

## CHAPTER XXVI

## CLASSIFICATION OF SHAMANISTIC PERFORMANCES

## AIMS OF SHAMANISTIC PERFORMANCES

From the instances of shamanizing shown in the previous chapter it can be seen that the aims of shamanizing may be different, but not all cases are seen in the above instances. When summarized, the aims of shamanizing may be classified into six groups, namely; (1) divination (discovery) of the causes of various troubles and of the future; (2) curing of persons; (3) transportation of the souls of dead people to the world of the dead and the governing of souls; (4) sacrifice to the spirits; (5) management of spirits and souls (including "mastering"); (6) various (e.g. new shaman). One and the same performance may have several aims, and it may have only one of the above indicated aims.

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DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

The discovery of causes of troubles and the divination of the future are the commonest aims of shamanizing. The shamans perform this very often, as a preliminary step, in order to find out what step should next be taken. Therefore, this almost always precedes the great shamanizing. In the latter it may constitute one of the parts or it may be carried out some time before the great shamanizing, i.e. in some cases even several months prior to the shamanizing. Among the Reindeer Tungus of Transbaikalia the divination, as a rule, is included in the shamanistic performance, as a conclusive part of the performance, or it is inserted into other parts. Finally, the shamans themselves are interested in getting acquainted with the spirits' activity, or with other people, and especially with the future, so that they very often perform "divination and discovery" even when they are alone.

The frequency of these practices and the methods of divination and discovery are variable in individual cases of the shamans and in ethnical groups. In fact, the shamans, among the Reindeer Tungus of Transbaikalia, are more inclined to these practices, than those among the Tungus of Manchuria and the Manchus. Some shamans devote to them more time than others, and I have met with some shamans who did this only when it was necessary for the performance. Those of them who are interested in finding new methods of divination and discovery practise this much more than those who follow the known practices.

In so far as the methods are concerned, divination and discovery may be distinguished (1) in the state of ecstasy; (2) in the state of sleep; (3) with the help of various technical and often mechanical means; and (4) by simple logical reasoning. In the first case the shamans believe that they can see the causes of troubles or the future with the help of the spirits which must be introduced into themselves. In order to introduce a spirit the shaman must first bring himself into a state of ecstasy. The question as to the nature of ecstasy, and the possibility of "divination and discovery" in this state, I leave for further discussion. The second method—in the state of sleep—is based on the

same idea of spirits' help during the shaman's sleep, when the shamans sometimes find the solution of problems set before them when they were awake. In the third method, technical and mechanical means are numerous. Such as, for instance, divination by means of the throwing down of a stick (*vide supra* p. 305), the burning of incense (*vide supra* p. 183), the throwing of cups, etc. all of which are based upon chance. Throwing of rolls of Chinese bread (*vide supra* p. 314) through a window paper is more than a simple game of chance, for the paper may be stronger or weaker, and the strength of the shaman may vary, as well as the hardness of the breads. Still more place for personal interpretation is found in the divination on the cracks of the omoplates of animals subject to the effect of fire. This method is known in Asia from time immemorial\* and is widely practised, especially by the Tibetans and Mongols of our days. In this method a great accumulation of the previous experience constitutes the whole art, in different degrees assimilated by the shamans, some of whom do not practise it at all. I need not explain the last case of divination and discovery based upon reasoning. It is done without the help of spirits, e.g. the shaman considers all symptoms of the disease, supposed to be produced by a certain spirit, and makes his inference as to the cause; the shaman may also consider all available facts and make his inference as to "luck" in the hunting, or travelling, or weather. In the same group we may include all cases in which a shaman influences himself or other people who act according to his prediction. Lastly, some shamans may foretell the future without a direct help of spirits, e.g. as to the arrival of other people, the change of weather, the movement of fishes, etc., and they sometimes believe themselves to be acting independently of spirits. Individual shamans use the above indicated methods in different proportions, which depends on the character of the shaman, his experience, and his belief in the effectiveness of these methods. A young inexperienced shaman will surely not rely very much on his or her simple reasoning. The choice of methods also depends on the knowledge of various methods (especially of the group of mechanical methods) within the ethnical groups. Since it is so, the methods may become fashionable and they may be easily forgotten. Naturally these must be known to the groups practising them as good and reliable methods. They become so either being borrowed from other ethnical groups which are considered to be superior to the Tungus, e.g. the Chinese with their numberless methods of divination or the Russians, with their fortune-telling with cards, or when the new methods are introduced by the influential shamans, whose credit is great among the given unit. Owing to these conditions, the complex of mechanical methods among the Tungus groups and individual shamans is variable. In some cases these methods may become of great importance, even for testing the shamans themselves by the audience, or for making the shamans themselves sure of their solving of some problems. Such a "hyper-

\* Cf. for instance, divination bones found in prehistoric sites, also in historic sites, in China.