

## THE ROLE AND DEVELOPMENT OF SHAMANISTIC DISCOURSE AMONG SOUTHERN SIBERIAN ETHNIC GROUPS IN THE POST-SOVIET PERIOD

*Andrei Vinogradov, University of Saskatchewan*

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Since the beginning of the 1990s (especially since 1991), Shamanism in Southern Siberia has been making a powerful comeback. However, while being resurrected, Shamanism mutated far beyond its “classical” forms and began to fulfill functions that were not typical for it.<sup>1</sup> Having spent a considerable time trying to make sense out of a bewildering array of old and new varieties of Southern Siberian Shamanism, and its roles, interpretations, and discourses, I saw in them three interrelated and yet distinct categories:

1. “Self-representation of the Other.”

This category relates to the variety of Shamanistic discourse and practice, directed to the outside world (be it an academic community, Russians or Westerners).

2. “The *new* Self-representation for one’s own community.” This category relates to Shamanistic discourse and practice, addressed to one’s own (or closely culturally and ethnically related) community, with discourse and practice significantly altered in comparison to the “classical” Shamanism.

3. Classical Shamanism.

I understand these three categories as being not merely descriptive tools. From my point of view, each of these categories relates to a distinct set of practices, self-perception, and often to a distinct set of beliefs among their adepts. In this paper, I will attempt to briefly describe and analyze these three categories.

My first encounter with Shamanism during a trip to Russia in the Summer of 2001 happened far away from Southern Siberia. It happened on July, 11, in Zelenograd (20 miles from Moscow), where I had the chance to participate in the Second<sup>ii</sup> International Interdisciplinary Scientific and Practical Symposium, “Ecology and Traditional Religious and Magical Knowledge.” The Symposium was held under the auspices of the Russian Academy of Science. The Organizing Committee included some of the foremost specialists in Siberian

Anthropology from Russia, Europe, and North America. The executive organizers of the Symposium, D.A. Funk who specializes in Siberian Anthropology, and V.I. Kharitonova who is a student of Slavic healing and magical traditions, had created a unique forum: at the Symposium, prominent anthropologists presented their research side-by-side with shamans, neo-shamans, healers, dowers, psi-researchers, Transpersonal psychologists, and Gaia theorists, to name a few. No set of beliefs (or dis-beliefs) was considered standard at the Symposium; positivist interpretation of the studied phenomena was as accepted as their Theosophical, or Shamanistic interpretation. Being exposed to such a diversity of approaches was both exciting and somewhat scary.<sup>iii</sup> The Symposium was a veritable “trading station”: in addition to the study of Shamanism and other forms of traditional knowledge, it was the front line of the *creation* of new forms of discourse about it and *of it*, which results in the possibility of creation of the new forms of practice within it. There, Shamans and other practitioners learned about the “scientific” discourse and about the perception of their beliefs by the “Westerners”<sup>iv</sup> as much as the Anthropologists learned about the Shamans.

The concluding part of the Symposium (July 14-21) was the trip of the participants to Abakan (Khakassia) and Kyzyl (Tuva), where participants were greeted by the local Republican governments and activists of the revival of the traditions. There, participants of the Symposium witnessed several large-scale Shamanic sessions. I saw a video of one of them: about twenty shamans (including two recent Russian initiates), armed with various implements (some had drums while others didn’t), conducted a *kamlanie*<sup>v</sup>, each in his/her own manner, with the purpose of bringing rain. The ceremony was performed in broad daylight and in the presence of many spectators.<sup>vi</sup>

I have gone to such length describing the Symposium because, while being an invaluable source of study of modern developments in Shamanism, it also served me as a brilliant metaphor/cross-section of the processes that are happening in the realm of both Shamanism and its studies in Russia.

### **The challenges of sudden empowerment**

Most of the aboriginal nations of Southern Siberia (with exception of Buryats) have been minorities on their own land, surrounded and dominated by other cultures and *being subordinate parts of their state institutions*, since approximately the 13<sup>th</sup> century (the Mongolian Empire and its later derivatives, and by Qin (Manchu) dynasty of China). From the 17<sup>th</sup> century on, they were gradually colonized by the Russian Empire. Buddhism and Christianity were imposed on them against their traditional beliefs with varying severity and success, as were the attempts of cultural assimilation. The long history of struggle against seemingly endless alien domination created a certain “minority attitude.”<sup>vii</sup> The basic characteristics of this attitude are: a) Lack of necessity of detailed and conscious self-definition - one is defined by the Other (“the enemy”); b) Very “minimalist” demand of knowledge of adherence to the cultural, or religious rules - both inevitable in the atmosphere of oppression, and sufficient to feel full membership in the tradition in question; and c) The “underground” attitude that becomes a positive assertion of membership in the tradition in question which is extremely parochial by nature and, on the long run, completely eliminates all realistic considerations of the possible future empowerment, replacing it with various utopias. In short, “the oppressed minority” mentality results in an attitude very similar to the attitude of the oppressed party in the abusive relations. While such an attitude enables a person, group, or culture to survive extreme hardships and oppression, it often fails in the situation of empowerment and necessity of being self-reliant. Shamanism perfectly fulfilled the function of a “counter-power”<sup>viii</sup> and of a consolidating ideology at the level of clans, but it lacked the ability to develop a discourse which was able to consolidate the whole society and create social and political integration.<sup>ix</sup>

After 1991 and a short period of excitement related to the changes, the nations of Southern Siberia (with the exception of Buryatia which has had a very strong positive Buddhist

presence), found themselves in a situation of cultural/spiritual deficiency: While traditional beliefs still existed, and had a considerable influence, they failed to become “automatically” sufficient in the situation of empowerment.

Alcoholism (now supplemented with massive drug use) in Southern Siberia (which was a problem in the Soviet period) became catastrophic, crime was on the rise, unemployment (especially in the cities) was huge, and the suicide rate (now, high among the teenagers and even children) had been steadily going up. Of course, many of these problems were related to the economic hardships, but there was, from my point of view, an extremely important non-economic reason for them as well. This reason was the lack of self-identity. Soviet ideology was over, and Christianity in Southern Siberia was very passive - they were no “defining others” for the ethnic Southern Siberians. Their existence was simply not acknowledged by the “world of the Other” - they were marginalized by being ignored by the outside world and by being isolated. The school system, which was based on the mandatory supply of teachers by the State to both the cities and the rural areas, had fallen apart, and the hefty “minority quota”<sup>x</sup> in the Russian colleges which once existed in USSR, was no more. Thus, the chances for Southern Siberians of becoming the “citizens of the world,” or at least, of the Russian realm, through education had greatly diminished.

Such is the extremely difficult, if not catastrophic, situation, in which Shamanism has been making a comeback.

Among the considered republics, its new manifestations (and its previous state) vary: In Buryatia, it was been destroyed by Communists less than in other places; also, there it has co-existed in a peculiar symbiosis with Buddhism (Gelugpa); In Tuva, a peculiar phenomenon, “the Shamanic guilds,” extremely uncharacteristic for the traditional Shamanism (and probably, reflecting the imitation of the Buddhist - Bon structures), has formed; In Khakassia, traditional Shamanism became extinct by the time of the end of Communism - there, it had to be revived “from the scratch,” and is more “neo-Shamanistic” than in any other republic; in Sakha, traditional Shamanism has almost disappeared, but due to the a very high rate of Russian-Sakha intermarriages and resulting metization and cultural mixing, it has survived in a form of syncretistic beliefs and practices with the elements of Orthodox Christianity (and Russian “community magic”);

and in Altai, in addition to a few surviving shamans, a large number of “biler kizhi” (“people of knowledge” who are “sort of” shamans, but not shamans), has emerged. I cannot discuss all the fascinating varieties of the modern Shamanic or quasi-Shamanic revival “republic by republic” in detail. Many of the brilliant papers, dedicated to this topic, are published in the above-mentioned series and other similar sources.<sup>xi</sup>

Let us turn now to the “three categories” mentioned in the beginning of the paper.

### Discourse for outsiders.

#### 1. Culture, Ecology, and Politics.

In general, in the times of the late Soviet Empire, the following tendency was manifest: People with Shamanic ancestry - those, who according to the traditional Shamanistic view, were likely to receive a shamanic calling - often constituted either the “cream of the crop” of local intelligentsia, or were involved in the performing arts, music or painting. Since the mid-1980, the latter have been successfully promoting and exporting their creativity. From the beginning of the 1990s, some of them became Shamans, while others became spokespersons for traditional culture and ecology, and some are still working in performing arts.

The late 1980 and 1990s were characterized by a wave of inter-cultural contacts among aboriginal people of Siberia and Native Americans, Ainu, and others, initiated by various ecological or peace causes approved by Gorbachev’s government. While such contacts were not explicitly spiritual or religious, they began to create patterns for later spiritual self-representation of Native Siberians.

Another pronounced tendency of that period was the activity of the international Ecological Movement (Greenpeace, etc.) that finally reached and was allowed into Russia. In the discourse of Native Siberians, it has been always linked (openly after 1990) to the traditional spiritual values - belief in the spirits of the places, sacred sites - and, as time went by and the grip of the Soviet imperial power was weakening - to the whole of the homeland of the group in question. The homeland was now perceived (and announced) as the embodiment of the Guardian Spirit of an ethnic group and had to be given back to its traditional inhabitants to be

its custodians.<sup>xii</sup> Thus, cultural self-representation smoothly merged with the ecological movement; as Communism was retreating, the discourse was becoming more explicitly religious and, simultaneously, nationalistic and political.

Having reached its climax around the beginning to middle 1990s, the political-nationalistic type of discourse receded: Russian Empire retreated as far as it could, the ecological battle was to some extent won.

In some instances, “nature was left alone” to a much larger extent than eco-traditionalist activists were planning: for example, in Altai, the mercury mines of Aktash which generated a substantial revenue, were closed, which made the Russian government lose all interest in the infrastructure - roads, priority food supply, etc. The “battle of the Katun” - a massive protest of Altaians and Russians against the hydroelectric project at Katun’ River - which reached its peak in the late 1980s to early 1990s, was also won, but now due to the shortages of electric energy, many Altaians wish that it was lost.

In the same period, many scientific conferences were organized throughout the capitals of the Siberian republics.<sup>xiii</sup> They were mostly dedicated to the study of local folklore, epic traditions, archaeology, history, and, of course, spirituality. To my knowledge, the precedent of inviting practicing shamans to these interdisciplinary conferences was created there. However, these conferences were very different from the Symposium that I described above: their main pathos there was the *creation* (rather than just the study) of the coherent national ideology and the articulation of its spirituality - in other words, the formation of the dignified and complete sense of self-identity for the members of a given ethnic group and for the outside world. Another important purpose of such conferences was establishing close, “brotherly” ties with the neighboring and related ethnic groups - that is, finding and founding a “larger field” of self-identity (e.g., the Turkic identity). Such conferences still take place, albeit more rarely. Their materials are an invaluable (although sometimes biased) source of the information on indigenous cultures.<sup>xiv</sup>

Interestingly, all of the above-mentioned types of discourse cannot really be called “shamanistic,” although traditional spirituality is their main theme. The discussion of Shamanism is present in some of them, but it occupies a very modest place. The reason for this

is very simple: Traditional religions of the peoples of Southern Siberia are *not* Shamanism. They are very complex forms of animism, which entail a number of different beliefs and forms of religious practice of which Shamanism is an important, but neither necessary, nor sufficient, component. These religions were erroneously labeled as “Shamanism” by their early researchers who named them after a most remarkable (and, in their eyes, bizarre) ceremony, *kamlanie*. In Southern Siberian religious traditions, there are many different “sacred offices” and vocations. In fact, many of the very significant “shamanistic” ceremonies of, for example, Altaians, do not even allow shamans to be present - exactly because they are “marked” and deemed impure.

However, the label stuck. It became popular, both in Russia and in the West, and as a result created the next type of discourse (still, like of the “outside” category) which I am going to discuss.

## 2. Shamans who run workshops

It appears that worldwide, Shamanism and its various aspects such as the nature of “being chosen,” or the character of the spirit-helpers, can take an almost infinite variety of forms. Even in Southern Siberia, “shamanisms” differ greatly. However, in traditional Southern Siberian Shamanism the following features seem to be conservative and invariant: 1) A Shaman must be chosen by the spirits (that is, there is no way one can *learn* how to Shamanise); 2) The “call of the spirits” is a very distinct and dramatic event - usually, temporary violent insanity and/or somatic disease; 3) The call to become a shaman is seen as an existentially negative, rather than positive, event; being a shaman (especially a “black” shaman who is able to retrieve souls from the Underworld) is, metaphorically speaking, no happier thing than being a vampire (but without the immortality of the latter) - at the end of shaman’s career, his/her helping spirits finally “get him/her.” Many people who are “called,” prefer to kill themselves rather than become shamans. A shaman’s afterlife is bleak; unlike the rest of the people who go to the “real world,” a shaman has to stay on Earth as a ghost, preying on the living shamans-to-be (this “preying” constitutes the “shaman’s call”)<sup>xv</sup>; 4) The overwhelming majority of shamans are hereditary (and their most active spirit-helpers - those who force them to become shamans in the first place - are their shaman-ancestors). Some shamans do not have a

shamanic ancestry, but they usually have a *really dramatic* experience before the call (the death of a family, near-death experience(s), etc.), 5) Shamans do not form groups; in fact, they do not like to meet (except for the short periods in cases of training of a novice chosen by spirits); they occasionally kill each other in “shamanic fights” which constitute an important part of their activities; and, finally, a very important point,

6) While Shamans often practice in an ethnic group different from their own (in fact, there was/is a trend among Tuvans to invite Altai shamans and vice versa<sup>xvi</sup>), they always use the spiritual context/vocabulary of a *particular* culture. In other words, they are not universalists like Jungian analysts, but particularists. The spirits they deal with are not “archetypes”: they are concrete spirits with names, “biographies,” and *local* dwelling places. Shamans are deeply embedded in their cultures and their myths.

Now, the shamans who run workshops transgress (or transcend) most of these rules. Shamans began to be invited to the West in the late 1980s.<sup>xvii</sup> They participated in the workshops and conferences, run by the Foundation for Shamanic Studies<sup>xviii</sup> and in various events related to Transpersonal Studies. Probably, those first visitors were not really aware of how the Western enthusiasts perceived Shamans and Shamanism: They went to perform, not to talk. However, when they came back with some honor and affluence, the “college-educated” people in their respective nations began having second thoughts about shamanism.

Soon enough, a number of prominent cultural activists, academics, and other urban dwellers began to manifest a shamanic calling (in many cases, they reported to have had the calling all along, but did not practice as shamans due to the possible repression by the Soviet authorities). They began traveling to Europe and the US and running workshops and receiving hefty honoraria. Unlike the first visitors, most of these shamans were aware of the subtleties of the Western market: They knew that Westerners liked the “individualist” (that is, not linked to the community) shamans like Castaneda’s Don Juan; that they liked *the experience* and didn’t give a damn about the cultural context that generated it, apart from the aesthetics of shamanic attributes (which were promptly made and sold to them), and that they, being democratic and egalitarian, did not want to hear anything about the elitist (and ambivalent) nature of the spirits’ calling. In short, they knew that Westerners (and later, Russians) just wanted to have “clean, safe fun”

and to gain some prestige in *their own* circles, and this is what they were selling. Even prior to their travels to the West, these shamans were apparently aware of the tastes of their future customers from the books of Carlos Castaneda, Michael Harner, and other popularizers of Shamanism in the West, and tailored their teachings accordingly.

Seeing this opportunity, more and more shamans (mostly, in Tuva) began to turn up. As a result, several education centers- “trade-unions”- were organized in Tuva (and these are now budding in Khakassia and Buryatia). Having more than one center in Tuva was required due to the splits and struggles in the first center which was organized by the patriarch of Tuvan “workshop shamanism” M.Kenin-Lopsan. Were the struggles just the return of the traditional “shamanic fights” as fledgling shamans gained power and ambition, or were they just the struggles for the market? I guess we’ll never know. A somewhat disconcerting fact about the “trade-union” Shamans (in Tuva) is that they look down upon the few traditional shamans who practice in the old ways, live in rural settings, and do not participate in “marketing.”

In the second half of the 1990s, Tuvan shamans began running workshops in Russia, initiating the first Russian shamans - mostly, young people with interests in experiential psychology and in esoterica. To my knowledge, getting initiated (after attending several seminars), including getting the drum and the *orba*<sup>xix</sup> costs about \$500 US. Despite the cost, becoming a shaman is a good investment for the Russian adepts: after the Great Occult Revolution in Russia,<sup>xx</sup> being a certified Shaman is much better financially than having a college degree.

The perception of such shamans in Siberian communities ranges from respect (they are “important people”) to amazement with the cleverness of the con-scams (the workshops) they manage to pull. However, it is never an attitude of contempt, because “these shamans, after all, manage to fool “those white idiots” and prove “us” to be cleverer, after all these years.”

While I am somewhat skeptical about the authenticity of this type of Shamanism and its discourse, I have to disagree with the veteran of the study of Tuvan Shamanism, S.I. Vainstein<sup>xxi</sup> who sees this type of Shamanism as totally fake and dedicated only to money-making. First of all, some of these shamans are

perceived in their own communities as *the* real ones; there, they work as healers and cultural educators, “moonlighting” with the workshops only occasionally. Secondly, I see them performing the same function in the West as the Tibetan lamas - by providing “spiritual entertainment” (even for money), they do no harm to their customers (apart from creating a few more narcissistic illusions among them), and at the same time, make their culture known, noticeable, and hence, less vulnerable. Finally, even traditional shamans were/are not fastidious about accepting money and gifts - so, shamanizing for money is not “against the rules” per se. The main source of my skepticism is the all-too-radical alteration of the fundamental rules of the traditional shamanism by these shamans for the sake of marketing. While this category of shamans constitutes the majority of those who attend various conferences, including the above-mentioned Symposium, they are not the only ones; another category of spiritual practitioners (or spiritual seekers) that is frequently encountered there (and in Siberian communities) is at the same time more humble and more charismatic - these people dominate the second category I am going to discuss.

#### **Shamans who go to workshops.**

This category constitutes usually younger people (in their 20s-40s) who may or may not live in cities, and may or may not have academic degrees. Many of these people apparently are the descendants of Shamanic lineages. These are the people who often seem to have been “struck” by a “spirit calling” for real. I met many of them; their characteristic feature is *excitement* which, in its more extreme forms, calls to mind Pentecostal near-glossolalia behavior or a psychological problem. Often, these people are of higher than average intellect. Also, they often know relatively little of their own traditional culture - so little that they feel too humble and embarrassed (not always, however) to “seek professional help” from the remaining traditional shamans. Some of them join various Pentecostal-type Christian sects, or try to go to study as Buddhist novices, others find themselves in nationalist or ecological causes, or in performing arts. Many go through a period of violent drinking and drug abuse. Still others seek initiation from the shamans, more often than not from the “workshop shamans” described above. Thus, the version of Shamanism “tailed for Western consumption gets reciprocated to the Siberian cultures. This is

not the only way this happens: I have talked to many of these people who read the books of Harner or Castaneda and “all suddenly started making sense for them.”<sup>xxii</sup> Also, many of them participate in various ESP-training seminars, Reiki training, and workshops on experiential psychological methods (e.g., Holotropic Breathwork). Their take on Shamanism and traditional spirituality is highly variable, but often it is innovative: they acutely feel that “simply tradition” is not enough in this new world. They are very eclectic in their beliefs - sometimes, to the point of being bizarre: In Altai, they often talk UFOlogy and Shambhala-seeking (the latter inherited from a Russian Theosophist N.Roerich who traveled in Altai in the late 1920s and thought that Shambhala might have been there), in Khakassia and Buryatia - “bioenergetic spots,” and so on. Another typical feature of these people is that they usually do not mind seeking help from the *Russian* “people of (magic) knowledge” who live in Russian villages in Siberia and practice Russian “community magic” and healing.

Another very characteristic feature of this category of spiritual seekers is their concern with various social problems such as those I have mentioned in the beginning of the paper. While traditional Shamans were/are fairly inert towards the society as a whole, dealing only with the individuals - their clients,<sup>xxiii</sup> or, at most, with their clans, these people talk in terms of the whole ethnic community (if not the whole world). Often, they work as journalists, social workers, etc., and their ideas receive wide response. One typical (and very relevant) passion found among them is struggle against alcoholism and depression in the society.

Now, why would these people be counted as a part of “shamanistic discourse”? As I said before, they are often “stuck” or rather torn between their culture and the less traditional (for their culture) spirituality. However, more often than not, they try to “plug” their charisma into the context of traditional spirituality, and they often succeed. Obviously, however, such a connection is not made easily.

In Altai, they usually do not become shamans. Instead, they become “neme biler kizhi” (the people who know something (a thing)). This is a traditional calling, or the accommodation of charisma. It has existed from pre-Communist times, being parallel to Shamanism.<sup>xxiv</sup> There are many types of “gifts” that *biler kizhi* may have, alone or in combination. They include healing,<sup>xxv</sup>

clairvoyance, etc.<sup>xxvi</sup> In some rural areas of Altai, *biler kizhi* completely replaced Shamans and fulfill their functions. The main differences between biler kizhi and shamans are the following: 1) biler kizhi are called to their vocation not by the spirits, but by a crisis such as an accident, or an illness (which implies the involvement of spirits, or God(s), but indirectly, in the form of fate, or vocation); 2) they do not have spirit-helpers; instead, they have abilities/gifts; 3) they do not shamanize (however, some practices of biler kizhi (smudging and certain clairvoyance methods) are identical to a very “mild” shamanizing), or rather they do not engage in a shamanic flight and do not have drums, 4) they do not practice soul retrieval (or soul-stealing), and 5) their vocation is not hereditary.

In Tuva, they, most likely, join one of the “shamanic trade-unions” with its modified practices.

This category of people seems to be slowly (or not so slowly) growing in importance, and I believe that, if Shamanism in Southern Siberia will survive in some form, these people will be defining it.

#### **A very short description of the third category: the traditional shamans**

The question is: How do we define a traditional shaman and his/her discourse? If we try to define him, or her by the presence of the signs of the “baroque” shamanism, characteristic for 19<sup>th</sup> century Southern Siberia and described by the first anthropologists who studied it - Shamanism with its richly theatrical, almost redundant, ceremonies, huge sacrifices, and intricate costumes and attributes such as “canonically painted” drums - we simply won’t find it (and if we try, we’ll find out that the “workshop shamans” of Tuva who give much attention to their looks, are the most suitable for being called “traditional”). Should it be the most profound knowledge of folklore? But most of the spiritual practitioners (including biler kizhi) in rural areas know it very well.

After some consideration about the definition of a traditional shaman, I decided that a traditional shaman is simply a shaman that has practiced since Soviet period and who, as a result, could not be suspected of being “inauthentic” or contaminated by “neo-shamanism.” In various villages, I was pointed to several old shamans by my Altai friends. They looked threatening, and I did not dare to talk to them. Finally, I decided to go for a treatment to

an old lady shaman whose “authentic” reputation I confirmed from many sources. I traveled to a remote village and met a very nice and wise old lady. She heard my complaints, and diagnosed and treated me with a number of procedures: smudging (authentic), palmistry (inauthentic?), medicine (?), and a number of implements (sort of protective charms) with prescriptions about how to deal with them(?). Then, she recommended that I visit a doctor with such and such question. She said that she had a drum, but it was necessary only in extreme cases.

When we sat to drink tea, she suddenly began a conversation on the topic (approximately) of religious ethics. I did not speak Altai, and she did not speak Russian well, but she spoke about the Devil and God in clearly dualistic terms! This was against everything I had read in all of the sources on traditional Shamanism. When we were parting, she assured me that we would meet in two years. Until then, I will live with confusion about the traditional shamanism of Southern Siberia.

### Conclusion

This paper has just scratched the surface of the brave new ancient world of modern Southern Siberian shamanism and the variations in its discourse. The only two conclusions I made after my study of it and which, I hope, I managed to bring across in this paper, are: a) Southern Siberian Shamanism is alive, and b) I am realizing more and more that it has never been static, and its latest developments are just another change among the uncountable changes it has undergone since ancient times.

I think that for the study of the current reviving and development of Shamanism, there are two important questions-markers to be considered and analyzed.

The first is the fundamental nature of traditional Shamanic function and discourse as oriented towards the immediate community, which is based on kinship. In many ways, the clan-based social structure (and most of the Southern Siberian groups are strongly clan-based) manifests significant weakness in the case of empowerment, ethnic consolidation and acquisition of statehood, based on the structure of a whole ethnos versus separate clans. The weakness of traditional shamanism in the new national-political discourse is the evidence of this. However, Shamanism may change, and is changing, and these changes are, probably, going to be most significant aspect of its new manifestations.

The second issue is related to the continuing dialogue between shamans-Shamanism and the ‘outside’ world. While in the part of the paper dedicated to the ‘second type of discourse,’ few variations of this dialogue are depicted, I am sure that, as time goes by, it will become more diverse, and its impact on Shamanism cannot be overestimated.

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### Notes

<sup>i</sup> Many Russian Anthropologists of older generations, who studied “old” shamanism, are somewhat hesitant to recognize many of its new manifestations as being authentic. However, younger Russian and several Western Anthropologists prefer to “take at the face value” the phenomena of the new wave of Shamanism, and to study them without trying to forcefully evaluate it only against its “classical” form. Most of their work is published in fairly esoteric sources, and in a very limited number of copies. It is rarely (if ever) found in the North American libraries. However, their publications are very important: they witness a unique process of incredible changes of an ancient tradition in the changing world.

<sup>ii</sup> The First Symposium took place in 1999.

<sup>iii</sup> The papers, presented at the Symposium, are published in the series, called “Ethnological Studies of Shamanism and Other Indigenous Spiritual Beliefs and Practices.” So far (1995-2001), 7 volumes (9 books), some consisting of the Proceedings, and others - of collections of similar papers, have been published. In the following footnotes – ESS.

<sup>iv</sup> And creatively use this knowledge;

<sup>v</sup> Shamanic session.

<sup>vi</sup> In *traditional* Siberian Shamanism, full-scale *kamlanie* is *never*: 1) done by several shamans simultaneously, 2) done during the day, and, while public is often present at *kamlanie*, it is not an “arbitrary” gathering. Many older Anthropologists who studied the “classical” Shamanism, saw this ceremony as a total abomination of tradition (I discussed the ceremony with them), lacking any relevance to Shamanism as they knew it. The rain, however, began promptly.

<sup>vii</sup> This attitude is not necessarily ethnic: Russian underground Christians, dissident intelligentsia, and even alternative rock’n’roll musicians, all disliked or persecuted by the Soviet state, had the same mentality and faced serious existential challenges when the Communist power was over.

<sup>viii</sup> This idea is discussed in detail in R. Hamayon in “*Traditional Siberian Shamanism*”, in: *Central-Asian Shamanism:*

*Philosophical, Historical, Religious, Ecological Aspects*, pp.123-29.

<sup>ix</sup> Since mid-1990, a new religious idea manifested itself throughout Southern Siberia - “The White Faith.” Among other reasons for its evolvment was, in my opinion, the need for the creation of the coherent “concept of empowerment.” See my forthcoming paper, “The Phenomenon of White Faith.”

<sup>x</sup> “The minority quota” here refers not to the restrictions to the access to education for the people of Siberia, but the other way around - to encouraging it.

<sup>xi</sup> For example, in the book, *Altai I Tsentral’naia Aziia: Kul’turno-Istoricheskaiia Preemstvennost.*’ (*Altai and Central Asia: Cultural and Historical Continuity*)

<sup>xii</sup> In Buryatia, the most widely recognized Guardian Spirit is Tsagaan Ebugen (White Old Man), the syncretistic Shamano-Buddhist deity, and in Altai - Altai Kudai (God Altai), or Altai eezi (the Master/Mistress of Altai).

<sup>xiii</sup> For example, a conference in Gorno-Altaiisk on October 5-7, 1998. The collection, mentioned in the footnote 11, consists of the materials of this conference.

<sup>xiv</sup> Especially interesting are the new trends in the of spirituality called sometimes White Shamanism, sometimes - Tengri religion, and sometimes - White Faith. See the footnote 13.

<sup>xv</sup> Buryat Shamanism has a more positive/optimistic view - perhaps, due to the Buddhist influence.

<sup>xvi</sup> This tendency is probably related to the fact that an “alien shaman” is unlikely to use his/her powers for some long-going local vendetta, in which a local one may be involved, or may take a side in a conflict that involves his/her clan.

<sup>xvii</sup> To my knowledge.

<sup>xviii</sup> The Head of the Foundation is Michael Harner, the author of the “shamanic manual,” *The Way of a Shaman*.

<sup>xix</sup> Drumstick - a very important shamanic attribute.



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<sup>xx</sup> The story of the Great Occult Revolution will appear in my forthcoming paper.

<sup>xxi</sup> .Despite the fact that he knows a lot more about Shamanism than I do.

<sup>xxii</sup> The story, "*The Shamanic gift and the performing arts in Siberia,*" presented by Kira van Deusen in the Volume 6 of the ESS, seems to tell about this category of people. I do not know personally any of her informants, but their stories looks similar to the stories of those I know.

<sup>xxiii</sup> In this respect, they strikingly resemble Psychoanalysts.

<sup>xxiv</sup> It is not exactly clear, how ancient this vocation is - it could be that it has "split off" Shamanism under the influence of Buddhism and Christianity (16th-19th centuries). On the other hand, similar phenomena are found throughout Siberia (including the places where neither Christianity nor Buddhism were influential), which may indicate that it is more ancient.

<sup>xxv</sup> In the virtual absence of medical care in rural areas of Altai, biler kizhi perform many of the healing functions, and apparently are good at it. In particular, they specialize in neurological and psychiatric cases, including treatment of alcoholism and suicidal tendencies. The people in the villages where biler kizhi are practicing, are conspicuously sober and optimistic.

<sup>xxvi</sup> About a dozen different gifts; see S.Tiukhteneva, "Neo-shamanism" in the Altay (end of 80s-90s): clairvoyance and dreaming in the practice of shamanizing people," ESS, V.5, p. 124.