

said that he, her husband, had been without a soul for two years. When he went to the cemetery, the father's tombstone was sunken and there was a big hole. Therefore, after her husband's death, Galina began to do all the Buryat traditional processes.

The connection to home and hearth, local place and ancestral kinship is very well illustrated in this case, even more convincing perhaps because it is a Russian who speaks and who has been won over to the Buryat point of view. The ritual of connection to ancestral spirits in their birthplace through the medium of a clan shaman is identical to the ritual Irina employed. Shamans received their power through the ability to make this connection — without which people feel they have no place and are lost as if their soul has departed and cannot be found.

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## Soul Suckers: Vampiric Shamans in Northern Kamchatka, Russia

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## Abstract

This paper proceeds from the assumption that the spiritual beliefs of native people of northern Kamchatka (Koryaks, Chukchis, Evens) are not false consciousness, nor "really" about something else. I situate beliefs about vampiric shamans in the larger cultural context of the spiritual world, the human soul, and the afterlife. After this description of discourse about shamans, the second half of the paper demonstrates how the way people talk about the spiritual world is interconnected with their social reality. *Keywords: Shamans, Kamchatka, soul, Koryak*

When I mention to people in North America that I have spent time with people in the Russian Far East who are considered to be shamans, and some of these shamans are thought to practice a sort of spiritual vampirism, I am always asked, "are there really vampiric shamans?" The best starting point is Evans-Pritchard's position that "beliefs...are sociological facts, not theological facts," and speculation on the truth or falsity of spiritual beliefs only hinders appropriate analysis (1965:67). I would like to go further and declare that analysis proceeds best from the assumption that such entities as spirits and vampires *do* exist, and are not the product of economic relations, psychopathology, hallucinogenic substances, or "superstition" (cf. Turner 1996). This paper will describe discourse and actions concerning vampiric shamans in northern Kamchatka, Russia among Chukchi, Koryak, and Even peoples in an area where traditional indigenous culture is dominated by reindeer-herding Koryak spiritual beliefs. I discuss Koryak spirituality and shamanic practices within an emic framework, which requires the assumption that spirits inhabit the earth and humans are not the only sentient beings. In the end I will suggest an analysis of the socially complex issues involved without invalidating indigenous categories or beliefs. Discourse about vampiric shamans provides an entrance into the serious spiritual, cultural, and socio-economic crises confronting native people in Kamchatka.

Kamchatka, Russia is similar to neighboring Alaska in many respects. In the southern portions, the landscape is dominated by volcanoes and mountains, thick forests, and rich salmon streams. The Itelmen people traditionally lived in winter villages and moved to fishing camps for the summer salmon harvest, much like native peoples of southeast Alaska. Moving north, one encounters Koryak and Even reindeer herders who traded with Itelmen and Koryak hunters, exchanging deer meat and skins for sea products and trade goods. This long tradition of reindeer herding

(as opposed to deer hunting) distinguishes indigenous Kamchatkan cultures from those of Alaska. Northern Kamchatka and the mainland are mixed forest/tundra and scattered permafrost, changing to open tundra and permafrost as one moves further north. The shores of the Okhotsk and Bering Seas were dotted with many small villages of maritime-oriented Koryak, Kerek, Alutor and (farther north) Chukchi and Siberian Yupik hunters. Like in Alaska, European values dominate political and economic affairs, but indigenous values are more prominent in spiritual beliefs and social relations in demographically native villages. After seventy years of Soviet nationalities policy, everyone has a single ethnic identity inscribed in their internal passport. This identity serves as the short answer to the question, "who are you by ethnicity?" But such easy answers are belied by people recounting their ancestors from various groups, and ethnic groups quickly lose their boundaries moving between contexts. The two villages I discuss here are dominated by reindeer herding; the indigenous language spoken by elders is Koryak, and the cultural symbols and ritual traditions are similar to Koryak ones described by Jochelson (1908), but there is some overlap with Chukchi described by Bogoraz (1904-07).<sup>1</sup>

Given this cultural context of Kamchatka, I will refer to Koryaks and Koryak traditions, as Koryak beliefs and rituals are the most salient in the context of vampiric shamans. Shamans among the Koryak are not professionals, as can be found among other Siberian peoples (Balzer 1990; Jochelson 1908). Often referred to as "familial shamanism," and described as such by many Koryak people themselves, shamanic practices in northern Kamchatka are available to some degree to nearly everyone.<sup>2</sup> A shaman (*angangel*) among the Koryak is a person with more spiritual power and knowledge than the average person. While all people have relations with spiritual powers through small offerings and larger rituals, shamans are in closer contact. They can more easily see and communicate with spirits. This is not limited to trances or altered states. For example, I was told of one powerful man who had died in the mid-1980s. He could see evil spirits, referred to as "*kalaw*" in Koryak, walking around town. One day he saw a *kala* wearing a woman's head around its neck. The woman soon became ill and later died, as a result of the *kala* carrying off the woman's soul.<sup>3</sup> This man and other people with shamanic abilities can perceive such things that go unnoticed by other, less sensitive people.

From a Koryak perspective, such an event is continuous with what we think of as "ordinary reality." The shaman is not privy to an extraordinary reality, but simply more perceptive about the ordinary. Much of the literature on shamanism explicitly or implicitly relegates spirits and human interaction with them to a different plane of existence, whether it is "non-ordinary reality" (Harner 1980; Horwitz 1990; Peters and Price-Williams 1980), or an emphasis on trance techniques for a person to engage the spirits (Eliade 1964; Lewis 1971; Vdovin 1976). Spirits are not relegated to another world in Kamchatka, where every person has a spiritual as well as corporeal component. Humans are one kind of person, along with animals, mountains, special parts of rivers, and other beings, like *kalaw*, who are rarely perceptible as corporeal beings. An analogy from our culture is color blindness. Color-blind people cannot see the numbers among a field of colored dots in the standard tests, while non-color-blind people can easily see the numbers. A shaman can see *kala* while the rest of us are *kala*-blind. An experienced reindeer herder can

immediately identify a particular deer out of several hundred, name the deer's owner and its dam and grandams several generations back. To less experienced people, many of these deer are indistinguishable from one another, and even if we could tell them apart, we would have a difficult time remembering each deer's genealogy and personal history, which come easily to the herder. Thus shamans, with talent and much practice and experience, can identify spiritual signs another would miss.

My second definition is the term "vampire," which I think of in broader terms than a revenant corpse drinking blood. For my purposes, a shamanic vampire preys upon other people, draining their spiritual energy or life force in order to gain extra power or maintain unusual youth and prolong their life.<sup>4</sup> This may sound like witchcraft to some, but without getting into typological arguments, I would like to point out that Koryak vampires are known as a kind of shaman. They interact with autochthonous spirits to cure or divine, travel to the land of the dead in trance or dreams. Vampiric shamans are not interested in killing or destroying their victims. Indeed, many of their victims are already dead.

I first learned about Koryak vampires from my friend and colleague Marina Ivanova.<sup>5</sup> She began the conversation with, "Did you know that Koryaks have vampires?" She told me of an old woman in her hometown who sits next to recently deceased people during funeral preparations: "She sits touching or puts one hand on the deceased person and draws residual energy out of the deceased into herself." She does this to prolong her life, and she looks much younger than she is. "This grandmother looks like she might be sixty, but she must be over eighty years old," Marina said.

Marina is not a shaman, but she is not necessarily *kala*-blind. She arrived home too late for her father's funeral because of a snow storm in which she nearly perished. Wandering lost from the snowmobile on which she had been riding, Marina begged her father's spirit for forgiveness for missing the funeral, and then she demanded help in reaching the village. Then she heard her father singing, and a light led her back to the snowmobile, where she heard the driver calling her name through the driving snow. "It was lucky that my family sent my *keke* (woman's reindeer fur winter suit) with the snowmobile for me. I would have frozen for sure without it," Marina told me. When she arrived, she went to visit some relatives, and saw the vampire sitting in the room, with an infuriatingly satisfied look on her face. Marina knew what she had done, and in anger she walked up to the woman, touched her on the shoulder, and said, "I take back my father's energy which you stole." Marina then left the house and went home. This brazen insult was dangerous, but she did not suffer from any retaliation, and later, in private, witnesses confided to Marina that she had done the right thing.

Death is associated with the departure of breath (*wuyevi*), which animates the physical body (cf. Jochelson 1908:100ff). The soul (*wyichit*) does not immediately leave this world upon death, but lingers in the general vicinity of the body until cremation. People were never clear on the specifics, but this primary soul is not the same as the soul stolen by a *kala* from a living person. However, it can be intercepted and eaten by a *kala* before reaching the afterworld. Another part of a person's soul is reincarnated into a descendant, and the child is given the name of the "returned" relative. The child need not be a direct descendant, and in one village, I was told

that three boys (aged 4, 6, and 11) all had the same name because they were each reincarnations of the same elder. At the same time, the deceased's "shade" (*wyehwuyel*) continues to exist in the 'other' world. Thus, a Koryak person has a unique combination of soul elements, only part of which is recycled from a previous generation.

Cremation opens the door to the other world and releases bonds between the deceased person's soul and this world. As people explained to me during the funerals I attended, the time between death and cremation is dangerous for the deceased. He or she is vulnerable to attacks from *kalaw*, who try to capture the soul and eat it before the body can be cremated. That is why people continually sat closely around the deceased the two days before cremation, while elder women finished sewing the funerary costume. It was also a time for the deceased to take leave of his family and friends as he lay under a shroud upon a deerskin on the floor.<sup>6</sup> Tea, tobacco, and sugar were shared with the deceased. An open pack of cigarettes or pouch of snuff was on his chest for people to help themselves, and a little tea was poured into a small, decorative teapot near the deceased's head when a round of tea was served.

Cremations take place far out of sight of town, and the deceased was vigorously guarded out in the tundra, while men built the pyre. Close friends and relatives said good-bye right before the deceased was carried over to the pyre. "If he is smiling when you look upon his face, your immediate future will be good," a grandmother explained. "If he is frowning, trouble lies ahead, and a blank expression indicates neither good nor bad fortune." The body is accompanied onto the pyre with two women who make the final preparations before cremation. An experienced grandmother is accompanied by a middle-aged woman "in training." They untie all knots on the deceased's clothing, so he or she is not bound or snagged in the journey to the afterworld, and they cut the abdominal muscles so that he or she doesn't sit up during cremation. It is best if the deceased just lies still and burns quietly and quickly, indicating an appropriate death and funeral and no further trouble for the deceased's family in the near future. These women hold a piece of moss in their mouths and caw like ravens as they work. Ravens are not necessarily "birds of death," but are conduits to the afterworld, also carrying offerings of meat from this world to the ancestors. The deceased is left alone on the pyre only after the fire is smoking profusely. Smoke and fire scare away evil spirits, protecting the soul on its departure to the afterlife.<sup>7</sup>

After one cremation I attended in a small native village, I was talking with some friends about the fact that the deceased's clothes burned off and flew up, exposing the naked corpse. This was a bad sign. It meant that his funerary clothes were not from his own deer, but stolen in some way. His first wife Sasha had sewn them, and she was regarded poorly. Soon after she had married this man, his deer began to disappear. After all his deer were gone, she left him for another man and began to deplete her next husband's herd. Deer are the ultimate source and signifier of wealth for Koryaks. There are spiritual and social connections between deer and their owner, and an attack on one is an attack on the other. My friends commented to me that Sasha is notorious for draining people of their energy or life force. She brings bad luck to whomever she lives with. All of her children have bad lives, too. Sasha looks a lot younger than she is. I remarked that it sounded as if she were a vampire. At first they

laughed nervously, then they agreed that she was exactly that. She could sap people's life force and use it to remain young, like a vampire.

In the course of asking about rituals surrounding the funeral and the meanings behind them, I learned that Sasha was disliked by many people. Not everyone accused her of vampirism, but she was considered a bad mother and a worse wife, crying crocodile tears at her ex-husband's funeral. She married a good man, an excellent herder with many private deer. Sasha used him up and discarded him, finding another husband with her unusually youthful, good looks. Is this female jealousy towards an "unfair" competitor? Is this social reprobation against a wife who doesn't provide for her old and sick husband after he provided for her in his youth, against a mother who ignores her children once they are adults? Maybe, but in twenty-two months of fieldwork in Kamchatka, I have heard many stories about greedy people — tirades against "loose women" who attach themselves parasitically onto a man with a job or other income, who ignore their children and only want to get drunk, but only once has such a person been accused of being a vampire. After Marina's statement about vampires, I was quietly, yet consistently, on the lookout for examples, but I found only three cases in two out of ten villages I worked in. Analyzing these cases purely as witchcraft accusations or metaphors for something else misunderstands the lived reality of people in Kamchatka.

Later that week two sisters, Anya and Tanya, told me about an elder relative of theirs who can heal. A cousin of their mother's mother, Miti cured their father of kidney stones. Sickness is not a thing or force, but a "people" (*narod* in Russian). You have to talk to the people and get them to leave. She talked to the kidney stone people and told them not to bunch up, but to spread out into little pieces. Thus the stone broke up and their father passed them. Anya and Tanya have several stories about people their grandmother has healed. After about an hour of conversation, the sisters confided that their grandmother lives far from town because she is feared and hated by many people. She can make people sick and die, as well as heal them, and has done so. I then heard several stories about people who had offended her, and how they quickly became very sick or their lives took drastic turns for the worse. She is a powerful person, and she can do many things, like understand dreams, foretell the future, talk to the dead, heal the sick and sicken the healthy. When Anya and Tanya told me that Miti looks very young for a woman of the same generation as their grandmother, who died almost ten years ago at a very advanced age, and that some accuse her of stealing energy from recently deceased at funerals, I connected her to the "vampire" described to me by Marina. Then I learned, Sasha is Miti's daughter.

When a shamanic vampire consumes some of the residual energy of a deceased person, she or he is not destroying the soul, not preventing its journey to the afterlife. She or he is, nevertheless, acting similarly to a *kala*. The *kala* who eats a recently deceased soul destroys that person and prevents them from going to the next world, from where part of them would be reincarnated back into this world. As anthropophagic monsters, *kalaw* are the most feared inhabitants of the Koryak universe. Vampiric shamans, feeding on dead souls, are analogous to *kalaw* cannibal monsters, and thus anathema to human society. These evil activities do not go without consequences, as I mentioned above. While they look younger and live longer, their family suffers. Their children are often ill, die young, or just have rotten

lives (alcoholism, poverty, divorces, etc.). Koryak people also told me that such people will eventually pay the price themselves. I couldn't get specifics, but their souls would suffer in some way after they died. "It will come back to hurt you," I was often told.

Unlike vampires of "standard average Europeans," however, Koryak vampires are not "evil incarnate." They are not possessed by evil demons, but are simply human beings doing evil things. As humans, they are also capable of good things: loving family, caring for the sick, protecting the weak, etceteras. Wandering the tundra alone marks shamans as powerful persons. The open tundra is a dangerous place, but not because people get lost. Koryaks know every little stream and hill as we know our favorite streets and haunts of our hometowns. They do have to worry about bear attacks, drowning, hypothermia and freezing to death, and hunger. But the scariest thing about the tundra is that people can simply disappear — *kalaw* get them. I have been told many stories of people who simply vanished. The boat, gear, dogs, and fish were all present at one man's fishing camp, but there was no trace of him. Another man was walking last in a file of four men. His son turned around to address him, and he was gone. The three men looked all over for him, calling his name, but they could find no trace of him. "It was if the tundra simply opened up and swallowed him," his son said to me. The subtext is that a *kala* ate him.

Miti lives several hours' walk from town, by herself. Not only does she not fear bear and other hazards, she prefers the dangerous milieu of *kalaw* and other spiritual forces of the open tundra to the strained milieu in town where she is either feared or hated. Paqa, another feared shaman in a different town, disappeared as she was walking the tundra a couple years ago. She was not hated as Miti seems to be, but many of the local Russians referred to her as a "witch." And many native people told me that it was best not to offend her. One would only lose in any fights with her. She also looked unusually young and vigorous for her advanced years, a physical index of her spiritual strength. Her remains were eventually found, a year after she disappeared, and Russians explained to one another that she was killed by a bear. Native people assured me that she allowed herself to be taken by a bear. She must have been tired with life, because it would have been impossible for a bear to simply surprise her and kill her. She was too powerful for that. I do not believe that Paqa was a vampire, but a powerful shaman with a powerful personality. She was not a recluse like Miti, but more of a community leader. Many who feared her nonetheless respected her, and Paqa did have many friends in town, where she lived.

My only direct experience with a vampiric shaman was in a third village, which I will call Woqanak. I was there to attend a festival, and the day after I was visited by a grandma, Qaichivangten, who gave me several beautiful gifts: a finely beaded fur hat, souvenir mittens, cute little bags, and a finely-made bead mat. I had been the recipient of Koryak generosity before, and I figured this was just the most dramatic example of the custom of giving guests parting gifts. The second after she left, my hostess and her daughter struck matches and frantically waved them all around the room, especially where the grandma had been sitting and where she walked. They also waved them over the fine gifts. "She is a bad shaman," they told me. "She leaves bad energy behind. You should be careful about those gifts." At my hostess's recommendation, I took the stuff over to another grandma who is also

famous for her shamanic powers. Tykken looked over all the stuff. Everyone agreed that Qaichivangten sews beautifully, but it is bad, made to enchant, suck my energy, ruin my marriage. Tykken cut the seam at the back of the hat and turned it inside out, looking for charms. She found some rabbit fur sewn into the seams and she pulled it out. She did the same with all the things, even found some suspicious thread in the beaded mat. Rabbit fur is powerful stuff. Loose tufts are mixed with seal fat or reindeer fat and kept in a bag; this mixture is given as an offering (*enelwit*) to the spirits through the fire and to the earth when setting up a new camp or before beginning a ritual. *Enelwit* is also left at sacred sites: certain hills, rock formations, sections of a river. The rabbit fur in the hat and other things was charmed to drain my energy and channel it back to the giver, Qaichivangten.

Tykken went on and on about the mitts and little bags. They were for a corpse. They were sewn like funerary wear. The beautiful fur and bead pendant intended for my wife would split us apart and suck our energy. We shouldn't wear it. She removed her head scarf, thus setting aside a Russian badge of femininity and appearing more "Koryak" (and so feeling more Koryak?) for her encounter with spirit allies. She lit a match and waved it over the stuff as she incanted in Koryak, exhibiting a light trance, such as I had seen her do at the ritually-charged parts of the festival. Sitting on the floor of her kitchen, in front of the brick, Russian stove of her second-floor Soviet apartment, Tykken called on the power of her helping spirit the loon.<sup>8</sup> She waved her arms over and around the pile of gifts, alternately chanting unintelligibly and making the throaty noises of a loon. I had brought over an audiocassette copy of Vladimir Jochelson's nineteen wax cylinders of Koryak songs and narratives from his 1901 Jesup expedition as a gift for the family. At that moment, the tape was playing a Koryak song with drum, a 100-year old recording of drumming to accompany Tykken's cleansing of the shamanically poisonous gifts.

My first thought was chagrin that I didn't bring my own tape recorder to gather more data, although I doubted if Tykken and her family would have wanted me to record the session. Then I tried to listen for Koryak words to write down later, but the syllables were impossible to understand. As she called out like a bird, her son-in-law leaned over to me and said, "she is a loon." The chanting took about 15 minutes. She cried some and seemed exhausted afterwards. She told me I could wear the hat, but I should sell the other stuff to a stranger. My wife and I shouldn't wear the pendant. One grandfather present told me that Qaichivangten sews very beautifully, and it can make one forget how dangerous she is. He told me, "she gave me a pair of beautiful boots, and I, like a fool, forgot how dangerous she is. I took them and wore them. Only a couple days after that I drove my ax right into my foot as I was chopping wood. I was laid up for weeks. I burned those boots right after that. Too bad, they were really nice, but I was hurt a long time because of them." He and other people present at the "cleansing" ceremony explained to me several times that the black shaman gives people presents so that she can hook into their spirit and suck their energy. Tykken told me the hat was now a safe souvenir, but it would be best to sell the gloves and little bags to a stranger, to someone with whom I had no personal connections. I gave the gloves to a friend to sell and I kept the bags. One of them was partially destroyed a year later by a moth infestation in my box of reindeer fur items. None of the hats in my collection, nor the boots given to me by friends were

damaged by the moths.

Qaichivangten is an example of a shamanic vampire who prefers preying upon living people. Her gifts provide a spiritual connection between her and the victim. Victims not only lose spiritual energy, but experience drastic side effects, like a broken marriage or an ax in the foot, due to her shamanic interference with the victim's life force. These vampiric gifts are an inversion of regular Koryak and Chukchi practice. Hosts present gifts to guests as they leave so that the person will have "good feelings" and there will be "good memories" of the visit. Qaichivangten's presents are even more "monstrous" than Mauss's potlatch prestations (1967). They are not an "agonistic" form of exchange, but anti-social, anti-human. The power in these gifts does not produce a positively-charged moral connection between giver and recipient, but a negative, antisocial one.

The social and economic context of these practices is nothing short of catastrophic. Even before the ruble melted down in August, 1998, native peoples in Kamchatka were in dire straits. No one was receiving their salary regularly, many not at all. Several years ago the quality of foodstuffs shipped in plummeted as prices skyrocketed. Stores and collective farms went bankrupt, and publicly-owned resources and equipment were privatized by their former managers. As the economic crisis has only deepened in the 1990s, people have learned how to embezzle and steal anything they can. This varies from bakers filching loaves of bread to administrators skimming off the top of budgets, or directly pocketing funds of their public institutions (governmental agencies, schools, remains of government-owned collective farms). The old system of centrally-subsidized government farms has broken down, but nothing has yet replaced it. The villages with vampires consist mostly of reindeer herders. The herds have been reduced to one-tenth of their sizes from those of only ten years earlier, and these villages don't produce anything anymore. Now people wait for government checks or live off the income of a family member working in the public sector (administration, school, hospital, etc.). All of that cash goes to *kommersanti* selling shoddy goods and low-quality foodstuffs imported from North America, China, and Korea. Cash then flows out of the village as richer people move back to the "mainland," send a child to college, or buy an apartment in the city.<sup>9</sup> People in small, native villages all over Kamchatka complain that they are being economically drained to support a few privileged ones.

From the president of the Russian Federation to the mayors of small native villages, everyone who can is sucking the economy dry to stave off personal economic disaster. I do not want to argue that Miti and Qaichivangten are the consequences of their economic base. They have been vampires for a long time, starting when the local economy was prosperous. Discourse about their activities is more salient in these times of economic crisis, providing culturally appropriate symbols for the general moral decline in Russia and Kamchatka. The rest of the people in their villages have become either vampires or victims. While Russian and Ukrainian managers in Kamchatka have their folkloric equivalent in blood-sucking undead, Koryak administrators and managers are analogous to vampiric shamans draining the vestiges of a vital force from a now-dead corpse.

I don't mean that vampires have caused the Soviet Union's economic collapse, but they do provide the best metaphor for understanding local experiences of the

current social-economic upheaval. Beliefs are intertwined with economic production and social structure, of course, but there are no clear lines of causality, as has often been pointed out (Kendall 1996; Nash 1979; Ong 1987; Taussig 1980; Weber 1958). The Russian cognate for "privatize" is a synonym for "steal" in everyday speech. Examples include, "the director privatized the collective farm's best ATV," and "I think I'll privatize that last piece of bread on the table." Koryaks are individualistic, especially compared to Russians, but they all agree that the root of current troubles lies in individuals taking once-public resources for themselves. It is a zero-sum game, and like the vampire's energy transfer from her victims, economic gain is possible only at another's loss.

Shamans, vampiric or otherwise, are more than metaphors. They are real people with spiritual powers beyond the ability of the average person. Vampiric shamans are feared and hated more than other powerful shamans because they feed on the energies of their own people — other Koryaks — acting more like a cannibalistic *kala* than a human being. I heard many complaints while working in Kamchatka, but the most bitter were about native people stealing and cheating one another. They expect the immigrant Russians, Ukrainians, and Buriats to take advantage of the locals, but only recently have Koryaks preyed upon one another, I was told. People break into storage sheds to steal equipment and fuel, break into homes looking for food, and poach other people's deer in the tundra. In Miti's village, people explained to me how the richest deer-owner tagged other people's newborn fawns as his own or slaughtered other's deer for sale. These actions are morally the same as the actions of vampiric shamans.

The connection between shamans and the social order is a discursive one. I opened this paper with the claim that the question, "are there really vampiric shamans?" misses the point. Shamans are shamans. Their power is not supernatural, but superhuman. They are stronger, wiser, *older* than other people. A full account of discourse about shamans is beyond the scope of this paper, but briefly, in the late 1990s, it is all bad. Natives lament that there aren't any "real" shamans any more. "In olden times" shamans had real power; they could cure people, find things, talk to spirits. Many insist that Koryaks didn't have any "black" or hurtful shamans in the past. "Shamans were powerful; people worked hard; we didn't know want or deprivation." Now the only shamans worth mentioning are vampires. "People drink all the time; we're starving; our leaders are inept, ineffectual, corrupt." This discourse opposes a halcyon past to a (spiritually and materially) impoverished present. It glosses over negative aspects of Soviet life, which, however, are salient in other contexts. Native people in Kamchatka don't separate their lives into "spheres" (economy, religion, social organization, etc.), but do analyze past and present experiences from different perspectives.

One is tempted to suggest, if only Koryaks could look to their shamans for healing people and keeping the spiritual world in order, they might find some constructive metaphors to improve their material lives and heal current anomie. Native peoples in Kamchatka do not see this as a viable perspective on shamans, (healing and spiritual leadership) because there are none left. Like the man who saw the *kala* carrying off a woman's soul, these people are already gone. I haven't exhaustively investigated the scene, but apparently the only shamans left are

vampiric ones. Certainly the only shamans people talk about in the late 1990s are ones who do more harm than good. Tykken told me she could counter Qaichivan's machinations against me, but she herself was not powerful enough to cure serious illnesses or perform spectacular feats like some people of her grandfather's generation.

Analyzing a culture in terms of economic, spiritual, and other spheres misses the integrated reality of the participants. Koryaks are experiencing a total crisis; it includes all spheres of their lives. The Soviets were at least partially successful in wreaking fundamental changes to Koryak social and spiritual life. Unfortunately, these changes have given the advantage to those who are not squeamish about sucking the spiritual and economic life out of their own people.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Linguistically, Koryak, Alutor, Kerek, and Chukchi people speak closely related languages of the Chukotko-Kamchatkan family. Itelmen is sometimes lumped with, sometimes split from Chukotko-Kamchatkan. Having arrived in Kamchatka only in the 16th century, Even people speak a Tungusic language, and their traditional culture differs in many respects from other Kamchatkan peoples. (Bobaljik 1998; Bogoraz 1922; Comrie 1981).

<sup>2</sup> The definition of "shaman" and the validity of a cross-cultural phenomenon referred to as "shamanism" are open questions which are beyond the scope of this paper (cf., Balzer 1990, 1991; Eliade 1964; Hoppál 1993; Lewis 1989; Nicholson 1987; Noel 1997; Pentikäinen 1997; Vdovin 1976).

<sup>3</sup> *Kalaw* is the plural, *kala* singular. This story was told to me by an elderly couple in a small, mostly native village in the presence of several middle-aged people. All present were Koryak or Chukchi and insisted to me that the story was true.

<sup>4</sup> See Dundes (1998) for a representative collection of analyses of "traditional" vampires. Konstantinos (1996) describes "psychic" vampires in the context of non-indigenous North American culture.

<sup>5</sup> All names of people and places have been changed to protect their privacy.

<sup>6</sup> In a tent, the deceased lies in the back in the sleeping area. Koryaks sleep in beds in houses, but in death, their bed is closer to the traditional arrangement.

<sup>7</sup> I will fully elaborate Koryak death rituals in a later paper. For an analysis of birds in Sakha spirituality, where ravens are more dangerous, see Balzer (1996)

<sup>8</sup> The loon is a powerful spirit in other Siberian and North American cultures as well (Balzer 1996; Henry Sharp, personal communication).

<sup>9</sup> College education is not an investment in the local community because these children rarely return to their small home villages to work.

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## Mannequins and Spirits: Representation and Resistance of Siberian Shamans

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### Abstract

In the early 20th century anthropologists collected sounds, images and artifacts to represent traditional cultures. Under the direction of Franz Boas, anthropologists working for the American Museum of Natural History's Jesup North Pacific Expedition documented a variety of northeastern Siberian shamanisms. Demonstrations staged for the phonograph and the camera served as models for museum representations. These ethnographic inscriptions, together with the collection of texts and sacred objects, documented shamanistic traditions; yet ceremonial traditions remained partially obscured, resisting full intelligibility. The complexity of variations suggests that mystification and opacity are central to shamanic efficacy and the continued vitality of performative ritual, and that Siberian shamanic practices are inherently resistant to anthropological modes of interpretation. *Key words:* shamanism, Siberia, Jesup North Pacific Expedition, sound.

### Introduction

The standard anthropological images and interpretations of Siberian shamanisms<sup>1</sup> were forged in part from demonstration performances staged in the field and re-created in museums through models, displayed artifacts, transcriptions, photographs, illustrations, sound recordings and texts. In this essay I will consider the construction of different types of ethnographic representation of shamanic ceremonies as documented by the American Museum of Natural History's Jesup North Pacific Expedition, mostly obtained between 1897 and 1905.<sup>2</sup> A monument of early modern anthropology conducted under the direction of Franz Boas, the Jesup Expedition produced classic ethnographic descriptions in various modes including texts and documents, photographs and subsequently composed models and miniatures, collections of artifacts including shamans' coats and drums, and wax-cylinder recordings of songs and tales—the first sounds ever mechanically recorded in northeastern Siberia.

The expeditionary gathering of material for study and display included performance-demonstrations captured by the turn-of-the-century's high-tech media, the glass-plate camera and wax-cylinder recording phonograph. The production of ethnographic images (often to serve as templates for museum exhibits and published illustrations) and texts (whether recorded by dictation or phonograph) helped shape