shape the essence of every tradition.

The "problem" of Bulgarian folk heritage, so to speak, is that it possesses and "remembers" many things that are present as well as absent in the folklore of other peoples. The Bulgarian concepts of the Universe are not less suffused with an invisible spiritual substance than those of any other shamanic or non-shamanic culture. The Bulgarians, too, venerate particular places (such as hearths, trees, springs, fields, vineyards, meadows, houses and graveyards) which they believe are guarded by "good spirits ... by the souls of long-deceased fellow villagers" (Маринов 1914: 243). The Bulgarian vocal and narrative tradition abounds in zoomorphic and anthropomorphic mediator figures inhabiting the *upper* and the *lower* realms, and residing in rivers, bridges, pools, fountains, wells, gorges and caves (such as serpents, dragons, *samovili* and *orisnitsi*). As a rule, these figures are dualistic in nature. Their common abode – believed to be "where the earthly house of God is" (Маринов 1914: 168) – attests to their divine/mythical origin. They are a "classical" example of synthesis of concepts

and contents that belong to different epochs and beliefs. But there are no "spirit hunters" in Bulgarian folk texts. These last, together with ritual voices, require an analysis that transcends the concrete verbal and musical form. In these ritual texts, concepts and acts, *the Beginning* and *the End* are a perpetually changing, spiral-shaped prospect, and not enthusiasm for and relief from life on earth, as another universal illusion holds. The apparent confusion and coexistence of the earthly and the otherworldly, of devils and angels, of the living and the dead, are a vestige of a somewhat forgotten worldview, of different "images" and dimensions of the World Order which are not subject to *spur-of-the-moment improvisation*. The alleged "discoveries" of shamanic traits in the Bulgarian and Balkan ethno-cultural traditions (in certain graffiti, myths and even rites) ought to be re-examined carefully by their "authors" in order to see whether they are indeed "genuinely" shamanic or, rather, belong to a trans-territorial ritual symbolic system (such as the concepts of the three-tier vertical structure of the world, the World Tree and the World River, calling from on high, the belief in patron- and malignant spirits, different forms of transcendence, and so on). It is precisely the specific configurations, application and participation of elements in the spiritual sphere that shape and form a given ritual-musical tradition and the "anthropological" experiences in the latter's image that makes it identifiable as a "race". That is why I am not in the least interested in, for example, the similarities between Bulgarian and Native American Indian rugs or between Bulgarian and other melodic motifs, but in their meaning and "occurrence" in the entity to which they belong, in the way of thinking and transmission of memory to the generations that create the individuality and uniqueness of every traditional culture.

# Appendix

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57. Mediaeval "town of the dead" by the village of Dargavs,  
Ossetia (Northern Caucasus)  
(<http://gallery.darial-online.ru/01.shtml>)

## ABBREVIATIONS

- АНТ – Татарска Академия на Науките  
 БТР – Български тълковен речник. София, Наука и изкуство, 1994.  
 ЕИМ – Етнографския институт с музей при БАН  
 ИИМ – Известия на Института за Музика  
 ИТТ I – Извори за историята на Тракия и Траките. Т. 1. С., АИ „Марин Дринов“, 1981  
 ИТТ II – Извори за историята на Тракия и Траките. Т. 2. С., Институт по тракология, АИ „Марин Дринов“, 2002  
 ИФ – БАН – Институт за фолклор към Българска академия на науките  
 КЧЭ – Краткая Чувашская энциклопедия. Чебоксары, Изд. Чувашский государственный институт гуманитарных наук (ЧГИГН), Чувашское книжное издательство, 2001  
 НПСС – Стоин В. Народни песни от Самоков и Самоковско. С., АИ „Марин Дринов“, 1975  
 СбНУ – Сборник за народни умотворения и народопис  
 СИБ – Качулев Ив. Народни песни от Североизточна България. Т. 2. София, АИ „Марин Дринов“, 1973  
 ТВ – Стоин, В. 1928. От Тимок до Вита. Изд. София, Министерството на народното просвещение  
 ТМ – Кацаров Г. И., Дечев Д. (съставители). Извори за старата история и география на Тракия и Македония. С., АИ „Марин Дринов“, 1949  
 ЧГИГН – Чувашский государственный институт гуманитарных наук  
 ЧНА – Чувашка национална академия  
 С.Е.Д. – Cassell's English Dictionary. London. Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1964.  
 О. Т. Д. – Oxford Talking Dictionary. The Learning Company, Inc. Copyright © 1998

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