

# STUDIES ON URALIC SHAMANS

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## INTRODUCTION

Reconstructing the ancient shamanism of the Uralic peoples is a fairly difficult task – partly because one immediately faces the question of whether it is an original state that used to exist in the distant past – some thousands of years ago – or the conditions of the recent past – say, the last one hundred years – that one wants to reconstruct. In this latter case, when trying to reconstruct some sort of system, one has to rely on the data – as recorded in the recent, 19th and 20th-century ethnographic descriptions – of the various Uralic peoples, the Samoyeds and the Ob-Ugrians. In the first case, we have the rather scant and rare data of Uralic linguistics – possibly those pertaining to a common Siberian terminology.<sup>12</sup> While, in the second case, we already possess some concrete descriptions, too, of the local shamans of the various peoples and their ceremonies. The local variants of ethnic shamanhoods have, or may have, common features which used to be (or could have been) elements of a common Uralic shamanism of long ago. We must realize that to try and prove this assumption would be a highly dubious enterprise, since, on the one hand, these correspondences are highly generalized (e.g. animism, ancestor worship, bear cult) and they are widespread far beyond the area of the Uralic peoples, often – outside the northern Siberian peoples – also among the North American Indians. I would not like to fall into the error of Mircea Eliade, who found the general features of Siberian shamanism everywhere round the globe, which makes his model “shamanism: an archaic technique of ecstasy” too inclusive, and consequently somewhat empty.

The alternative is the method whereby try to collect and arrange typologically the data available. Here, the volumes of the international project *Encyclopaedia of Uralic Mythologies* (Editor: Anna-Leena Siikala – Mihály Hoppál – V. V. Napolskih) – which has been running for over 15 years (see chapter 2 in the present volume) – will be a great help. Each monograph focussing on the mythology of a particular

<sup>1</sup> J. Janhunen, Siberian Shamanistic Terminology, in I. Lehtinen (ed.), *Traces of the Central Asian Culture in the North*, Helsinki, Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seure, 1986, 97–117.

<sup>2</sup> J. Janhunen, The Eurasian Shaman: Linguistic Perspectives, in J. Pentikäinen – Simoncsics, P. (eds.), *Shamanhood: an Endangered Language*, Oslo, Novus forlag, 2005, 17–18.

Finno-Ugric (Uralic) people will devote a chapter to the characteristics of local shamanism. A comparative – or, even more, a contrastive – study of these data could provide fresh insights. Until these volumes appear, it is worth reviewing the monographic literature already published, since this material is fairly rich. Therefore, this is what we will attempt in the first part of our study, as the old European publications are known to relatively few people. In the second part of this chapter, then, we will discuss the most recent studies of shamanism of the Uralic peoples.

What we can ultimately assume is that the spiritual culture of Siberian (northern Eurasian) peoples – and so their shamanhood, too – has retained many archaic elements, just as a refrigerator conserves, in the cold, the food it holds.

## FROM THE HISTORY OF STUDIES

Science-historical surveys – by the nature of things – can never be perfect; there will always be something missing from them, as day in day out new researches add to the preexistent material. For instance, Åke Hultkrantz<sup>3</sup> has added a whole host of new historical data to our knowledge of the early history of research into shamanism (as it happens, apropos of the Sâmi data) – data that are relevant to an understanding of Uralic shamanism, too. Indeed, the work of the Swedish scholar is the standard regarding the study of the details of arctic shamanism and of the place it holds in the history of religion.<sup>456</sup>

The study of shamanism has an especially old tradition among scholars of Finno-Ugric comparative cultural.<sup>78 9</sup> It might be worthwhile to remind the reader that K. F. Karjalainen devoted the closing chapter of the last volume of his three-volume monograph to a review of Finno-Ugrian shamanism. Characteristically, the chapter bears the title *Die Zauberer (The Magician)*. The Hungarian scholar Géza Róheim, the founder of psychoanalytic anthropology, devoted an interesting chapter to the question of Ob-Ugrian shamanism in his study *Hungarian and Vogul*

<sup>3</sup> Åke Hultkrantz, On the History of Research in Shamanism, in J. Pentikäinen et alii (eds.), *Shamans*, Tampere, Tampere Museums, 1998, 51–70.

<sup>4</sup> Åke Hultkrantz, A Definition of Shamanism, *Temenos* 9 (1973), 25–37.

<sup>5</sup> Åke Hultkrantz, Ecological and Phenomenological Aspects of Shamanism, in Diószegi, V. – Hoppál, M. (eds.), *Shamanism in Siberia*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1978, 27–58.

<sup>6</sup> Åke Hultkrantz, Arctic Religions: An Overview, in M. Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 1, New York, Macmillan, 1987, 393–400.

<sup>7</sup> M. A. Czaplicka, *Aboriginal Siberia: A Study of Social Anthropology*, Oxford, 1914.

<sup>8</sup> K. F. Karjalainen, *Die Religion der Jugra-Völker*, III, Helsinki – Porvoo, Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, *Scandinavian and Finnish Lapps*, Leiden, 1927, 245–331.

<sup>9</sup> U. Holmberg (Harva), Finno-Ugric, Siberian Mythology, in C. J. A. MacCulloch (ed.), *Mythology of All Races*, IV, Chapter XXI, Boston, 1927, 496–623.

*Mythology* (1954). Another study on this subject was written by Vilmos Diószegi, who explored the remnants of shamanism in recent Hungarian folk beliefs in *A sámánhit emlékei a magyar népi műveltségben*.<sup>10</sup> Later he wrote a book on the pre-Christian belief system of Hungarians.<sup>11</sup> Diószegi edited several volumes of outstanding value, which are worth discussing in some detail.

One of the first basic collection of essays on Siberian shamanism was compiled and edited by Vilmos Diószegi. An interesting historical aspect of the original edition was that when it appeared in 1963 as *Glaubenwelt und Folklore der Sibirischen Völker*,<sup>12</sup> followed five years later by the English version, *Popular Beliefs and Folklore Tradition in Siberia*,<sup>13</sup> the book was dedicated to the memory of Antal Reguly (1819–1858). This was presumably because the monograph entitled *A vogul föld és nép (The Vogul Land and People)* compiled by Pál Hunfalvy and based on the material of Reguly who died at an early age, had appeared in 1864. However, the appearance of a recent edition<sup>14</sup> also coincides with an anniversary of Hungarian research on Siberia: it was one hundred and fifty years ago that the 19th century Hungarian traveller and ethnographer visited the land of the Voguls (Mansi) and Ostyaks (Khanty). He published the results of his research trip in 1846 in St. Petersburg, in a book in German entitled: *Ethnographisch-geographische Karte des nördlichen Uralgebietes, entworfen auf einer Reise in den Jahren 1844 und 1845 von Anton Reguly*. It is quite fitting to dedicate the shorter selection to his memory since Reguly wished to throw light on the origin of the Hungarian people with his research.

We must also mention that the editor of the original publication, Vilmos Diószegi (1923–1972) died many years ago. A few years after the English edition he was working on another volume with a similar theme – *Shamanism in Siberia*<sup>15</sup> – when he passed away unexpectedly. It was in fact this work that made Diószegi a leading internationally recognized figure of Siberian studies. All the more so since he provided the possibility for Russian colleagues to publish in a foreign language. In those years shamanism (and mythology) were practically taboo subjects in what

<sup>10</sup> Diószegi, Vilmos, *A sámánhit emlékei a magyar népi műveltségben* [Traces of Shamanism in Hungarian Folk Beliefs], Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1958.

<sup>11</sup> Diószegi, Vilmos, *A pogány magyarok hitvilága* [Religious Beliefs of the Pagan Hungarians], Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1967.

<sup>12</sup> Diószegi, Vilmos (ed.), *Glaubenwelt und Folklore der sibirischen Völker*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1963.

<sup>13</sup> Diószegi, Vilmos (ed.), *Popular Beliefs and Folklore Tradition in Siberia*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1968.

<sup>14</sup> Diószegi, Vilmos – Hoppál, Mihály (eds.), *Shamanism in Siberia*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, Reprint, 1996.

<sup>15</sup> Diószegi, Vilmos – Hoppál, Mihály (eds.), *Shamanism in Siberia*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1978.

was then still the Soviet Union. As the Russian colleagues recall, this book was regarded as a breakthrough; it was of historical significance since it built a bridge between the scholars of East and West.

Béla Gunda (1911–1994), the professor from Debrecen, head of the Department of Ethnography and teacher of the author of the present book, who has since also died. As professor, he first drew the present author’s attention to research on folk belief and in particular to folk healing and more specifically, research on shamanism. It seems likely that the Magyars who settled in the Carpathian Basin preserved their old beliefs (before 896 AD and for many centuries after). Researchers consider that many elements of the ancient belief system coincided with the legacy of shamanism brought from Asia, Diószegi also reached this conclusion.<sup>16</sup>

Not only the ethnology professor from Debrecen, Béla Gunda has died since the appearance of the first edition, but also two outstanding linguists who contributed to the volume: János Balázs and László Gáldi, both professors at the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. Balázs analysed the shamanistic meaning contents of variants formed from the Hungarian verb *rejt* “to hide, to conceal” and showed, for example, that the word *révülés* is the expression used in Hungarian for trance. The essay,<sup>17</sup> reflecting amazingly broad erudition, presented in detail all the relevant Ob-Ugrian data and went even further to show the findings of historical investigations. His essay is one of the best writings of Hungarian shamanism research – as is so often the case – it has been undeservedly forgotten by the present generation of researchers.

Professor László Gáldi analysed the rhythm of the shaman songs found in M. A. Castrén’s manuscript collection dating from 1842 and recorded on wax cylinders by Kai Donner in 1914. Such textual analyses of shaman songs are still rare. Two good examples can be found in *Shamanism in Siberia*, both the work of Hungarian authors: Péter Hajdú<sup>18</sup> and Péter Simoncsics.<sup>19</sup>

Still with the Hungarian authors, Péter Hajdú, a linguist and expert in Uralic languages; distinguished three groups of Samoyed shamans.<sup>20</sup> The first group comprises those who are able to communicate with the spirits and work miracles. The second consists of the healing and prophesying shamans and the third group

<sup>16</sup> Diószegi, *A sámánhit emlékei* [Traces of Shamanism], 1958.

<sup>17</sup> Balázs, János, The Hungarian Shaman’s Technique of Trance Induction, in Diószegi, V. – Hoppál, M. (eds.), *Folk Beliefs and Shamanistic Traditions in Siberia*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1996, 26–48.

<sup>18</sup> Hajdú, Péter, The Nenets Shaman Song and Its Text, in Diószegi, V. – Hoppál, M. (eds.), *Shamanism in Siberia*, (Selected reprint), Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1978, 355–372.

<sup>19</sup> Simoncsics, Péter, The Structure of a Nenets Magic Chant, in Diószegi, V. – Hoppál, M. (eds.), *Shamanism in Siberia*, (Selected reprints), Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1996, 52–67.

<sup>20</sup> Hajdú, Péter, The Classification of Samoyed Shamans, in Diószegi, V. (ed.), *Popular Beliefs and Folklore Traditions in Siberia*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1968, 147–173.

is formed of shamans who heal simpler illnesses, interpret and explain dreams. His very thorough study contains a large collection of dialect words which show that a distinction was made not only between the stronger and weaker shamans, but also between those who were active at night by firelight and those who worked in the daylight, without fire; the old great shamans also had permanent assistants. Only the strongest shamans were entitled to wear the shaman's cap, just as there were shamans who worked with a drum and others who did not. Hajdú compiled a very interesting table listing the terminology used for shamans in the Nenets, Enets, Nganasan, Selkup and Kamas languages.<sup>21</sup>

A. A. Popov was one of the classic figures of Russian ethnography who lived and collected among the Nganasans of the Taimyr peninsula in the 1930's. His manuscripts were published posthumously in 1984 by his colleagues in what was then still the Leningrad Institute of Ethnography. That slim volume contains a separate chapter on shamanism (under the title of "*shamanstvo*" = shamanhood;<sup>22</sup> it is worth noting that the expression *shamanhood* has recently appeared in the literature in English, too.<sup>23,24</sup> The annotation by Popov published records the initiatory visions of a famous Nganasan shaman, recounting how he received the shaman power in a dream when he felt (in his dream) that he was taken to pieces and forged on an anvil to be made a shaman. The shaman recounted that only a person who had shamans among his ancestors from whom he could inherit this gift could be a shaman. The text is one of the few authentic Siberian texts on how a person became a shaman, and for this reason has been widely quoted – on the basis of the English translation – as well as for the fact that it refers to such details as the making of the shaman's cloak and its symbolism, and the making of the drum.<sup>25</sup>

In the year of 1978 the excellent monograph by the Finnish researcher, Anna-Leena Siikala, *The Rite Technique of the Siberian Shaman* was published.<sup>26</sup> This work presented a vast body of material and examined the main laws of the ecstasy technique of the Siberian shaman. It drew on modern social psychology for an understanding of the role played by the shaman, and on the findings of modern hypnosis research for an insight into the trance state. The work on Lapp shaman-

<sup>21</sup> Hajdú, Péter, *The Classification of Samoyed Shamans*, 165.

<sup>22</sup> А. А. Попов, *Нганасаны-Социальное устройство и верования*, Ред. Грачева, Г. Н. – Таксами, Ч. М., Ленинград, Наука, 1984, 93–143.

<sup>23</sup> Pentikäinen, *Shamans*, 1998.

<sup>24</sup> Pentikäinen, J. – Simoncsics, P. (eds.), *Shamanhood: an Endangered Language*, Oslo, Novus forlag, 2005.

<sup>25</sup> А. А. Попов, How Sereptie Djaruoskin of the Nganasans (Tavgi Samoyeds) Became a Shaman, in Diószegi, V. – Hoppál, M. (eds.), *Shamanism in Siberia*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1996, 61–69.

<sup>26</sup> Anna-Leena Siikala, *The Rite Technique of the Siberian Shaman*, Helsinki, FF Communications 220, 1978.

ism written by Louise Bäckman and Åke Hultkrantz also appeared in 1978, in the series of publications issued by the Department of Comparative Religion of the University of Stockholm. This volume contains Hultkrantz's theoretical article on the ecological and phenomenological approach to shamanism, set out as a programme.<sup>27</sup>

One of the symposiums of the World Congress of Anthropologists held in Zagreb in 1988 examined the phenomena of shamanism. Close to fifty papers were read and forty of these were published in 1989 as the first two volumes of the ISTOR Books by the American foundation International Society for Trans-Oceanic Research and the Ethnology Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.<sup>28</sup> These studies covered an exceptionally wide spectrum and so reflected the state of research and the direction of enquiry at that time. The conference was of historical significance as the first occasion after the Cold War years bringing together researchers and representatives of peoples among whom shamanism is still a living tradition. The participants include Yakut and Nanai researchers from the Soviet Union, a South Korean and several Chinese scholars. Claude Lévi-Strauss referred to the importance of this fact in the letter he wrote to one of the editors expressing praise for the volume. The final session of the symposium was also a historical event: the establishment of the ISSR (International Society for Shamanistic Research) was announced.<sup>29</sup>

Mihály Hoppál in his historical overview approaches the “changing image of the Eurasian shamans”. More than a dozen pictures illustrate his essay. These illustrations, lithographs from the 18th–19th centuries, and photographs from the beginning of the 20th century, can be considered as the most valuable pictorial sources for the study of Siberian shamanism.<sup>30 31</sup>

Juha Pentikäinen approaches shamanism from a comparative aspect, and analyzes the so-called “shamanic poems” of the Kalevala and their Northern Eurasian background. He begins by dispelling the myth of the only authentic Kalevala, i.e., the New Kalevala, which is read by Finnish schoolchildren and was translated into 40 languages. Pentikäinen<sup>32</sup> argues that Old Kalevala is as authentic as the new

<sup>27</sup> See also Åke Hultkrantz, *Ecological and Phenomenological Aspects of Shamanism*, 1978.

<sup>28</sup> Hoppál, M. – O. von Sadvoszky (eds.), *Shamanism: Past and Present*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, Los Angeles, Fullerton, International Society for Trans-Oceanic Research, 1989.

<sup>29</sup> Hoppál, Mihály et al (eds.), *Shamans Unbound*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 2008.

<sup>30</sup> Hoppál, Mihály, Changing Image of the Eurasian Shaman, in Hoppál, M. – Sadvoszky, O. (eds.), *Shamanism: Past and Present*, I, Budapest, Los Angeles, Fullerton, ISTOR Books, 1989, 74–90.

<sup>31</sup> See also Hoppál, Mihály, *Schamanen und Schamanismus*, Augsburg, Pattloch, 1994, (in Japanese Tokyo, Seidosha, 1998.)

<sup>32</sup> J. Pentikäinen, The Shamanic Poems of the Kalevala and their Northern-Eurasian background, in Hoppál, M. – Sadvoszky, O. (eds.), *Shamanism: Past and Present*, 1, Budapest, Los Angeles, Fullerton, 1989, 97–102.

one, since it is more folklore-based than the New Kalevala, which Elias Lönnrot created more as an artist-poet. In Pentikäinen's opinion, the Old Kalevala is more exciting, as far as its plot is concerned. It is shorter, and as an epic not as dull as the new version which contains more incantations, wedding runes, and many repetitious episodes, which do not belong to the pattern of the epic in the way the Finnish people understand it.

Saami shamanism is seen as a specific conceptual complex. It enables ritual communication with the supernatural, in particular to overcome an unbalanced situation within the individual, the group, or the world at large. This takes place symbolically in the person of the shaman, by means of rituals dramatization in the shamanic ceremony as it is outlined by Erich Kasten in his paper. He analyzes symbolism in Saami shamanism from a diachronic point of view.<sup>33</sup>

Certain symbolic variations can be explained as ongoing modifications of its basic conceptual theme in response to significant changes within the Saami ecosystem in its broadest sense. Among these, the impact of the Black Death and the shifting traits of Saami shamanism during culture contact are the most important. As both the cultural context and the respective historical situation become more clearly identified, the uniqueness of Saami shamanism may be better understood in its own historical complexity. Kasten emphasizes that the symbolic approach in the study of religious phenomena such as shamanism requires a diachronic perspective as well.

Bo Sommarström, who worked for the Ethnografiska Museet in Stockholm until his recent retirement, provides a tentative analysis of how cosmological concepts and their pictorial representations may be related to perception processes in non-ordinary states of consciousness. As the Saami drums used for divination are in most cases copiously painted with figures on the drumhead, a question arises as to whether this is mainly for facilitating the comprehension of the client, or is of real importance for the act of divination carried out by the shaman in a state of light trance. A "split holographic vision" would perhaps be a plausible explanation.<sup>34</sup> It is interesting to note here that, quite independently from the Swedish scholar a few years earlier, a Hungarian also came to a conclusion similar to that of Sommarström. Having compared a Eurasian myth and the nocturnal sight of the northern sky with the pictographic design of a Selkup shaman's drum, Marcell

<sup>33</sup> E. Kasten, Saami Shamanism from a Diachronic Point of View, in Hoppál, M. – Sadovszky, O (eds.), *Shamanism: Past and Present*, Budapest, Los Angeles, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1989, 115–124.

<sup>34</sup> B. Sommarström, The Saami Shaman's Drum and the Holographic Paradigm Discussion, in Hoppál, M. – Sadovszky, O. (eds.), *Shamanism: Past and Present*, I, Budapest, Los Angeles, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1989, 125–144.

Jankovics on the basis of analogies came to the conclusion that this particular drum bears cosmological knowledge, i.e., it is a “star-map.”<sup>35</sup>

Besides unraveling the meaning of the texts, a highly important task for research in the future, scholars must look to the examination of objects. This was one of the goals, which the Hungarian scholar of shamanism Vilmos Diószegi had set for himself. He was investigating the world of objects of Siberian shamanism. Unfortunately, cruel fate prevented him from accomplishing that work. Even if slowly, the Soviet colleagues have nevertheless begun processing their unusually rich records. It should be noted that the ethnographical collection of Lenigrad’s Kunstkammer is deservedly world-famous because of the unique objects kept there it includes rare shamanic objects from the peoples of Siberia and North America.<sup>36</sup>

Juha Janhunen, a linguist and professor at Helsinki University, collected various shamanistic notions connected with some puzzling creatures in Siberian wildlife, i.e., the flying squirrel (*Ptoremy volans* L.). Because it moves by night, and mainly because it is capable of flying, this small animal has long since been associated in the folklore of Siberian peoples with shamanhood, as the shaman’s helping animal. In the second part of his paper<sup>37</sup> he examines through the etymology of Siberian appellations of this curious squirrel species. An analysis of these appellations reveals that the small animal also at some point in the past, may have been the helping animal of the shaman. His writing is a good example of how a minute data can be placed in a broader perspective.

A senior researcher of the Ethnological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Zoya Sokolova, who has been making trips to the Ob-Ugrians for over three decades, has collected data relating to shamanism primarily from older literature. She compared these data with her own records and concludes that, by the end of the sixties, the shamans had disappeared from the life of the Voguls and Ostyaks inhabiting the Ob region.<sup>38</sup>

Galina Gračeva gives a detailed description of the wooden masks collected among the Nganasans and the Enets. She carried out extensive field research to gather information about their use. It turns out that shamans used to cover their faces with these masks during certain specific seances. The comparison of the masks with wooden idols and with the Yukagir tradition of treating the dead,

<sup>35</sup> Jankovics, Marcell, *Cosmic Models and Siberian Shaman Drums*, in Hoppál, M. (ed.), *Shamanism in Eurasia*, I, Göttingen, Herodot, 1984, 149–173.

<sup>36</sup> See their catalogue J. Pentikäinen et alii (eds.), *Shamans*, Tampere, Tampere Museums, 1998.

<sup>37</sup> Juha Janhunen, *On the Role of the Flying Squirrel in Siberian Shamanism*, in Hoppál, M. – Sadovszky, O. (eds.), *Shamanism: Past and Present*, I, Budapest, Los Angeles, Fullerton, ISTOR Books, 1989, 184–190.

<sup>38</sup> Z. P. Sokolova, *A Survey of the Ob-Ugrian Shamanism*, in Hoppál, M. – Sadovszky, O. (eds.), *Shamanism: Past and Present*, Budapest, Los Angeles, Fullerton, ISTOR, 1989, 155–164.

together with certain iconographic features of the masks themselves, makes it possible to suggest that the masks represent the dead ancestors of the male or female shamans.<sup>39</sup> The recent data illustrate that the works were widely known as shamanistic idols, or masks, not only among the Evenks and Buryats, but also in the North-Eastern regions of the Yenisei River.

Otto von Sadvoszky, was linguist at California State University, presents linguistic evidence for the Siberian origin of Central California Indian shamanism. He discusses various terms denoting shamans' activities. Sadvoszky compares the California Penutian forms, as he has done in other publications in the past decades, with the equivalent linguistic forms in Finno-Ugrian. The cognates of these shamanistic terms further reveal the closest relationship to the Ob-Ugrian (Vogul and Ostyak) languages and shamanism.<sup>40 41</sup>

Russian and Siberian scholars of shamanism unanimously agree that the appearance in 1978 of *Shamanism in Siberia* represented a turning point in the evaluation of Siberian shamanism in Russia. This was still long before the period of "glasnost", when "shaman" was a taboo word belonging in the category of politically and ideologically non-existent things since it was related to the ethnic and religious traditions of the small ethnic groups of Siberia. The publication of the volume in Budapest, by Akadémiai Kiadó (Publishing House of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences), in a friendly socialist state, gave the colleagues in Russia a point of reference that could be cited. Even so, it was not for a good three years, at the end of 1981, that the first collection of studies on Siberian shamanism could appear. It was edited by I. S. Vdovin and bore a very misleading title, or perhaps one that was intended as a camouflage,<sup>42</sup> promising a study of the "social consciousness of the Siberian indigenous peoples". The Russian work appeared in a very limited edition (it was printed in only 1950 copies) and *Shamanism in Siberia*, out of print for years, has become a rare book, too, so, it has been decided to republish it.

In the new edition the most frequently cited and now classical study by Åke Hultrantz: "Ecological and Phenomenological Aspects of Shamanism" has been placed at the beginning of the new selection since it has lost nothing of its timeliness

<sup>39</sup> G. N. Gračeva, Nganasan and Enets Shamans' Wooden Masks, in Hoppál, M. – Sadvoszky, O. (ed.), *Shamanism: Past and Present*, I, Budapest, Los Angeles, Fullerton, ISTOR Books 1–2, 1989, 145–153.

<sup>40</sup> O. J. von Sadvoszky, Linguistic Evidence for the Siberian Origin of the Central California Indian Shamanism, in Hoppál, M. – Sadvoszky, O. (eds.), *Shamanism: Past and Present*, I, Budapest, Los Angeles, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1989, 165–184.

<sup>41</sup> For a more detailed treatment see O. J. von Sadvoszky, *The Discovery of California, A Cal-Ugrian Comparative Study*, Budapest, Los Angeles, Akadémiai Kiadó, ISTOR Books 3, 1996.

<sup>42</sup> I. S. Vdovin, (ред.) *Проблемы истории общественного сознания аборигенов Сибири (по материалам второй половины XIX – начала XX в.)*, Ленинград, Наука, 1981.

and because it gives an excellent summing up of the main component elements of Siberian shamanism and the principal social functions of the shamans. To cite Hultkrantz: “The central idea of shamanism is to establish means of contact with the supernatural world by the ecstatic experience of a professional and inspired intermediary, the shaman. There are thus four important constituents of shamanism: the ideological premise, or the supernatural world and the contacts with it; the shaman as the actor on behalf of a human group; the inspiration granted him by helping spirits; and the extraordinary, ecstatic experiences of the shaman.”<sup>43</sup> It seems to us that such a clear definition of shamanism is in its way just as classical as the Swedish scholar’s entire *œuvre* (see the special issues of *Shaman* vol. 13 and 14 which were published for his 85th birthday).

Having given the reasons why only some articles have been reviewed here because they are of importance first of all because they report new, previously unknown data, generally on the basis of then fairly recent fieldwork.

Her colleague, L. V. Khomich, classified the Nenets shamans on the basis of data collected between 1953 and 1964. (She too published a much more detailed Russian version in Vdovin’s volume in 1981.) She considers that there are three main types of Nenets shamans; the first is the “strong shaman” (*viđutana*) who heals and prophesies and communicates with the spirits of the underworld. The second (*janjaŋi tadebja*) is able to find the lost order, belongs to the earthly world and shamanises at night. The shaman belonging to the third kind (*sambana*) designates the place of the dead and his main task is purification. Shamans can also be distinguished according to whether they used a drum or not.<sup>44 45</sup>

In a doctoral dissertation written in the early seventies, Péter Simoncsics examined the poetic characteristics of the Nenets shaman songs. There are very few studies based on textual analysis in the literature on Siberian shamanism. The Hungarian researcher made an exemplary analysis of the magic chant (*sāmpadabc*) of a shaman recorded in 1842 by M. A. Castrén. The author concluded that the symmetry and parallelism identified on the levels of phonology, syntax and motifs serve mainly for visualisation of the text and, we could add, in the final analysis for its memorisation.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Åke Hultkrantz, *Ecological and Phenomenological Aspects of Shamanism*, in Diószegi, V. – Hoppál, M. (eds.), *Shamanism in Siberia*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1978, 30.

<sup>44</sup> L. V. Khomich, Шаманы у ненцев, in Вдовин, В. В. (ред.), *Проблемы истории общественного сознания аборигенов Сибири*, 1981, 5–41.

<sup>45</sup> L. V. Khomich, A Classification of Nenets Shamanism, in Diószegi, V. – Hoppál, M. (eds.), *Shamanism in Siberia* (Selected reprints), Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, Bibliotheca Shamanistica, 1996, 43–51. 2.)

<sup>46</sup> Simoncsics, Péter, The Structure of a Nenets Magic Chant, in Diószegi, V. – Hoppál, M. (eds.), *Shamanism in Siberia*, (Selected reprints), Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1996, 52–67.

In 1996 Aulis Joki wrote about Selkup shamanism among the Samoyed peoples of Northern-Siberia, giving much factual material and also drawing on collections made by Kai Donner in the early years of the century (1911–1913) and texts recorded in his diary. The article is illustrated with photographs of Selkup shaman objects in the Helsinki Kansallismuseo B. O. Dolgikh collected in 1938 among the Nganasan living on the Taimyr peninsula. His article in this volume, which is actually an excellent communication of data, not only describes the typology of the Nganasan shamans, but also gives the terminology related to the drum and costume. The greatest strength of the paper is that after a careful analysis of the details, the author concludes it is clear from the shaman costume that the Nganasan people consist of two ethnic components: one is the small Uralic ethnic group, the Nganasan and the other the Dolgan. (DOLGIKH 1996).Nincs ilyen tétel a bibliográfiában.

We now know that G. N. Gračeva (1934–1993) was one of the outstanding figures of research on Siberian shamanism. She died in 1993 in tragic circumstances on a field trip.<sup>47</sup> She devoted practically her entire life to the ethnographic study of a small Siberian ethnic group, the Nganasans. In particular, she was especially interested in the famous shaman clan, the Ngamtusuo. She also wrote a number of studies on the traditional world view of the Nganasan, and each of these contains a few important details on shamanism.<sup>48,49</sup>

In one of them she describes the shaman's cloak which was worn by the shaman to help him communicate with the upper world and the sleeves symbolise bird's wings. It is interesting to note the series of dual oppositions: the garment is divided into two halves (left and right), one side coloured black and the other red as symbols of winter and darkness opposed to the sun, light and spring.<sup>50</sup>

There are strong tendencies among scholars to study shamanism from a historical point of view. Carla Corradi Musi reviews some relatively unknown sources on the historical development of Ural-Altai shamanism that can be found in the written accounts given by a few travellers who visited the areas adjoining the river Ob in the 18th and 19th centuries. The details from the travellers' personal observations relate to several traits of shamanism such as archaic animism, the cult of trees, idol worship, the conception of death as rebirth, the role of the shaman as well as the modes of shamanic rituals.

<sup>47</sup> A. M. Reshetov, In Memoriam G. N. Gracheva, *Shaman* 2, 1, 1994, 79–85.

<sup>48</sup> G. N. Gračeva, A Nganasan Shaman Costume, in Diószegi, V. – Hoppál, M. (eds.), *Shamanism in Siberia*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1978, 315–323.

<sup>49</sup> G. N. Gračeva, Nganasan and Enets Shamans' Wooden Masks, in Hoppál, M. – Sadovszky, O. (ed.), *Shamanism: Past and Present*, I, Budapest, Los Angeles, Fullerton, ISTOR Books 1–2, 1989, 145–153.

<sup>50</sup> G. N. Gračeva, A Nganasan Shaman Costume, in Diószegi, V. – Hoppál, M. (eds.), *Shamanism in Siberia*, Selected Reprints, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1996, 79–87.

Carla Corradi Musi is senior lecturer at the University of Bologna, where she teaches Finno-Ugric philology. Since the mid-1970s she has published over eighty extensive studies, among them a number of books giving brief descriptions of the history and culture of various Finno-Ugric peoples (those of the Volga, the Perm, the Baltic and the Finnish nations). She has regularly participated in conferences on Hungarian and Finno-Ugric studies where she has always presented interesting and previously unresearched topics. In the last decade she has frequently touched on the problems of shamanism. Her volume is a collection of the English translations of some studies, most of which were originally published in Italian. The activity of Carla Corradi Musi has acted as a bridge between East and West (CORRADI MUSI 1997).

The first short piece connects the problem of the Finno-Ugric double soul with shamanism. The author's initial idea is that the idea of the double soul is a basis for the motif of the soul journey which plays a central role in Siberian shamanism. The following study examines the meanings of two important symbols in Eurasian shamanism, that of fire and of water. Fire is the symbol of power while water is the instrument of initiation, of shamanic rebirth in shamanic rituals. The basic idea of the third study is that Finno-Ugric shamanism and European mediaeval magic may be compared at a number of points. Indeed, this has also been suggested by Carlo Ginzburg and also, some years earlier by the Hungarian scholars (Gábor Klaniczay and Éva Pócs) and promises to become an interesting trend of research for the future. The author of the book provides a quantity of new data which suggest diverse fields of research requiring many years of hard work. Among these, for example, is the connection between the Sampo (the magic mill of the Finnish epic *Kalevala*) and the Grail. The parallels between the blacksmith and the shaman would deserve a complete book to compare the vast range of literature on the subject.

In her study on tree worship, which is one of the longest, the author lists a number of facts which confirm her thesis according to which some beliefs, symbols and mythological motifs can be related to the mythical-ritual scenario of the Siberian and Finno-Ugric shamanic area.

In another chapter, writing about Western-European animism, Corradi Musi compares several creatures of the natural world, in the shamanic area and in the area of animism in Western Europe. The author states: "it is clear, however, that Western- and Eastern-Europe were, from the most distant past, much closer to each other than could be imagined at first sight". One of the proofs of this might be that cultural elements, myths and beliefs spread along the trade routes of Baltic amber.

In the essays which constitute the backbone of the volume, the author uses old sources to quote data which refer to the Finno-Ugric. Some of these have long been known to researchers, others, especially those which were written in Latin and

Italian, were hardly known to the wider public. Thus it is due to Professor Corradi Musi of Bologna that international research can now gain access to them, since this is the first time they have appeared in English. She quotes interesting data from 13th century chronicles written in Latin.

In another piece she refers to important data from the historical writing of Olaus Magnus (*Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*) which, as early as the 16th century, demonstrates a number of parallel features in the belief systems of European and Siberian peoples.

One of the most valuable chapters in this book is the one which describes an early 19th century work of 'encyclopaedic ethnology', Giulio Ferrario's *Il costume antico e moderno*, more precisely those parts of it which refer to Finno-Ugric peoples. Research has not yet taken advantage of these early data, even though they contain a quantity of excellent observations. Thus Ferrario noticed the sharp distinction made between male and female idols and, generally, between ritual roles, among the Ostyaks, and the special veneration granted to holy trees. The description of the reindeer sacrifice by this 19th century ethnographer is so realistic that one wonders how this was possible if not from personal experience.

In her next essay the author surveys two other 19th century publications, involving a good deal of useful data regarding Siberian shamanism. F. de Lanoye published a book in Paris in 1868 in which he describes the observations made by Éva Félinska, a lady of the Ukrainian nobility and by the famous Finnish researcher, Matias Aleksanteri Castrén among the Ob-Ugrians. The other book contains a travel account by Stephen Sommier which was published in 1883. In this he describes a summer's journey during which he visited the Ostyaks, the Samoyeds, the Zyryans, the Tartars, the Kirgiz and the Bashkir. If we consider the obstacles that need to be overcome for a journey like that even in our day, it appears an almost incredible achievement for a hundred years ago. (CORRADI MUSI 1997:79–85).

The volume is concluded by two essays in which the author has collected all the data that refer to elements which can be compared in the shamanism of certain Finno-Ugric (particularly Ob-Ugrian) peoples and of North American Indians. It must be noted that this is a ground-breaking phenomenon in comparative studies and many might find its conclusions too daring but in fact Corradi is not alone in her ambitions since many people today are already working on this topic (see von Sadovszky's (1996) comprehensive work on this subject).

Even more conspicuous are parallels between the Finno-Ugric and the North-American Indians in terms of their folklore relating to death and nature. Corradi Musi finds a number of examples in this area, too. Thus, for example, both groups imagine the other world, the kingdom of the dead to be on the far side of water. It is worth mentioning the infinite calm with which both the Ob-Ugrians of Siberia and the North-American Indians face death: this is an important mark of both

cultures. It is characteristic of both peoples and their culture that man is believed to have two souls and that the custom of double burial was also practised in both places, in spite of the great geographic distance separating them.

Carla Corradi Musi's writings (1997) are examples of the possibilities inherent in *comparative* research in the traditional sense, but they also serve as a warning that *contrastive* studies must also gain ground in the future.

The first variant of this article had been published ten years ago and since then several new books and studies were written about the shamans of the Uralic people. I have been researching this topic for a long time permanently and my opinion is that despite the increasing number of new books on shamanism only a few of them provide genuine insights, the majority refers to the earlier ones again and again. An outstanding exception among the different popularizing works is a book by Ronald Hutton with the title *Shamans: Siberian Spirituality and the Western Imagination* (2001). In part one the author gives an interesting historical overview on how the picture about Siberia and Siberian people has changed through the writings of travellers and later researchers. The author quotes a detailed description of a shaman ritual supposedly among the Nenets people that was recorded by an English traveller, Richard Johnson, on the first day of the year 1557.<sup>51</sup> Part two is about the shamans' activities, initiation, equipment, rituals and performances. In the last part of the book the author gives a description about the present situation of the Siberian shamans.

Another excellent work, called *The Beauty of the Primitive: Shamanism and the Western Imagination*, that was written by the Russian scholar Andrei A. Znamenski, deals with this topic on over 400 pages from the Enlightenment up to the present times. The development of the metaphor – „*the Shaman as spiritual healer*“ – can be traced from the data of the first travelogues to the pseudo shamans of today (in Sakha [Yakutia] Republic and Tuva), who preen themselves in the role of the well-intentioned healer. The main value of this book amongst many (see the review by Vilmos Voigt<sup>52</sup>) is that it makes the not so well known data of the Russian studies on this topic available to western readers as well. Moreover, as an emigrant to the USA, Znamenski got extremely fast acquainted with the American Neo-Shamanism, and in this way his book can be regarded as an Eliade-like summary of the topic. Unfortunately, similarly to Hutton, he also uses the term „Western Imagination“ in the title of his book that suggests that the culture of the shamans is a kind of European-made idea, such as the concept of ethnic identity, nation and cultural tradition.

<sup>51</sup> Ronald Hutton, *Shamans: Siberian Spirituality and the Western Imagination*, London, New York, Hambledon and London, 2001, 30-39.

<sup>52</sup> Voigt, Vilmos, Review, Andrei A. Znamenski, *The Beauty of the Primitive, Shaman*, 17, 1-2, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 2009, 205-218.

One of the latest books, *An Introduction to Shamanism*, dismisses the dogma that treats shamanism as a primitive religion right in the introduction.<sup>53</sup> Listing the archeological data is an interesting and new approach to the evolution of shamanism (see chapter 3.), such as the derivation of the shamans' ecstasy from music (see chapter 9. „music and etheogens”). Thomas A. DuBois professor of folklore, religious and Scandinavian studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, used not only Asian examples of shamanism in his book but both American and Asian phenomena. The last chapter deals with the persecution and oppression of the shamans, as well as, the rebirth of the shamanic tradition and the development of new forms of shamanism within new cultural and global context.

*Shamanism: a Reader*, edited by Graham Harvey, is an excellent collection that complements well the monographies mentioned above and also provides a unique overview of modern understanding of shamanism.<sup>54</sup>

It is important to note that during the last two centuries several essential international conferences were organised by the International Society for Shamanistic Research (ISSR). This society gathers those researchers who work on the field of Shamanism. ISSR was founded in 1988 and since then has organised nine international conferences (on the history of the first twenty years of ISSR see Hoppál 2008). Most of the lectures of these conferences have been published either in the official journal of the Society (*Shaman*) or in the *Bibliotheca Shamanistica* that has been being published regularly since 1993. (There are two volumes from the past years that contain several good studies<sup>55 56</sup>). Selected studies of the last ISSR conference held in Alaska were published in the 18th volume of *Shaman*, the official Journal of ISSR (spring 2010).

An important book that shows new directions, *Shamanhood*, has been published and already the title indicates the editors' intention to introduce a fresh concept instead of the empty shamanism. „Shamanhood is closer to the self-perception of the shamans themselves, since they do not see shamanism as a 'religion'... but rather is suggested in order to emphasise the anti-dogmatic nature of the phenomenon in its ecological and cultural milieu.”<sup>57</sup> The head of the Finno-Ugric Department of the University of Bologna organised a conference in 2006 among the medieval

<sup>53</sup> Th. A. DuBois, *An Introduction to Shamanism*, Cambridge, University Press, 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Graham Harvey (ed.), *Shamanism: A Reader*, London, New York, Routledge, 2003.

<sup>55</sup> Hoppál, Mihály-Kósa, Gábor (eds.), Rediscovery of Shamanic Heritage, *Bibliotheca Shamanistica* vol. 11, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 2003.

<sup>56</sup> Hoppál, Mihály et alii (eds.), *Shamans Unbound*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 2008.

<sup>57</sup> J. Pentikäinen. – Simoncsics, P. (eds.), *Shamanhood: an Endangered Language*, Oslo, Novus forlag, 2005, 7.

walls of the ancient university, about *Symbols and Myths of Shamanic Traditions* (in Italian<sup>58</sup>).

It is a well noticeable tendency nowadays that conferences, as well as, the authors of monographies concentrate on certain, narrower aspects of the field. For example, Anna-Leena Siikala analysed Finnish folklore texts (such as incantations) and the mythic and poetical images of the Kalevala.<sup>59</sup> With the help of these texts Siikala has reconstructed a whole mythical and shamanic imagery. A young English researcher did the same basically in his two-volume book (almost 900 pages), *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic*.<sup>60</sup> The work of Clive Tolley is one of the best work in of shamanic research,<sup>61</sup> in which he analysed the most important elements of Eurasian shaman folklore (such as the world pillar, the mountain, the mill, the tree, cosmography, the smith, the bear, etc.) and the shamanistic imageries, from texts written in several different languages from ancient-Icelandic to the Finnish Kalevala.

Since the year 2000 the present author has published several books on Eurasian shamans. Already in his earlier monographies his aim was to present a characteristic visual image of Siberian shaman culture.<sup>62</sup> The novelty of these books is that he enlists the local features of shamanhood and presents the symbolic phenomena of the shamans' material world, illustrated with a lot of pictures. (These books have been published not only in Hungarian but also in German, Finnish, Estonian, Japanese, Chinese and Polish.) The theoretical works of the author have been published also in English in several volumes.

<sup>58</sup> C. Corradi Musi (ed.), *Simboli e miti della tradizione sciamanica*, Bologna, Università di Bologna, 2007.

<sup>59</sup> Anna-Leena Siikala, *Mythic Images and Shamanism: A Perspective on Kalevala Poetry*, Helsinki, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2002.

<sup>60</sup> Clive Tolley, *Shamanism in North Myth and Magic*, 1–2, Helsinki, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, FFCcommunications. XCLIV, 2009.

<sup>61</sup> Voigt Vilmos, Review: Clive Tolley: Shamanism in North Myth and Magic, Helsinki, 2009. *Shaman* 18, 1–2, 2010, 204–210.

<sup>62</sup> Hoppál, Mihály, *Das Buch der Schamanen: Europa und Asien*, München, Ullstein, 2002.

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