

The Living Landscape of Knowledge

An analysis of shamanism among the Duha Tuvinians of Northern Mongolia

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Specialeafhandling til Kandidateksamen, Specialerække nr. 317

Contents

Acknowledgements

Chapter One: Introduction

- 1.1 Formulation of the problem
- 1.2 Recent work on religion and tradition in the region
- 1.3 Historical background
- 1.4 Present life in the taiga

Chapter Two: Shamanism, Landscape and Knowledge

- 2.1 Shamanism – definition of a highly contested term
- 2.2 The shaman and shamanism: A historical overview
- 2.3 Landscape
- 2.4 Shamanic knowledge

Chapter Three: Fieldwork and Methodology

- 3.1 Anthropologist, adopted daughter and ignorant child
- 3.2 From participant observation to experiencing participation
- 3.3 Chosen by the spirits

Chapter Four: Land of the Living and the Dead

- 4.1 The iconic Landscape
- 4.2 The natural law and the rules
- 4.3 My tree is my fate
- 4.4 The shamanic ritual

Chapter Five: Nomadic Life- moving from place to place

- 5.1 The neighbourhoods of spirits and humans
- 5.2 Decolonizing the camp
- 5.3 Migration as a ritual

Chapter Six: Flexible fates and unsafe bodies

- 6.1 Sacrificial trees and oboos
- 6.2 The corporeal and spiritual aspects of being
- 6.3 Seeing through the eyes of the spirits

Chapter Seven: The Shaman who went to Town

- 7.1 Going to town
- 7.2 Shamanizing in town
- 7.3 Shamanism as a commodity or shamanism as a secret - the end of flexibility or a potential for change?

Chapter Eight: Conclusion and perspectives

Bibliography

Notes

Appendices

1. Map
2. Mongolian terms
3. Photo illustrations

Acknowledgements

My gratitude goes first to the many Duha Tuvinians and Tuvinians in Mongolia and in Tuva who generously gave me so many insights into their lives and shamanic traditions. In Mongolia I especially want to thank my adoptive parents Gompo and Centaling and my host family Erdemchimeg and Bat-zajah for inviting me to live in their homes for several months, for the guidance they gave me in my research and for their warmth and kindness as the friends and relatives they became. My gratitude also goes to "my dear brother" Dakdji for his patience and generosity in several interviews and conversations and to Ojombadum, who helped me transcribe my fieldnotes, and came with interesting comments on my material. Moreover, I want to thank all the Duha Tuvans, Darhat and Halh Mongols without whom this fieldwork could not have been done.

In Tuva I want to thank the shamanic organisation "Toc-Deer", the president of the organisation Mongush Kenin Lopsan, all the shamans working in the clinic and clients in the clinic for letting me work both as a shaman and an anthropologist among them. Moreover, I want to thank my Tuvan friends Maja Salchakovna, Tatjana Ondar and Nikolai Abaev for their help in my research and for their warm friendship.

I also want to thank the financial support of "Kronprins Frederiks Fond", "Lise & Aage Dahls Fond", "Feltarbejdspuljen", "Ølgod Rotary klub" and "Ølgod Elforsyningsfond", which made my fieldwork possible.

In Denmark, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, anthropologist Finn Sivert Nielsen, who has thoroughly read and commented on my drafts. Moreover, I want

*to thank friends and relatives for their comments on my drafts,
and for their patience and support, when I sometimes
disappeared in my studies.*

Chapter one: Introduction

The shamanic traditions of the Tuvinians - a nomadic people living in the Russian republic Tuva⁽¹⁾ in southern Siberia and in the mountainous regions of northern Mongolia - has puzzled and fascinated foreign travellers and scientists up through history. For example, in 1914 an English explorer; Douglas Carruthers described the Duha Tuvinians (or "Urianhai" as they were called in those days) in this Rossaustian romantic way:

"The Urianhai, in his simple and yet subtle belief, sees mystery and feels the supernatural on all sides. His attitude is scarcely to be wondered at. The mystery of the sudden, taiga-clothed hills, the dark, silent valleys, and the mountain-craggs which toss their heights above the forest, fill him with awe and crowd his thought with dread." (Carruthers 1914: 244).

The communist regimes in Mongolia and Russia perceived the Tuvinians, and other indigenous people in the region as "the children of nature", ready to make "a leap from primitive-communal society to socialism" (Grant 1995: 10). However, they also perceived shamanism as "opium for the people" and the shaman "as a counterrevolutionary". This resulted in a massive political repression of shamanism in the region, which lasted over half a century. Shamans were killed and imprisoned, and people were forced to practice their traditions in hiding. However, after the breakdown of communism, the Tuvinians in Northern Mongolia are once again practicing their shamanic traditions in the open, and in

Tuva intellectuals and shamans have even organised shamanic clinics and organisations, to preserve and maintain their indigenous traditions.

In 2000-2001, while I was living amongst the Duha Tuvinian reindeer nomads in Northern Mongolia, researching the construction of shamanistic knowledge, my informants were often reluctant to talk about shamanism (*bögiin sjasjin*) and many said they had no faith in shamanism. In contrast, the presence and influence of spirits in human life and in the landscape never seemed to be doubted. The landscape is inhabited by various spirits, such as *ezes*⁽²⁾ (spirit owners mastering specific natural entities and places) *luc'* (ancestor spirits) *ongods* (shamanic helper spirits) and *chötgörs* (dangerous demon-like spirits). My adoptive father Gompo and other Duha Tuvinians often told me that they honoured and entrusted their fate (*zajah*) to their surrounding landscape - Oron Hangai - and their sacrificial trees and *oboos* (stone-cairns or wooden cairns). The Duha Tuvinians perceive human fate (*zajah*) as intimately connected with the deeds of their ancestors, who influence them through specific natural entities located in the local landscape. Each patrilineal clan has its own sacrificial mountain *oboos* (stone cairns) and each shamanic lineage have their own sacrificial trees (*taxih shutdeg mod*) in the landscape, which they describe as "my mountain, my tree". Such personal relations to trees and mountains are connected to the Duha Tuvinian' concepts of *ongods* - shamanic spirit helpers - and *luc'* - ancestor spirits, which after a shaman's or another important person's death become located in a natural entity, from where it influences the lives of the living kin.

The way a certain spirit affects humans depends on the character of the spirit, which is in turn connected to the actions of the historical person from which the spirit originated. However, the character of the spirit is not unchangeable, it can be moulded and even totally transformed by the deeds of the living kin and people roaming in the area inhabited by the spirit. Conducting wrong sacrifices, hunting, urinating or digging holes in the ground results in pollution, which may anger and sometimes transform a *luc* into a *chötgör* - devil. Polluted places are

known as chötgertei - devilish places - where demon-like spirits roam, spreading misfortune and illness among humans.

Confronted with misfortune and illness the Duha Tuvinians will sometimes seek the help of shamans and participate in shamanic rituals. A couple of times a month - at dates which are considered suitable according to the lunar calendar - the Duha Tuvinian' shamans conduct rituals, where they drum in order to travel to the places of the spirits, which they fight to heal illnesses and repair (*zazal hinaa*) misfortune.

During the last couple of years some Duha Tuvinian and Darhad⁽³⁾ shamans have visited the towns of Mörön, Erdenet and Ulaan Bator, to conduct healing and prophecy rituals for an urban audience. This is a practice most Duha Tuvinians see as wrong and even dangerous, for the travelling shaman and for the community as a whole. They often told me that the shamanic drum and dress - animated by shamanic *ongods*⁽⁴⁾ - should be kept in the clean and sacred northern part of the *urts* (tepee-like dwelling). Taking it away from the shaman's *urts* can lead to pollution of the shamanic equipment. It is not the shaman travelling, as a person, which is seen as dangerous, but the separation of the shamanic *ongods* from the shaman's *urts* in the local landscape.

Shamanism among the Duha Tuvinians is thus a deeply local tradition, closely intertwined with their awareness of the surrounding landscape. For them it is important to know where the spirits of one's clan are located, and to make offerings to specific sacrificial trees and *oboos*, in order to avoid disastrous events. On the other hand shamanism among urban Tuvinians is only partly a local tradition and to some extent a more "global" or "modern" tradition; since urban Tuvinian shamanism both deals with the concrete landscape and with an "imagined" landscape. Among them, knowledge of shamanic cosmology is not only important when one moves in the concrete landscape of known places and kinship: rather the local landscape is being relocated, to affirm ethnic identity and rights in Russian national space. In the Tuvan capital Kyzil shamans and academics are using shamanism politically at conferences and in the media,

representing shamanism as "an ethnic wisdom about the environment genetically remembered by the Tuvinians" (Personal conversation with Professor Abaev 2001).

1.1 Formulation of the problem

This thesis examines the ways in which the Duha Tuvinians perceive human life as related to the various beings (human and non-human spirits and animals) and natural entities in the land. I will discuss the way they conceive past and present fates as intertwined with the local landscape, and how they continually create and reinvent the landscape as a meaningful place through cosmological symbols and ritualised experience of place and space. I will investigate how the Duha Tuvinians try to control, understand and negotiate their lives through ritual engagement with natural entities and "spirits" in the landscape, and by transforming the space of the land into a place suitable for human living. Finally, I will discuss the flexibility of Duha Tuvinian' shamanistic knowledge, and explore how changes in their livelihood, shamanic practices and knowledge transmission may challenge their tradition.

In order to investigate these questions, the thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 1 provides background information on other anthropological work about shamanism in the region and the setting of my fieldwork. Chapter 2 introduces shamanism, landscape and knowledge as analytical perspectives within anthropology. In chapter 3, "Fieldwork and methodology", I discuss the methods I have used to gain access to the field and to produce field data. Chapter 4, "Land of the living and the dead", focuses on how the Duha Tuvinians use symbols to construct their land as a meaningful place, representing past and present lives and as a blueprint of rules for appropriate human behaviour. Chapter 5, "Nomadic life - moving from place to place", discusses how the migration cycle is organised to integrate humans in a transhuman world of spirits, animals and humans, to reproduce their homeland of the taiga and how the practices of larger scale social formations pose a challenge to the livelihood and shamanic

traditions of the Duha Tuvinians. Chapter 6, "Flexible fates and unsafe bodies", analyses how the Duha Tuvinians use their shamanic cosmology and rituals to negotiate and challenge their problems and life. Chapter 7, "The Shaman who went to Town", analyses why the Duha Tuvinians perceive new shamanic practices as a threat to their lives and their homeland, and how these new practices may challenge the tradition. Finally, Chapter 8, "Conclusion and perspectives", makes the conclusions and perspectives of this thesis.

1.2 Recent work on religion and tradition in the region

Many recent works on North Asian shamanism in general and Tuvinian shamanism in particular focus on the revitalisation of shamanism and the neo-traditional movements in the urban areas of the region (Ondar 1998, Vitebsky 2001, Figureido 1997). The anthropologist Piers Vitebsky proposes that when neo-traditional movements co-opt local shamanic ideas this results in a shamanism that is inherently different from "the local shamanism" they claim to represent: of fixed rather than flexible knowledge, and with an understanding of the landscape as an ethnic territory in global or national space, rather than as a concrete land of ancestors spirits and kin relations (Vitebsky 2001: 293). Some anthropologists propose that shamanism in the traditional sense of the term - as a local tradition embedded in a specific people's understanding of their concrete landscape - does not exist any longer or only exists to a limited extent among North Asian people (Siikala 1992: 17, Vitebsky 2001). Other anthropologists assert that these new forms of shamanism are just another example of the flexibility of traditional shamanism, and its capacity to adapt to changing social circumstances (Hoppal 1992, Figureido 1997).

Caroline Humphrey (1994) - who has conducted comprehensive studies of Mongolian shamanism - investigates how shamanism has changed up through history as a response to changes in local social systems and wider political structures in the region. Humphrey perceives shamanism mainly from a macro-perspective, and sees broader political powers - such as the rise and fall of the

Mongol state - as the primary agents shaping local shamanic traditions. Tuvian shamanism certainly responds to - and is shaped by - the increase in social problems and the ideological void, which followed the collapse of the Communist regimes in Russia and Mongolia. As one Duha Tuvian told me: "before, the state helped us, but it does not any longer. So we can only rely on the help of the spirits, and turn to the shamans to find solutions to our problems". My perspective differs from Humphrey's, as I view Tuvian shamanism from an actor-oriented perspective, where I want to investigate how the Tuvians make use of shamanic knowledge about their land and its spirits to deal with concrete problems deriving from social change, rather than how social changes mould shamanism.

Some anthropologists have adopted a micro-perspective in their investigation of the indigenous ontologies of the hunters, pastoralists and reindeer herders in rural areas of North Asia (Pedersen 2001, Willerslev 2001). These studies place themselves within the recent revival of the animism debate, and uses new theories of animism, perspectivism and classical theories of totemism to describe the native ontologies in the region. In this thesis I will use these theories to reach an understanding of how the Duha Tuvians perceive humans, non-humans and the landscape. To reach an understanding of how they create their landscape as a map representing human fate, and of how they link individual fates to places, natural entities, spiritual beings and human deeds I will use Roy Wagner's (1986) theory of how humans construct meaning in a dialectic between conceptualising or naming symbols and establishing relations of analogy between these symbols. The "landscape" is central to most studies of both neo-traditional and traditional shamanism in the region (Humphrey 1997, Lindskog 2000, Pedersen 2003, personal conversation with Halemba 2004). Generally, studies on new shamanic movements investigate how the land is constructed as "imagined" through discourse and narrative (Vitebsky 2001, Halemba). New studies of traditional shamanism and indigenous ontologies often seek to "denaturalise" the landscape - by viewing it from a more phenomenological perspective - to investigate how

people's engagement with and concepts of the land constructs their perceptions of the land (see: Pedersen 2001, 2003, Lindskog 2000, Willerslev 2001). The Danish anthropologist Morten Pedersen uses Bruno Latour's actor-network theory and a phenomenological perspective in his analysis of how Tsaatang' [Duha Tuvinian'] animism and nomadism structures spatial perception of the landscape (Pedersen 2003: 243). The Duha Tuvinians view specific places in the land as the location of spirits, who influence humans in various ways. These places are however - according to Pedersen, and I agree - not perceived as delimited areas with exact spatial boundaries, rather it is the experience of unusual events at a place, which the Duha Tuvinians link to the presence of spiritual beings (Pedersen 2003: 245).

It is thus experience, rather than convention, which *structures* Duha Tuvinian shamanic knowledge. In my work as a "shaman" - which will be described in chapter 2 - I was fortunate to gain insights into how people in practice link their own and other people's fate to unusual events in the landscape and human life and how they seek to control their fate through ritual engagement with the land and participation in shamanic rituals. To gain insight into such a fluid tradition is difficult through traditional anthropological methods. In this thesis I will - in contrast to other anthropological works from the region - use not only the perspective of the anthropologist, but also the perspective of the anthropologist as a shaman, in an attempt to reach a more profound understanding of how Duha Tuvinians link their own fates to the land and its spirits, and how they negotiate this relation through interaction with the land and its spirits.

1.3 Historical Background

The Tuvinians are a Turkish-speaking nomadic people, living in the Russian republic Tuva and in northern Mongolia. Today, approximately 210,000 Tuvinians live in Tuva, while only around 400 Duha Tuvinians (also known by the name Tsaatang and Urainhai) live in Mongolia. In the steppe regions of Tuva the Tuvinians have traditionally been nomads, breeding cattle, horses, sheep, goats

and camels, while they in the forested and mountainous regions of Western Tuva and Northern Mongolia have traditionally lived as reindeer herders and hunters. The geographical isolation of the Tuvinian' homeland, bordered by the Eastern Saian Mountains to the North, and the Western Saian to the South, has led some early ethnographers (Carruthers 1914: 215) and many contemporary travellers to represent the Tuvinians as a historically isolated people independent of outside influence. However, this picture is misleading, since the Tuvinians' homeland up through history has been a zone contested by various empires and occupied by a succession of conquerors - the Turkish Khanate, Uighurs, Kyrgyz, Manchus, Russians, Mongols, Soviets - competing for control of Inner Asia. These empires have influenced the Tuvinians linguistically, socially, economically and politically⁽⁵⁾.

In 1921, Tuva gained nominal independence, and the Tannu-Tuva People's Republic was established, as a republic under Soviet sovereignty. In the first years after independence, Mongolia made attempts to regain control of the area, but the Russians were unwilling to give the entire territory of Tuva back to the Mongols. However, in 1924, following the establishment of the Mongolian People's Republic, the Soviets granted Mongolia "a strip of territory, sparsely inhabited and small in size (about 16,000 sq. km.), called Darhad - west of Khöbsögöl" (Friters 1949: 131). The Darhad territory is the traditional homeland of Darhad Mongols and Duha Tuvinians, who then came under Mongol control. The Mongolian government decided that the Duha Tuvinians, as a people of Tuvinian nationality, were supposed to live in Tuva, and began a series of campaigns - lasting from 1927 up until 1951 - to expel them from Mongolia (Farkas 1992: 7-8). Yet, within a few years of each eviction, the Duha would return to Mongolia - only to be driven out again⁽⁶⁾.

By the middle of the 1950s, the Duha Tuvinians had basically all returned to the Mongolian taiga. As a result of the Mongolian government's collectivisation campaigns in the 1950's, the Duha Tuvinians were obliged to join local *negdel* (collectives), collectivise their reindeer, and submit to national hunting

regulations. They were given access to state provided medical care, schooling and veterinary assistance. The government's motives in collectivising the reindeer did not so much derive from a concern for transforming reindeer herding into a productive part of the national economy, as a desire to integrate the Duha Tuvinians into production and sedentarize them (Wheeler 2000: 49-50) to control their whereabouts and livelihood to make them a part of the socialist project of the state. Almost half of the younger generation was forced to move away from the taiga to a small fishing collective in Tsagaan Nuur, while the other half was allowed to stay in the taiga to herd the government's newly collectivised reindeer⁽⁷⁾.

Communist rule not only forced the Duha Tuvinians to be collectivised and sedentarized, their shamanic tradition was also repressed. At the end of the 1930's, the Mongolian president Choibalsan initiated a violent campaign against religion, persecuting and liquidating thousands of Buddhist lamas, destroying hundreds of monasteries and prohibiting religious practice by law. According to my informants, several Duha Tuvinian and Darhad shamans were also liquidated in this period. The liquidation of lamas and shamans ended in the beginning of the 1940's, but the suppression of religious practice and the prison confinement of lamas and shamans continued up until the 1980's.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union The Mongolian People's Republic Party gave up power in 1989, and economic reform and democracy were implemented in Mongolia. For the Duha Tuvinians - as for the Tuvinians in Russia - the transition meant freedom of religion, but also a sudden increase of poverty. During the economic crisis in Mongolia in 1992 the government was no longer able to pay salaries to the Duha Tuvinians, and "leased" the reindeer, so the Duha Tuvinians could personally profit from the livestock (Wheeler 2000: 55). The government completely privatised the reindeer in 1995, giving each family the herd, which they had so far been leasing (ibid: 55).

The Duha Tuvinians now had to rely for subsistence on reindeer herding and hunting, as state supplies had disappeared with the collapse of the communist

system. Unfortunately, the small number of reindeer in the herds, the poor health of the reindeer resulting from inbreeding, lack of veterinary assistance and medical supplies, and the practice of cutting the reindeer's antlers (which weaken their immune system) has led to a serious decline in the total number of reindeer. Moreover, violent assaults, alcohol abuse and crime have increased among the Duha Tuvinians during the last 10 years.

1.4 Present life in the taiga

Today there are only around 200 Duha Tuvinians who still live as reindeer nomads in the forest areas of the Zuun and Baruun taiga of Northern Mongolia. From autumn 2000 until summer 2001 I lived among these nomads. In Zuun Taiga I lived for 4 months in the household of an elderly couple in their fifties, Gompo and Centaling, and their two adopted daughters. In Baruun Taiga I lived for another 4 months, in the household of a younger couple in their early thirties with four children. I lived in various households of both Duha Tuvinians and Khalha Mongols in the village of Tsagaan Nuur for 2 months.

The Duha Tuvinians' mother tongue is Tuvinian, however most people speak and many young people only speak Mongolian with a strong Darhad accent. During my fieldwork I chose to learn Mongolian - which I studied in Tuva for two months - instead of Tuvinan, as this allowed me to speak with both Tuvinians and Darhad. Thus, the indigenous terms used in this thesis are mostly Mongolian/Darhad. However, I believe that to use this language does not transform the contents of the cosmology, since many Duha Tuvinians among themselves use the Mongolian/Darhad language in daily life, also when discussing cosmological issues, and since the shamanism of the Duha Tuvinians and Darhad are closely related⁽⁸⁾.

The Duha Tuvinians are nomadic, and their subsistence is based on reindeer breeding and hunting. While I lived among them we would migrate to new pastures once or twice a month. Campsites were chosen on the basis of availability of grasses and water, and according to shamanic ideas of how the spirits of certain places might influence livestock and people.

The Duha Tuvinians are divided into three clans - Balakshi, Urat and Sojong - which are subdivided into several exogamous patrilineal sub-clans. Each clan has an informal leader, who is informally chosen on the basis of age, gender and abilities. At the time of my fieldwork the leader of the Balakshi clan was Gompo. Decisions about when to migrate, go hunting, or go to town for barter were discussed - mostly by the men - and the final decision was usually taken by Gompo in his position as leader of the Balakshi clan.

Work activities are broadly divided according to gender. The women mainly take care of work within the camp, such as preparing food, childcare, making clothes, looking after the reindeer and conducting offerings at the sacrificial places close to the camp. Men are mostly in charge of duties outside the camp, hunting, trading and travelling to sacrificial trees and *oboos* many days' ride from their current homeland.

As a result of the decreasing size of reindeer herds and the absence of resources formerly supplied by the state, the Duha Tuvinians' main subsistence activity today is hunting. While I lived among them, the male members of the camp went hunting for several months at a time on the border between Mongolia and Russia. While the men were away, the women and children stayed in the camp, to look after the reindeer and take care of daily work activities.

On returning from hunting trips, the men and sometimes women would travel to Tsagaan Nuur to barter skins, antlers and furs for basic food supplies and clothing items. Tsagaan Nuur is the link to the broader Mongolian context: it houses a Mongolian border station - overseeing the border between Russia and Mongolia - a post office, a medical clinic (mostly without staff and medical supplies), and a primary school. Most Duha Tuvinian children go to school in Tsagaan Nuur for 7 years from the age of eight. During the school season they live in the local boarding school or in the households of relatives⁽⁹⁾.

During the last couple of years some tourist companies have started to organize tours to the Duha Tuvinians, where they travel by helicopter or by horse to their camps, and stay for a few days to photograph and experience the lives of the

reindeer herders. The Duha Tuvinians usually speak positively about the foreign tourists, who sometimes give money, food, medicine etc.: "It is interesting to meet them, and see their helicopters". On the other hand some of them perceive the tourists as intruders, who: "Just come here and photograph us", and as a threat to the spirits and the land, since "they throw their leftovers in the land and urinate wherever they want, unaware that they might pollute the land and its spirits". Another problem is that some Duha Tuvinians, mainly in Zuun Taiga, choose their summer camp in order to be close to Tsagaan Nuur, so tourists can arrive easily, regardless of the fact that this is a threat to the reindeer's health, since it is too warm.

Since the early 1990s shamans and lay-people; who during communist rule had to practice their shamanic traditions in secret, have begun to practice the tradition openly. Many Duha Tuvinian and Darhad Mongols have - in the last couple of years - become shamans. According to the Duha Tuvinians, this sudden increase in the number of shamans has various reasons. First, it is no longer politically dangerous to be a shaman, so people who receive "the shamanic call" are able to follow their shamanic fate (*zajah*)⁽¹⁰⁾. Secondly, shamanizing is seen as just another means to make a livelihood, as Juvaang among others explained, "in these days there are many shamans, but few are "real" shamans. Some shamans just shamanize to make money". Thirdly, shamanism as an ontology and cosmology seems to fill up the ideological gap left by the fall of communism, and as a practical tool and a cosmology it seems to offer solutions and explanations for the increasing social problems.

Chapter two: Shamanism, landscape and knowledge

2.1 Shamanism - definition of a highly contested term

The applicability of the term "shamanism", to define the inspirational practices and cosmologies of the indigenous people of Mongolia and Siberia, is a contested issue among scientists working in the region (Humphrey 1996, personal conversation with Abaev 2001). The Tuvinian historian Nikolai Abaev proposes that the religious traditions of the Tuvinians are not shamanism in the strict sense of the term, since their cosmology includes an idea of "god" (*burhan*) and not just spirits. The term "shamanism" gives a misleading impression of a single unified system, and of the shaman as a "singular ritual practitioner", while the Tuvinian traditions termed "shamanism" are generally flexible and fluid, and have several religious specialists in addition to the shaman (see Humphrey 1996, Vitebsky 2001).

I have decided to retain the concept of shamanism, as the Duha Tuvinians use a similar concept - *böögiin sjasjin* (shamanic religion or faith) - to describe their cosmology and cosmological practices. However, they sometimes made a distinction between "shamanism" (*böögiin sjasjin*) as faith in shamans, and as worship of and belief in spirits. Some people told me that they did not believe in "shamanism" because they did not trust the shamans nowadays - there were no longer any powerful (*xuchte*) shamans left. Thus, the competence (*chadah*) and strength (*xuch*) of shamans can be questioned, but I never heard any Duha Tuvinian doubt the presence of spirits. Drawing on Humphrey (1996) I will use the term "shamanism" as "the entire conglomeration of ideas about beings in the world which includes the shaman" (ibid: 50), and not in the Duha Tuvinians' strict understanding of the term (faith in living shamans).

2.2 The shaman and shamanism: A historical overview

The Duha Tuvinians perceive the land as inhabited by various - for a layman's eye - hidden spirits, which influence the lives of the living. They need shamans to reach a deeper understanding of the intricate relation between humans and spirits, since it is only shamans who can travel to the world of spirits, see the origin of people's misfortunes, and fight demons and other ill-minded spirits.

During rituals - performed from midnight to dawn - the Duha Tuvinian shaman calls his *ongods* (spirit helpers) by singing and drumming, and with the help of his *ongods* and his drum⁽¹¹⁾ he rides or flies to the places of the *ongods* and *luc'* of each member of the audience, to seek out the reasons behind - and search for ways to heal - misfortune, illness and other problems. The shamanic performances I saw among the Duha Tuvinians and Darhad Mongols were often scary, the shaman's dancing, singing and drumming was "wild": the shaman would have fits, loose consciousness, shiver, scream, laugh and hit or scratch himself or herself and others.

The shaman's seemingly "outrageous behaviour" during rituals has led many ethnographers from East and West to define shamans as "hysterics" and "half-insane" (see Basilov 1989). The idea of the shaman as suffering from mental disease was challenged by the historian Mircea Eliade (1974), who viewed shamans as former psychotics - cured through their shamanizing, and by the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1963 b), who saw the shaman (or sorcerer) as similar to the psychotherapist, and compared the shamanic ritual with psychoanalysis.

In the 1960s many scholars started to investigate the altered state of consciousness of the shaman, inspired by Eliade, and influenced by biological and psychological works on how human consciousness operate. Interest in the psychological state of shamans has lasted until today, and has led some scholars to perceive shamanism as identical with the state of consciousness⁽¹²⁾ shamans obtain during rituals (Peter and Price Williams 1980). Other scholars have followed Lévi-Strauss and investigated the therapeutic effects of shamanic rituals (1991).

It is my impression that Duha Tuvinian' shamans does enter an altered state of consciousness during their rituals, and also that the ritual does seem to have a therapeutic effect, allowing sensitive issues to be discussed openly. However, the Duha Tuvinians healing and altered states of consciousness are not ends in themselves, but means to obtain information about the relation between spirits

and men. Altered states of consciousness are - as Ridington writes - "revelatory, not in and of themselves but because of their place in cultural systems of knowledge" (in Atkinson 1992: 311).

In the past two decades, anthropologists have started to focus on the processes of knowledge production inherent in shamanism. The anthropologist Graham Townsley (Townsley 2000) defines shamanism as "an ensemble of techniques for knowing", and sees shamans as "sophisticated producers of meaning" (ibid: 264). However, Townsley fails to situate shamanic knowledge in its historical setting, as he constructs cosmological knowledge as a-temporal.

I believe, following Humphrey (1994), that broader political power and historical circumstances shapes local shamanism (ibid: 192). Humphrey posits that two variants of shamanism are simultaneously possible for any Mongol group (ibid: 194). The first variant Humphrey terms "patriarchal", as it concerns shamanic involvement in the symbolic reproduction of the patrilineage, clan or polity.

Shamanic practices in this form involve divination, sacrifice and prayer. The other variant she calls "transformational", because it deals with hidden aspects of forces thought to be immanent in the world. The shaman, operating through rituals and in trance fights and negotiates natural, spiritual and political forces. At times when native political organisation was powerful and successful, people tended to practice patriarchal shamanism. When political organisation came under threat and was weak and unsuccessful, people have turned to transformational shamanism (ibid: 199-200).

The sudden increase in the number of shamans among the Duha Tuvinians can - as earlier noted - partly be seen as a result of the social insecurity, following the breakdown of communism. The Duha Tuvinian and Darhad shamans may be seen as practitioners of transformational shamanism. They offer their clients explanations to current problems, by negotiating with and challenging the various natural and spiritual forces in the land.

The Duha Tuvinians perceive both human misfortune and prosperity as intimately connected with spirits located at specific sites in the surrounding landscape.

They say that it is only by interpreting the land and its spirits that one can comprehend the nature of human life, and only by interacting with the spirits of the land that one can ensure human well-being. This means that to reach an understanding of Duha Tuvinian "shamanism" we need to investigate how the Duha Tuvinians conceive their surrounding landscape.

2.3 Landscape

Vitebsky (2001) defines traditional shamanism as local knowledge systems deeply intertwined with a local population's conception of their surrounding territory. Shamanistic knowledge traditions are characterised by the fact that cosmic space penetrates into the space of everyday life at specific points marked by certain natural features in a local landscape. Moreover, shamanistic thinking is holistic, in that the cosmos and the local landscape between them provide a total rendering of the universe (ibid: 293). Duha Tuvinian shamanism can thus be seen as a local tradition, which cannot be separated from the landscape these people inhabit.

The Duha Tuvinians use the term *Oron Hangai* (forested land) to describe their surrounding landscape. *Oron Hangai* is not merely the concrete physical landscape, but also contains a - for the human eye - hidden dimension of spirits of crucial importance for human well-being. To avoid misfortune it is thus basic to be aware of this hidden aspect of the land, and this implies knowing how to interact with and interpret it.

The Duha Tuvinian concept of landscape differs from its western counterpart, which reflects the idea of objectification of place related to practices such as painting, map-making, song and poetry. The Western idea of landscape is essentially static; a denial of process. This idea is, however, inadequate regarding the Duha Tuvinians conception of landscape, where it is not contemplation of the land that is important but interaction with it (see Humphrey 1997). I see the Duha Tuvinian landscape - drawing on Ingold - as:

"not a picture in the imagination, surveyed by the mind's eye, nor, however is it an alien and formless substrate awaiting the imposition of human order. Thus neither is the landscape identical to nature, nor is it on the side of humanity against nature. As the familiar domain of our dwelling, it is with us, not against us, but it is no less real for that. And through living in it, the landscape becomes part of us, just as we are part of it" (Ingold 1993: 5).

Landscape is thus more than a static representation; it is a cultural process (Hirsch 1996). The landscape is, following Hirsch, constructed in the dialectic between a "foreground landscape" - the concrete place of everyday life - and a "background landscape" - a space of potentiality for new interpretations. The landscape is a process in so far as people attempt to realise in "the foreground" landscape of everyday life the potentiality of "the background" landscape (ibid: 3-5).

The "foreground" of the Duha Tuvinian landscape is the camp and everyday life in it, while the surrounding landscape, with its concealed spirits, is the "background" landscape of potentiality. The people create their landscape by utilising their knowledge about the hidden dimensions of the land in the construction of the camp, and by using their everyday experiences of life in the camp and of concrete phenomena in nature, to understand the concealed aspects of the land.

During my fieldwork, the Duha Tuvinians taught me that the intricate relation between humans and spirits cannot be understood intellectually, rather one has to interpret and sense the spirits concealed in the land with one's body.

2.4 Shamanic knowledge

Duha Tuvinian shamanistic knowledge is inconsistent and fluid rather than doctrinal. As such, it is a flexible kind of knowledge that is always in the making. It is - as Fredrik Barth writes about cosmologies in oral traditions - a living knowledge tradition in continual change, closely intertwined with daily life, rather than grounded in a formal system of knowledge (Barth 1987: 84).

The "inconsistent" nature of shamanic knowledge may be considered a result of the social distribution of the tradition and the transaction processes and communicative means involved in its reproduction. The unequal distribution of knowledge and ideas among the interacting parties in a population is, as Barth writes, a major factor in the organisation of that body of knowledge and ideas (Barth 1987: 77). Each Duha Tuvinian generally knows about the spirits connected to his or her patrilineage and shamanic lineages, whereas knowledge of other people's spirits is more limited.

Duha Tuvinians generally agree about the existence of three different worlds, the underworld, this world and the heavens. But their understanding of how these worlds are composed varies from individual to individual⁽¹³⁾. When I confronted them with the seeming discrepancies, they often said that maybe for the other person it was just different, which did not seem to bother them. Later I understood that my initial search for a consistent system was bound to fail, since this cosmological knowledge involves knowing how to act in the landscape to avoid misfortune, rather than possessing an exact knowledge of abstract cosmological terms.

In the anthropological analysis of local knowledge, we need, as Robert Borofsky writes, to overcome the bias of fitting indigenous knowledge into the form of scientific culture. Instead we should try to discover the knowledge organisation used by our informants (Borofsky 1994). Borofsky suggests that we should conceive of a continuum between knowledge (understanding that is definite and delineated) and knowing (understanding that is fluid and flexible) (ibid: 24). The flexible character of knowing derives from three sources. First, knowing can change in different contexts, as when individuals present different accounts in various settings. At the start of my stay among the Duha Tuvinians, Centaling thus assured me that there were no longer any black shamans. Later - after visiting the household of a shaman - she told me that this shaman is a very dangerous black shaman, and described in detail how he had killed several people. Secondly, some aspects of knowing can be "relatively defined in some

respects and relatively undefined in others" (ibid 335). The Duha Tuvinians all agreed about the presence of "three worlds", but the exact composition of these worlds differed from person to person. Thirdly, parts of what is known cannot be precisely delineated and explained precisely (ibid: 335). It is futile to ask the Duha Tuvinians to describe the exact form and character of spirits, as they change form and character as a result of human action, and are understood not as fixed forms, but fluid beings.

To reach an understanding of the flexibility of Duha Tuvinian "knowing" I find it important - drawing on Borofsky - to investigate how "the known" is grounded in meaningful activity, rather than focusing on the known as content detached from activity (ibid: 338). We need to understand - as Borofsky writes - "when a difference really makes a difference" in what people say and do, if we are to understand diversity" (ibid: 338).

For the Duha Tuvinians it does not make a difference whether there are one or several beings in the underworld, because shamanic knowledge is concerned with controlling the forces in the world rather than understanding them intellectually. "Knowing" implies the ability to control the known object (Humphrey 1996). This power relationship is crucial for shamanism, where knowing means to be able to perceive, restore and control the intricate relations between humans and spirits.

Chapter three: Fieldwork and methodology

3.1 Anthropologist, adopted daughter and ignorant child

In October 2000, I arrived in Tsagaan Nuur, a tiny village in Northern Mongolia, from where I planned to make my way, on horseback, to the shaman Ingtuja's camp in the mountains north of the village. I knew Ingtuja from my earlier pilot

studies in the area in 1998 and 1999, when she and her family had agreed to adopt me and allow me to do fieldwork among them when I returned.

When I arrived in Tsagaan Nuur, in the autumn of 2000, local nomads told me that Ingtuja was hospitalised in Mörön, a town 300 km south of Tsagaan Nuur, after receiving a gunshot in her arm. I decided to try to find another family who could adopt me. Through my Mongolian teacher in Tuva, I became acquainted with Ojombadum - a local Duha Tuvinian, working as a schoolteacher in Tsagaan Nuur. Ojombadum introduced me to her mother-in-law - Centaling - who suggested that she could adopt me. It seemed a good opportunity, so I agreed and travelled by horse together with Centaling to her camp in Zuun Taiga, a two-day ride from Tsagaan Nuur.

The willingness to adopt me seems to derive from several sources. Adopting, not only children, but also unmarried females is a common practice among Duha Tuvinians. My status as a foreigner with knowledge of the West and, maybe most importantly, of their homeland Tuva across the border in Russia, made me someone worth adopting. My contribution to the family's subsistence, through my supplies of flour, rice and tea, was, of course, also important.

Attaining the position as an adopted daughter was important for me, because in a society where kinship defines most relationships, it is important to have "a role as a fictive kin person in order to participate" (Abu-Lughod 1988 [1986]: 15). Like Jean Briggs, who was adopted into an Inuit family, I also had qualms concerning:

"The loss of objective position in the community, drains on my supplies which would result from contributing to the maintenance of a family household, and loss of privacy with resultant difficulties in working" (Briggs 1970: 20).

However, I had not expected the fear that became an all-compassing element during the first couple of months of my stay in my adoptive family's household. Alcoholism and violence are, as mentioned above, a part of daily life among the Duha Tuvinians. My initial meeting with my adoptive father Gompo; gave me an insight into the relations I would have to deal with as an adopted daughter. In my diary, I wrote:

"As Centaling and I were approaching the Duha Tuvinian camp we saw a hunter approaching us on his reindeer. Centaling told me: "That is my husband Gompo". As he came nearer he suddenly fired his gun at us, and we only avoided the bullets by throwing ourselves to the ground. Another hunter forced Gompo's gun away from him. However, this did not pacify Gompo, who started to beat Centaling violently until she was lying silently crying on the snow. Afterwards, Gompo presented himself to me, with the words "I am Gompo, your adoptive father, get on your horse. Now we are riding to our camp".

The incident, of course, scared me, and I thought of going back to Tsagaan Nuur. But I decided to stay, since I was unable to find my way back to the village alone, and I feared Gompo's reaction if I asked the nomads of our camp to help me back.

I tried to find a position as a daughter in Gompo's household, by taking part in daily chores, sewing boots, milking reindeer, fetching snow for water etc. Both Gompo and Centaling were very helpful and kind in teaching me how to fulfil my daily obligations. I was not very talented at sewing and I continued, unknowingly, to break taboos, which made me the "foreign clown" of the village. Breaking taboos was important for my understanding of the relationship between shamanistic cosmology and the landscape. For example, one day, I unknowingly urinated close to a spring, which turned out to be the home of an ancestor spirit. This was a dangerous act, from the Duha Tuvinian point of view, as I could have angered the spirit and even died.

After about a month's time, my clownish behaviour had become a practical burden, both for me, for my adoptive parents and for the broader community. The atmosphere started to become tense. For a time it was funny to observe and be a clown, but then it turned out to be uncomfortable for all parties. The clown position gave me insights, but it was also an obstacle, since it defined me as a child, who was not permitted to discuss serious questions of cosmology. When I tried to ask what kind of creatures *ongods* and *luc'* are, what they do, where they

are situated etc. people would answer very briefly and often evade my question with a non-committal "I do not know".

In retrospect, I believe their initial reluctance to share their knowledge with me derived from several sources. First, my elaborate questions were a reminder of the communist past; when government officials were sent to cross-examine the Duha Tuvinians about religious issues, which often resulted in shamans being subjected to political punishment. Secondly, in my position as an ignorant foreign child, I was not considered able to understand or someone worth discussing serious issues - like shamanism - with. Finally, formal interviewing did not make sense to people, as shamanic knowledge is based on concrete experiences rather than abstract principles. Although they deal with the *luc'* and *ongods* daily, they do not talk much about them. Knowledge about the spirits is often non-linguistic and difficult to translate into words.

3.2 From participant observation to experiencing participation

At the start of my fieldwork I was, in my position as an ignorant child, prevented from making formal interviews and had to rely on what I observed and what the Duha Tuvinians occasionally told me about shamanic issues. To achieve access to shamanic knowledge I had to be included in the adult sphere. According to the Duha Tuvinians "to be an adult" is defined not only by age, but also by the ability to know how to act in the world of men and spirits, and to be able to fulfil the practical skills acquired for adulthood. I was not able to fill an ordinary adult position; as I was not very skilled at sewing, cooking, milking reindeer, social etiquette (the traditional duties of a grown woman). To become acknowledged as an adult one of the few "adult" roles I could fill was that of "the shaman", since shamans diverge from convention, just as I did.

Since the publication of Laura Bohannan's book "Return to Laughter" in 1954, the tension between participation and observation that is implied in "participant observation" has been a matter of discussion. Anthropologists have long been aware that it is impossible for the fieldworker to be a detached observer, "a fly on

the wall" observing "the other". Instead the anthropologists is - in the act of observing - always a positioned subject in the field.

As Fabian (1991) and Stoller (1989) point out, it is essential to participate actively in the lives of the people we are studying not only with our mind but with our body, with our emotions, senses and feelings, if we are to reach an understanding of the lives of our subjects. Participation may be seen as "a willingness to engage with another world, life and idea; an ability to use one's experience, to try to grasp, or convey meanings that reside neither in words, "facts", nor texts, but are evoked in the meeting of one experiencing subject with the other" (Wikan 1992: 463).

The question is, however, to what extent we - as anthropologists - can share the experience of the people we are studying. Clifford Geertz wrote: "We cannot live other people's lives and it is a piece of bad faith to try. We can but listen to what in words, in images, in actions they say about their lives" (Geertz 1986: 373). It is impossible to live other people's lives. What we need is, to become engaged in their lives, sharing time and space with them, and finding common ways of coping. This is what Hervik call "shared reflexivity" in the field (Hervik 1994).

As Bloch (1992) and Okeley (1994) have noted, much of the knowledge that we - as anthropologists - purport to study is non-linguistic and involves implicit networks of meanings which are formed through experience of, and engagement with, the external world. This is especially the case with Duha Tuvinian shamanism, where people seek an understanding of the relation between spirits and humans through bodily engagement with natural entities. To gain insight into such non-linguistic knowledge requires a more full-fledged participation prior to analytical dissection, than classical participant observation permits (Turner 1992, Jackson 1989).

Some anthropologists propose that such participation may be achieved through "experiencing participation" (Ots 1994), "socialisation in their (our subjects) systems of meanings and participation in the dynamic process of the construction of these meanings in which they are engaged" (Lindquist 1995: 5). The inclusion

of the experience of the professional anthropologist in his or her ethnography is part of what Jackson (1989) calls a radical empirical method, whereby anthropologists make themselves "experimental subjects" and treat their own experience as primary data. In this sense, personal experience "becomes a mode of experimentation, of testing and exploring the ways in which our experiences conjoin or connect us with others, rather than the way they set us apart" (Ibid: 4).

3.3 Chosen by the spirits

An honest account of the circumstances of fieldwork, not merely a perfunctory note stating the dates the anthropologist was "there", is, as Maybury Lewis (in Abu-Lughod 1988 [1986]) points out, not only essential for evaluating the facts and interpretations presented in ethnographic reports, but sometimes embarrassing. Coming home from the field, it was sometimes not only embarrassing, but painful to talk about some of my experiences among the Duha Tuvinians.

It was often difficult to talk about the violence that shaped my initial meeting with my adoptive father Gompo, and the ensuing fear of living in his household. I was also embarrassed to talk about my position as at once a shaman and an anthropologist in the field, as I feared that my story would be categorised as an "elaborate hoax" (see Stoller and Olkes 1987: 25). A legacy deriving from the questionable authenticity of Carlos Castaneda's work, that makes any report of extraordinary experiences risky in the profession (de Mille 1981a, 1981b).

However, I believe, as Goulet and Young have argued, that:

"taking our informants seriously when they call upon us to "experience" in rituals, visions or dreams, the realities that inform their lives, allows us to go beyond describing the "obvious" aspects of a culture, to a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of those beliefs and practices that are central to the meanings of a group" (Goulet and Young 1993: 329).

One day, confused by my problems with gaining access to the field, I was looking at some tarot cards, which a shaman had given me in Tuva. Our neighbour, Centaling's younger brother, Bat, asked what I was doing, and when I told him about the cards he asked me to give him a reading. While Bat had previously been very reluctant to discuss shamanic issues with me, he now asked me "how are my *ongods* influencing me". I asked him to pick four cards, which turned out to be the 8 of disks (a picture with a huge tree), death (the man with the scythe), art (two women standing over a stove) and the hermit (an old man). I told Bat that the tree was a sign of potential good fortune and happiness in his life, which however were suppressed and turned into poverty and misfortune by two sources. First, he had unintentionally hurt an elder woman, who now sought to revenge herself on him. Secondly, an older man had destroyed Bat's happiness by hurting a young woman close to Bat's heart.

After the reading Bat gave me an acknowledging look and said: "Yes, you are right". People in the *urts* started whispering about my reading. One man said, "Yes, it is that deer you wounded at Tengic", another said, "Remember, the bear; no normal bear would break into an *urts*". I could not make any sense out of these remarks, and did not ask, since I was used to not getting answers. After Bat had left, Centaling told me: "Tuja [my Mongolian name], you told the truth. The tree is our sacrificial tree, on our mother's line, situated close to the river Tengic. Here Bat once wounded a deer, and now our mother's *ongods* are taking revenge on him. The young woman is Bat's deceased wife; she was only 25 when she died. Nobody could do anything. Her father, the old man on your cards, was a cattle thief, he stole cattle from the strong shaman Tsagaan, and the shaman's *luc'* and *ongods* are still taking revenge on our clan, you see the daughter (Bat's wife) and her mother, were killed by the shaman, he took the form of a bear and broke into the *urts*, only her blood-stained clothes were left. The *ongods* are strong, it is hard to repair such misdeeds".

In the following days, our *urts* was full of people actively discussing cosmological issues with each other and me. Following this session, my position in the field

changed totally. I was no longer a foolish child, but someone who was able to perform a ritual act, which they could relate to. My readings seemed to have proven that I had some kind of shamanic knowledge, and this urged Centaling and others to tell me stories, which would help me understand the messages in the readings, and repair (*zazal hina*) the relations between humans and spirits. When my informants insisted on revising our roles, and asked me questions instead of the other way around, I started to reach an understanding of which cosmological questions are important to the Duha Tuvinians. These questions can be grouped into three overlapping categories: First, the role played by *luc'* and *ongods* in unexplainable events experienced in nature; secondly, the complex relationship between ancestor spirits, animals, natural entities and the fate of living kin; thirdly, how to repair (*zazal hina*) and control (*hjanalt*) the relationship between spirits, animals, natural entities and humans.

As a mere anthropologist I was unable to answer these questions. But people insisted that I try, and as I told them about the meaning connected to the signs on the cards, people sitting in our *urts* started to elaborate on my interpretation according to Duha Tuvinian cosmological ideas.

I started to conduct the tarot sessions as a kind of informal focus group activity, where one person would ask a question, and on the basis of the picture on the cards, all the camp members sitting in our *urts* would participate in creating an interpretation. Asking questions by letting people interpret pictures was much more fruitful than formal interviewing, because it was similar to the interpretative practices that the Duha Tuvinians were used to. It resembled the fortune-telling techniques they themselves use when they read the cosmological signs in the landscape, in money-notes, in stones and in burned sheep shoulder bones (*dal*). On the basis of central cosmological ideas and concrete events discussed during my informal focus groups I started conducting formal interviews. My tarot readings had increased my access to information about shamanism dramatically: I no longer had to "beg" for answers and interviews, people often wanted to tell

me about spirits affecting their lives, so I, as they said, "could help them (with their problems) and myself (to become an adult, as well as to write my thesis)". During my focus groups *cum* tarot sessions and my formal interviews, I was still mainly the observing anthropologist listening to people's words. Then I had an experience, which forced me to enter into a deeper participation in Duha Tuvinian cosmological traditions.

I was deep asleep one night with my two sleeping bags protecting me from the indoor temperature of minus 50 Celsius, when I woke and saw an elderly man dressed in a heavy fur coat coming into our *urts*. At first I thought this visit was nothing unusual. Often before, both acquainted and unacquainted hunters had spent the night in our household. As always, as Gompo's daughter, I got up and made tea for him. The visitor was unusually quiet, and did not answer my questions. He just sat there, intensely observing me, which made me rather uncomfortable. Usually, the dogs would howl when visitors came to our *urts* and people would wake up, but the dogs had been silent and my family was deep asleep, which I also found strange. Suddenly the visitor said farewell and left the *urts*.

Next morning I told Gompo and Centaling about the visitor. They asked me to describe his appearance and clothes to them. Then they started discussing who the visitor could be. After some time they concluded that it had been the protector spirit of the shaman Bair's clan mountain. Later, Bat came into the *urts* to report a dream he had had that same night, where the shaman Bair came into his *urts* pointing at the spot in its north eastern part, where an amulet she had made for him was lying. While people were discussing the possible interrelations between Bat's dream and my "vision", a rider came to our camp with the message that the shaman Bair had died that night. People took this as evidence that Bair's spirit had in fact visited us that night, and they told me: "You must be a shaman, since the protector spirit of Bair's mountain has chosen to reveal itself to your eyes. No ordinary person could see such a spirit."

I felt very confused after this incident: Wondering whether the man I had seen was a product of a dream or maybe an actual spirit, feeling that I had started to lose control over my position in the field, since I was no longer seen as an anthropologist, but as some kind of shaman; a role I was not at all sure I wanted to fill. At first I tried to avoid the position as "a shaman" by refusing to engage in the interpretation sessions. However, they did not accept my refusal, but insisted that I try to interpret their lives and heal them. They would say that "now they had been riding for several days just to get my advice" or "why did I refuse to help them, when I could actually see?" I tried to explain that I actually could not "see" the spirits, but they usually just took this as a sign of modesty and laughed. Following "my dream", the Duha Tuvinians started to teach me how to interpret phenomena in the landscape according to shamanic ideas. They would tell me which spirits belonged to which places, the signs indicating the presence of evil spirits, the ritual actions that should be performed at certain sites, and encouraged me not merely to understand the spirits intellectually, but to sense them through ritual engagement with natural phenomena - springs, trees, mountains - listening to the sounds from the burning wood in our fireplace, feeling the hailstones beat against my skin.

Such bodily experiences are seen as indicators of the spirit's presence in human life, and are the starting point for verbal discussions of the spirit's influence and presence in specific situations. In my efforts to reach an understanding of Duha Tuvinian' shamanistic knowledge, I believe it was crucial to participate in these bodily experiences, since they are such an important part of shamanic knowledge production. As Favret Saada wrote about witchcraft in Bocage:

"To understand the meaning of this discourse (the gift of unwitching, seeing everything) there is no other solution but to practice it oneself, to become one's own informant, to penetrate one's own amnesia, and to try to make explicit what one finds unstateable in oneself " (Favret-Saada 1980: 22).

The reason why the Duha Tuvinians decided to share their experience and knowledge with me, seems to be that they saw me as having access to a

knowledge that was important for their own welfare, and that I through my acts had shown myself to be an adult, capable of discussing the relation between spirits and humans. Our neighbour Bat told me several times: "It is good you are here, it will be difficult when you leave, because the spirits have chosen you to see things".

Trying to integrate my experiences as "a shaman" in my anthropological work, I made notes about how the Duha Tuvinians taught me to "see" or "feel" the spirits, what I "saw" or "heard" during these experiences, and how the Duha Tuvinians interpreted my experiences. I often wondered whether my "seeing" was just a product of my imagination. However, I believe we can gain valuable insight into the way informants construct knowledge through "experiencing participation". As Bloch has written: "As a result of fieldwork; I too can judge whether a bit of forest in Madagascar makes a good swidden. If I walk through the forest I am continually and involuntarily carrying out such evaluations" (Bloch 1992: 194).

When I, in the summer 2001, got on the bus to Ulaan Bator and left my nomadic life among the Duha Tuvinians behind me, I became aware of the extent to which I had assimilated their' sense of the fatal relation between humans and specific places. When the bus driver - a Khalka Mongol - passed a holy *oboo* (stone cairn) without stopping, I immediately started shivering from nervousness, thinking that the spirits of the place would take revenge on the whole bus and make it explode. Without thinking, I resolutely went up to the driver and asked him to drive back so I could place a few matches on the *oboo*. The driver first looked surprised, then said approvingly, "It is good you know the traditions", and went out with me to conduct offerings.

In retrospect I am very grateful that the Duha Tuvinians insisted on teaching me to "see" the land, as this gave me insights into how knowledge is constructed in practice, which I do not think I could have gained through a more traditional kind of participant observation. In the following chapter I will investigate the processes

these people engage in when creating their land as a realm of interconnections between humans and spirits.

Chapter four: Land of the living and the dead

In my work as a shaman, the Duha Tuvinians often asked me how specific places and natural features in the land influenced their lives - questions I at first could not answer, as I did not know how they perceived the land. However, my adoptive family and others were eager to teach me how signs in nature hints at the presence of specific spirits and how they mould and colour individual lives. Among other things, they taught me that if cotton ribbons are tied to the branches of a cedar-tree it is not an ordinary tree but a sacrificial tree inhabited by a deceased shaman's *ongods* (shamanic helper-spirits) and *luc'* (a spirit of an ancestor, in this case the shaman's spirit). Black cotton ribbons indicate the presence of black and dangerous *ongods*, which may inflict illness and misfortune on human life, while white cotton ribbons signals white and beneficial *ongods*, spreading prosperity and health among humans.

The history of the Duha Tuvinians is reflected in the land, where certain mountains represent specific patrilineages, and certain sacrificial trees represent specific shamans in a shamanic lineage. Mountains and trees do not merely represent patrilineal and shamanic ancestors, but also affect the fate and lives of the living, as the deeds of deceased and living kin mould the character of spirits located in natural entities and influence the lives of the living. Every person belongs to his or her father's patrilineages, and to both his/her fathers and mother's shamanic lineage(s). A shamanic lineage consists of a temporal series of related shamans - both men and woman - who have inherited the ability to become shamans from a deceased shaman and have been chosen by the *ongods* to become shamans. Both the paternal and maternal kin of a deceased or living shaman belongs to the shaman's lineage, and should worship the

sacrificial trees of their lineage. This means that each person only has one mountain - the one connected to their patrilineage - but often multiple sacrificial trees - connected to their fathers and mother's shamanic lineages - which they should worship.

In this chapter I will investigate how the Duha Tuvinians construct their surrounding landscape as a map representing the histories of patrilineages and shamanic lineages, and as a blueprint for appropriate human behaviour.

Moreover, I will discuss how human fate is perceived as intertwined with the land, and how individual fates in particular are tied to specific natural and spiritual entities in the land.

4.1 The iconic landscape

Language is, as James Weiner has noted, not merely a neutral tool, useful for describing a world "out there" but constitutive of the world itself (Weiner 1991: 31-32). When trying to reach an understanding of how the Duha Tuvinians conceive human fate as interconnected with Oron Hangai (their surrounding landscape) it is important to grasp the conceptual means by which they understand the world.

As previously stated, the Duha Tuvinians associate each clan and each patrilineage with a certain mountain *oboo* (cairn), and each shamanic lineage with specific sacrificial trees. In the classical anthropological literature such identifications between people and natural phenomena are termed totemism. Lévi-Strauss saw totemism as a certain kind of rationality by which people use the distinctions in nature to impose social divisions between people. It is, according to Lévi-Strauss, not the actual species used in totemic differentiation, which is important; rather it is the fact that animals exist as species. We are dealing with identities in form, rather than content, where the difference between animal species is similar to the difference between clans. Any field, domain or series within the natural world can thus be speciated; that is "detotalized", and

consequently used to introduce social distinctions into human communities (Lévi-Strauss 1963a).

According to Weiner and others indigenous conceptualisation of landscape is often iconic of human history. Individual lives are detotalized (Lévi-Strauss 1963) into a series of place names that, taken in their entirety, stand for the totality of a person's history (see Weiner 1994: 600). Among the Duha Tuvinians, commonly known *oboos* and sacrificial trees are distributed along the migration routes of past generations, with some sites situated in Tuva, several week's travel away from their' current homeland. The stories of sacrificial trees reflect the history of specific shamans and shamanic lineages, while the stories of *oboos* reflects the conventional values of the patrilineage.

Stories about sacrificial trees concern the particular details about how specific trees originated from particular shamans and their spirits, and how these spirits influence his or her living maternal and paternal kin. This is shown in the story Bat *zajah* told me about his sacrificial tree:

"My father was the shaman Gompo. His mother was also a shaman. Her sacrificial tree is far away in the south-west. My father's sacrificial tree is situated here (pointing to the west) close to the river Xaramat Gol. My father was a very good (ich cain) and strong (*xuchte*) shaman. You see; he even knew when he was going to die. He took off all his clothes and lay down. Then he told us that it was his time to die, and told us that when he had passed away we should place his shamanic gear beside this tree. Then he died, you see he really knew when he would die. So his *ongods* are at that place. Good white *ongods*. We are linked to them. One of us (the children of Gompo) had to become a shaman. My sister - (pointing to her) - went ill. Ambii said it was the shamanic disease, so she was to become a shaman, and she did. But she had different teachers, first Ambii Guaj, and then Nergvi. The ongod did not like that, they started to fight each other, and you see my pure sister turned mad and no one can heal her."

This story exemplifies how the history of a shamanic lineage is remembered through the land, where each sacrificial tree represents a single shaman and her or his life and deeds, and where the totality of sacrificial trees represents the entire history of the shamanic lineage. The stories of *oboos* include few details about the individual ancestors located at an *oboo*; rather they concern the conventional values of the patrilineage. An example is the story Dungarmaa told me about his clan *oboo*:

"Each clan has its *oboos* and mountains, where they worship their ancestors, and pray for the continuance of the lineage, and its health. People should show reverence to the heavens. Otherwise, the *luc'* in the heavens scold you, just as an elder scolds a disrespectful child. People should worship their ancestors (patrilineal) on mountains, because mountains are males. On the mountain we reach up to the male *luc'* of the heavens. My Sojong clan has an *oboo* in Zuun taiga, at a high mountain. My brothers and I go there to make offerings to the heavens, to our ancestors. We do this to make sure that our clan will continue, that it will prosper and our children be healthy. Only us men go to the *oboo*, women should not go. The *eze* do not like woman."

As in this story, narratives about *oboos* describe the connection between an *oboo* and a patrilineage or clan, and confirm the conventional values of hierarchy and male domination as the basis for social organisation. The more particular details about the human ancestors worshipped at the *oboo*, their origin characteristics, are usually not mentioned, and often not known. On the other hand, the *eze* (non-human owner spirit) of the *oboo* is remembered as a complex and unique individual.

The Duha Tuvinian landscape may thus be seen as a "map" of divisions between and within patrilineages and shamanic lineages. Moreover the landscape represents a "moral" map, where beneficial and dangerous places and natural entities reflect a division between "morally" proper and improper human deeds.

4.2 The natural law and the rules

The moral character of a sacrificial tree is reflected in the offerings left at the place, and revealed in the narratives told about the deceased kin inhabiting the place. My adoptive mother Centaling often told me how some deceased shamans had conducted "black deeds"; brought disease or death on humans and livestock. This she was sure of, as she had seen the black cotton ribbons tied to the branches of their sacrificial tress, which indicate the presence of black and dangerous *ongods*. On the other hand, white cotton ribbons signals the presence of white and beneficial *ongods*, which shamans use to conduct "white deeds", heal people from disease; increase people's livestock; regain their hunting-luck etc.

According to Centaling it is dangerous to approach a tree with black *ongods*, as these *ongods* are ferocious and angry and may inflict misfortune in your life.

Centaling also warned me that I should not approach *chötgörtei* (devilish) places, as such places are inhabited by dangerous *chötgörs*, who might steal my soul.

She explained that, lone standing trees, red cliffs and a sound like human whispering were all signs indicating the presence and land of a *chötgör*. These *chötgörs* derive from human pollution (*boxirdol*), which has transformed former beneficial human, non-human *luc'* (spirits and animals) and former beneficial white *ongods* into dangerous *chötgörs*. Juvaang, an elderly man, explained:

"Without pollution, there are no dangerous places. Some places are dangerous, because in the old days people did not believe and worship the *luc'* of this area. These *luc'* make bad things, because they have been polluted, they have become *bug chötgör*. They are angry with everybody, so we call such places dangerous. You know that Gol Xaramat (area in the western taiga) is a place with many *chötgörs*. In the old days people were buried in this land. During Communism, people burned the *ongods* (cotton ribbons representing shamanic helper spirits) of these people, thinking that these things were not suitable for them. The people who burned these things did not have a good life. If you burn the *ongods* they become *chötgörtei* (devil spirits)."

As this example shows the character of spirits is tied to - and moulded by - human interaction with the land and its spirits. Centaling was always very concerned to teach me to avoid "polluting activities", such as urinating close to water or digging holes in the ground. Just talking about these issues made Centaling and other Duha Tuvinians sound angry, and they would tell me over and over again that pollution is very dangerous. To reach an understanding of why some activities are seen as polluting and dangerous, we must search into the Duha Tuvinian concepts of "the natural law" (*jam*), and "the rules" (*yos*). Dakdji explained to me that to avoid pollution, I needed to learn to follow the *yos* (rules) of the natural law (*jam*). It is heaven (*tenger*), which has given humans the natural law, which prescribes the ideal order of the cosmos. This order implies two interdependent ideas. First, it contains a social order of the world, where all living things (humans, animals and spirits) are ordered in a hierarchy of beings. Very generally we can say that heaven *luc'* and *ezes* of the land, are situated in a superior position, humans and animals in a middle position, and earth *luc'* in a low position. It should be noted that although the idea of hierarchy is shared by all Duha Tuvinians I spoke with, its exact composition is fluid. Secondly, the rules imply a natural order of the world, where all living beings have their own way of being (*asjिता*); their characteristic livelihood and physical characteristics, which are interconnected with the *asjigitai* (way of being) of all other living beings (*ambtan*) - animals and spirits. As Dakdji explained:

"On the earth there are all kinds of people and animals, they all have their own *asjigitai* in nature. For example animals drink water, they hide in the woods and make shelters to keep themselves warm, in the same way as humans drink water to keep alive and cut the trees to make an *urts*", and he continued, "the Duha Tuvinian *asjigitai* (way of being) is to hunt, breed reindeer and move (*nüüh*) in the taiga."

The Duha Tuvinian *yos*⁽¹⁴⁾ prescribes how humans should interact with the *asjigitai* of other living beings, and how they should position themselves in the hierarchy of living beings. The Duha Tuvinians often explain to their children why

certain acts are wrong, by recounting narratives about how humans have gone mad after disturbing the *asjitai* of other living beings, or how humans have suffered various misfortunes because they polluted the land of the spirits, by acting as if they were superior to a spirit. As Basso demonstrates concerning the Apache Indians, narratives about the landscape often express the systems or rules according to which people expect themselves and others to organise and lead their lives (Basso 1984: 36). Conceptions of the land thus work in important ways to shape the image people have of themselves (ibid: 49). Pollution and danger belief are, as Mary Douglas has demonstrated, often used to support and maintain the moral values and social rules of a given society (Douglas 1966: 3). In the case of the Duha Tuvinians the notions of *chötgör* and pollution (*boxirdol*) are used to explain immoral or improper behaviour and attitudes. As Dakdji explained:

"Without people's bad minds and hearts there would be no pollution (*boxirdol*), there would be no *chötgör* in Oron Hangai. For example if a shaman has a bad mind - makes poison (*xorlox*)⁽¹⁵⁾ - then *luc'* from Oron Hangai get polluted, they get a bad mind. *chötgörs* - devils - are a thing connected to people's bad mind and heart."

To avoid disturbing the order of the cosmos by polluting thus requires an awareness of the complex *yos* of the natural law. People should interact with all natural entities - both as a natural phenomenon and as the habitats of a spiritual entities - according to certain *yos*; principles for human behaviour towards the social and natural aspects of other living beings. The concept of *yos* contains ideas of the way of being (*asjita*) and hierarchical position of spiritual and natural entities, which is the basis for acting correctly - acting according to the *yos* - toward these entities (see also Lindskog 2000: 131-135).

According to the Duha Tuvinians, pollution derives from dirt or from wrong activities. Activities or things, which contradict the hierarchical and natural order of the world, may produce dirt and pollution. Pollution can, following Mary Douglas (1995) be defined as "matter out of place": "things" or "activities" which

confuse or contradict shared classifications in a given culture. Humans try to create order in society and human life by categorising objects and events, as either male or female, within or without, above or below etc., and eliminating things which do not fit into these categories (ibid: 4). Pollution is thus, as Douglas writes, never a unique, isolated, event, rather it is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements (ibid: 36). This means that where there is pollution there is always some kind of system, and pollution should be understood as an expression of this system. In the case of the Duha Tuvinians, I believe - as explained by Dakdji - that such a system can be localised around two concepts implied in the natural law. First, a "loose" hierarchical order of beings, secondly the idea that each living being has its own unique way of being (*asjita*), which should not be disturbed by other living beings.

When I asked the Duha Tuvinians "why they thought it is wrong to hunt game animals in a land inhabited by an *eze* (an owner spirit)", they explained that it is because these animals are the possession of the *eze*, and humans are inferior to *eze*. This example shows that pollution arises from not acknowledging one's inferior position to that of *eze*. Though the earth *luc'* generally are perceived as having a lower position than humans, it also produces pollution to dig holes in the ground - for example to bury people - since such practices disturb the way of being (*asjigta*) of earth *luc'*. The Duha Tuvinian shaman Gosta explained the dangers of such disturbance:

"Today these *luc'* are very ferocious, because people have polluted this homeland. They have thrown garbage on the ground, defecated and urinated close to water, dug holes in the ground. Therefore *luc'* are harming people. In the old days our homeland was clean, but today it is polluted. According to our traditions a dead man should not be buried in the ground, the natural law is to place him on the open ground. According to our *yos* it is wrong to dig holes in the ground."

Some ideas about the natural law seemed to be shared by most Duha Tuvinians. Almost everybody I spoke with sounded angry and even scared when they talked about digging holes in the ground⁽¹⁶⁾. They saw this as a major violation of the natural law. Ideas about more abstract principles of the natural law - like the composition of the hierarchy of beings - differed from person to person, which did not seem to bother people. The concern of the Duha Tuvinians was rather the *yos*, because as Dakdji explained: "We need to be aware of the *yos* to ensure human well-being". The way people conceive the *yos* differs from person to person, and in different contexts: It is people's experience of the land, rather than conventional ideas about *yos*, which is seen as the most reliable resource for understanding the *yos*. The fact that experience is seen as a better tool for understanding than convention, is, as I see it, connected to the idea that the hierarchical position of spiritual and natural entities is not stable, but changeable. This means that to live according to the *yos* one must interpret the current nature of entities, rather than rely on stable ideas, which might no longer be appropriate for the natural entity in question.

4.3 My tree is my fate

Each human being has his or her own fate (*zajah*), which is given by their position in the patrilineage and by *ongods* at their sacrificial tree(s). Fate includes predestined and unavoidable elements, for example if one's fate is to become a shaman - if the *ongods* decide so - one has to become a shaman otherwise one will almost certainly die⁽¹⁷⁾. Yet, fate also includes that which is predestined yet avoidable. For example it is the fate of an elder man to be wise and a leader, but if an elder man does not have the abilities of leadership he may not become a leader. Moreover, individuals constantly mould their own and other people's fate by their actions. If a person pollutes Oron Hangai the pollution will feed back on the fates of the trespasser and his/her family. Finally, shamans may mould the fates of people, they may make "poison" and inflict misfortune on people's fate, or they may *free* people from an unfortunate fate.

People should ideally follow and live in accordance with their fate, since if they diverge from it they may suffer disease and other misfortune. The problem is however, that an individual can almost never live according to his or her fate, since every person has multiple and often contradictory fates. In theory this could make all fates and all Duha Tuvinians equal. In practice, not all members of the Duha Tuvinian community are regarded as sharing the same fates and social positions. In daily life it is person's position in the patrilineage, which governs fate and social position. However, when your abilities differ from your conventional position or when you experience something unusual in your life or in the land, you often reinterpret your own and other people's fate, which may give you a new position in the community. "The unusual" is often linked to people's sacrificial trees, which - I believe - contain a potential for negotiating and expanding convention. To take control over one's own fate - to find out why one is suffering misfortune, how to challenge the conventional "power" of men and elders - people interpret which sacrificial trees mould their own and other people's fate, and how.

To understand their collective fate, the Duha Tuvinians seem to interpret the landscape as a temporal map, representing the totality of the clan's history and the entirety of moral actions performed by humans. Collective problems - within the clan and within the Duha Tuvinian population, such as decreasing reindeer herds and general poverty - are often seen as the direct result of ancestors' misdeeds. Natural entities do not merely represent conventional clan and moral divisions, but directly influence the lives of present generations. The landscape is full of potential dangers, which cannot just be avoided, as prosperity in the lives of the living depends on knowledge of the lives and actions of deceased clan members and interaction with the *luc'* and *ongods* of one's clan.

During my fieldwork I often heard people say "my sacrificial tree is my fate", and the Duha Tuvinians often explained current misfortune with the character of their *ongods* and their *luc'* situated at their sacrificial trees. Trees have their own distinct *asjigtai* (way of being), just as humans and other living beings, as will be

elaborated in chapters 5 and 6. However, when a tree is made into a sacrificial tree and inhabited by the *luc'* and *ongods* of a deceased shaman the conventional frame of reference in which people and trees are distinct entities - each possessing their own unique *asjitai* - breaks down. The tree is transformed into a sacrificial tree, and the fate of the deceased shaman's family is tied to the sacrificial tree and the *ongods* and *luc'* inhabiting it.

Thus, the Duha Tuvinians seem to construct their surrounding landscape as meaningful by (1) conceiving the land as representing the whole history of shamanic lineages and patrilineages and the entirety of *yos*, (2) by employing places to represent conventional divisions between shamanic and patrilineages, and between inappropriate and appropriate behaviour; and, (3) linking these concrete places to individual fates in an ongoing search for solutions and explanations for current misfortune and problems.

The process whereby the landscape is invested with meaning may be seen as a dialectical interaction between what Roy Wagner (1986) describes as a microcosm of names - "merely representing the things named" - and a macrocosm of analogic relations - where "naming becomes a matter of analogy: symbol and symbolized belong to a single relation" (Ibid: 14). In the first case we are dealing with a closed world of signs separated from the world of phenomena - as symbols and names merely represent their references. Here meaning arises in the contrast and grouping of names or symbols, for example the concept of purity is understood in opposition to the concepts of impurity and pollution. In the second case, symbolic references are part of the world of phenomena, as meaning relies on the relation between the concrete symbol and its reference. It is only my concrete sacrificial trees, and not any tree, which are my fate, as it is only at this concrete tree that my white *ongods* of my shamanic ancestors are situated. If this tree dies I will almost certainly die, as my fate and the fate of the tree are analogous.

I see the microcosm of names, as a structural way of perceiving the world in Ricoeur's (1971) sense of the term, where signs only refer to other signs within a

closed system of signs, and not to the world of phenomena (ibid: 554). From this point of view the Duha Tuvinian landscape consists of named places representing collective shared values, rather than the concrete physical landscape. On the other hand, the macrocosm of analogous relations can be defined as a more hermeneutic way of perceiving the world; where the concrete sign and its reference are part and parcel of each other; part of a broader world (ibid: 560-561). The concrete sacrificial tree and other natural entities matter for the Duha Tuvinians, changes in their appearance hint at a similar change in human life. If the branches or trunk of a sacrificial tree are broken the human subjects, related to the deceased shaman located at the tree, will suffer misfortune. Sacrificial trees contain a potential for creativity and innovation, since almost any idea and value can be read into the complex symbol of the tree. To understand how the Duha Tuvinians invest their landscape and its natural entities with meaning, I believe we must, like Wagner, combine a structuralist and a hermeneutic approach. As Wagner writes: "the microcosm of social names *mediates* the macrocosm of analogy by cutting it into manageable pieces. And the macrocosm of analogy, of course, mediates the microcosmic points of reference by allowing us to see resemblance among them" (Wagner 1986: 16). The microcosm deals with "collective conventional ideas", whereas the macrocosm of analogy is concerned with "concrete, holistic, individuating facts or events", and has a potential for innovation and new thinking, as it challenges conventional reference by establishing new relations between categories (ibid: 24-25). "The dialectic, then, mediates between two ideal and effectively unrealisable points, the social collectivity and the concrete, individuating fact or event" (ibid: 25).

The Duha Tuvinian microcosm of landscape terms is, as we have seen, characterised by its use of lineage (patri- and shamanic) terminology, and by its use of the oppositional terms pure-impure, beneficial-dangerous and white-black. These terms represent the conventional and collective shared values of the Duha Tuvinians, and proper and moral deeds are seen as pure, beneficial and white,

whereas improper and immoral deeds are seen as impure, dangerous and black. It is by mapping former clan members unto specific features of the land, and dividing these places into black and white *ezentei* places and polluted *chötgörtei* places that the landscape is named.

The Duha Tuvinian concept of fate (*zajah*) connects the members of a shamanic lineage and their sacrificial tree in an analogic macrocosmic relation. This analogy poses a challenge to the conventional hierarchy of the patrilineage, since youngsters, elders, females and males may be considered equal in the shamanic lineage, as they may have the same fates and since the *ongods* grant them similar abilities.

I believe that the analogy between person and sacrificial tree relies on a series of analogies, which are all based on an initial analogy between shaman and *ongod*. A layman is chosen to become a shaman, because the *ongods* have possessed his body. He has in other words "become the *ongods*" and acts in "mad" ways, as he is not yet able to control the *ongods*. To control the *ongods* the layman needs to become a shaman. This presupposes a "new" analogy, in the form of a barter between shaman and *ongods*, where the layman entrusts his children's fate to the *ongods* in order to receive shamanic power and become a shaman. During the shaman's lifetime he/she influences his/her children's fate through his *ongods*, as the shaman's actions and the shaman's mind are analogous with the character of his *ongods*. The performance of black shamanism makes the shaman's *ongods* black, whereas the performance of white shamanism results in white *ongods*. The death of the shaman marks the separation of shaman and *ongods*, and ends the shaman's ability to control his *ongods*. The shaman's children's fate is, however, still dependent on the *ongods*. To control the *ongods*, the shaman's children should place the shaman's equipment at a certain cedar tree - according to the prescriptions given by the shaman before his death. When the shamanic gear is placed at such a tree it becomes enlivened by the shamans *luc* (spirit) and his/her *ongods*, which transforms the tree into a sacrificial tree for worship of these spirits. Dakdji explained this:

"After a shaman's death his own children should certainly start a worshipping cult, because they should certainly make offerings, if they do not the spirits will be angry, also the children won't know where the *ongods* are, and so they will be badly affected. The *ongods* of the shaman will be passed to the children of the shaman and to future generations. The *ongods* will follow the souls of these people, their *zajah* is entrusted to these *ongods*".

In the evenings, Centaling often told me how the deeds of former shamans colour their sacrificial trees and influence their living kin. One evening Centaling said:

"She (Sering) has black *ongods* at her father's sacrificial tree and she also keeps some of these black *ongods* at her home. You see, Sering's father was a very strong and dangerous shaman, he made many bad things, and he even killed people through poison (black magic). Therefore, most of his children died early and therefore Sering and her children lead a miserable life. Their fate is tied to the black *ongods* at their sacrificial tree situated at a mountain north of our camp".

According to Centaling, Sering sometimes tied black cotton ribbons to her sacrificial tree, in order to do "bad things", to inflict illness or misfortune on people. The act of fastening black cotton ribbons to a "black" tree (a sacrificial tree which is commonly known to be inhabited by black *ongods*) confirms the conventional idea that this tree represents impure and dangerous forces. The act of linking the lives of individuals - the concrete suffering, poverty or illness they have experienced - to their tree and its *ongods* may, in the long run, expand, challenge or even change the conventional values attached to a given tree. This is especially the case when people use their tree and its *ongods* to mould their own and other people's lives. My Mongolian teacher Ojombadum told me how an acquaintance of hers had changed the nature of his tree:

"His sacrificial tree used to be white, it was a good and pure tree. But this man has done things, dangerous things, he has made poison toward people.

So he went up to that tree and fastened black cotton ribbons, while he read spells. He used those white powers to conduct evil deeds. He transformed the white *ongods* into black *ongods*. Now this is a polluted tree. Many people do such things, but they will not tell you."

The sign(s) of a sacrificial tree may be read in a way, which confirms conventional and collectively shared ideas, but also has a potential for alternative readings, which may challenge convention. As individuals link their own lives to that of the tree and its *ongods*, and as they seek to mould their own and other people's lives through ritual engagement with the tree, they participate in constructing the meaning of the sign(s) of the tree. The meaning of a given sacrificial tree is thus fluid over time, and continually recreated and renewed. As Wagner notes, concerning the Walbiri aboriginals in Australia:

"Since the traditional Walbiri must perforce as hunter gatherers, not only gain their living following tracks, but also spend their lives constantly making tracks themselves, thereby life in all of its acts becomes a process of inscription. And this inscription, in large part an endless repetition of domestic and productive acts, a following of custom and techniques, was also a retracing of trails and tracks that had been known from time immemorial. The life of a person is the sum of his tracks, the total inscription something that can be traced out along the ground" (Wagner 1986: 21).

Something similar seems to be the case of the Duha Tuvinian worship of sacrificial trees, where people go to worship the sacrificial trees of their ancestors and repeat the customs and conventions applied to their trees, and inscribe their own life in the signs of the tree.

The analogy between person and cult place is named in microcosmic terms - fate - but it cannot be reduced to a cognitive ordering of place. Confronted with seemingly unexplainable problems and misfortunes the Duha Tuvinians often try to find explanations for their fate through practical engagement with and interpretations of macrocosmic images, especially sacrificial trees, but also other natural entities such as cliffs, mountains, lakes etc. It is through such

engagement with macrocosmic images that the analogy between person and natural entity is experienced. This became apparent to me during my "upbringing" among the Duha Tuvinians.

During migration and travels to worship sites I asked people which *yos* were connected to this or that natural entity. They would answer shortly, encourage me to experience the natural entity with all my senses, and explain how to conduct the right offerings. Descending from the worship mountain Gurvan Saihan, a heavy hailstorm began, and my adoptive brother Dakdji commented:

"Feel, Tuja, the hailstones beating against your skin. It is the *luc'* thanking us for the offerings we made. If it was silent weather it would be a bad sign, but the hailstorm shows that they are eating our offerings."

As Humphrey has demonstrated concerning the Daur Mongols, a religious concept's felt authenticity is guaranteed primarily by direct modes of experiencing natural phenomena (Humphrey 1996: 126). Once or twice a year the Duha Tuvinians travel to their sacrificial trees and their *oboos* to make offerings to the *luc'* and *ongods* of their shamanic and patrilineages. On such occasions they often interpret how their sacrificial trees are currently influencing their life⁽¹⁸⁾. Their interpretations are never simple and clear-cut, since both their own deeds and the deeds of deceased and living kin influence the character of their sacrificial trees and thus their fate.

To avoid misfortune, the Duha Tuvinians try to figure out which *ongods* and which places influence their fate, and seek to control their *zajah* by making offerings to the *ongods* and *luc'* of their sacrificial trees according to the *yos* connected to the place. Such interaction with natural entities and spirits is seen as at once necessary and dangerous, since people may not be aware of the right *yos* - which are not consistent dogmas - and might unknowingly conduct the wrong offerings and cause pollution.

The landscape at once represents past lives and conventional collective values, and is continually recreated and invested with new meaning, reflecting current problems and individual fates. In daily life the Duha Tuvinians engage with an at

once known landscape; a microcosm of named natural entities commonly acknowledged as inhabited by either fierce or beneficial spirits connected to certain shamanic lineages, and with a hidden landscape of potential - forgotten and not yet revealed spirits. To avoid misfortune they interpret and interact with natural entities and their spirits according to commonly known *yos*. However, no natural entity is attached to an absolute conventional meaning: it can only be understood and interpreted in relation to events in human life. Lay people can reach a rough understanding of this relation by interpreting events in nature and human life, but only shamans have the knowledge and means to make out the details of this intricate relation.

4.4 The shamanic ritual

Confronted with misfortune - such as illness among people and reindeer, marriage problems, loss of hunting luck - the Duha Tuvinians often seek the advice of shamans, who search for answers and solutions to misfortune during shamanic rituals. During my stay among the Duha Tuvinians, I often joined such rituals together with my adoptive parents and other clan members. In January 2001, my neighbours Bat and Bair returned to our camp from a month-long hunt, depressed and exhausted, as they had caught almost no game. Moreover, both of the men's livestock had decreased, the wolves had taken some and others had died from various diseases. The men decided to ask the shaman Balchir to find the reason for their misfortune, since they could not understand it themselves. I joined Bat and Bair at the shamanic ritual and the following is an extract from what I wrote in my notebook:

"We arrived at Balchir's household just before sunset. His *ger* (felt tent) was crowded, approximately 20 people were lying and sitting in his house, some drinking tea, others half-asleep and others - who had just arrived - giving offerings (tea, vodka, milk products, candies) to Balchir, which he placed at the altar in the north-eastern end of the house. Bat and Bair handed Balchir their offerings and said: "We would like to ask the *ongods* why we have lost

our hunting luck". At midnight Balchir dressed in his shamanic coat and headgear and started to drum. For around an hour Balchir's drumming was monotonous, like the sound of a horse galloping through the forest, as he sang "I am riding, I am on my way", and people commented, "He is riding to the spirit world on his drum". After the first hour, the drumming suddenly became wild and unstructured, and Balchir started to jump around with his drum, scream, and cry, giving the impression that he was in some kind of fight. People whispered and said: "The *ongods* have arrived, they are angry, which *ongods* have arrived, is it my *ongods*, is that the sound of a wolf, is that an owl?". Balchir's voice became clear and he sang, "You wounded a fox". Then his voice broke and he laughed angrily and howled like a wolf. Bat whispered to Bair: "Don't you have a wolf *ongod*? I think it is your *ongods* that has arrived". "I don't know if there is such an *ongod* in my clan", whispered Bair. The audience started to discuss the messages of the shaman, which became more and more confusing, one moment a roar like a bear, then howling again and songs with almost indecipherable words. However, an old woman knew that there are actually wolf *ongods* in Bair's clan, and Bair got up to sit in front of the shaman. The shaman started to drum monotonously in front of Bair, and people whispered: "It is right, it was his *ongods*". After a short while, Balchir started to sing again: "The river is flowing, a fox is wounded, a mountain with human bones", and he screamed and fell to the ground in fits. His assistant burned some incense around him, people looked frightened and were almost silent as they observed him. Suddenly, the shaman jumped up and laughed, beating Bair with cotton ribbons from his shamanic coat. Bat whispered to me: "Now he is trying to remove something bad from Bair, it is good". Bair got up again and sat among the audience, while Balchir started to sing and drum wildly again, followed by people's discussion of which *ongods* had arrived and what messages they had. Bair and Bat were absorbed in discussing the meaning of the *ongod*'s message to Bair: "It might be that human skull we saw lying on that mountain, maybe it

was a *chötgörtei* place..." After the shamanic ritual, Balchir discussed the meaning of the *ongods'* messages with the audience. He asked Bair and Bat whether they had actually seen human bones on a mountain, and they told him that they had wounded a fox on their last hunt and afterwards had seen a human skull on a mountain slope. Balchir nodded and said: "Yes, that was an *ezentei* mountain, you were not supposed to hunt there, and the fox you wounded was an *eze* (owner spirit): "You see you have polluted this place, so therefore you do not receive any game and your reindeer are dying. Also you drink too much Bair, therefore your *ongods* are angry, you should not drink, when you drink you do not know what is game and what is *eze*. Also, there is a tree in the west next to a river, this place is dangerous". Bair answers: "But that is one of my worship places, where my *ongods* are". Balchir replies, "You think they are *ongods*, but someone has polluted the place, and they are *chötgör*. I have tried to repair your misdeeds, but to calm the *eze* of that mountain you have to go back and make offerings. People should not hunt at that mountain. It is *ezentei*, people should only make offerings at that place."

In the shamanic performance, the *ongods* are not hidden spirits, which are only revealed through natural entities representing them. The audience experiences the *ongods* as present through the shaman's dramatic performance. I believe the shamanic ritual can be seen as a macrocosmic image - "a symbol that stands for itself" (Wagner 1986: 25) - where analogic relations are combined in new ways - human fate, moral deeds, human misfortune, natural entities, sacrificial trees and *oboos* are played out against each other and connected - which makes the meaning of the ritual highly innovative (see Wagner 1986: 29). The ritual may give individuals an impression of the content of their fate - how it is moulded by their position in the lineage hierarchy, their *ongods* at their sacrificial trees and their own deeds - and how they should live and act to avoid and solve misfortune. Moreover, the ritual has a potential for new thinking and change, as conventional references - such as fate as governed by age and gender - can be opened and imbued with new meaning - though I am a woman I might have

abilities superior to my position, since my *ongods* give me capabilities - during the analogic flow of the performance.

The cryptic message of the ritual itself can lead people to reflect in new ways on the relation between their own fate and various spiritual and natural entities in the land, but to be able to use these reflections to challenge convention in the broader community, the ambiguous messages of the *ongods* need to be translated into conventional language. This takes place after the ritual - when the shaman explains the more specific meaning of the *ongods's* ambiguous messages to the audience. The macrocosmic images of the ritual cannot be used directly to negotiate convention, since they are part and parcel of the ritual performance, and as such only make sense in the context of the ritual. To use the innovative potential of the ritual to challenge and negotiate conventional values and social positions outside the context of the ritual, it is necessary to translate the macrocosmic and fluid messages of the ritual into the discourse of convention, which is microcosmic.

In daily life, the spirits should ideally not be seen or heard by a layman but only manifest themselves through the signs of nature. It is only during formal rituals that spirits - in the form of *ongods* - should be perceived by lay-people, and only a part of the *ongods'* message should be told to the audience, while the shaman keeps other information secret. This separation between everyday knowledge - which is based on interpretation and knowledge of natural entities and *yos* - and ritual knowledge - which is founded upon actually seeing and hearing the *ongods* - is not trivial. It can - following Bateson (1990) - be seen as a precondition for flexibility.

The shamanic ritual may challenge the conventional facts of microcosmic knowledge. The *ongods* - possessing a macrocosmic knowledge about the world - are perceived as present by the audience during the ritual. The *ongods* offer their messages to the audience through the shaman's body: his song, his words, the rhythm of the drum and movements of his body are all used to interpret the *ongods'* messages. The full understanding of the *ongods'* complex messages

can only be recognised by shamans. After the ritual, the shaman explains the meaning of the *ongods'* messages to the audience, but as the shaman Gosta told me, "We never tell everything, many things are secret, and should not be told". To conceal certain information is - as Bateson writes - basic if the sacred is to be maintained, as communication can change the character of the way we conceive the sacred (Bateson 1990: 88). For a system to survive, part of the information in its variables should be kept secret or unconscious, and not be communicated to the other variables. Non-communication and secrecy is needed to preserve solutions and knowledge, which would be dissolved or transformed if it were made conscious or communicated verbally. The secrecy in Duha Tuvinian shamanism means that lay people can never be quite sure of the content of the connection between humans and spirits; they need to interpret "macrocosmic symbols" in nature, human life and rituals to gain insight into it. In theory, anything can be read into such macrocosmic symbols, as they are subject to invention and flexible.

During the shamanic ritual the relation between human fate, human deeds, the land, its spirits and its natural entities are played out against each other, in a search for explanation and solutions for misfortune. The Duha Tuvinians mainly join such rituals when they are faced with severe misfortune, which they cannot solve in other ways. More minor problems are interpreted and solutions attempted in everyday conversation about - and interaction with - the land and its hidden spirits. In fact - I believe - the practical skills of nomadism are organised to avoid infecting human life with misfortune and to integrate humans in a society of living and deceased clan members. In the following chapter I will investigate how the Duha Tuvinians try to control and understand individual and collective fate through the practices of nomadism.

Chapter Five: Nomadic life: Moving from place to place

In my upbringing as "a daughter" and "a shaman", my adoptive parents and other Duha Tuvinians put great effort into teaching me the practical skills of nomadism: how to load a reindeer, find a place for a camp, where to make a halt during migration, erect an *urts* etc. According to them it is crucial to master these skills in order to live the Duha Tuvinian *asjigtai* (way of being) - to find and live one's proper position in the land of Oron Hangai, and to avoid disturbing and angering the *asjigtai*s (way of being) of other beings. The skills of nomadism do thus not merely serve practical aims, but can - following Appadurai - be seen as instances of locality production⁽¹⁹⁾ which aims to produce local subjects; "actors who properly belong to a situated community of kin, neighbours, friends and enemies" (Appadurai 1995: 205).

In order to produce and reproduce local subjects it is - according to Appadurai - necessary to construct a concrete neighbourhood, in and through which the production of locality can be realised. According to Appadurai the challenge of settled people is to maintain and reproduce their neighbourhoods. Since the Duha Tuvinians are nomadic, their neighbourhood of campsites and *urts'* are bound to be temporary places, which must be partly erased to go on migration, and must continually be recreated in new places⁽²⁰⁾. Their challenge is thus - in contrast to that of settled people - to continually recreate and erase their neighbourhood of campsites.

To produce a neighbourhood people define and shape their territory as a representation of their own social values, in opposition or relation to other contexts (social, environmental, material) and neighbourhoods (ibid: 208). The Duha Tuvinian neighbourhood is not limited to their campsites; rather it includes the broader area of their pastures and cult-places, which they call their homeland (*nutag*). The homeland is punctuated by significant places - in the form of cultplaces for the worship of human ancestor spirits and non-human *eze* (master-spirits). This homeland may - drawing on Appadurai - be seen as a context, which provides "the frame or setting within which various kinds of human action (productive, reproductive, interpretive, performative) can be initiated and

conducted meaningfully" (ibid: 209). The Duha Tuvinian homeland in the taiga stands in contrast to the Darhad homeland in the steppe, and to the wilderness (*xeer*); the areas of the taiga, which is not inhabited by humans. Only the Duha Tuvinians are seen as capable of roaming safely in their homeland, since it is inhabited by their ancestor-spirits, which may infect misfortune in the lives of outsiders or non-relatives passing their locations.

According to Appadurai the construction of a neighbourhood is inherently colonizing, as it requires "the assertion of socially (often ritually) organised power over potentially chaotic and rebellious places and settings", through "risky or even violent action in respect to the earth, the forest, animals and other humans" (ibid: 208 - 209). To erect an *urts* or to create a cult-place in the taiga are both acts of colonization, since they aim at controlling a place and its spirits in order to integrate humans in the land. However, the aim of Duha Tuvinian colonization is not first and foremost to gain power over the land, but as Bat explained: "to try to fit into the land of Oron Hangai, without disturbing the *asjigtai* of other living beings". The relation between humans and the landscape among the Duha Tuvinians is thus - as Humphrey notes regarding Mongolians - "an interactive field, rather than a passive setting in which human beings take action" (Humphrey and Sneath 1999: 2).

The Duha Tuvinian subsistence as reindeer herders is based on a continual oscillation between settling in place and migrating in space, which is organized as a move from place to place. They strike camp and move to a new place approximately once every second month during winter and early spring, and once every month during the summer and early autumn. During migration, they usually only make a halt at cult-places, where they stop to make offerings to the spirits and rest, and at camp-sites, where they stop to eat, drink and visit acquaintances. People should not halt simply in open space - areas in between cult-places and camp-sites - since it may be inhabited by dangerous and hidden spirits, which humans may unknowingly pollute, if they urinate, eat or simply rest in their land. To find a place to construct a camp, they consider the availability of

grasses for the reindeer, woods and water for people, and the *asjigtai* and character of spirits and animals that already inhabit the place. They construct their *urts* in a strict and invariant order, as a named place representing both the cosmos and the social world, to make it a "safe" place for humans to live in the land.

The Duha Tuvinians thus engage with two different, but mutually dependent landscapes; the significant places of the homeland - the camps and cult places - and the fluid and undefined space of the homeland and the wilderness. The settlement of the *urts* and cult-places are both named microcosmic places, and macrocosmic symbols, which aim at reproducing conventional macrocosmic analogies between the land, its spirits and humans. The undefined areas of the land are a macrocosmic space of fluid analogic relation, since it is an uncolonized land, where the relation between spirits and humans has not yet been discovered, but is open for negotiation. I use the concept of place - following De Certeau (1984) - as referring to the collective ordered representations of the state of knowledge of the world, which "implies an indication of stability", whereas the concept of space is composed of "intersections of mobile elements", which are ambiguous and often in conflict, representing the actions and practices by which knowledge is produced, affirmed or transformed (De Certeau 1984: 117-122). The practices of migration and hunting brings the Duha Tuvinians through the space of the wilderness, where they often discover hidden spirits and construct cult-places for them, by which fluid space is transformed into a named and temporarily stable place. On the other hand if the Duha Tuvinians do not conduct the appropriate offerings to the spirits located in the cult-places of the homeland, the spirits may "run away", and over time the cult-place will become part of the space of the wilderness.

Locality is, as Appadurai states, "an inherently fragile social achievement", which "must be maintained carefully against various kinds of odds" (Appadurai 1995: 205). In the Duha Tuvinian case such "odds" takes the form of the *asjigtai* of other living beings, which should not be disturbed, the act of foreign tourist, which

sometimes pollute clean places and spirits in the homeland, as well as the practices of nation-states, who established and guard the international border (between Russia and Mongolia) across their traditional homeland.

The production of a neighbourhood is always historical and contextual, that is, it "contains a theory of context: a theory, in other words, of what a neighbourhood is produced from, against, in spite of, and in relation to" (Appadurai: 209). The encounters with other contexts or neighbourhoods inevitably lead to the creation of new contexts, which over time may change or extend local values, language, rituals and social convention (Ibid: 210). The space of the wilderness is made into a place of the homeland, when people reveal spirits and construct cult-places for them; the participation in Darhad shamanic rituals and the encounter with missionaries extends the cosmology etc. The dilemma is that the context producing capabilities of the Duha Tuvinians, nation-states and tourist-companies are not equal, since the Mongolian and Russian polity and the arrival of foreign tourists, as I will show later, forces the Duha Tuvinians to move away from their traditional pastures.

The focus of this chapter is on the Duha Tuvinian concept of *asjigtai*. I explore how the Duha Tuvinians produce and reproduce their *asjigtai* through the migration cycle, and how subjects and land are socialised and localised in this process. This leads me to investigate how they seek to fit into the land by "colonizing" macrocosmic space to create a microcosmic places or neighbourhoods, and by decolonizing the microcosmic place of the camp to create a macrocosmic place. Moreover, I will explore how the context producing activities of nation-states and tourist poses a threat to the Duha migration cycle, their homeland and the very survival of their shamanic knowledge.

5.1 The neighbourhoods of spirits and humans

When the Duha Tuvinians first arrived in present-day Mongolia many centuries ago, the land was not yet their homeland; nor an empty space open for human occupation. Rather it was a wilderness (*xeer*) - a transhuman space inhabited by

animals and concealed *eze*s. These *eze*s had and have their own neighbourhoods in the land; the *eze*s master and own certain mountains, valleys, forests, lakes etc., and own the wild game roaming in their land. Since humans and *eze* should not share a neighbourhood (it is considered theft to cut down the tree, collect the berries and hunt game in the location of *eze*) they needed to discover and delimit the whereabouts of *eze* in order to find room for their own neighbourhoods. When they discovered the location of an *eze* they made a cult-place for it, in the shape of an *obo* or a sacrificial tree, where they fed the *eze* with offerings to domesticate or colonize it in a delimited place - the cult-place and its vicinity.

The challenge of the Duha Tuvinians was both to control the *eze*s of the land, and to keep track of - and integrate - their own ancestor spirits in their new homeland. The shaman Gosta explained:

"Tuvinian people need a homeland to live, we cannot just live in the wilderness, how should we keep track of our ancestors *luc'* and our shamans *luc'* and *ongods*, how should we control our fates? Our homeland originated with the arrival of our ancestors in this land. They discovered *eze*tel mountains in the wilderness, where they erected *oboo*s to worship the *eze* of the mountain and to worship the heavens and ensure the continuance and prosperity of our lineages and clans. Each clan has its mountains where they worship their ancestors (of the patrilineal clan). Also, each time a shaman died they placed his *luc'* and *ongods* beside a tree, and linked them to future generations. In this way the *luc'* and *ongods* arrived, sacrificial cults started and the land became our homeland".

First, each time a shaman died they founded a sacrificial trees for his/her *luc'* and *ongods* to keep track of these spirits. If the *luc* and *ongods* simply roam all over the land, lay-people loose control over their fates, as they will not know their current location and where to go to feed and worship them. Secondly, they founded patrilineal *oboo*s on mountains to worship their paternal ancestors in the heavens, which is a necessity to maintain the prosperity and continuance of the

patrilineage(s). Patrilineal *oboos* and sacrificial trees of deceased shamans are both created in the locations or neighbourhoods of *eze*s, since "the *eze* keep track of the ancestor spirits, while we are not present at our *oboos* and sacrificial trees". The Duha Tuvinians thus "colonize" part of the space of the wilderness to control the whereabouts of its spirits, in order to construct a cult-place or a neighbourhood for spirits and the broader neighbourhood of the homeland.

Campsites are never constructed right next to cult-places - since these places are "owned" by *eze* or *luc* - but are constructed at close distance to the cult-places of beneficial *eze* and *luc* - since these places generally are considered "pure" and "clean", making them suitable for human settlement. However, the quality of a place is never certain - as humans may pollute the place, its spirits and the *urts* by their actions and by bringing dirty things into the place.

The construction of the camp in general and the *urts*' in particular aim at colonizing space in order to make it into the place of a human neighbourhood or camp. The *urts* is constructed as an ordered and named microcosmic place to integrate the human way of being into the complex web of beings in Oron Hangai, and to control and avoid pollution from infecting the community with illness and misfortune. This is done through - on the one hand - constructing the *urts* as a microcosmic place, representing cosmological and social values. On the other hand the *urts* is constructed as a macrocosmic image - "a symbol that stands for itself" - that, as Lindskog writes regarding the *ger* (felt-tent) of Halh Mongol nomads, "draws the cosmological into the social and the social into the cosmological" (Lindskog 2000: 92).

In its physical layout, the *urts* is at once constructed as a representation of the cosmos and of the social world and as a place for human interaction with the cosmos. In the *urts*, the cosmos is represented as an invariable place, by dividing and naming the space of the *urts* according to the four cardinal points and heaven and earth each representing their own distinct and constant cosmological values. Moreover, the social world is represented as stable and invariant, through positioning people in a hierarchical order in the *urts*, according to their positions

in the patrilineage. The cosmic and social space of the *urts* is divided according to the binary oppositions superior - inferior, male - female, pure-polluted and used to draw analogies between people's social and cosmological position. By integrating the social in the cosmological, the male-focused social organisation of the Duha Tuvinians seems to be constructed not merely as a social institution, but as a part of the cosmic order. This means that to situate oneself wrongly in the *urts* is an offence both to the host of the *urts* and to the cosmic order.

I have chosen to call the *urts* a microcosmic place (though the *urts* has macrocosmic qualities) since the composition of the analogy between the cosmological and the social in the *urts* is fixed and controlled by the microcosm of conventional references, rather than open for negotiation and innovation. The microcosmic naming of the space of the *urts* is used to integrate visitors and new members of the household (children, adopted infants and adults, wives) into the conventional order of the patrilineage. An arbitrary mixing of the cosmological and social could pollute and transform the land, its spirits, humans and their possessions, posing a serious threat to the household's well-fare and to the Duha Tuvinians' social organisation. The microcosm of names thus - as Wagner writes - "has the effect of stopping or controlling the flow of analogy for social purposes" (Wagner 1986: 30). The practice of seating people in specific places in the *urts* in accordance with their gender, age and abilities can be seen as a ritual activity which is a means "to embody locality and locate bodies in socially and spatially defined communities", within the *urts* (Appadurai 1995: 205). It is a way to produce "local subjects" that belong to the patrilineage of living and deceased members.

For the Duhas, each of the four cardinal points represents its own cosmological value, which is integrated in the organisation of space in the *urts*⁽²¹⁾. The north - pointing towards the lost homeland of Tuva, where many of their sacrificial trees are located - represents the clean and sacred aspects of life. The south - pointing towards the steppe, the homeland of the Darhad and Khalha Mongolians - represents the more mundane and potentially polluting aspects of life. The west

represents the masculine, the east the feminine. Male members of the household usually sit to the west, female member to the east, seniors⁽²²⁾ to the north and juniors to the south. Likewise, visitors are invited to sit in the part of the *urts*, which is suitable for their age, gender and abilities.

In the middle of the *urts* is the hearth, with its opening pointing toward the eastern, female part of the *urts*. The hearth is not just a tool for cooking, but is seen - by all Duhas I spoke with - as a living being, inhabited by one or several fire spirits (*galiin luc'*) and guarded by a spirit animal protecting the household. The hearth is crucial for the household's well being, since it protects the families, their herds and the continuance of the lineage of the *urts*.⁽²³⁾ According to Dakdji, a snake-god surrounds and protects the hearth of every *urts* of the Balakshi clan. This snake guards the household and patrilineage by keeping away potential pollution and prescribes the social order of the *urts* - mainly governed by the principle of the patrilineage. This snake will be angered - and hurt - by any human who places him- or herself in a part of the *urts*, which does not suit his or her position.

The hearth is a link between the earth and the sky. It brings the offerings that people place in the fire simultaneously to the earth *luc'* - in the actual fire and in the ground surrounding the fire - and to the heaven *luc'* - through the vertical column of ascending smoke. This connection is crucial for the household, since human well-being - according to all Duhas I spoke with - is dependent on the male heaven *luc'* and the female earth *luc'* (fodnote). The heaven *luc'* are clean and pure. They prescribe the fate and *asjigtai* of all living beings, whereas the earth *luc'* have a more arbitrary character; they are capable of both harming and supporting people. To ensure prosperity and health among people and livestock, humans should interact with and worship both categories of spirits.

To avoid misfortune and somehow control and follow one's fate it is crucial to construct the *urts* as a vertical centre, symbolically linking heaven and earth by making offerings to the central hearth. According to Humphrey the idea of the centre among Mongolian nomads is: "not so much a point in a horizontal disc on

earth, as a notion of verticality, for which position on earth does not matter" (Humphrey 1997: 142). For the Duhas the position of the *urts* in the land certainly does matter, as places and spirits in the horizontal landscape are unique and distinct from each other. However, no matter where they settle in the land, the power of the heavens is identical, it is male, protects the patrilineage and sets out the fates of humans and other living things. Humans can only be protected from the dangers of the earth by creating a vertical centre connecting the variable powers of earth and the invariable powers of the heavens.

The *urts* thus provides a stable frame - in contrast to the macrocosmic space - where the male-focused social organisation of the Duhas is represented as a fixed and invariant value. In the construction of the *urts*, these people thus engages in a series of locality-producing activities, which aim at producing the neighbourhood of the *urts* as a "safe" microcosmic place, where humans, spirits and nature each have their invariant positions in the land and the cosmos.

5.2 Decolonizing the camp

The effort the Duhas put into constructing their *urts*, as a microcosmic place must be understood in relation to the vulnerable nature of humans and their possessions. For them, no "item" - be it an object, a natural entity or a living being - is isolated in itself. Its nature is seen as open, and can be changed by pollution in the outer world. Metaphorically, I believe we can understand each item as covered with open holes through which outside forces may enter and transform its character. The character of the item is made permanent by closing these holes - by bringing them into a controlled analogic relation with a clean item.

This means that when the Duhas strike camp and pack their *urts* the analogies between humans; their possessions and the cosmos controlled by the microcosmic order of the *urts* is broken. They seek to "close" these analogies by packing their possessions on the load of the reindeer in a specific order, dirty items - such as clothes - is placed at the bottom of the load, while "holy" and

"clean" items - such as the hearth and the family *ongods* - should be placed on the top load. Such holy items must be close to the clean heaven in order to protect them from the dirty earth, which may change their character from objects protecting the household to agents threatening it⁽²⁴⁾.

When the Duhas arrive to the place of the new camp they unpack their possession in the reverse order, before setting up their *urts* the family *ongods* and the hearth is placed in their proper position, then the *urts* is made and then other possessions are placed in the *urts*⁽²⁵⁾. This formalized way of packing and unpacking the load in the old and new camp works to symbolically perpetuate the *urts* as a structured and clean neighbourhood throughout the move and "transfer of the "home-ish" quality of their previous camp into the site of a new one" (Pedersen 2003: 251).

Before leaving the old camp, human signs or items left on the ground, should be removed, since they are open and transformable to outside pollution. To avoid such pollution they "decolonize" the microcosmic place of the *urts* - they seek to erase all human traces that are vulnerable to outside pollution. All leftovers are burned - not in the family stove, which should be kept clean - but in a fire outside. An exception is the *urts'*, which is not teared down completely; instead they leave three wooden poles standing on the ground. According to Bat *zajah*: "this is our *yos*. The poles are not dangerous [do not pollute]. You see they point towards the heavens." The wooden poles are left standing, as they - like the hearth - link the powers of the earth with those of the heavens, and work as a kind of "barometer" which reflect the qualities of the place. When people pass former settlements they often interpret the appearance of "the three wooden poles", to gain knowledge of whether the place is still suitable for human settlement or not. If the three wooden poles stand upright, as they were left, or have simply fallen apart and are left lying on the ground where they used to stand, it is a sign that the place is still suitable for human settlement. On the other hand, if they have fallen apart in an "unusual" manner, if the three poles lie at different places, as if

they had been moved, it is a sign that the place is not suitable for human settlement.

The aim is thus not to retransform the microcosmic place of the *urts* back into "empty space" (see Pedersen: 2003: 250-251), rather it needs to be transformed into a macrocosmic place. The wooden poles can be seen as a macrocosmic symbol - a symbol that stands for itself - where analogous relations are allowed almost free expansion. The qualities of deeds and actions performed at the left camp are analogous to the quality of the wooden poles and leave traces on them. The wooden poles sets the former settlement apart from the surrounding space, and maintains it as a place for potential future settlement. When people pass former campsites they discuss interpret the current quality of the place; whether it is suitable for settlement or not, through interpreting the appearance of the wooden poles.

5.3 Migration as a ritual

The nomadic moving process can be interpreted, as some anthropologists have done, as a ritual activity announcing a spatial or temporal realm or event distinct from the settled life of the camp (Humphrey 1997, Szykiewicz 1982, Chabros 1988, Barth 1986). For the Duhas, moving in macrocosmic space differs from staying in the microcosmic place of the camp in two ways. On the one hand, movement is a potential danger as possessions and people are separated from the "safe" microcosmic place of the *urts*. On the other hand, movement in macrocosmic space is a potential for renewal and change, as it may lead to new and bountiful pastures and enrich the herds and humans.

For the Duhas migration is a highly ritualised and controlled event, which is performed according to the lunar calendar and the seasons. The migration forms a yearly cycle, which brings them past the same pastures, cult places - and sometimes the same campsites - in a regular succession - which is repeated every year. They seek to follow a "pure" and "clean" track to the new homeland,

by travelling along beneficial *ezentei* places and away from dangerous *chötgörtei* places.

Barth remarks that the nomadic migration cycle can be seen as "the central rite of nomadic society", which works as "a primary schema for the conceptualisation of space and time" (Barth 1986: 153). In my work as a shaman it became clear that the meaning of seasons, places, spirits and actions were interlinked and derived from their place in the migration cycle, from which they cannot be removed without losing meaning. Once during winter a man asked me how to regain his hunting luck, and I proposed that he soon had to go to worship his sacrificial tree, a solution I had overheard other shamans give their clients. However, I had not been aware of how these shamans always told people to go at certain seasons. So the man laughed and said: "how can I go, now? It is wrong to go now. We always go to the tree during our spring migration". In autumn I proposed Centaling to collect berries for the winter, which she strongly refused with the words: "we eat berries in autumn, in the land of our autumn migration. In the winter we eat meat. It should be like this". A season and a part of the country are thus - as Barth notes concerning the migration cycle of the Basseri nomads of South Persia - "aspects of a unit within the migration cycle" (Ibid: 149).

Among the Duha Tuvinians, a unit of the migration cycle is also a part of the yearly seasonal transformation of the spirits. Like nature, the spirits are affected by seasonal change. In winter the earth, the water and the spirits "freeze" (they fall asleep), in spring "the ice melts, the trees start to bloom and the spirits slowly wake up". In summer "all trees blossom, the water flows and the spirits have too much energy and are dangerous". In autumn "the trees lose their leaves and the spirits are sleepy. Humans should interact with the spirits according to their seasonal specifics, meaning that each migration unit implies a certain way of interacting with the spirits and the land. To reach an understanding of how the Duhas reproduce their homeland as a meaningful place we need to take a closer look at the activities of each of the migration units or seasons.

During the spring migration people should go to their cult-places - paternal *oboos* and sacrificial trees - to offer and feed the spirits. If people do not go to worship their sacrificial trees their *luc* and *ongods* may leave their cult-place in search for food, and humans may lose track of them. The aim of the offerings is to recolonize the cult-place - in order to reproduce the link between the place, its *eze*, ancestor-spirits and the living kin - and to protect humans against the dangers of the coming summer - since "if the spirits are fed during spring they will not torment people during summer". Toward the end of spring, excitement and anxiety about the coming summer' migrations and camps arises. People talk about the pleasure of migrating in the warm weather, the beauty of the blossoming trees and the joy of living in the summer camps, where many households camp together and where the yearly Naadam (sportsfestival) - with wrestling matches and horse and reindeer races - takes place. They discuss the potential dangers of the summer; whether their spring offerings were properly given, and if not, which misfortune they may experience in summer. During summer people should, in ideal, stay within their camps and their migration tracks, and avoid travelling outside of them, since the spirits of the wilderness are thought to be most ferocious at this time of year. However, the search for new campsites, lost reindeer and game-animals often forces them to travel in the wilderness, where they must show uttermost caution not to interfere with - or be enticed by - spirits. In all seasons, humans seek to uncover the whereabouts of spirits by interpreting signs in the land and in human life, indicating the presence and character of spirits. Of all seasons, however, summer is the time of year where I experienced most interpretations. A sudden hailstorm, a sound in the forest or the sighting of a bear were all occasions for stopping the caravan for a while, discussing whether we indeed were in the land of this or that spirit, whether another route should be chosen or whether we should make offerings. These interpretations sometimes leads to the establishment of new cult-places, migration tracks and camp-sites and can thus be seen as "context generative". Moreover, unusual event experienced in the land and in human life remind

people of the need to worship their shamanic and paternal spirits in order to control their lives, and creates a general yearning for autumn. During the autumn migration they go to their sacrificial trees to, like in spring, recolonize the cult-places. At their worship places, they may find solutions to their problems, but they are also faced with the often dangerous character of their spirits: Black cotton ribbons hanging from a tree remind people about the ill-minded nature of their spirits, creating a longing for the peaceful winter, where "the spirits are asleep and cannot hunt people". Winter is a season of narratives about the spirits and the land, and of limited interaction with the spirits themselves - although not without interaction, as humans should still avoid activities of pollution, which eventually will pollute the spirits when they wake up. Much time is spent inside the *urts*, where elders tell youngsters stories about the spirits and their places, evaluate the current characteristics of the land and its spirits, and tell how people should worship their cult-places in order to avoid misfortune. As the spirits are frozen and inactive during winter it is not yet a suitable time for worshipping the spirits, and expectation and freight about the coming spring arises. The migration cycle can thus be seen as a ritual, whose meaning - drawing on Barth - arises in its movement, dramatic form and sequence of activities (Barth 1986:153). The activities of each season or migration unit seem to create a general excitement around the next, which ensures a continual dialectic between parts of their shamanic knowledge and movement between parts of the homeland and the wilderness, by which the Duha Tuvinian neighbourhood and locality is reproduced and expanded.

It is my thesis that the Duha's continued capability to reproduce their neighbourhood (homeland) and shamanic knowledge about the land; is connected to their participation in the migration cycle as a whole, since the ritual meaning of the migration arises in the relation between the migration units. As Gregory Bateson (2000) writes, it is in the relation between part and whole that we can locate the basis for stability of "systems", such as human societies, organisms and ecosystems. Bateson defines such systems as "minds"

maintained by a flow of information between its variables. Each variable has information and contains a redundancy of information, which creates responses and information in the other variables. (ibid: 315). In our case, the parts are the migration units, which contain information about the characteristic of places and spirits: About how to colonize these places in order to produce and reproduce the neighbourhoods of cult-places and campsites, and to produce and reproduce local subjects and values. Moreover, each migration unit contain information about how to generate new contexts, in order to intergrate new places, subjects, ideas and values in the Duha' neighbourhood and shamanic knowledge. Each unit contains a redundancy of information; colonization of place forces people to experience and contextualize space, and lead to the colonization of new places and so on, which ensures that the system do not stagnate in one unit.

According to Bateson, the stability of "systems" relies on their capability to adapt to changing social and ecological circumstances. It is crucial that all variables, in a given system, are flexible, that they contain an "uncommitted potential for change" (ibid: 505). This means that the information that each variable aims to maintain must be directed by multiple determinations - such as habitat, social convention, emotions etc. - rather than by a single cause. If one of the determinations is blocked - as the result of changes in the social or ecological context of the system - it will not result in the collapse of the system, as the remaining determinations still transfer the given information. On the other hand, if the variable is only determined by one single cause and this is blocked, the whole system might collapse or stagnate.

The acts of migrating in the homeland and worshipping and settling in its places each hold "an uncommitted potential for change", as they all serve mutual needs: To find new pastures, to live according to the *yos*, to live their *asjigtai*, to control individual fates etc. Though the Duha Tuvians - as earlier noted - during communist time were expelled from their traditional homeland, and many were forced to sedentarize, most chose to return to their traditional homeland and nomadic lifestyle. Though today they are confronted with a dramatic decline in

reindeer herds and general poverty, and although some had been offered economically profitable work in the village or in the city, I seldom heard about people who wanted to give up their traditional life. Many Duhas explained that they chose to return or stay in their homeland because "it is our *yos*", "our fate is to stay close to our sacrificial trees" and "our *asjigtai* is to move in the taiga and herd reindeer".

Today the practices of nation-states (Mongolia and Russia), tourist companies and geologists influence the Duha's migration cycle and their homeland. The border politics of Russia and Mongolia separates them from the part of their homeland situated on the Russian side of the border, this has led to a decline of the number of reindeer herds, which forces them to hunt in the wilderness, however, as they are subject to the hunting and fishing regulations of Mongolia, they need to travel far away from the patrolling guards to resist confinements.

The acts of arriving geologists and tourists leave traces of pollution in the land transforming places of benefit into places of danger. The flexibility of the migration cycle is reflected in the way they adapt it to these new circumstances. As the Duha Tuvinians migrate and hunt in the wilderness, they interpret its places, and transform some into cult-places and campsites, whereby they contribute to the creation of new contexts, which are made part of their homeland. Also the acts of foreigners and geologists are integrated in their understanding of the characteristics of places and spirits.

Once, while passing the mountain Agi, Gompo told me "last year a group of foreign geologists climbed this mountain, searching for stones, but they all got ill, and probably they are dead by now. Also some tourists have climbed that mountain, and they got ill too. So you see Tuja. Geologists are not supposed to climb this mountain. They have dug too many holes in the ground. They have polluted this mountain, so we should be cautious to approach it, as its *eze* is angry and may hurt humans. Especially these geologists, the *eze* of Agi kills them if they try to climb his mountain". In this example, the tourist and the geologists actions in the land is relatively unproblematic, as they are simply

integrated in the Duha understanding of the homeland, and does not disturb their capability to produce context.

However, the context producing capabilities of nation states (Mongolia and Russia) and tourist companies might pose a serious threat to the Duha Tuvinians capability to produce contexts. As Appadurai writes:

"Locality production is inevitable context generative, to some extent. What defines this extent is very substantially a question of the relationships between the contexts that neighbourhoods create and those they encounter. This is a matter of social power, and of different scales of organization and control within which particular spaces (and places) are embedded" (Appadurai 1995: 111).

The Duhas cannot migrate to their traditional summer and autumn pasture and cult places located in Tuva (Russia), as the Mongolian/Russian border have been controlled by border guards since the mid 1990s. Instead they have moved their summer and autumn camp south; many have even moved it close to the village of Tsagaan Nuur, to make it easier for foreign tourist to arrive, since their presents may supplement their livelihood. A single household have even moved their camp all the way to the lake Khöbsgööl Nuur - a tourist site - where they have become a living tourist attraction. After moving to Khöbsgööl, the mother of the household is a shaman, and makes shamanic performances for local (mainly urban Mongols) and foreign tourist. In this process the migration cycle of the Duha Tuvinians are increasingly governed by the "context producing capabilities" of larger scale social formations, who delimit the movement of the Duha Tuvinians to delimited and bounded areas, which with the arrival of foreign tourist companies partly are transformed into tourist sites, beneficial places into polluted places and local subjects into ethnic curiosities.

I believe that the migration cycle can "control" a certain extent of pollution and a delimited change in the migration cycle: As long as the number of polluted areas is limited they may simple be avoided; as long as they are only sedentarised in delimited periods of the year (summer), they may continue their migration cycle

in the rest of the year. However, if the number of polluted places escalates, and if places crucial for the Duha migration cycle - such as cult-places, campsites and migration tracks are polluted, or if their migration cycle mainly is determined by the location of tourists, the migration cycle and the homeland might dissolve. As Bateson writes, the variables in a system contain an "upper and lower threshold of tolerance" for movement to adapt itself to changing circumstances. However if a variable is close to its upper or lower threshold - as the result of massive changes and stress - it may become fixed and isolated from communication leading to a lack of flexibility, which spreads through the system (Bateson 2000: 504-506). Dirt is - as we have seen - not perceived as an isolated event, but capable of transforming anyone or anything in its vicinity. If a cult-place is polluted, those who pass it and those who are related to its *luc* may become polluted themselves, and may pollute the neighbourhood of their *urts* and campsite, which again may pollute the members of - and visitors in - the household. Pollution thus poses a serious treat to the flexibility of the migration cycle, as it may spread itself through all variables in the system. On a more concrete level, the traditional homeland contains the areas suitable for reindeer herding, whereas the tourist-companies often compel the Duhas to move south to areas not suitable for reindeer herding, which in the long run might lead to a further decrease of the herds, which may even deprive them of their status as ethnic curiosities, as the livelihood, which grants them this position, will be broken.

The migration cycle is thus crucial to produce and reproduce the Duha' *asjitai*, since it is through the migration cycle that the homeland and its places is maintained as a neighbourhood, where the relation between humans and spirits is confirmed and negotiated. The stability of their homeland, community and shamanic knowledge is today - as we have seen - challenged by the activities of wider scale social formations (nation-states and tourist-companies). In the following chapter I will investigate how the Duha Tuvinians use their kinship

structure, shamanic cosmology and rituals to conceptualise and deal with their problems in life.

Chapter six: Flexible fates and unsafe bodies

In my upbringing as a daughter in Gompo's household I experienced how position in the patrilineage governs social duties, behaviour and etiquette. In our household it was my duty - as I was "Gompo's young daughter" - to fetch water, to cook, to watch the reindeer with my mother Centaling, and to bring Gompo his tea and tobacco. Gompo acted toward me as "the protective father"; he scolded any man who tried to touch my hand, and when I went to other camps (to conduct interviews) he always offered to ride along and take care of me. However, when I became "a shaman" my position changed. Suddenly I was not merely regarded as an ignorant child, but as a person of knowledge. Gompo was still the patriarch and leader of our household and camp, but where formerly he alone had decided when and where to migrate, settle, hunt, go to the village, go to sleep etc. he now asked my advice on these issues.

It is mainly age and gender, which govern people's social position in the patrilineage, their work duties in the camp and their social etiquette toward other people. Yet, if an individual shows, or lacks, abilities different from the ones needed in his/her predefined social position, he/she may get a social position suiting these abilities. In practice this is the case, rather than the exception. For example; although Gompo was not the eldest man of our camp, he was the informal leader, as he had the abilities of leadership; he was authoritative; protective; wise and charismatic. Social position is thus given by one's place in the patrilineage only to the extent that it suits the abilities of the person. Beneath the patriarchal and hierarchical social organisation we can discern an egalitarian ethos, where personal abilities are the actual basis for social position. I believe this egalitarian principle for social organisation is made possible through the idea

of fates in sacrificial trees, where each tree; deceased shaman, and *ongods* influence their living kin in their own unique way. The Duha Tuvinians are caught in the dilemma that the female *luc* of the earth interfere with the patrilineal order of the world, as they independently of people's age and gender can pollute or empower people's character and grant or steal their abilities. Moreover, the Duha Tuvinian shamans stand in contrast to the principle of the patrilineage, as it is the abilities of a person and not gender or age that makes him or her a shaman. In practice, people are continually forced to adjust the ideal of the patrilineage - as an invariable and constant social institution, to the ambivalent practical circumstances; where a given persons' position within the lineage may not suit his or hers abilities.

The coexistence of two seemingly opposing kinship-structures (the patrilineage and the shamanic lineage) and means of social organisation is not unique for the Duha Tuvinians, but is characteristic for many indigenous people in the region and in other places in the world (Evans-Pritchard 1990, Humphrey 1997). The segmented kinship-structure means that people's social position may change from context to context, which is important to maintain the overall stability of the Duha Tuvinian community in times of change. The patrilineage confirms and stabilises conventional values, and integrates the members into a "stable" and ordered community; the shamanic lineage challenges the conventional order and values of the patrilineage, thereby ensuring that social relations and values do not become rigid.

The paternal ancestors are - as we have seen - collectively worshipped at the *oboo* of each patrilineage, while each deceased shaman of a shamanic lineage is worshipped at its specific sacrificial tree. Only males participate in the cult of the patrilineal *oboo*; if a woman approach a patrilineal *oboo* she may suffer disease and even die. The cult of the patrilineal *oboo* is a collective event; male members of the lineage gather at their *oboo*, where one of their elders (and sometimes a Buddhist lama), pray, offer, and sometimes read mantras to the heavens in order to ensure the prosperity, health and continuance of the collective patrilineage.

Both females and males participate in the cult of sacrificial trees, as they are all equal members of its lineage. This cult is a more individual event; it is performed both solitarily by individuals and by family groups, its aim being to find answers and solutions to individual problems.

These two cults thus provide people with different means to solve and interpret their fate and problems. However, not all kinds of misfortune may be dissolved and understood through these cults; if a person's body is "touched by a *chötgör* or an ongod" it may result in severe disease and "madness", which only shamans - according to the Duhas - can heal. If a person is touched by the body of a *chötgör*, or even just hears its voice, he or she may lose her soul, and be infected by the "power" (*xuch*) of the other being, and only shamans can combat the *chötgörs* and remove their "power" from the ill person's body. The amount of people infected by *chötgörs* have - according to the Duhas - increased these last years, since the number of *chötgörs* in their land has multiplied as outsiders have polluted areas and spirits of the land.

The focus of this chapter is on how the Duha Tuvinians use their shamanic cosmology and rituals to understand and negotiate their problems in life. First, I will investigate how the patrilineage and the shamanic lineage present people with different ontologies and ritual practices, and how they use them to understand and challenge the relation between spirits and humans, between humans, and how to solve and understand problems facing them in their lives. Secondly, I will investigate why the pollution of the places and spirits of the land is considered a threat to human bodies, and how they seek to avoid and transform such pollution. Finally, I will investigate how the shamanic ritual may serve as a kind of safety net for the community, since it may dissolve rigid and unstable social relations, and dissolve the pollution of places, spirits and individual bodies.

6.1 Sacrificial trees and *oboos*

During my fieldwork I was amazed by the effort people put into going to worship their sacrificial trees; sometimes travelling for weeks through dense forest and high mountains to fasten a cotton ribbon on the branches of a sacrificial tree. Since each shaman, each *ongod*, and each sacrificial tree is unique, and each have their distinct influence on human fate, people cannot control and negotiate their fate through the worship of any tree, but only beside the tree(s), where the given shaman, his *luc* and *ongods* are located. People told me that they also had patrilineal *oboos* situated far away in Tuva, but often did not remember their exact location, as they had never visited them. In the cult of the patrilineal *oboo* it is not the specific *oboo*, which matters; the paternal ancestors are all located in the heavens, not in the *oboo*, and so as all *oboos* are tools for the worship of the heavens and the paternal ancestors. Moreover, the importance is not the individual characteristics of paternal ancestors; rather it is their collective and unchanging position as "wise ones" and "superiors", which is celebrated in the *oboo* cult. The paternal ancestors are often combined with a god-like "power" or person by the name of *Burhan Bagsh* (god the teacher). As Dakdji's words illustrates:

"The ancestors are situated in the heavens, they are part of *Burhan Bagsh*. *Burhan Bagsh* is (...) it is difficult to explain. It is that, which created the world, which governs the world, it is very powerful. All things are part of this. Especially the ancestors, they become part of *Burhan Bagsh* when they die."

The heavenly fate (prescribed by *Burhan Bagsh* and the paternal ancestors) is conventional and invariant; it confirms the hierarchical order of the patrilineage. All *oboos* are places for reaching up to worship the heavens, which makes any of the patrilineal *oboos* suitable for confirming and understanding the heavenly fate. On the other hand, the fate in sacrificial trees is unconventional and individual, and often challenges peoples' predefined positions in the patrilineage. The cults of *oboos* and sacrificial trees rest on different ontologies, which I - drawing on Pedersen (2001) - will term totemic and animistic. In the totemic ontology the relation between humans and non-humans (spirits and animals) is

conceptualised as "one of homologous differentiation" (ibid: 419); a youngsters position in the patrilineage varies from the position of elders and middleaged in the same way as the position of the *luc* of the earth differs from the position of the *luc* of the heavens and the *eze* of the land. In the animistic ontology the relation between humans and non-humans is understood as one of "analogous identification" (ibid: 419); the character of a given shaman's *ongods* are coloured by his or her actions, which further influence the fate of the shaman's relatives. In the cult of *oboos* a totemic ontology is played out reflected in the strict order of offerings; first offerings are made to the heavens; then to the *oboo* itself and finally; an elder distributes food to the participants, where elders are given first, then middle-aged and finally youngsters. The aim of the patrilineal *oboo* cult is thus "totemic", to confirm the conventional hierarchical division of the patrilineage. The cult of the sacrificial tree on the other hand is animistic; by participating in it people negotiates, moulds and controls the relation between their own fate and that of the *ongods*. In the cult of the sacrificial tree an animistic ontology is played out; when a man or a woman ties a cotton ribbon to the branches of his/her sacrificial tree, he/she reproduces and moulds the analogy between the *ongods* and his/her fate.

The cult of *oboos* thus represents a totemic ontology, but beneath it - I believe - we can locate a more animistic ontology. Each patrilineal *oboo* simultaneously represents the invariable values of the patrilineage, but at the same time, each *oboo* is unique as they all have their own and distinctive *eze* (a non-human spirit, mastering the place). *Eze* are non-human beings, but are human like, they have souls, intentions and own livestock (in form of the wild animals roaming in their land), and humans should interact with them according to their individual characteristics. The presence of *eze* pose a treat to the conventional aim of the *oboo* cult (to reproduce the patrilineage as an invariable and constant institution) since the *eze* of a given *oboo* may, for example "dislike young men and prefer young women", which may exclude young men from - and include young women in the *oboo* cult, thus transforming the conventional aim of the cult. That these

eze is considered a real threat to convention may be illustrated by an example from Tuva. In this republic I experienced that Buddhist lamas went around in the countryside, to read mantras for the *eze* of *oboos* in order to "clean them" and "make them Buddhist".

Among the Duha Tuvinians *eze* has - to my belief not been conventionalised; rather people seek to construct their patrilineal *oboos* at mountains whose *eze*s "likes men and dislikes women". Instead an animistic ontology seems to lie in the way in which they perceive both animals and most spirits, since all these beings are considered social (beings); each with their own characteristic way of being (*asjigta*), soul and community. According to Pedersen "the fundamental animist principle is one of analogous identification", it "depends on an unbounded potential for identification" (Pedersen 2001: 416). The Duha Tuvinians make such analogies between human and non-humans. They often told me how animals and spirits are similar to humans ("the *luc* have tracks, which they travel along, just as humans follow tracks in the land" and "the bear makes its shelter in the forest, just as we construct our *urts'* in the forest"). This does not mean that the Duha Tuvinians confuse themselves with non-humans, rather the analogy consist - as Pedersen writes - of "the ability to imagine oneself in someone else's position, and the ability to imagine someone else in one's position" (ibid: 416). In the cult of sacrificial trees the extent of identification between humans and non-humans (in the form of *ongods*) increases, and is sometimes perceived as being the other, not simply imagining oneself as the other. We can conceive the different extent of identification as a continuum between similarity (we are like) and sameness (we are). The fate of the shaman's *ongods* and the fate of the shaman's relatives are generally conceived as similar; "since my grandfather, the deceased shamans used his *ongods* to spread misfortune in people's life, I suffer misfortune". However, when a lay-man suffers from the shamanic decease, *ongod* and human becomes almost identical; the lay-man body and soul becomes part and parcel of the body and soul of an *ongod*, leaving him or her floating in a void in between humanness and *ongodness*, until he or she

becomes a shaman and as such may travel back and forth between the human and spirit world. The ontology behind the cult of sacrificial trees is thus animistic confirming the analogous fate of a deceased shaman, his/her *ongods* and kin. The presence of both animistic and totemistic notions and ontologies is not unique for the Duha Tuvinians, but characteristic for all indigenous people of Northern Asia (Pedersen 2001: 413). However, these ontologies are not present to an equal degree in the various communities; rather one tends to prevail over the other. According to Pedersen, as we move from the indigenous people of Northern North Asia (NNA) to those of Southern North Asia (SNA) we can locate a change from a predominantly animistic to more totemic ontologies, which follows the shift from the mainly horizontal (egalitarian) social organisation of NNA to the vertical (hierarchical) social organisation of SNA (Ibid: 419). Pedersen explains the different social organisation used by the indigenous people of these two areas:

"The societies of NNA organize the world horizontally (through notions of charismatic leadership, egalitarian ethos, bilateral descent, direct exchange, an orally based shamanist religion etc.), societies of SNA organize it vertically (through notions of inherited leadership, a hierarchical ethos, patrilineal descent, indirect exchange, a script-based Buddhist religion, etc.) (Ibid: 420)

Animist ontologies are dominant among the people of NNA since the animist notion of "analogous identification" seems to fit the horizontal nature of their social relations, whereas a totemic ontology is dominant in SNA, since its differentiated principle seems to fit the vertical nature of social relations. The every day life of the Duhas is mainly structured according to the hierarchical ethos of the patrilineage, which - in theory - would make a totemic ontology the dominating. However, it is my impression that the animistic notions are the predominant, rather than totemic ones. Although the places and spirits within the land are named to represent divisions within the social world, they are first and foremost considered to be unique phenomena. Something similar is the case of social positions, which are shaped both by age, gender and personal abilities.

In my work as "a shaman" people were always concerned to ask me about how the *ongods* and *luc*' situated at their sacrificial trees affected their lives and fates, whereas they seldom asked me about the influence of their paternal ancestors and *oboos*. The influence of paternal ancestor on human fate does not need to be discovered by a shaman, as it is given beforehand, whereas the influence of *luc* and *ongods* is fluid, and continually must be discovered anew. When I once asked a young man why he did not participate in *oboo* cults, and why he did travel to worship his sacrificial tree, he laughed and said:

"The *oboo* ritual will not change my life. They (lamas and elders) just pray and offer, but nothing changes. Why should I go? Of course, when I pass an *oboo* I offer. It should be so. But I do not trust lamas. My tree, my dear tree is something else (...). When I go there I understand my life better, and it helps me in my life"

The social and practical problems the Duha Tuvinians are faced with in their everyday life make them turn toward their sacrificial trees in a search for explanations and solutions to their problems. This cult and its underlying ontology provides individuals with means to negotiate and understand the various problems touching upon their lives, since the fluid and flexible character of the cult makes it possible to read almost anything into the complex symbol of the tree. The reason why they seldom engage in the cult of *oboos* is - to my belief - because it cannot offer explanation and solutions to the concrete problems they are facing, but merely confirms the conventional ethos of the patrilineage. Furthermore, although individuals may gain insight in their own personal problems from worshipping their sacrificial trees, each individual worship feeds back on the fate of all the deceased shaman's kin, and since worships are often performed alone and in secrecy, they create a collective insecurity, which yields further worship of sacrificial trees etc.

6.2 The corporeal and spiritual aspects of being

The insecurity the Duha Tuvinians are faced with today is not only of a practical and social kind, but also of - what we may term - a more "existential" nature. People fear that if they encounter a *chötgör* they may lose their soul, become like a *chötgör* and turn "mad" The Duha Tuvinians told me that today the amount of *chötgörs* has multiplied and still increase, whereas "in the old days" they were few. As Dakdji explained:

"During communism many *luc'* were transformed into *chötgörs*. You see, we were told to bury the dead, they burned our *ongods*, and they burrowed holes in the earth to search for stones and so *luc* became *chötgör*. Also, today these tourists, they do not know, so they bury holes, urinate. The *luc'* becomes angry, and sometimes they turn into *chötgörs*. *chötgörs* are bad; they may steal your soul, and make you mad. Life is difficult today, there is not many reindeer left, people drink too much, and our homeland has become polluted and dangerous. All these *chötgörs* they make people go mad "

To understand why the Duha Tuvinians perceive these *chötgörs* as capable of transforming humans into non-humans we need to make a closer investigation of how they perceive themselves as similar to and distinct from non-humans. The classical western distinction between nature and culture does not make sense in a Duha Tuvinian context, since they do not make a sharp distinction between themselves and other living beings. Both humans and non-humans are social beings, with souls, intentions and communities. The difference between humans and spirits consist of their different kinds of *asjigtai* (way of being) or nature, and of their different strength or power (*xuch*). This "power" is part of the nature and *asjigtai* of beings, since it derives from their physical characteristic, corporeal capacities and some kind of inner power (*xuch*), which give them certain abilities. For example the "power" of bears derives from their corporeal characteristics - their stature, teeth, claws etc- as well as some sort of inner power, which makes them capable of using their bodies and "do the things bears do".

To understand this non-western cosmology we should, as Viveiros de Castro (1998) proposes, consider the differences "between the spiritual and corporeal aspects of being" (ibid: 469). De Castro takes his point of departure in Amerindian cosmologies, which according to him are "multinatural". In these cosmologies the difference between humans and non-humans is perceived as a difference between corporeal characteristics, arising from the idea that nature (or the object) is the form of the particular, whereas they all belong to a "unicultural" world, as their "spirit" or culture is similar. In contrast, western cosmologies are founded upon the idea that there is only one single nature "guaranteed by the objective universality of body and substance" and a plurality of cultures "generated by the subjective particularity of spirit and meaning" (ibid: 470). It is my theory that the Duha Tuvinian cosmology can be seen as "multinaturalist", as all beings have their own unique nature (their own distinct *asjigtai* and corporeal characteristics) and "unicultural" since all beings are equal social being; they have souls and communities. It is crucial not to interfere with the *asjitaís*, "communities" or places of other living beings, since such interference produces pollution, which might anger *eze* and impose misfortune in human life, and, in cases of severe pollution, transform beneficial *luc* into dangerous *chötgörs*.

Several times during my fieldwork I encountered people or heard about people who were mentally ill, as a result of - according to the Duha Tuvinians - being touched by the body or voice of a *chötgör*. A darhad man told me how his younger brother had lost his mind:

"When my brother was young he was a normal kid. But look at him now. He is mad; he is just sitting there all day laughing. It has been like that for almost 4 years. It started that day. He went out to look for the livestock, and he passed a *chötgörtei* land. You know, that land in Kharamat Gol, where many people were buried during communism, and they turned into *chötgörs*. People should not go there, it is dangerous. It is the *asjigtai* of *chötgörs* to live there and entice people with their whisper. It is not our *asjitaí* to go there. I think that

chötgör enticed him with its whisper, and he got frightened and so the *chötgör* touched his body with its hands and stole his soul. You see that *chötgör* captured him, and made him mad. He cannot come back. Even shamans cannot do anything. We went with him to many shamans and lamas, but none could do anything."

As this story shows, to be touched by the body of a *chötgör* may make humans mad. This madness derives from a transformation of the man's human nature. As the brother of the ill man explained: "my brother cannot come back to himself, because that *chötgör* is part of his body". If a *chötgör's* body infects a person's body his/her human nature may be transformed into something in between humanness and *chötgörmess*. Shamans deliberately use a similar transformation of nature; when they put on their shamanic dress they receive the *xuch* of the *ongods*, and are transformed into a being between the nature of humans and *ongods*, and when they take off the dress they return to their ordinary human state. If a layman put on a shamanic dress he is likely to become mad, as he does not have the acquired "power" (*xuch*) to return to his ordinary human nature.

From the Duha Tuvinian point of view, to be touched by the body or voice of a *chötgör* or to put on a shamanic dress is - as Viveiros de Castro proposes concerning Amerindian people - to "activate the powers of a different body" (de Castro 1998: 482). As the shaman Gosta told me "my shamanic dress is not just clothes. It is alive. The *ongods* are in it. When I put it over my body my body becomes powerful. I gain the capabilities of my *ongods*, I can fly and fight like them". However, it is not only clothes, which may change the human body. Also if the hands of a spirit touch one this may change one's body. As Gosta explained: "*chötgörs* are dangerous. If they entice a man with their whisper the man may lose his soul. If the *chötgör* touches a man with its hands the *chötgör* will become part of the man's body, and such a man will turn mad. He cannot find back to himself, something else is part of his body; it is difficult to help such a man." These examples show that shamanic clothes and the bodies of *chötgörs*

are perceived as phenomenas capable of transforming humans into other kinds of beings. Only shamans and lamas are seen as capable of healing people infected by the corporeal *xuch* of other beings, since only these people have the ability to both transform and retransform themselves.

6.3 Seeing through the eyes of the spirits

Lay-people only have limited access to knowledge about the location and characteristics of spirits, and their influence on human fate. They mainly rely on microcosmic knowledge of the land; conventional ideas about what kind of spirit (whether it is an *eze*, a *luc* or a *chötgör*) a certain natural entity contains, and partly on macrocosmic knowledge of the land - as they try to interpret signs indicating the character of spirits. Shamans have a more profound knowledge about the current character of spirits, and their influence on human life, as they are capable of perceiving the world "through the eyes" of their own and other people's *ongods* and *luc'*. As the shaman Gosta explained: "When I shamanize my own mind disappears, and the *ongods* and *luc'* arrive. Through the eyes of the *ongods* and *luc'* I see the origin of people's misfortune, illness and problems". This ability to switch perspectives shares similarities with what de Castro calls "perspectivism": the ideas in Amazonian and many hunter-gatherer cosmologies (1) that animals and spirits may conceive themselves as humans, and may see humans as non-humans, in the same way as humans see themselves as humans, spirits as spirits and animals as animals (2) the idea that humans can transform themselves to non-humans (the hunter becomes an animal when he takes on their skin, the shaman becomes a spirit or an animal during the ritual) and retransform themselves to their human form, and that non-humans might transform themselves to humans and back in the same way (de Castro 1998: 470-471). The first point refers to the "fact" that though the physical appearance of humans and non-humans differs, their "internal form" "their soul or their spirit" is the same. This implies the second point as the ability to become another "only"

demands changing one's appearance, as their inner form is already the same (ibid: 471).

Perspectivist notions is a part of the Duha Tuvinian cosmology and ritual life, as shamans are as seen as capable of gaining the perspectives of non-humans (animals, *eze*s and *ongods*) and humans (ancestor-spirits), and return untransformed to their human form. This however is not perspectivism in de Castros strict sense of the term since animals and spirits, do not and maybe cannot transform themselves into humans and back, only humans, and not any human, but only the shaman are capable of moving between perspectives. Such change in perspective is made possible through their mainly animistic ontology since, as Pedersen notes, in animism humans and non-humans are perceived as "unicultural", which means that it is possible to become the other by taking on the skin of the other, and return to oneself by taking of the skin (Pedersen 2001: 421) According to many Duhas and Darhads only Duha shamans are capable of transforming themselves into non-human beings (animals and spirits), whereas the Darhad shamans only can transform themselves into other humans (ancestor-spirits). This seems to fit the overall vertical nature of the Darhad ontology, which mainly concern the pure and clean heaven *luc*, and of their social structure, which is more fixed around hierarchical notions, than the Duhas. The ability of the Duha shamans to switch perspectives is possible since the "inner form" of humans and non-humans and humans (spirits) are similar, and restricted to the shaman, since only they are considered capable of controlling the "power" (*xuch*) of the body of other living beings.

During the ritual the shaman "activate" the "power"(*xuch*) and abilities (*chada*) of his/her *ongods* by putting on his shamanic dress enlivened by these beings, afterwards he/she undertake a transformation; and become an animal or a spirits and activate their powers and abilities, which makes the shaman capable at removing the "power" of *chötgörs* from the bodies of the audience. When the shaman touches or whips the audience with the cottonribbons (*chalamar*) fastened to his shamanic coat he "activate the powers" of the bodies of his

ongods, who are usually considered stronger than the "power" of the *chötgörs*. The result of the combat is never given beforehand: In case the shaman's *ongods* are stronger than the *chötgör* the ill person will recover, but in the case of the opposite, the shaman's *ongods* may be infected by the *chötgör* and turn "evil", and ultimately kill the shaman.

During the shamanic rituals I participated in, the shamans both tried to repair (*zazal hinaa*) the bodies of people infected by *chötgörs* and to resolve the unfortunate fates of people. The second case sometimes confirmed, and at other times challenged, people's conventional social position in the patrilineage. During a ritual an *ongod* - through the shaman - scolded a young man for not respecting the elders, which led him to conclude that his misfortune arrived from disrespectful behaviour. In another ritual an *ongod* sang to an elder man of leading status "you fool (*teneg*), your heart and mind has turned black. A wild river, blue and green..." After the ritual this man told the shaman how he had beaten up his wife, while drinking, and the shaman advised him to go to his sacrificial tree in the north to offer in the coming spring, in order to clean his heart and mind to enable himself to avoid alcohol and violent assaults.

The shamanic ritual thus, in contrast to the cults of *oboos* and sacrificial trees, aims to confirm as well as to challenge the hierarchical order of the patrilineage. The shamanic ritual seems to contain "an uncommitted potential for change" (Bateson 2000: 505) as it holds multiple potential messages and interpretations, by which unstable social relations may be stabilised, polluted bodies be cleansed and rigid social positions and values negotiated and challenged. To maintain the flexibility of the ritual the shamans need to keep some of their knowledge secret, since - as earlier noted - non-communication preserve solutions and knowledge, which would dissolve if they were communicated formally.

The Duha Tuvinians often told me that "today there are very few real shamans left", which they regretted because "we need shamans to understand how our *ongods* affect us, and to clean the *chötgörs*". "Real shamans" are defined as those who stay in the homeland, while shamans who perform rituals in town often

are considered charlatans. In the following chapter I will explore why the act of making rituals in town is considered wrong.

Chapter seven: The shaman who went to town

During the last couple of years some Duha Tuvinian and Darhat shamans have started to visit the towns of Mörön, Ulaan-Bator and Erdenet to perform shamanic rituals, and engage in shamanic meetings and competitions⁽²⁶⁾. At the start of my stay among the Duha Tuvinians, people often showed me - through jokes - that they questioned the legitimacy and authenticity of these shamans. One day when I told Bat *zajah* that I was on my way to visit the Darhat shaman Nergui, he laughed and ironically said: "Oh, Nergui, he is a very strong shaman, he is a shaman of the Mongol state (*mongol ulcin sarin*)". Later, I asked Bat *zajah* to explain what he meant by this, and what he thought of shamans performing rituals in town. Bat *zajah* explained:

"I think it is bad when shamans go to town, there is no *yos*, which allows a shaman to take his *ongods* away from his own hearth, the *ongods* should stay at home. If a shaman takes his *ongods* away from his home it angers the *eze*, therefore a good shaman would not go to town. I believe Ambii and Gosta are very good shamans. They are good because they do not take their *ongods* and shamanic clothes away from their home. They only leave to go to a meeting."

Likewise, shamans accepting that foreigners filmed and photographed their rituals and who were known to tell about secret issues were generally seen as "insulters of the tradition". In June 2001 while I lived among the Duha Tuvinians a British film team visited one Duha Tuvinian shaman and filmed her during her ritual. Following this incident, the shaman Gosta told me:

"Shamans should not let their picture be taken during a ritual. According to the shamanic *yos*, people should not talk openly about shamanism and let people film it. To have pictures taken and to tell secrets is insulting to the tradition. It is against the *yos*. I do not talk about great secret things. I have only travelled far away a few times, to go to meetings."

Most Duha Tuvinians react very harshly with anger and fright to shamans who bring their gear to town to shamanize or have their rituals filmed. At first this antipathy against shamans visiting town seemed paradoxical to me, since the Duha Tuvinians' subsistence is based on movement in space; hunting and migration to new pastures. But through migrating with the Duha Tuvinians and listening to the narratives people told about shamans going to town, I became aware, that the acts of migration within the land and going to town implies different degrees of "control" over the land and its spirits. Migration is - as shown earlier - a highly controlled event. The actions performed to navigate safely in the land - placing possessions in a specific order on the reindeer, interacting bodily with natural entities as a basis for understanding their more spiritual character, making offerings and worshipping natural entities etc. - often can not be conducted correctly, when people drive to town in a public bus.

In this chapter, I explore why the Duha Tuvinians conceive the act of going to town as a dangerous activity for shamans, their relatives in particular and the homeland in general, and ask how the act of moving within Oron Hangai and the act of travelling to town differ in their potential for locality production. Finally, I will discuss how new means of knowledge transmission may lead to a change in their shamanic tradition.

7.1 Going to town

When a shaman travels to town, he risks losing control over his shamanic gear. As Bat said: "The shaman's gear can get polluted by filth hidden under the luggage in the bus. The drum and shamanic dress should by all possible means be kept in a clean place." The filth in the car is capable of transforming the

character of the *ongods* in the shamanic gear, from beneficial *ongods* to fierce and dangerous *ongods*. Such a transformation is seen as extremely dangerous, as it threatens not only the shaman, but the shaman's living family and coming generations, whose fate are intimately tied to the *ongods* of the shaman.

In the act of going to town by public bus the shaman moreover risks losing control over space, as it is mostly the driver and the availability of roads, which determines the way to the city. On its way the bus might pass polluted places inhabited by fierce *chötgörs*, who can infect and transform the character of the shaman's *ongods*. Even if the shaman rented his own car and went to the city, his *ongods* might be polluted, as the road to the city leads through a - for the Duha Tuvinians - unknown land inhabited by other people's ancestor spirits. This differs from migrating in their homeland, where they seek to travel from cult-place to cult-place and from campsite to campsite, where they navigate by means of a loose microcosmic mental map hinting at the character of places, which they crosscheck by interpreting the current macrocosmic quality of the land. In case the shaman rented a car he could still try to interpret the macrocosmic qualities of the land, but he does not have a mental microcosmic map of the land he goes through, as it is the habitat of other people's ancestor spirits of which he has little or no knowledge.

7.2 Shamanizing in town

It is not merely the act of going to town, but also the act of making rituals in town, which most Duha Tuvinians perceive as a morally wrong and dangerous act.

Gompo explained this:

"I think shamanism is a very sacred and precious tradition. So when these shamans leave their own fireplace and go to town to shamanize they are insulting Oron Hangai. Shamanizing in town is against the *yos*. Shamans should practice in front of their own fireplace and people should come and watch them there. You should treasure and hold your belief sacred. In our time there are many shamans, some only shamanize to make money, but do

not have any shamanic abilities. To go to town is to despise and insult the religion (*sjasjin*). These shamans deal with their own religion in the wrong way. For example, I am a shaman and I take my drum to town. When I arrive I make a lot of money, at the same time our national faith (*yndecnii s jyteen*)⁽²⁷⁾ can be angered. Your own fireplace and the *ongods* will take the prosperity of people's life away."

Like Gompo, most Duha Tuvinians told me over and over again that according to the *yos*, shamans should only practice in front of their own fireplace, and identified the danger of shamans visiting town with the act of separating the *ongods* from the fireplace. The *ongods* of shamans should be positioned to the north of the fireplace in the *urts*, where the spirits of the fireplace keep the *ongods* safe and clean from potential pollution. By positioning the *ongods* in the vicinity of the fireplace the Duha Tuvinians seem to construct a closed analogy between fireplace and *ongods* - the *ongods* are protected from pollution arriving in the *urts* with visitors as the fireplace keeps these dangers away. When shamans go to town, the analogy between fireplace and *ongods* is broken, and the *ongods* can be infected by *chötgörs* and dirt - creating an analogous relation between the *ongods* and source of pollution, which transforms the character of the *ongods*.

If -as I have proposed - the danger of the city is equivalent to the absence of the fireplace and the safe microcosmic place of the *urts*, we may ask whether the Duha Tuvinians would perceive ritualising in town as safe, if the shaman erected his *urts* in the city. When I asked the Duha Tuvinians this question they laughed, and explained that "it would still be wrong" since "people have dug many holes in the ground of the city, to erect houses and bury people" and as "the land of the city is the habitat of other people and unaccountable *chötgörs*, and not the clean land of our ancestors". The space of the city thus seems to differ from the space of the wilderness in its varying potential for constructing a neighbourhood.

From the Duha Tuvinian point of view even shamans cannot control the multiple pollution and *chötgörs* of the city, which means that it is not possible to colonize

any of its places in order to construct a safe neighbourhood, where humans can control surrounding dangers. If a shaman conducts a ritual in town, his or her *ongods* will thus inevitable become polluted, and spread misfortune in the life of the shaman, his close kin, the broader Duha Tuvinian community and homeland. According to Gompo this is "very dangerous" since "only shamans are capable of cleansing polluted places of the homeland, but if the shamans are polluted we can do nothing".

7.3 Shamanism as a commodity or shamanism as a secret - the end of flexibility or a potential for change?

The Duha Tuvinians themselves see the act of shamans making rituals in town and shaman's telling their secrets as a threat to their tradition. I propose that these acts may indeed pose a threat to the very survival of Duha Tuvinian shamanistic knowledge, as they involve new ways of knowledge transmission, which might in the long run fix the flexibility of the Duha Tuvinian cosmology. The Duha Tuvinian shaman Mokka explained how he transmitted the messages of the spirits for the audience in town, in contrast to that of the taiga:

"It is easier here [among the Duha Tuvinians and Darhad] because they understand the *ongods* and *luc*, I do not have to explain. But when I travel to Erdenet [Monolian town], I bring my sister, so she can explain. Because, you see these people of the city, they really do not understand. They always ask question, they do not listen to the *ongods*; they want me to explain. So I try and, my sister tries, but often I do not understand their questions, they do not make sense [laugh]. So I bought this book by a Mongolian scientist, he explain everything, and now I can explain people"

In Mokka's case we can describe the difference between knowledge transmission in the taiga and in town as a shift from from mainly non-verbal towards verbal knowledge and written knowledge. Also the Duha Tuvinians sometimes gain knowledge about their tradition from books, articles and films about shamanism.

During my fieldwork among the Duha Tuvinians I was invited a couple of times to watch videos in the households of the neighbouring Darhad people. A Darhad man travelled around in the area with a generator and a VCR-machine, and made a cinema in a *ger* in the steppe, where Duha Tuvinians and Darhads watch videos. Mostly American B-movies, but also a few ethnographic films showing the rituals of and interviews with Darhad shamans and urban Tuvinian shamans. Their reactions to these films were very complex: Some people got angry and said that since these shamans had permitted filming they were not real shamans; their ritual was just theatre, and the spirits not really present. Others - mostly youngsters - thought it was fun and interesting to see these films, and said it gave them a better understanding of the spirits.

To reach an understanding of how such new means of knowledge transmission may feed back upon and shape the local tradition, we need - as Barth writes - to "depict the conditions of creativity of those who cultivate knowledge" and investigate the "inadvertent, cumulative effects" of knowledge transmission on the very traditions which are being transmitted (Barth 1989: 641, 651). As we have seen, the knowledge of Duha Tuvinian' shamans is traditionally considered secret, and is transmitted predominantly non-verbally in ritual performances, where the audience gain knowledge about the spirits through the shaman's song, dance and drumming. The shamanic ritual can be seen as a macrocosmic symbol, which is not formalised, but open for mutual interpretations, which ensures and maintains the flexibility of the tradition. The act of revealing and verbally transmitting secret information may change the nature of this information from former macrocosmic symbols into microcosmic reference, which only represent a single meaning. In the long run such formalisation of parts of the cosmology may pose a threat to the very survival of shamanic knowledge. It will no longer be entirely up to the individual to interpret how his/her own life is connected to land and spirits; someone else (a shaman, a cameraman, an anthropologist) has already interpreted and formalised the content of this

connection, which delimits potential interpretation, and the possibility of integrating new phenomena and ideas into the cosmology.

Let us look at an example of how such new ways of knowledge transmission amongst the Urban Tuvinians, in the Russian republic of Tuva, has led to a change in the perception of part of their cosmology. The Tuvinian ethnographer and shaman Mongush Kenin Lopsan has published several books and articles about shamanic cosmology. Moreover, he is the president of the Tuvinian shamanic organisation "Dungur" and has received the title "living treasure of shamanism" from the Michael Harner shamanic foundation. When the shamans and clients of the shamanic clinic "Toc Deer" (nine heavens, where I also conducted fieldwork) explained to me about their cosmology, they often took their point of departure in Kenin-Lopsan's books, rather than in their own experiences of the spirits in rituals and in the land. For example, all shamans agreed that there are nine heavens, to which the name of the clinic refers, and whose exact meaning is elaborated and explained in the writings of Kenin Lopsan (see Kenin Lopsan 1995, 1997). To practice in the shamanic clinic one must obtain permission from Kenin Lopsan; if one diverges too much from Kenin Lopsan's ideas about shamanism, one is suspended from work in the clinic. I do not think the flexibility of Tuvinian cosmology (in Tuva) is dissolved yet, since experience of the spirits through rituals and engagement with the land, is still the main means to gain knowledge. Also, Kenin Lopsan himself is - although he has written books about shamanism - an active spokesman against the idea that shamanism can be learned. Rather he maintains that only the spirits can grant people the ability and knowledge of shamanism. However it shows how written language - in contrast to spoken and especially in contrast to the highly metaphoric language of rituals - can transform flexible ideas into more conventional facts.

Although we can see changes in the transmission of Tuvinian shamanic knowledge, they still view their own interpretations of the land and its spirits and participation in shamanic rituals as the main way to gain knowledge. I also

believe that though new means of knowledge transmittance may increase in the future (as they have done in Tuva, where shamans write books and participate in conferences) the concept of spirits in itself holds "an uncommitted potential for change". Shamans and others may write and tell about the characteristics of spirits, but all Duha Tuvinians and Tuvinians insist that the spirits are basically fluent and transformable beings. This means that they usually perceive fixed knowledge as just a temporary state or picture, of how the spirit was in the instant of the book, film etc. I thus believe that the Tuvinians effort to gain knowledge of the current character and influence of spirits, through rituals and interpretations might pertain also during times of change.

Chapter eight: Conclusion and perspectives

In this thesis I have shown how the shamanic worldview of the Duha Tuvinians lies behind and shapes their understanding of life and their practices of nomadism. Even though their shamanic tradition and their nomadic subsistence have been and are subject to political, social and practical changes and repressions they are still alive and vital. The reasons behind the persistence of their tradition seem to rely on its inherent flexibility, by which new ideas, values, subjects and places gradually have been, and are integrated into their traditional cosmology and homeland.

Duha Tuvinian' shamanism is a deeply local tradition, closely intertwined with their awareness of the surrounding landscape and their kinship-structure. The landscape contains named places - microcosmic references - that represent the histories and values of patrilineages and shamanic lineages. These places and their spirits are not merely static representations detached from the world of phenomena, rather they - especially sacrificial trees - are considered transformable and unique phenomenas or beings - macrocosmic symbols - which shape and mould the fate of the living. The process by which both the land and

human life is invested with meaning can be seen as a dialectic between microcosmic references (named places) and macrocosmic symbols (analogies between place, spirit, human etc.), which are enacted in the shamanic ritual; in the movement between the cult of *oboos* and the cult of sacrificial trees (which implies a move from the conventional order of the patrilineage to the more fluid order of the shamanic lineage) and in the migration cycle (which implies a move from migration in space to settlement in and worship of place). These practices are important to ensure the flexibility and stability of the social organisation, shamanic knowledge and nomadic lifestyle, since their implied dialectic provide the Duha Tuvinians with means to challenge rigid social relations and values, and stabilize dissolving ones.

The Duha Tuvinian neighbourhood of their homeland is especially vulnerable to outside change, as it is not a formally bounded and controlled space, such as a city, a house or a nation state to some extent are. For the outside eye a part of the Duha Tuvinian homeland (for example mountains uninhabited by humans) may just seem like a part of nature, open for any tourist to climb, geologists to excavate and nation-state to establish a border across. For the Duha Tuvinians these practices pose a threat to the very stability and character of their homeland and its places, and to the persistence of their migration cycle. They are - from my point of view - increasingly caught as prisoners in the context producing capabilities of nation-state and tourist-companies, which forces them away from their traditional homeland, separates them from their cult-places, pastures, hunting territories and campsites, and restrict their movement to the place set out and defined by the nation-state and the tourist-companies. Confronted with the rapid decline in reindeer, subject to hunting and fishing regulation of the state, tourism has become an important mean of income, which transform the summer-camp into tourist sites, local subjects into ethnic curiosities (especially shamans), and pollution of the land, which yields further "existential" instability.

Although their traditional cosmology supplies them with means to control and interact with the various beings inhabiting their land in order to avoid misfortune it

only provides them with delimited means to contest the practices of larger scale social formation. In order to gain agency in the encounter with nation-states and tourist companies they need to have representatives or leaders, who can represent the broader community, and negotiate with representatives of the state and the tourist companies. Gompo was - during my fieldwork - the informal leader or representative of all the people of Zuun taiga, and we might say of all the Duha Tuvinians, whereas the people of Baruun taiga did not have a single leader, but multiple leaders, whose legitimacy often was questioned. It was my impression that the Duha Tuvinians in Zuun Taiga, in contrast to Baruun taiga, were better prepared to meet - and influence the result of the encounter - with representatives of aid organisations, tourist companies and the state, since their community is connected around one informal leader (Gompo), which the other is not. During my fieldwork Gompo had meetings both with tourist-companies, aid-organisations and the Mongolian president, which resulted in agreements about the time of arrival and extent of stay of tourists, food and medicine supplies and the reintroduction of Tuvinian language lessons in the local school. On the other hand, the people of Baruun Taiga did not participate in such meetings, during my stay in the area, which they themselves were often frustrated about, but apparently could not change this, as they did not have a collective leader as Gompo.

After I have left the Duha Tuvinians the reindeer in Zuun Taiga has decreased dramatically, now only a few reindeer should be left altogether, while the reindeer in Baruun Taiga is much more numerous. Although Gompos ability of leadership gave the Duha Tuvinians of Zuun Taiga some agency in the encounter with larger scale social formations, the general lack of basic food supplies, and the connection to foreign tourist companies have forced them to move south to places suiting these companies, which has had fatal consequences for the reindeer, and their livelihood in general. It seems very doubtful that the Duha Tuvinians confronted with a severe decrease in reindeer, and since the left stock

is interbreed and suffer various diseases, will be able to continue their life as nomadic reindeer breeders.

Their shamanic knowledge is - as we have seen - intimately connected to their nomadic life in the taiga, and if this livelihood disappears it will inevitable pose a threat to the continuance of their shamanic traditions. I do not believe that the tradition will dissolve completely, but as shamanism increasingly becomes a commodity, and as the means of knowledge transmission changes, it may - to my belief - inevitable feed back on and change the tradition.

Notes

1. In the mid 1990' republic of Tuva was renamed Tiva. I have however retained the name Tuva, since this is still the name local and outsiders mainly use to refer to the republic, and as I refer to Tuva in different historical periods.
2. Certain mountains, rivers, trees, natural spring waters etc. are considered to have a particular spirit owner (*eze*). These beings are intentional non-human beings, which own and master specific natural entities and their vicinity. The mountain Agi, which is situated in the western taiga, north of one of our winter camps, has an *eze* known by the name Avaling. According to Bat, whose parents had seen Avaling, this *eze* looks like a 4-year-old child and has a huge mane of yellow hair. When people see Avaling he only shows half of his body. In spite of his appearance he is known as a very strong *eze*, who roams the peak of the mountain Agi. Every hunter passing the mountain Agi should make an offering to Avaling, and he will receive game, but nobody is supposed to hunt on the mountain itself, as the wild game there is the possession of Avaling.
3. The Darhad people are the neighbouring people of the Duha Tuvinians, who live in the steppe regions of the ...as nomadic pastoralists - breeding cattle, sheep, goat and horse. They are - like the Duha Tuvinians - shamanic and partly Buddhist.

4. I mainly use the term ongod in the plural - *ongods* - since the shamans always have several *ongods*, and often refer to these beings in the plural. An exception is the shamanic ritual, where the shaman usually is dealing with one ongod at a time.
5. The influence of the Turkish-speaking conquerors - such as the Turks, Uighurs and Kyryz - on the Tuvinians is - in most literature about the subject - mainly seen as linguistic, as they led to a turkization of the Tuvinian language. Some elder Duha Tuvinians agreed on this issue saying that: "we are Uighur speaking".
6. The Duha Tuvinians who returned with their parents to Mongolia in the beginning of the 1940s explained that they had decided to come back because of the escalating aggression of the Soviets, who confiscated possessions such as meat and livestock, and forced the young men to fight for the Russians in the Second World War (1940-1945).
7. The Mongolian government considered reindeer an unimportant animal, which, according to Mongolian standards, was simply not livestock (*mal*). This was reflected in government policy concerning reindeer breeding. In 1979, the government ordered the Duha Tuvinians to harvest the velvet antlers - which function as heat-regulators for the reindeer during the hot summers. In the same year, a local administration ordered the slaughter of about half the Duha Tuvinians reindeer to provide meat to the local school. This government-mandated slaughter cut the total number of the Duha Tuvinian's reindeer from 2275 head to 1278 (Sükhbaatar 1998: 50).
8. Darhad and Duha Tuvinians deal with the same categories of spirits (such as *luc* of heavens, *luc* of earth, ancestor *luc* and *ongods*). However, they differ as Darhad shaman speak in Mongolian, and Duha Tuvinians and Tuvinian when they make rituals. Moreover, Darhad shamans mainly deal with the *luc* of the heavens, while the Duha Tuvinians deal with the earth *luc*.
9. The school was closed most of the winter 2000, as the heating system broke down, and many children had frost-bites during the lessons.

10. Both in Tuva and in Northern Mongolia I was told that during communist time shamans and Buddhist lamas had sometimes "saved" individuals from becoming shamans, by "closing" their shamanic disease until it became safe to practice as a shaman.

11. The Duha Tuvinians say that their drum is their reindeer or horse, which they use to ride or fly to the spirit-world.

12. Peter and Price-Williams (1980) define shamanistic "ecstasy" as a particular form of ASC (altered state of consciousness), characteristic in that "the specialist enter into a controlled ASC on behalf of his community". To reach an understanding of what happens with the shaman's mind and body during ASC, some researchers has used neurophysiology and biology to resolve the relation between drum-rhythm and brain-waves, and between shamanic dancing and the freeing of endorphins: reducing the shaman's body's sensitivity to pain. To ascertain whether and when a shaman achieved an altered state of consciousness was difficult for me, during my fieldwork. However, I think the ability of elderly shamans - like the 96 years old Sojong and 74 years old Najdmit - to dance and drum without stopping from midnight to dawn can be seen as a sign that they had actually gained ASC.

13. Thus, my adoptive father Gompo gave elaborate explanations involving the existence of 99 heavens, which were connected to the ancestor spirits in the landscape. Others insisted that there were only 18, 9 or 7 heavens, which were not connected to any ancestor spirits.

14. The *yos* of the natural law is, according to Dakdji - given by the *8 gazrin luc'* - spirits of the earth. The earth is divided into 8 sections, each mastered by one of the *8 gazrin luc'*. Each *gazrin luc'* roams in the section of the earth, which it masters, and as Dakdji explained: it decides which places are for human settlement and which are not. *Gazrin luc'* can harm people and livestock if people settle in a place, which the *gazrin luc'* decide is not for human settlement.

15. Poison is "black magic"; rituals conducted with the purpose of producing illness and problems in other people's lives.

16. The taboo against digging holes in the ground is not unique for the Duha Tuvinians, but also shared by Tuvinians in Tuva. In Tuva, Russian and German archaeologists have excavated Schylian warrior graves in Tuva: a practice many Tuvinians are against and scared of. During my fieldwork in Tuva I often heard stories about how people thought misfortune and illness, in the villages close to the excavated graves, derived from the anger of the spirits of the earth.

17. The shaman Gosta explained: "Now you should listen, Tuja, of course I am free to practice shamanism today, but my fate is something else. I am not free to choose to be a shaman or not, my fate is to be a shaman". And he continued: "In the old days there was one man in my clan, who was chosen to become a shaman. He did not make the right sacrifices, did not believe, at the worship places he made wrong sacrifices. He has become a *chotgor*. This happened. If your father's mother's line has a shamanic heritage, and you do not believe and worship the *luc* and *ongods* of this line, or if you make the wrong sacrifices, you will become *chotgor*."

18. Once arriving home from his sacrificial tree Bat *zajah* told me: "Tuja, you know I have been ill this winter, so I went to my tree to conduct sacrifices. And my tree, my dear tree. It looked so grey and old. Many of the cotton ribbons had fallen off. One of them was black; somebody has used the tree's white *ongods* to conduct poison. I think that is why I have been ill. My tree and I has both suffered illnesses. I think my offerings may improve the health of the tree and my health."

19. Appadurai defines locality as "an aspect of social life" and "a structure of feeling", which is "produced by particular forms of intentional activity and yields particular sorts of material effect" and which is "primarily relational and contextual, rather than scalar and spatial" (Appadurai 1995: 204).

20. The subsistence as reindeer herders means that the Duha Tuvinian neighbourhood is always a temporary place. As Bat *zajah* explained: "The Duha Tuvinian *asjigtai* is full of dangers, we find a clean and safe place in the taiga to live, but after a while there are no grasses left for the reindeer, and we have to move (*nüüh*) to a new place, and erect a new camp. To move and settle is not

easy, we try to avoid disturbing and interfering with the *asjigtai* of the spirits, but sometimes we fail".

21. The *urts* is always constructed with its front and doorway (*üüden xoimor*) facing directly south and its back facing north. Inside the *urts* the northern area (*xoimor*) is considered the most sacred and esteemed area, and is the place where holy possessions are placed - such as the family *ongods*- an amulet protecting the family - and - in the household of a shaman - the shamanic equipment. In the southern area of the *urts* - which is considered mundane - dog food and other leftovers are placed. The western part of the *urts* is for male equipment - such as guns, fishing equipment - whereas female possessions - such as cooking equipment - are placed in the eastern part of the *urts*.

22. The position as a "senior" (*axmad*) is assigned according to gender and age (a man of similar age to a women generally sits north of the women), and ability (young shamans (females and males) are invited to sit to the north of older persons).

23. It is important to keep the hearth clean. To put leftovers into the fire is dangerous, it pollutes the fire spirits and poses a serious threat to the household's life. The hearth should be fed with the best (*deesj*) part of food, to revitalise the protective powers of the fire spirits.

The Duha Tuvinians say that the sound of wood burning in the hearth is the voice of the fire-spirits talking to the members of the household. The hearth brings messages about coming visitors, future misfortune and benefits in the household. The Duha Tuvinians interpret the messages of the fire by listening to the way the burning wood sounds - whether its crackling is gentle or wild, whether it "speaks" from the northern, southern, eastern or western side of the hearth.

24. Once Centaling told me that I should not take my tarot cards away from the *urts*, as "it is against the *yos*", and could pollute them and me. Later, I asked Centaling what I should do with the cards while on migration, and Centaling explained: "if you place them on the top load of your horse, the heavens will protect them, and it is not really like moving them away from home". Movement is

thus only considered actual movement if it involves an upheaval of the symbolic order (microcosmic) of the *urts*.

25. Shamans must especially be aware of how to move their shamanic gear, as these are most vulnerable to outside pollution. As Dakdji explained: " When shamans migrate to a new homeland (camp) they should place their shamanic gear on the top load of the reindeer to keep it clean. Before setting up the *urts*, the shaman should place his drum and del (coat) on a clean place on earth, and set up his *urts* over the shamanic gear, so it will be located in the northern part of the *urts*. The del and drum should never enter through the doorway. If people take it in through the doorway it (the shamanic gear) will become polluted."

26. In 2001 the Darhad shaman Balchir went to Ulaan Bator to participate in a "shamanic competition" between shamans of Mongolia. The participants all had to contest in various disciplines - hypnosis, drumming, magic, healing etc. - and as Balchir had managed to drum for 10 hours without a stop he won the competition. Following he was given a diploma "doctor of shamanism" by the Chengis Khan institute in Ulaan Bator.

27. Gompo refer to shamanism or the black faith (*xar sjasjin*) as the national religion of the Tuvinians, whereas the national religion of the Mongols according to Gompo is the yellow faith (buddhism).