

MUSICIANS, CARVERS, SHAMANS by Tim Hodgkinson  
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## ABSTRACT

Tuvan art invokes a particular construction of 'nature' (and of an experience of nature) as a total cosmos embracing both 'this' and 'other' worlds. The concept of *kūsh* bridges the boundary between art and shamanism, but does not abolish it. Both art and shamanism set in motion a movement of the imagination that extends beyond everyday modes of representation. They diverge, finally, in three ways: first, by the degree to which occasion is determinative; second, by the direction of movement between material and imaginary planes (being there/ being away with the spirits); third, by the specific role given to the shaman in relation to the imagined.

### 1. Orientation

I have visited Tuva on numerous occasions from 1992 onwards, as a musician keen to work with other musicians, as a musical and anthropological thinker intrigued by the specific complexities of Tuvan culture, as a human being in search of adventure and beauty, responding to friendship and respect generously offered. My research defined itself gradually over this time, partly through my own thinking and partly through what I was finding in the field as I got further and deeper in. In summer 2005, I spent two months researching Tuvan aesthetics, interviewing musicians, carvers, and shamans, focussing in particular on the intriguing, sometimes awkward, sometimes tense boundary between the practice of art and shamanism.

### 2 Tuva: People, place

The Republic of Tuva is famously situated in the exact centre of Asia, bordering on Mongolia in the south, the Republic of Altai in the west, Khakassia and the Krasnoyarsk region in the north, Buryatia and the Irkutsk region in the east. The land surface is about 170,000 square kilometres and the population is about 310,000, giving a density of 1.8 people per square kilometre. However, just under half the population now live in towns, so in the countryside the density is closer to 1 person per square kilometre. Of city dwellers, by far the largest proportion, circa. 88% are concentrated in Kyzyl, the capital city. 70% of the population are ethnic Tuvans, with Russians as the largest minority.

About 82% of Tuva is occupied by mountains and the territory is closed off from the main part of Siberia by the Sayan Mountains in the north, whilst the Tannu-Ola mountains form a natural barrier to the south. Tuva contains most of the headwaters of the Yenisey River, which flows out northwards over 3000 kilometres to the Arctic. The climate is sharply continental with summer reaching 35 above zero and winter 40 below. The territory holds many different kinds of landscape, from high mountains, forests with numerous rivers and lakes, to rolling steppes. Its fauna is rich and various, with reindeer in the north east, camels in the south, yaks in the west, as well as bear, elk and wolves in the taiga (forest), and wild horses pretty much everywhere.

The celebration and sacralisation of this unusually diverse and rich natural environment has a direct bearing on both art and shamanism. There is today in Tuva an identifiable state-oriented, pan-national, unifying basic ideology centred on vivid and persistent notions of the territorial space termed 'native land', comprising a unique geographical and cultural world that stands apart from other types of civilisation within Russia. Within this space is spiritual communion between Tuvan land and Tuvan people (Anaiban 1998: 78).

The ethnic and political history of Tuva is complex, with many centuries of movements through the area and settlements of different Turkic and Mongol groups. In 1755 Tuva became a recognised territorial part of the Manchurian Empire. However the Russians quickly realised its strategic importance as a barrier against the Chinese and Mongolians, and various modes of informal Russian colonisation and 'protection' ensued. In 1921 Tuva declared itself an independent socialist republic, closely under Russian protection until its formal absorption into the Soviet Union in 1944. In a moment of renascent nationalism in 1991 Tuva adopted a national constitution that remains to this day inconsistent with that of the Russian Federation of which it is still part. Fortunately this potential conflict has not so far been realised in the economically difficult post-communist period (Anaiban 1998). If Tuva has managed to avoid major political conflict in the recent period, the cultural tension between Russian and Tuvan ways of life runs deep into the ways people conceptualise and experience art and the sacred.

The Tuvanian language is amongst the older forms of the Turkic group within the family of Altaic languages. Runic inscriptions in Old Turkic found in Tuva date from the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD. Today, in the post USSR period, it is the language of choice for most Tuvans and increasingly used for all kinds of communication outside of state level administration and commerce where Russian is a practical necessity. A further indicator of cultural resilience comes from a historical study of Tuvan names carried out by Harrison (1999); the study shows that Tuvans increasingly gave Russian names to their children in the period from 1930 to 1950. But then an accelerating tendency to go back to Tuvan names set in, so that the proportion of Russian names fell from 55% in 1955 to 20% in 1990. Harrison interprets this Tuvan naming trend as a strategy of resistance,

suggesting that a new sense of national ethno-linguistic identity was quietly growing in Tuva long before the period of *glasnost* and *perestroika*.

The Tuvan traditional way of life is nomadic pastoralism and hunting. However, with the collectivisation campaigns conducted by the communists in 1928-30 and in 1948, the government was claiming by 1958 that the last of the nomads had moved into permanent houses. Given the unreliability of such claims, I tend not to disbelieve people who describe their families as living in yurts much later than this, and indeed through to the present day. Another clue is changes in the way yurts are made, and there are plenty of the older type around. The key point here is that the Tuvan economic-cultural type of South Siberian nomadism is identified with smaller units of economic production and consumption, but not with political, military and administrative structures, which appear in other social forms. The autonomy between upper and lower scales of organisation is known to have increased in Tuva in the period 1755 -1912, as a result of the Manchu strategy of dissolving larger kinship groups (Vainshtein 1980). The point is not simply that the lower end of the scale was resistant to change but that it was so for a reason: the amount of livestock mobility largely determines the degree of pasture degradation and knowledge of this relationship is passed from generation to generation of herders (Humphrey and Sneath 1999). This knowledge would have opposed itself implacably to communist notions of settlement and specialisation and ensured the persistence of small-scale units as the locus of Tuvan cultural life.

Tuvan culture is profoundly shot-through with shamanic belief. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries two main waves of proselytising Buddhists reached Tuva from Mongolia, setting up monasteries and temples and importing the Tibeto-Mongolian type of Lamaism. However the diffusion of Lamaism in Tuva, far from replacing shamanism, simply added a new layer to the shamanic religious concept. (Suzukey 1993, p 12-3) Prior to the persecutions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century every small local community in the country had its shaman. Two main factors worked against the communist onslaught on the 'obsolete' Tuvan way of life. First, with regard to shamanism, the Party concentrated on the externals and failed to realise the depth of the animist beliefs woven into every aspect of the life of herding and hunting peoples. Second, within Tuva, apart from the main basin of the Yenisey, the mountainous fringe and all the eastern region was without roads, so that the shepherds, reindeer-herders and hunters, although collectivised, largely maintained their ancestral way of life (Forsyth, 1992).

More recently, it has been suggested (Vitebsky 1995, Kristensen 2002) that Tuvan shamanism has lost its link to tradition in the urban and post-communist period.

To which a feisty response comes from the shaman Sergei Ondar:

*I don't see any problem with shamanising in cities, or indeed in extremely unshamanistic environments...All of my life has been a step by step development of shamanism: working in the city is part of that, and doesn't seem like a big disjunction: I am in touch with my roots in nature and the cosmos.*

### 3 Tuva: art

Tuva is famously home to an ancient and extraordinary tradition of throat singing, called *xoomei* - a technique by which a singer appears to sing two notes at once, developing a melody of upper notes that are in fact harmonics of the lower note. Around a core strand of traditional vocal and instrumental music has developed a vigorous contemporary musical life that would put many a larger country to shame. In Kyzyl one may hear solo and ensemble performances of traditional music in different styles, as well as a national folklore orchestra, homegrown rock and pop bands of many types, and hip-hop and rap groups. There is also a national symphony orchestra that plays pieces by Tuvan composers, a conservatoire, and at least one jazz group. Tuvans also enjoy mixing things up: my notebook of 1992 describes a concert by the group Biosyntes: 'one man performed shamanic dances whilst another did throat singing, two drummers pounded, and cello and violin exchanged angular atonal lines'. The schools seem to be humming with music and dancing. Kyzyl residents enjoy Karaoke and Turkish disco hits.

Tuva is also home to a less well known but very widespread tradition of stone carving. Agalmatolite soft stone is the usual material, obtained from a single area in western Tuva. Many Tuvans enjoy carving and it is common to see someone waiting for a bus bring a carving out of their pocket and whittle at it with a knife.

This paper concentrates on the art of music. As a supporting case I use data on carving to show how aesthetic vocabulary goes beyond the specifics of a single practice. I have not dealt with poetry (except indirectly as it contributes to the shamanic songs or *algysh*) because to do so would require a deep grasp of the language. I have omitted to discuss the ancient, and possibly no longer extant, art of inspired epic performance, for the simple reason that I have had no personal contact with it. As a way of putting the topic aside, the carver and shamans' costume maker Alexander-Sat Nemo told me:

*In Tuvan folklore the storyteller goes into shamanic trance, seeing only the world of the story, of the heroes. I met a living storyteller and he told me that that was how he worked himself: he went there into the world of the story.*

It was clearly a rare event for Alexander-Sat Nemo, well connected with both artists and shamans, to meet a living storyteller.

#### 4 Objectives

My objectives were first to establish the content of Tuvan aesthetic vocabulary. By 'aesthetic vocabulary' I mean the words people use when they talk about art: in this case primarily the words that musicians and carvers use to conceptualise both their own work and the work of others. One question was to confirm the extent to which there is indeed a shared vocabulary for carving and music.

Second, to explore the connection between Tuvan aesthetic vocabulary and the specifically shamanic aspects of Tuvan culture. I say 'aspects' because, although there is a specialised vocabulary of shamanic belief and practice, there is also a pervasive informal referencing of shamanic belief in everyday parlance. Indeed this referencing extends beyond the verbal to include all kinds of representation.

With regard to the practice and discourse of shamans themselves, there is evidently overlap with art practice in the concrete sense that shamans create and perform their personal *algysh* or shamanic songs, and often play the *dungur* drum and sometimes also other instruments. Shamans also make (carve or construct) or find objects to act as vessels for sacred power. Finally, shamans attend to the formal aspects of their rituals in ways that might parallel the attention given by artists to the crafting of songs or carvings.

However, distinct from this 'concrete' connection, is the question of how shamanism might underpin the Tuvan aesthetic concept, in the sense of providing a dimension that is not given directly in day-to-day experience. Thus Tuvans responding to songs or carvings appear *prima facie* to be doing more than simply iterating a perceptual training acquired in, say, horsemanship or hunting.

#### 5 Aesthetic vocabulary in Tuva

Tuvans do not generally articulate a 'music theory' in the sense of a musicology. Tuvan music theory begins, rather, at the point where music is not seen as separate from life. The focus is not 'music' in the sense that isolates a sonic structure of pitch and time relationships, but music as a field of sounding connectivities between inner and outer states, music as a means of metaphysical metabolism, of modulating the (multiple) being of the human within the (multiple) world(s) he/she inhabits. Therefore Tuvan music theory is more like what we in the west would call the philosophy, or the aesthetics, of music.

Here is a basic, not comprehensive, list of Tuvan art words, with approximate English equivalents:

<i>Küsh/küshtüg</i>	strength, force, energy
<i>Hostug</i>	free
<i>Shyn</i>	true
<i>Dirig</i>	connection to life
<i>Bödün</i>	simple
<i>Kök</i>	pure (literally, blue)
<i>Arig</i>	pure
<i>Charash</i>	beautiful
<i>Ygaanig</i>	excellent
<i>Eki setkil</i>	with good spirit
<i>Öngür/chyryk</i>	bright
<i>Teren/khany</i>	deep

All these words can be used in the context of both music and of carving, though the third group would be used more for music.

These are positive enthusiastic words, describing qualities that are sought. They come in sentences like these:

Radik Dulush: *Truth is the relation between music and life as revealed in the performance: I have to understand the music's world, its intention.*

Gendos Chamzyryn: *If it sends shivers down your spine, if it hits you, if you receive a shock from it, this is what it's like when you hear the very best music for the first time: big energy, heart and feeling.*

Taras Mongush: *A carving should be simple, primitive, it should have strength, aliveness, energy, an energy coming from the taiga.*

Kongar-Ool Ondar: *You can teach energy and concentration in music, but only from the inside, from the spirit.*

In these and similar statements we notice that the accent is not on the literally perceived but on the transmission of an inner experience that is triggered by what is perceived. At the same time, in a way that might be seen as running counter to this, there is a strong accent on the connection between art and the natural environment.

## 6 Mimesis, metaphor, nature

The attitude of art to nature is metaphorical rather than mimetic because art addresses the discontinuity between natural and social in the human being. In developmental psychology, mimesis - for example a child's imitation of a parent - is often seen as a form of identification, an immature precursor of metaphor. Thus metaphor is a mode of active and selective substitution between two fields acknowledged as inherently different in character, whilst mimesis is the passive and unselective copying of elements from one field onto another that is effectively a blank page. Within the pragmatics of art, i.e. so far as the process of making work is concerned, mimesis is a starting point, the seeing and perhaps the acting out of connection, but not the end point, the finished result, which comes from selective decisions taken in the course of making. In Tuvan art, so also, mimetic representations, where they occur, are in the service of metaphorical ones, and not vice versa. Here I part company with the interpretation placed on Tuvan music by Levin (1999), who considers sound mimesis to be the 'core aesthetic idea' of Tuvan music. This is an unacceptable reductionism applied to the art of another culture, a reductionism that collapses art into its material.

Radik Dulush: *It's not just nature, it's nature and the human being who inhabits it, who feels it: out of this feeling and thinking begins a dialogue. So it's not imitation, because something is coming out of yourself.*

Alexei Kagai-Ool: *A carver is not representing nature in a visual sense: there's the presence of the human being, so nature is seen not just with the eyes.*

Levin is also loose in his interpretation of what constitutes mimesis. For example he describes throat singing as recognised by Tuvans as 'the quintessential achievement of their mimesis'. But clearly throat singing is not a literal imitation of natural sound. Tuvans are expert at imitating natural sound when they want to. But throat singing is as highly stylised as, say, a Tuvan animal carving. No one would suggest that a carving of a yak doesn't represent an idea of a yak, but 'photographic' accuracy is hardly the point.

There's a synaesthetic drift in the way Tuvans verbally connect music with nature. Certain melodic lines are connected to mountain topologies, or to visual experiences themselves. Suzuke records an example from a *khomus* (jaw harp) player: *And then, in the heat, everything is moving, like a mirage. You see that movement of the air with your eyes. So, there you see how the khomus sounds.* (Quoted by Kira Van Deusen 1997. )

Something is being said here about the connection, vehicled by sound, between inner and outer states. Although this outer state is closely associated with nature, it is not nature itself, either in the sense of how nature 'simply appears' (which of course it never does), or in the sense of a functional interaction with the environment in the form of, say, herding or horse riding. It is nature passed through a particular sensibility arising from a need to see and feel beyond what simply is.

## 7 Kūsh: strength, force, energy and the psychology of creation

The term *kūsh* can be translated as strength, force, or energy. If I give it key importance, this is because of the breadth of the concept, the connection it draws between art and nature, the connection it draws between the maker and the receiver of a song or carving.

Radik Dulush: *The energy growing during a concert like a beautiful flower that everyone feels.*

The musician Gendos Chamzyryn is also a carver. He explained that a carving contains three kinds of energy: the energy of the place from which the stone was found, the energy put into it by the artist, and the energy of the animal it represents. The stone itself is sensed as having its own individual *kūsh*: it is to get this that the carver watches the stone before starting to work on it, to see what's in it, what kind of spirit.

But *kūsh* is also the force that a shaman absorbs from the sky and the earth, the energy that the shaman then uses to execute a spiritual act such as a healing. In the shamanic context also, *kūsh* can be stored in objects that are either empowered by rituals, or which already contain *kūsh* by virtue of some naturally given, yet anomalous aspect. Thus a piece of white firestone contains *kūsh* which a shaman can use for healing.

An artist receives *kūsh* by entering a special state of mind.

Gendos Chamzyryn: *When I'm playing, a particular spirit comes to me, it's above and comes down into my body and sometimes I'm playing and singing and it's not me doing it, it's someone else. It's the spirit from where I'm born, a place that's light and kind and beautiful.*

Alexander-Sat Nemo: *A real carver puts in total concentration, forgets everything else: stone, hands, eyes, doesn't think of anything else at all. Afterwards, there's a power there, such that a stone can have an effect on a person.*

Alexei Kagai-Ool: *The carver has to feel the stone, be in dialogue with it. Before I start, I have to converse with the spirit of the stone, I do a ritual, I need to ask the spirit.*

So carving is also a performance, and the finished carving is the trace of that performance which has transformed the stone and given it *kūsh*.

Thus songs and carvings contain a power drawn from a cosmos that embraces different metaphysical worlds. The work of art is an opening to the cosmos, and this opening is its aesthetic potential - the quality that makes aesthetic experience different from other experience. Thus beauty implicates an expansion that escapes the limits of cognitive grasp.

## 8 Art & shamanism: the boundary

In Tuvan art there is a special psychology of creation, a 'moment' of extreme innerness. But although this moment is like the moment at which the shaman enters the spirit world, it is not the same thing.

Sergei Tumat (shaman): *When I shamanise, I'm not here, not in the place where I'm playing dungur, it's just my material body that's there: I'm away with the spirits, that's where my total attention is. If someone touches me, tries to get my attention, there in the yurt, that's dangerous - it would be like falling a long way. So it's completely different from playing music to an audience, where you have to be there, to be attentive to what your material body is doing.*

Gendos Chamzyryn: *There is a boundary between music and shamanism. The shaman sees and feels what is unusual. The dungur is his most important key: with it he respects spirits, heals or attacks the spirit of another person, travels to the underworld. When he starts he already has the link, he already knows how to go through the earth, the skies, he uses his ritual, his *algys*. Music is external, of this world, something that everyone can see. So they are two different things.*

Something that came up many times in discussing the shamanism/ art boundary was this: musicians are destined to be musicians and shamans are destined to be shamans: once destiny applies, a specific and incomparable mode of knowledge applies (Humphrey 1996: p 321).

Radik Dulush : *I was brought up to believe that shamanism was very serious, so you shouldn't imitate it, it's for those who feel another world.*

This gives a sense that shamanism, as direct experience, is for some people, but not for everyone, and so is not conceived as a form of cognition valid for every context. But that the roots of shamanism, that underpin the specific doings and cognitions of shamans, form something more like a philosophy or world view, expressed in terms sufficiently general as to have a kind of background universal validity.

What happens if the boundary between musical performance and shamanising is blurred?

Sayan Bapa: *People would ask about it and our percussionist would demonstrate dungur playing and *algys*, but after a few times we thought it disrespectful and we stopped doing it.*

Ludmilla (shamaness): *A shaman should never appear on a stage, as part of a spectacle or concert: it's disrespectful to the spirits.*

Sergei Tumat: *I was scared at first when we were playing music with the Wolf-shaman: I felt the wolves arrive and circle us, but, after it seemed we were more sure about what we were doing, they distanced themselves.*

In 1992 we talked with the actor Alexander Salchak who specialised in the role of shaman in the Tuvan national theatre group. This group went touring throughout the country playing in remote settlements. Sometimes people would assume that he was a real shaman and ask him to come to their homes to heal a sick person. 'A real shaman has to have an inner vision', he would say: 'I don't see, so I refuse.' But he also told us, more ambiguously: 'There could be a situation where I would call up the spirits and then be unable to send them back.'

The shaman Kunga-Tash Ool-Boo regularly uses the term 'artist' - in the sense of stage performer - pejoratively to describe shamans who he considers to be not 'real' shamans because they have mastered little more than the elementary skills of fortune-telling with cards or stones.

It appears that empirically there is a contested boundary that is interpreted in different circumstances by different players.

Perhaps we can abstract the following underlying principle. An artist should not carry out, or go through the motions of carrying out, a ritual act such as that which would change the world. Neither should a shaman simply go through the motions of ritual without being in the real situation that makes that ritual necessary. An artist is free to ask permission from spirits, and to receive help from spirits, within the context of an aesthetic process. A person who listens to, or looks at, art may receive *kūsh*, the spiritual force residing in the work as a result of the artist's inner moment of creativity and dialogue with the spirits, but what follows depends on how this person perceives and receives this force. So art does not make a direct and potentially drastic intervention like the shaman's act of healing - which changes not only the person but all the relevant objective circumstances surrounding that person.

## 9 Innerness

Sergei Ondar (shaman): *Without the inner state - mind and heart - medicine would be no more use than water.*

And the artist's 'total concentration' involves forgetting the outside world, going inwards to the sensation of sound and singing, stone and carving.

Tuvan culture confers a necessary and fundamental role to the individual imagination. This is often given a positive accent, as in statements about the creative individuality of each shaman's ritual - which must express the objective inner nature of the individual shaman. But there is a dark side.

I spoke with Dr Tamara Vassili, psychiatrist. She told me that the Tuvan psychology is introverted. This is functional within the old economic and social system - introverts are at their best alone or in small and familiar social groups - , but becomes dysfunctional with urbanisation, alcohol and unemployment. People keep their thoughts in, don't attach a value to 'expression' or to 'emotion' in the demonstrative sense. Nowadays the depressive type is the most common, suffering inside, not letting it out, drinking silently. The shaman would be the opposite of this, a hysterical dramatic type. So the abnormal shaman and the normal person form a symbiotic pair, sharing a common thread of intro/extra- version, the shaman acting out what the normal person represses. This is brought out in the data on sorcery.

Dopshun-Ool Kara-Ool (shaman): *Ordinary people do kargysh (black magic) to each other a lot. They send their anger and resentment against another person, and sometimes to that person's whole family. A shaman must be called in to dissipate the kargysh.*

Zorbas (2004) analysed the cultural modes through which guilt and envy are objectified into the symbolic idiom of affliction with curses and sorcery, and the possible therapeutic efficacy of shamanism in relieving psychosomatic distress caused by bottled-up feelings. He worked with shamans who linked the psychological needs of their clients to the increasingly antagonistic struggle of coping with poverty and destitution in a post-Soviet society.

It is the lived problems of everyday life, coming to an acute point, that provide the occasion for calling on the shaman. Shamanising is case-orientated, and art is not. A piece of art is in the world, something that a person could encounter or not. The connection between a person and a work of art comes from the way that work opens towards the cosmos, and the interplay between that opening and the person's circumstances. True, a performed art, such as music, tries to be as case-orientated as it can, tuning itself to time and weather, place, and the feel of an audience. But this can't match the detailed crafting of a shamanic ritual to fit a personal crisis, with the careful astrological reckoning, the 'inner' and 'outer' observation, the probing questions asked. Whilst art addresses persons, ritual objectively changes the world around and inside persons, dealing with all the circumstances, near and far, that bear on the case.

Connected to the experience of an accented interiority is how identity is constructed in Tuvan society. I am struck by the fact that Tuvan society is more individualist than western society. Thus family and clan identity (*rod*) are used to emphasise the uniqueness of persons rather than their conformity to stereotypes. Behind this genetic differentiation lies the system of *mengi*, a code of coloured dots of varying number that forms an extension to the astrological system. Each person is singled out not only by the facts of birth and kinship but by holding a unique and complex metaphysical identity that establishes their sphere of action not only in the day-to-day world but in other domains of existence. Where Christians have only 'body' and 'soul', Tuvans have a complex of concepts - such as *tyn*, *sulde*, *sunyezín*, *kut*, and *hei-aht* - of the non-material existence of the human being. These concepts indicate a psychological structuring that mediates between the experiences of conscious self, autonomous kinds of experience, and objective states such as existence after death.

Ai-Churek (shamaness): *In this world alone it's very hard to help someone or heal them: you need a connection with that person in another world. ...I was treating drug problems: the problem was simply people's ignorance about narcotics and the roots of drug addiction in other worlds.*

Thus a person, considered as a whole, is like a cluster of partly independent psychological entities inhabiting a plurality of worlds. This plurality enhances the uniqueness of persons, and I have often heard Tuvans say that they alone know how the world appears to them, that they see the world in a unique way, and so on.

Perhaps this potential for isolation, and the difficulty of overcoming it by means of verbal discourse and social interaction, psychologically motivates the sacralization of nature, the identification with animal spirits, and the desire for a dynamic circulation of energies, material and immaterial, between humans and surrounding nature...

## 10 Conclusion: art and the sacred

Looking over the ground covered in this paper, we saw how in Tuva art is spoken about in terms of a philosophy of nature. This led us to a consideration of the conflicting pulls of innerness and the natural environment, and we were able to resolve this by finding support for a construction of 'nature' as cosmos within a specific metaphysical sensibility. In the process we saw how important it is to avoid any kind of mimetic reductionism in our interpretation of Tuvan art. A pre-eminent concept was that of *kūsh*, a force or energy that exists in nature (as metaphysically thought), whose transmission between, and containment within, objects, persons and acts, transcends the boundary between shamanism and art. But the presence of *kūsh* within the experiences of both art and shamanism is not enough to dissolve the boundary between them, and we looked at how this boundary was felt and negotiated. Aesthetic and ritual activities diverge in three ways: first, by the degree to which occasion is determinative: second, by the relation between material and imaginary planes (being there/ being away with the spirits): third, by the specific role given to the shaman in relation to the imagined.

Although much of art's work takes place in the imagination, the artistic imagination is always fundamentally orientated towards an image that requires to be made in the real (i.e. 'this') world. The dialogue is between maker and materials, via the imagination. The convergence between the plane of imagination and the plane of material is effected by a physical process of making.

Ritual, on the other hand, establishes a special kind of meaning whereby concrete actions refer to, summon, and enliven a collective imaginary space designated as the sacred. Here is a movement starting in the plane of concrete acts, but going away towards the plane of imagination. What happens in the yurt, what a shaman physically does - drumming and singing, for example - , is fundamentally orientated towards what happens in the domain of the sacred. Thus a shaman takes care of the material plane primarily to organise it in relation to the sacred, according to the special semantics distinguishing ritual acts and signs from everyday ones. When the shaman comes back to earth, so to speak, the work is then one of interpretation, the material to be worked is the client and their situation; like Joseph Beuys the shaman might say 'society is my work of art'.

It would be wrong to oppose sacred imagination (as collective) to artistic imagination (as individual). Artistic imagination is itself culturally and collectively constructed. At the heart of Tuvan artistic imagination is an image of nature as a totality, as a cosmos. It is towards this cosmos that an artist strives to open. Artistic skill is knowing how to work this opening towards the cosmos into the materials of sound or stone, by revealing the inner nature of these materials. On a collective and historical level I suggest that the emergence of *xoomei* throat singing from a background of shamanic belief derives from a cultural tendency to want to unveil the hidden inner character of a phenomenon, rather than to observe its exterior. By filtering and amplifying the upper harmonics of a fundamental vibration we are unveiling its hidden life. Tuvan melody is the unfolding of the inner nature of a single sound because it is made completely of these upper harmonics.

The shaman, in contrast, is trained for work in the imaginary space itself, 'already has the link', knows how to go through the earth, to other earths, knows how to trick, flatter and cajole difficult spirits. The shamanic construction of the collective imaginary sacred is by way of vivid scenes, journeys, encounters. What might have been merely experiential becomes a matter of life and death. So the power and cunning of artist and shaman diverge, the shaman primed to negotiate sacred worlds, the artist ready to hone a particular vocal technique or visualise the exact way a deer leaps.

So we can watch where the care goes, where the attention goes. Take the shaman Kunga-Tash Ool-Boo, who is also a carver. When speaking of his carvings, he uses an unequivocally aesthetic tone: 'Look at this, look at how beautiful it is, how the two goats are standing together, the composition'. As the only carver I know who works in horn rather than stone, he talks about horn being a finer and stronger material than stone, how this allows him to achieve greater delicacy in the figures. His work frequently shows a sense of exploiting variations in colour and texture of the material to achieve a more 'living' quality in the figure. In this sense the carver Kunga is truly a maker, focussed on taking physical stuff and crafting it into a physical thing. But as a shaman Kunga also makes ritual objects that have a ritual function, such as acting as vessels for spirits. Such objects may be the *ongon* given to householders to keep in their homes, to be prayed to, or given small sacrifices of food. Here his approach is completely different. Although the *ongon* depicts three human figures, it does so in the most rudimentary way: the work is done quick, using felt, metal, or wood, whatever is to hand. From the art point of view, this is like making a tool, or a sign: there is no interest in the form as such,

just the idea of the completed object and its function. But from the ritual point of view, the *ongon* is a focus for acts that refer to the imagined sacred.

But it is lucky to find such a clear example. The usual situation is, rather, that there is a hierarchy of functions and that shamanic doings contain elements of artistic practice and vice versa. So shamans talk of their costumes aesthetically - about the beauty of the objects that they've hung on it, or the feathers they've found for their headdress. And you sense that there is yet another form of value beneath the aesthetic one, a value which can be spiritual, but which could also be something like that of an antique or rarity.

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This paper draws on my own earlier writings, notably:

1984 *Sulla libera improvvisazione*, Milan, Musica/Realtà 15

1988 *Polyphony: emergence and necessity*, MS.

1996 *Siberian shamanism and improvised music*, Contemporary Music Review vol 14, parts 1-2, Netherlands, Harwood, pp 59-66.

2004 *Sibérie, Cybernétique, Si Bémol*, Revue et Corrigée 62, December 04.

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