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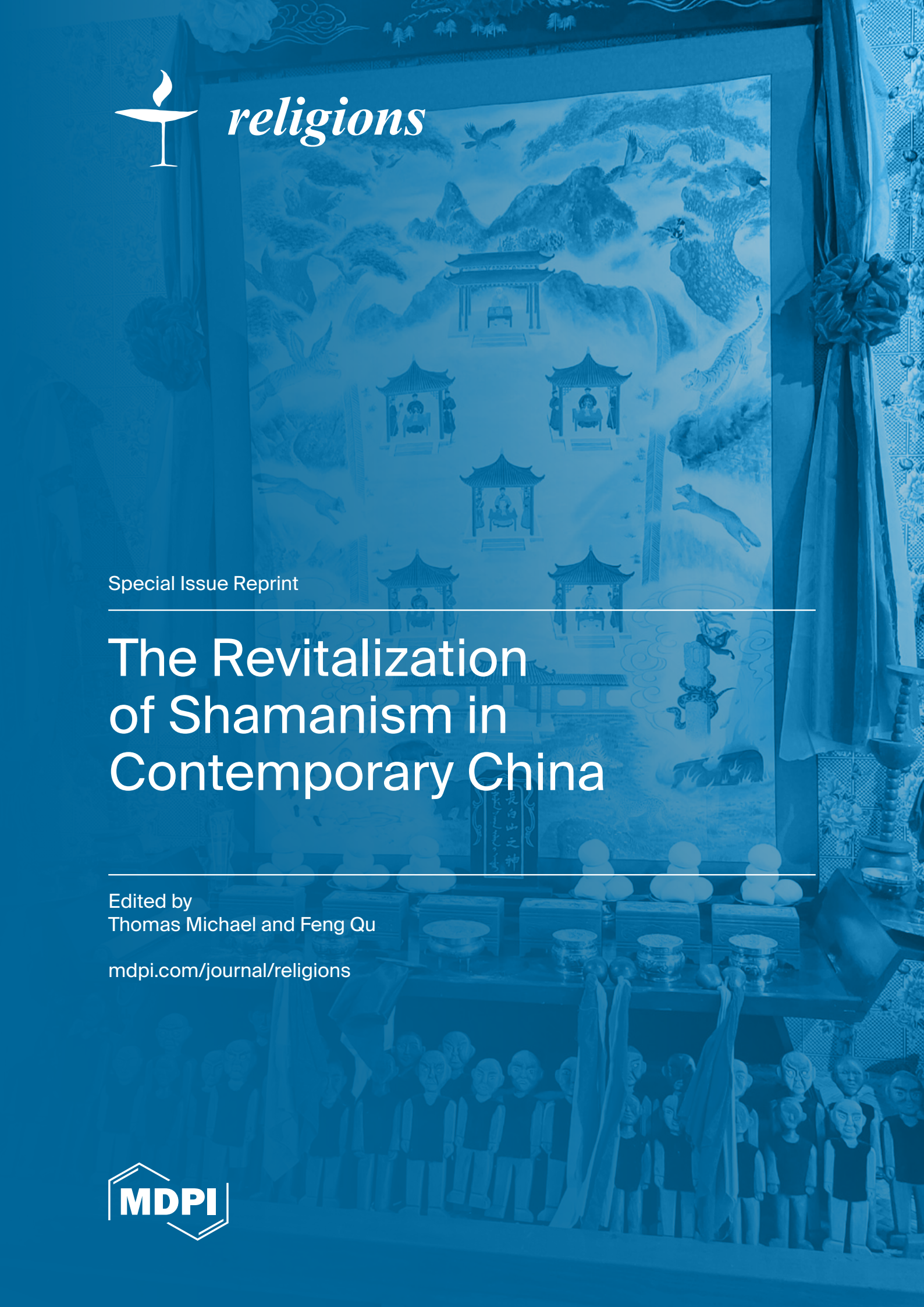

Special Issue Reprint

The Revitalization of Shamanism in Contemporary China

Edited by
Thomas Michael and Feng Qu

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This is a reprint of the Special Issue, published open access by the journal *Religions* (ISSN 2077-1444), freely accessible at: https://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions/special_issues/Revitalization_Shamanism.

For citation purposes, cite each article independently as indicated on the article page online and as indicated below:

Lastname, Firstname, Firstname Lastname, and Firstname Lastname. Article Title. *Journal Name* **Year**, *Volume Number*, Page Range.

ISBN 978-3-7258-4009-0 (Hbk)
ISBN 978-3-7258-4010-6 (PDF)
https://doi.org/10.3390/books978-3-7258-4010-6

Cover image courtesy of Feng Qu

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Editorial

From Cosmopolitical Mode to Traditional Knowledge: Introduction to the Special Issue "The Revitalization of Shamanism in Contemporary China"

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Received: 3 March 2025
Revised: 26 March 2025
Accepted: 12 April 2025
Published: 16 April 2025

Citation: Qu, Feng, and Thomas Michael. 2025. From Cosmopolitical Mode to Traditional Knowledge: Introduction to the Special Issue "The Revitalization of Shamanism in Contemporary China". *Religions* 16: 512. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16040512

In his 1993 paper published in *Shaman*, Shi (1993) recognized that while Chinese scholars conclude that shamanism emerged and flourished in the prehistoric period and faded in post-industrial society, they are "puzzled by its vitality today" (Shi 1993, p. 156). As Shi states, Chinese scholars "fail to realize that shamanism, like other components of tradition, undergoes constant change and adaptation in order to survive in an ever-hostile environment" (Shi 1993, p. 156). It is true that the evolutionary trend from classical anthropology still had a significant influence on Chinese anthropologists during the 1980s and 1990s. On the one hand, Chinese scholars viewed contemporary shamanism as "a remnant of primitive culture" and "living fossils" (Fu 2000, p. 124); on the other hand, they regarded shamanic practices and other forms of material culture as representing a valuable heritage to be preserved and studied in order to enhance ethnic cultures and improve ethnic identity (Qu 2018, pp. 8–9). According to Shi's report, in the 1980s and the early 1990s, "at least a dozen documentary video films were made on the surviving shamanic traditions of the Daur, Evenki, Manchu, Mongol, Oroqen, Uygur, and Xibo" (Shi 1993, p. 152).

Recent ethnographic data show that contemporary shamanism in China appears to be a highly complex phenomenon. While shamanism has declined among some minority groups, such as the Oroqen (Qu 2024a) and the Chinese Reindeer-Evenki (Heyne 1999), shamanic practices have been significantly revitalized among the Mongolian, Daur, Manchu, Han-Chinese, and other groups in the 21st century (Qu 2024b). As Qu rightly points out, shamanism among ethnic groups in China "is a traditional regional knowledge system characterized by strong continuity, as well as flexibility and adaptability to changes in natural and social environments. Although it has historically suffered the loss of much traditional knowledge due to the pressure of institutional religions and political suppression, it has shown the ability to readjust its relationship with contemporary social environments whenever conditions permit, thereby finding new paths for existence and development" (Qu 2021, p. 115).

This volume introduces eleven studies that present various approaches and diverse perspectives on shamanic and other folkloric magico-religious practices among ethnic groups and Han-Chinese living in both urban and rural areas of China. Five of these studies focus on Tungusic groups, including the Manchu (Jiang; Qu), Manchu-ized Han-Chinese (Zhao and Zheng), Oroqen (Ni and Guo), and Daur (Sa). In 1935, the Russian anthropologist Sergei Mikhailovich Shirokogoroff (1887–1939) published his famous monograph *Psychological Complex of the Tungus*, which represents pioneering research on Tungusic shamanism (Shirokogoroff 1935). Since the early 1980s, numerous Chinese scholars

have engaged in the study of shamanism in Manchuria, greatly influenced by Shirokogoroff's work. Several of the papers collected herein demonstrate that Tungusic groups remain a central focus in contemporary studies of shamanism in China. As well, with one contribution on Mongolian healing and another on the Tu group in Northwest China, four focus on case studies of Han-Chinese.

Based on her in-depth examination of the research history of shamanism in China, Shuyun Guo has determined that between 1980 and 2010, research on shamanism was "developing on a large scale" and had produced "excellent results" (Guo 2013, p. 145). Topics such as the concept of shamanism; ritual functions; heritage; the origin and development of shamanism; its relationship with Chinese civilization; and the characteristics of shamanic myths, music, and psychological elements became popular in the field (Guo 2013). However, the contributions in this volume reflect new trends in the study of shamanism and magico-religious phenomena in contemporary China. First, although the trance or ecstasy model has dominated shamanism studies for over half a century, the authors herein shift away from this psychological focus toward historical and social dimensions. Second, rather than adhering to static functional approaches, scholars now emphasize dynamic and diverse perspectives, exploring how social transformations, political changes, and modernity have reshaped the ontological forms and social roles of shamanism in contemporary China. Third, the authors in this collection reveal an ontological turn that rethinks the relationships between humans and other-than-human beings from a relational perspective, moving beyond the dualism traditionally dominant in anthropology. In this framework, ritual healing and interactions with nonhuman entities are no longer treated merely as physiological or psychological mechanisms. Instead, they are understood as forms of local traditional knowledge aimed at maintaining cosmological harmony within communities shared by humans and nonhumans.

1. Moving Beyond the Trance Model

There is no doubt that using psychological states as a criterion for defining the concept of shaman or shamanism has led to a global misunderstanding of shamanism. Since the Eliadean trance model has become dominant in shamanism studies after the publication of the English edition of Eliade's monograph *Shamanism* in the 1960s, the psychological term "Altered States of Consciousness" (ASC) has become "the buzzword in interdisciplinary studies of shamanism" (Atkinson 1992, p. 310). In the 21st century, an increasing number of scholars have recognized this academic issue while analyzing ethnographic and historical data. It is undeniable that the trance model presents a timeless and ahistorical perspective based on the human central nervous system. Within this framework, ethnographic and historical studies appear unnecessary and "superfluous" (Sidky 2010, p. 223). From Robert Wallis' perspective, the psychological trend is driven by cultural evolutionism and is thus characterized by primitivism, dualism, colonialism, and a "scientific" logic (Wallis 2003). It is evident that all these elements have significantly influenced previous studies of shamanism in China. The term "living fossil" has become a dominant metanarrative in many Chinese publications on shamanism (see Qu 2018). By emphasizing "symbolic and cosmological aspects," the trance model inevitably downplays "socio-political diversity" (Wallis 2003, p. 38).

Paradoxically, although the word shaman originally comes from the Manchu language, nevertheless, according to trance theory, the clan shaman—one of the two types of Manchu shamans—may not be classified as shamans because they do not enter ecstatic states during ritual performances. Meanwhile, many mediums, yogis, and other practitioners worldwide may be categorized as shamans simply because they can enter an altered state of consciousness (Walsh 2001, p. 32). Michael Winkelman also observes that

many practitioners other than shamans employ "a variety of trance induction techniques" to achieve an ecstatic state (Winkelman 1986). When examining North Asian ethnographic and historical data, Caroline Humphrey argues that the Eliadian model is inadequate for explaining shamanic practices in this region. She contends that "inspirational religious practices have never been independent of context" and "should be seen as reactive and constitutive in relation to other forms of power" within a broader regional and diachronic framework (Humphrey 1994, p. 192). Having conducted a case study on Manchu court shamans in the Qing Dynasty's Forbidden City in Beijing, Humphrey's findings reveal that although these court shamans—typically the wives of court officials and ministers—did not call spirits to enter their bodies, but rather, they still summoned spirits to be present on-site through drumming, dancing, and praying. She argues that there is no justification for excluding these Manchu female practitioners from the category of shamans (Humphrey 1994).

In his contribution to this volume, Michael Winkelman provides an ethnological analysis of the term *Chinese wu* (巫) based on cross-cultural research. He argues that *wu* is not a homogeneous category but encompasses various types, including priests who hold dual political–religious roles and wield supreme secular and religious power and mediums engaged in healing, divination, and spirit communication. His typological study reveals that *wu* varies across different regional, historical, social, and political contexts and remains in a constant state of change and transformation. It is evident that Winkelman seeks to distinguish *Chinese wu* from the Siberian shaman, echoing what the French sinologist Henri Maspero referred to as *wuism* (Maspero 1927). From Winkelman's perspective, the foraging shaman possesses supernatural animal qualities, the ability to transform, techniques of ecstasy, and the drumming and singing skills essential for trance. However, he argues that most types of *Chinese wu* "do not correspond to Foraging or Agricultural Shamans, but rather to other types of ritualists". Winkelman's conclusion clearly contradicts Thomas Michael's perspective, which identifies two varieties of shamanism in early historical China: "bureaucratic shamanism" and "independent shamanism" (Michael 2015). Nevertheless, his analysis undeniably contributes to a deeper understanding of the revival of shamanism in China.

It is evident that trance theory remains central to Winkelman's construction of the concept of shamanism. However, this is not the case in other contributions to this volume. Instead, these authors shift their focus from the psychological dimension to social and political analyses, aiming for a more holistic understanding of shamanic practices in contemporary China. Drawing on contextual studies of Manchu historical accounts and ethnographic records, Feng Qu's contribution argues that Manchu shamanism—including court shamanism, clan shamanism, and wild shamanism—has always been a dynamic, reactive, constitutive, and historically fluid process. Xiaoli Jiang examines how shamanic rituals permeated daily life and became integral to the social realities of ordinary Manchu families. She argues that shamanism remained active and played a vital role in the social life of Manchu Banners throughout the entire Qing Dynasty, both in Manchuria and in Beijing and its surrounding regions. Manchu rituals were deeply intertwined with clan structures, subsistence practices, military activities, and everyday life. Lina Zhao and De Zheng offer a unique and original analysis of how military elements have contributed to the formation and development of a specific type of shamanic ritual among Han-Chinese groups within the Manchu Banner system, shaped by long-term social and political transformations. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that shamanism has always, in the words of Humphrey, "responded to the different configurations of power in changing historical circumstances" (Humphrey 1994, p. 194).

2. Social Transformation and Cosmopolitical Mode

The above analyses indicate that shamanism is not a static model but a dynamic and ever-changing social phenomenon. These dynamics have been particularly intensified in the 21st century, as rapid advancements in technology; globalization; environmental challenges; climate change; economic transformations; political complexities; and global, national, and regional governance issues continue to shape local cultures. In China, the modernization and politicization of heritage-making processes have significantly influenced the revival of shamanic practices, leading to a growing academic focus on cosmopolitics (Qu 2024a). In Ivan Taycey's perspective, the term "cosmopolitics" refers to a local ontological world shaped through "interconnectivity with other places and peoples and contemporary experiences of rapid environmental change and social, economic and political marginalization" (Tacey 2021, p. 92). Scholars are now considering the multiplicity of relationships and the diverse actors involved in the making of shamanism. Many of the studies in this volume demonstrate that, under the influence of heritage policies and sociopolitical changes in a globalized and modernized context, shamanism in contemporary China has undergone a transformation. This shift emphasizes ethnic identity and the legitimization of ethnic traditions within a new cosmopolitical framework, where traditional individual healing rituals and seasonal sacrifices take place simultaneously.

Richard Fraser observes that while the Chinese state employs top-down heritage and tourism policies for rural and economic development, minority actors often adopt bottom-up heritage-making and new livelihood strategies to strengthen ethnic identity and improve their own communities (Fraser 2019). In this volume, Haiyan Xing and Mengting Huang's study on the Tu group in Qinghai and Zhuo Ni and Yue Guo's study on the Oroqen group in Northeast China illustrate how minority actors actively participate in the state-led heritagization of local shamanic cultures to legitimize their own traditions. In this way, "the cosmological and the political, the local and the global, and the traditional and the modernized are intertwined to form a cosmopolitical mode" (Qu 2024a, p. 117). As Xing and Huang observe, among the Tu group, informal local magico-religious activities can influence the formal political structure of a Tu community. Consequently, state policies and local realities can "achieve a compromise".

The heritagization of shamanism signifies a shift from local ideology "to a more global level" (Wallis 2003, p. 224). In examining the revival of shamanism among the Yakut, Piers Vitebsky observed that contemporary shamanism has been "re-localized on the spot, creating a kind of global indigenosity" (Vitebsky 1995, p. 198). Consequently, Vitebsky further argues that shamanism in this context "is both community-based and a new sort of world religion" (Vitebsky 1995, p. 193). In their studies of Oroqen shamanism in this volume, Ni and Guo argue that, against the backdrop of globalization, modernization, and social transformation, shamanic culture has taken on a new contemporary significance. They suggest that by using shamanic culture as a starting point and reshaped symbol, the Oroqen people reinforce their identity, deepen their understanding of national culture, and strengthen their cultural confidence and awareness.

Michael Herzfeld introduced the concept of "cultural intimacy," which refers to the tension between internal cultural practices and external misunderstandings of those practices. For Herzfeld, paradoxically, state bureaucracies—as outsiders—often construct official narratives based on the intimate, everyday practices of grassroots communities (Herzfeld 2016). Inspired by Herzfeld, Naran Bilik argued that shamanic practices in China "provides an informal space of cultural intimacy, a space not open to outsiders whose inquisitive gaze may only bring embarrassment, and where both officials and non-officials feel the commonality of mutual acknowledgement without any sense of awkwardness" (Naran 2021, p. 219). In this volume, Xiaoshuang Liu also notes that the process of heritage-

making creates new spaces of cultural intimacy, in which state discourse and insiders of shamanic culture have established cooperation. While shamanic rituals are presented as folklore art and intangible heritage for the government and tourists, they function more fundamentally as an ontological knowledge system that connects the human and nonhuman worlds.

3. Animist Ontologies and Shamanism as Traditional Knowledge

Scholars studying shamanism and magico-religious traditions in China have drawn inspiration from ontological anthropologists such as Descola (2013), Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998), and others (Ingold 1998; Pedersen 2001). The animist ontologies proposed by these scholars suggest that the realm of sociality extends beyond humanity to include mountains, trees, animals, and similar entities as nonhuman persons (Pedersen 2001, p. 418). In this framework, culture and society are not solely created and shaped by humans but are also influenced by nonhuman activities. Recent scholarship recognizes the social relations and intersubjective interactions between human and nonhuman beings. Xi Ju's study in this volume illustrates how nonhuman animals, coexisting alongside urban human inhabitants in Beijing, interact and communicate within the same social realm. It also highlights how animals, as social agents with their own personalities, intentionality, and sociality, actively participate in the processes of everyday life-making and co-construct urban culture and history alongside humans.

For human inhabitants in Beijing, understanding and interacting with neighboring animals reflect a traditional knowledge system that plays an integral role in building a society shared by humans and nonhumans. As Ju emphasizes, "this knowledge is not only local and embodied but also backed by a long and vast tradition. In this tradition, animal spirits are not considered as elements of a 'religion' or a 'belief' but rather as a widely shared 'zoology' that has a long history".

Although indigenous communities have relied on Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) for generations, it was only in the 1980s that Western scientific circles began to recognize its value as an important resource for ecological understanding. By the 1990s and 2000s, TEK became increasingly integrated into research practices in the world, marking a paradigm shift toward the quasi-systematic involvement or consultation of Indigenous communities in scientific studies (Berkes 1993, 1999; Lavrillier and Gabyshev 2021). However, although scholars have acknowledged that TEK constitutes an integrated system of knowledge, practices, and beliefs (Berkes 1993, p. 7) and is embedded within a cosmological framework (Doubleday 1993), shamanism as eco-cosmological knowledge has been significantly underestimated in the field of TEK studies. Nevertheless, several studies in this volume—including Ju's—provide compelling research on ritual healing, nonhuman structures, and shamanic wisdom, which are examined as components of a traditional knowledge system. Undoubtedly, shamanic and magico-religious practices, as local traditional activities, will continue to play a vital role in human adaptation to social and climatic changes within the context of globalization and modernization.

In this volume, we view shamanism as part of TEK, equivalent to what Tacey has termed "eco-cosmological" knowledge. In Tacey's framework, the term "eco-cosmology" refers to an animistic and relational system in which humans are deeply interconnected with a variety of nonhuman entities, including spirits of animals, ancestors, places, meteorological phenomena, and the underworld (Tacey 2021, p. 77). As an Indigenous scholar proficient in Daur languages, Minna Sa's contribution to this volume possesses a comprehensive understanding of the unique significance and meaning of each Daur ritual. This enables her to provide a thick description and nuanced interpretation of Daur traditional knowledge regarding the *oboo* ritual and its associated spirit system. The *oboo* ritual, as an

expression of ecological knowledge among peoples in North China, plays a central role in human social life. As Dumont suggests, the reciprocal exchange between human and nonhuman entities during the *oboo* ritual ensures "the fertility of the herds, green pastures, and abundant rain" (Dumont 2021, p. 50).

Shamanic healing has been regarded as a therapeutic or psychotherapeutic technique in cross-cultural and ethnographic studies of shamanism (Peters 1982; Walsh 1990, 1997; Winkelman 1986). However, two authors in this volume view shamanic and magico-religious healing as a traditional knowledge system that maintains cosmological relations between the human and spirit worlds. Based on his analysis of shamanic elements in contemporary Khorchin Mongolian bone-setting clinics in Inner Mongolia, Gencang Meng's contribution to this volume reveals that traditional Mongolian bone-setting played a significant role in shamanic practices, with its knowledge passed down through generations via family inheritance. In fact, as Meng argues, modern Mongolian bone-setting practices are a combination of scientific medical knowledge and traditional spiritual knowledge. Shichang Zhao's contribution focuses on the healing ritual practices of the Precious Scrolls among Han-Chinese communities in the Hexi region of West China. These practices involve scroll-chanting, dancing, instrument playing, incense burning, and incantation reciting, all performed by local specialists to invoke spirits. The specific scrolls and spirits invoked vary depending on the illness. In the author's argument, the healing power derives from the ritual space, scroll texts, offerings, portraits, music, fragrances, talismans, and incantations, which together constitute a system of local knowledge.

4. Outline of Contributions

Our volume opens with Winkelman's contribution, "Chinese Wu, Ritualists and Shamans: An Ethnological Analysis". Although it primarily focuses on traditional ritualists in ancient China rather than modern shamans, it offers a cross-cultural model for defining multiple types of religious practitioners and ritualists, based on ethnographic data at a global level. We believe that Winkelman's approach holds significant value for understanding the revival of shamanism and contemporary magico-religious phenomena across diverse regions in China. This cross-cultural model identifies various types of religious practitioners and ritualists, including forager shamans, agricultural shamans, healers, mediums, priests, and sorcerers, through a quantitative analysis of ethnographic information drawn from 47 societies worldwide. Winkelman establishes a set of standard characteristics for each type of religious practitioner and ritualist. For example, the characteristics of foraging shamans include performing rituals involving enactments, drumming, dancing, and singing; communicating with spirits for healing, divination, and hunting; encountering spirits in visions and dreams; and undergoing training involving vision quests, among others. In his comparative analysis of ancient Chinese ritualists, the *wu*, Winkelman argues that they encompass multiple types of practitioners, including healers, agricultural shamans, mediums, and sorcerers/witches. Winkelman also extends his comparisons to the Reindeer Evenki on the northeastern edge of China and the Tu people in the northwestern region. While he concludes that the *šaman* of the Reindeer Evenki aligns closely with the characteristics of foraging shamans, he argues that the *bo* among the Tu people does not fit the shamanic profile but instead corresponds more closely to the features of a priest. However, Xing and Huang in this volume hold a different view, as they see no issue in using the term "shaman" to describe the Tu practitioner *bo.*

In his discussion of the Evenki *šaman*, Winkelman identifies the state of ecstasy and altered human consciousness as central features of a foraging shaman. However, the following three papers shift their focus away from the psychological perspective to the social dimension. Qu examines three types of Manchu shamanism—court, clan, and

wild shamanism—providing an in-depth analysis of historical accounts and ethnographic records. This research critically challenges Eliadean trance theory. Based on his examination of historical literature, Qu reveals that all three types of Manchu shamanic rituals revolve around calendrical sacrifices for blessings, thanksgiving, and harvest celebrations, as well as irregular sacrifices during times of calamity for healing, exorcising evil spirits, and seeking protection. Although trance was performed by the shaman in wild rituals to invoke spirits, it does not represent the ultimate purpose of these religious practices. His ethnographic observations of contemporary Manchu rituals demonstrate that both domestic and wild sacrifices form an integral part of a unified ritual process. His contribution situates these practices within a historical, social, and political context spanning several hundred years, arguing that shamanism among the Manchus is a dynamic, reactive, constitutive, and historically unstable process.

Like Qu's approach, Jiang's contribution also demonstrates that Manchu shamanism was continually reshaped by social and political changes. She highlights the significant role shamanic sacrifices played in the everyday lives of grassroots Manchu bannermen throughout the Qing Dynasty. Based on analyses of ritual books, clan genealogies, and personal journals, Jiang points out that, although Manchu bannermen were garrisoned in diverse locations across Manchuria, Beijing, and surrounding areas and experienced dramatic social changes during the Qing Dynasty, the Manchu clan system remained active in organizing shamanic rituals within the framework of the Eight Banners military system. This demonstrates how Manchu shamanic practices were deeply intertwined with social, economic, political, and even military elements.

Zhao and Zheng provide a case study of the unique sacrificial culture—the *Qixiang* sacrifice—among descendants of Han-Chinese army bannermen within the Manchu Eight Banners system during the Qing Dynasty. Based on field observations of the *Qixiang* ritual process of the Zhang clan in Gongtong Village, Wulajie Township, Jilin Province, they identify significant military elements in the rite: the five major spirits are military generals from ancient China; ritual performances include arrow shooting and broadsword playing; and historical legends, such as a general's pre-battle preparations for a war horse (walking to the horse, feeding it, saddling it, tightening the girth, putting on the bridle, pulling the reins, mounting the horse, and shooting arrows from its back) and an army-leading emperor's lament (beating his chest and weeping bitterly for fallen soldiers) are vividly enacted during the rituals. The authors argue that the *Qixiang* culture originated from the Han military ritual *Maji* of the Ming Dynasty's army, later incorporating Manchu shamanic elements. Through this synthesis, the Han bannermen established a form of military shamanism, reflecting their dual identity as both Manchu and Han.

From the contributions, we observe how social transformations, along with political and military factors, have reshaped shamanic traditions and given rise to new ritual forms. The following three contributions, however, shift our focus to the tensions between modernity and tradition, globalization and locality, and the state and folk practices. Xing and Huang examine contemporary folk religion among the Tu group in western China, arguing that these practices play a crucial role in the modernization of farming and contribute to the construction of social order. Their field data reveal that rituals performed by specialists such as *bo* or *fala* serve to mediate conflicts within the Tu community. Local religious leaders play a dual role as both specialists and power brokers. They invoke spiritual power and engage with nonhuman entities not only as specialists mediating between human and nonhuman domains but also as local elites negotiating between communities and local governments. The active ritual practices of local religious organizations, led by these leaders, have thus facilitated a compromise between state policies and local realities. While Tu ritual activities continuously adapt to state policies in response to secularization and ratio-

nalization, they have also been successfully revived within the framework of state power, supported by heritage policies and the tourism industry.

Ni and Guo examine the transformation of the social role of Oroqen shamans in Daxinganling Oroqen communities, focusing on two significant socio-historical events. The first is the "Sending Away Spirits Ritual" of 1953, during which more than ten local shamans performed a ceremony to persuade spirits to leave human communities in response to the government's prohibition of shamanic practices. The second event is the initiation ritual conducted in 2008, in which the shaman Guan Kouni passed on her shamanic lineage to her daughter, Guan Juhua. Ironically, this decision was made by the local government rather than by the shaman in accordance with traditional inheritance practices. In 2009, Guan Juhua tragically died in a car accident, and community members believe that the incident was a consequence of violating the customary rules of shamanic succession. Analyses of these two events suggest that Oroqen spiritual life and human relationships with nonhuman beings have been profoundly reshaped by social changes and political influences in the process of modernization and transformation. The authors argue that future shamanic practices hold multiple possibilities, as modernity brings new meanings to Oroqen shamanism, distinct from those of the past.

Liu applies Herzfeld's cultural intimacy theory to examine the tensions between state discourse and shamanic practices in China. In frontier regions, she suggests that the recognition of shamanic traditions as cultural heritage has created a new space of cultural intimacy, effectively neutralizing the tension between local shamanic practices and official ideology. Based on her analysis of shamanic organizations, the intangible heritage processes led by local governments, and indigenous ritual practices, she argues that while shamanic culture among indigenous groups in North China is legitimized within official discourse as heritage and a tourism resource, it simultaneously fulfills public needs by facilitating connections between human and nonhuman worlds.

The following contributions illustrate the remarkable resilience of traditional knowledge in the face of globalization and modernization. Ju's chapter explores human–animal relations in Beijing, drawing on historical and ethnographic data. Residents of Beijing refer to four "sacred" animals—the fox, hedgehog, weasel, and snake—as *sidamen* (meaning "Four Great Gates"), recognizing their deep interactions with humans in daily life. Through possession rituals performed by mediums, these animal spirits are believed to offer healing, prophecy, and conflict resolution within the community. Ju's fieldwork reveals that local people perceive each animal spirit as an individual entity, complete with a name, body, address, and distinct personality within a broader social network. Many Beijing residents regard the Four Animal Spirits as human neighbors, possessing unique identities and a parallel society while coexisting with people in the urban landscape. These animal spirits are regarded as true agents, as they are believed to keenly perceive changes in human society and adapt their behavior accordingly. As the author suggests, the Four Animal Spirits system represents a form of local knowledge deeply rooted in the everyday experiences of Beijing residents. It is shaped by the historical and environmental context of the local society, reflecting the dynamic interaction between humans and nonhuman entities.

As an Indigenous scholar, Sa provides an emic perspective on the *oboo* sacrificial ritual among the Daur people in North China. Based on her participatory observation of the *oboo* sacrifice in the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner in 2014, she offers a detailed analysis of the system of deities and spirits, as well as the ritual process within Daur religious tradition. Her research reveals that the *oboo* sacrifice serves multiple functions, including invoking rain, ensuring favorable weather, securing abundant harvests, and fostering livestock prosperity. Most importantly, she highlights that the *oboo* ritual plays a crucial role

in revitalizing the traditional clan system and serves as a key mechanism for strengthening internal clan unity.

Meng's contribution examines the medical practice and evolution of Khorchin Mongolian bone-setting, highlighting the tensions between shamanic healing and modern medicine within the framework of Chinese state discourse. Based on his research, Meng identifies three primary forms of bone-setting therapy in contemporary Inner Mongolia: home-based practice, private clinics, and state-owned medical institutions. His findings reveal that home-based bone-setters are often well-known shamans in rural communities, while those in private clinics are typically shamans who have relocated from the countryside to urban areas. In contrast, bone-setters working in public hospitals tend to deliberately conceal the shamanic elements of their practice, instead presenting bone-setting as a form of traditional Mongolian medicine. In the context of China's scientific, medical-oriented nation-state construction, the author highlights that contemporary Khorchin bone-setting practices are undergoing a transformation from a traditional shamanic healing practice into a more comprehensive medical system.

Zhao's chapter explores the Scroll Chanting ritual among Han-Chinese in the Hexi region of Gansu Province. While specialists in the Scroll Chanting ritual may align more with the definition of ritualists rather than agricultural shamans if following Winkelman's theory, we do not pursue these conceptual debates here. Nevertheless, Zhao provides a thorough analysis of the ritual process, belief system, notions of incarnation, as well as the scroll text. He argues that the healing power derives primarily from the construction of the ritual space, rather than from the scroll text itself. All elements within the sacred space—such as the text, offerings, spirit images, music, incense-burning aromas, talismans, and incarnations—are intertwined to create healing power. In his argument, the fundamental cause of illness is attributed to the imbalance in relationships—between people, between humans and nature, and between humans and the cosmos. Therefore, the primary method of treatment in the Scroll Chanting ritual focuses on maintaining harmony among the components of the system and restoring cosmic order.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Article

Chinese *Wu*, Ritualists and Shamans: An Ethnological Analysis

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Abstract: The relationship of *wu* (巫) to shamanism is problematic, with virtually all mentions of historical and contemporary Chinese *wu* ritualists translated into English as shaman. Ethnological research is presented to illustrate cross-cultural patterns of shamans and other ritualists, providing an etic framework for empirical assessments of resemblances of Chinese ritualists to shamans. This etic framework is further validated with assessments of the relationship of the features with biogenetic bases of ritual, altered states of consciousness, innate intelligences and endogenous healing processes. Key characteristics of the various types of *wu* and other Chinese ritualists are reviewed and compared with ethnological models of the patterns of ritualists found cross-culturally to illustrate their similarities and contrasts. These comparisons illustrate the resemblances of pre-historic and commoner *wu* to shamans but additionally illustrate the resemblances of most types of *wu* to other ritualist types, not shamans. Across Chinese history, *wu* underwent transformative changes into different types of ritualists, including priests, healers, mediums and sorcerers/witches. A review of contemporary reports on alleged shamans in China also illustrates that only some correspond to the characteristics of shamans found in cross-cultural research and foraging societies. The similarities of most types of *wu* ritualists to other types of ritualists found cross-culturally illustrate the greater accuracy of translating *wu* as "ritualist" or "religious ritualist."

Keywords: *wu*; shaman; ethnological analogy; priests; mediums; healers; witch; China; evolution of Chinese religion; sociocultural evolution of religion

Citation: Winkelman, Michael James. 2023. Chinese *Wu*, Ritualists and Shamans: An Ethnological Analysis. *Religions* 14: 852. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14070852

Academic Editors: Thomas Michael and Feng Qu

Received: 13 April 2023
Revised: 17 June 2023
Accepted: 25 June 2023
Published: 29 June 2023

1. Introduction: What Is the *Wu*?

The term *wu* (巫) has been widely applied to ritualists of China's past and present (Boileau 2002; Cai 2014; Hopkins 1945; Lin 2009; Michael 2015; Qu 2018; Schafer 1951; Sukhu 2012; Xing and Murray 2018; Fu 2022). The spectrum of *wu* ritualists ranges from presumed archaic practices that persisted as Chinese society transformed from matriarchy to patriarchy, then to tribal chiefs and ancient kings, and eventually a wide range of historical and contemporary ritualists, including mediums and ancestor worship priests. Whatever the original manifestations and meanings of *wu* were, by the Warring States period (fifth to third centuries BCE), *wu* was widely applied to very different forms of ritualists and virtually all subsequent forms of Chinese religious activity (Michael 2015; Williams 2020).

Following Eliade's (1951/1964) seminal book *Shamanism*, the term shaman began to be applied to the translation of *wu* into English (Michael 2015). Even earlier, Hopkins (1945) and Schafer (1951) translated *wu* into English as shaman, but they also used the terms wizard and witch for *wu*. The increasing practice of Chinese scholars translating *wu* as shaman following Eliade's (1951/1964) seminal book was without critical assessments of whether it was appropriate (see von Falkenhausen 1995; Keightley 1998; Boileau 2002; Williams 2020 for critiques). Boileau addresses the consequences of such problematic uses of the term shaman that lack clear references to established features of shamans and used vague definitions that fail to differentiate shamans from virtually any religious ritualist.

This widespread practice of translation of *wu* as shaman is surprising considering Eliade's explicit rejection of such equivalence (Eliade 1964, pp. 450–54). Eliade discussed vestiges of China's archaic shamanism in male practitioners (*wu xi* 覡 and physicians *wu yi*

巫醫) but rejected the association of shaman with *wu*, whom he characterized as mediums, noting their possession states as an aberrant form and reflective of shamanic decadence. Michael (2015) notes this disavowal by Eliade of any equivalence of shamanism and *wu*: "Although Eliade discussed many examples of ecstatic flight, vestiges of China's archaic shamanism, he did not associate them with the *wu* . . . By *wu*, he specifically referred to 'the exorcists, mediums, and 'possessed' persons . . . [who] represent the aberrant shamanic tradition' (Eliade 1964, p. 450). Shamanism was a heroic venture, and possession was a decisive manifestation of its decadence" (Michael 2015, pp. 677–78). To Eliade, the loss of shamanism was evident in the features of possession characteristic of the *wu*.

Nonetheless, scholars have ignored Eliade's perspective and tended to use shaman in a very loose way to refer to virtually all Chinese ritualists, a practice that undermines the usefulness of the term and points to the need for a different translation of *wu*. Williams (2020, p. 154) points out that by the Han dynasty (206 BC–220 AD), virtually all forms of supernatural practitioners across China were called *wu*: "*wu* . . . comprises almost everybody who has to do with supernatural phenomena." Mair (1990) also noted that the practice of translating *wu* as shaman has problems stemming from a lack of correspondence with the characteristics of the Siberian shamans, beginning with the centrality of the ecstatic flight and the shaman's ritual with the whole community where the healing rituals emphasized soul recovery. "This is in contrast to the *wu* who were closely associated with the courts of various rulers and who were primarily responsible for divination, astrology, prayer, and healing with medicines" (Mair 1990, p. 35). Allan (2015) notes that many of the diverse ritualists called *wu*—also translated as diviners, conjurers and healers—do not even engage in alterations of consciousness, a defining feature of shamanism. Translations of *wu* as spirit medium (von Falkenhausen 1995, pp. 279–80), magician (Mair 1990, p. 35) and diviner (Boileau 2002) illustrate reasonable alternatives to the blanket use of shaman for all types of *wu*.

These descriptions illustrate that from the beginning of Chinese religion, there were several distinctive types of *wu* ritualists. This wide range of *wu* ritualists suggests that the term has a general meaning as [religious] ritualist rather than as shaman in particular and emphasizes the need to differentiate among types of *wu* rather than translating all of them as shaman. The critical question involves the correspondence of any of the various types of *wu* with empirically established cross-cultural features of shamans. Numerous scholars of *wu* have lamented the lack of objective criteria for determining what is a shaman and its features.

This paper presents such objective criteria from ethnological research to illustrate the cross-cultural features of shamans and their differences from other types of religious ritualists. This research provides an objective etic framework for empirical assessments of resemblances of the various types of Chinese *wu* with other religious ritualists, including a cross-cultural foraging shaman. The usefulness of this approach is illustrated below by showing the correspondence of some types of historical *wu* and Chinese shamans with the etic features of shamans, as well as the correspondence of most *wu* types with other types of religious ritualists found cross-culturally. These comparisons are used to show that most ritualists called *wu* or Chinese shamans do not correspond to cross-cultural features of shamans, but rather correspond to other types of religious practitioners.

2. Cross-Cultural Methods: A Derived Etic Model of Religious Practitioners

Rather than using theoretical or ideological principles to arbitrarily define the types of religious practitioners, Winkelman's (1986, 1990, 1992, 2010a, 2022) cross-cultural research project used a grounded method of deriving variables from descriptive ethnographic data and performing quantitative analysis of this information to identify cross-culturally valid religious practitioner or ritualist types. This study is based on a subsample of the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample (SCCS) (Murdock and White 2006) which examined 47 societies worldwide (see Winkelman 1992 for details). This subsample provided 115 culturally recognized types of religious practitioners, professional occupations thought to have a spe-

cial capacity for interacting with supernatural beings or power. These practitioners were characterized by variables based on ethnographic descriptions of their practices (for data see footnote[1]). This descriptive data represented as variables (nominal, ordinal) was used to generate a matrix of similarities which was entered into cluster analysis to determine the different types of religious ritualists based on their empirically shared features (see Winkelman 1986, 1990, 1992 for details).

These statistical groupings were used to derive an etic model of types of ritualists that are represented in the SCCS/CosSci[2] variables as Shaman[3] (879), Shaman/Healer[4] (880), Healer (881), Medium (882), Sorcerer/Witch (883) and Priest (884). These variables are referred to with initial capital letters in the text to distinguish these etic ritualist types from common concepts represented in the same words. The common and distinctive features of these etic religious practitioner types were determined by frequency analyses of the variables[5] used in determining the types of ritualists; these features are reported in Winkelman (1986, 1990, 1992, 2010a, 2021a, 2022) and presented in Table 1 and others below.

Table 1. Characteristics of Religious Practitioner Types (adapted from Winkelman 2022).

Ritualist Type	Principal Magico-Religious Activity	Selection and Training	Social and Political Power	Professional Characteristics	Motive and Context
Shaman (Forager Shaman)	Healing and divination. Protection from spirits and malevolent magic. Hunting magic. Cause illness and death.	Dreams, illness, and signs of spirit's request. ASC induction, normally vision quest by individual practitioner alone in wilderness.	High social status. Charismatic leader, communal and war leader. Makes sorcery accusations. Ambiguous moral status.	Predominantly male, female secondary. Part time. No group—individual practice with community. Status recognized by clients.	Acts at client request for client, local community. Community-wide ceremony at night.
Shaman/Healer (Agricultural Shaman)	Healing and divination. Protection from spirits and malevolent magic. Hunting magic and agricultural rites. Minor malevolent activity.	Vision quest, dreams, illness and spirit requests. Training by group. Ceremony recognizes status.	Moderate social status. Informal political power. Moderate judiciary decisions. Predominantly moral status.	Predominantly male. Part-time. Collective group practice, ceremonies. Specialized role.	Acts at client request. Performance in client group.
Healer	Healing and divination. Agricultural and socioeconomic rites. Propitiation.	Voluntary selection, large payments to trainer. Learn rituals and techniques. Ceremony recognizes status.	High socioeconomic status. Judicial, legislative, and economic power. Denounce sorcerers. Life-cycle rituals. Predominantly moral status.	Predominantly male, female rare. Full-time. Collective training, practice and ceremony. Highly specialized role.	Acts at client request in client group. Treatment in client group. Participates in collective rituals with Priests

Table 1. *Cont.*

Ritualist Type	Principal Magico-Religious Activity	Selection and Training	Social and Political Power	Professional Characteristics	Motive and Context
Medium	Healing and divination. Protection from spirits and malevolent magic. Agricultural rituals. Propitiation.	Spontaneous possession by spirit. Training in practitioner group. Ceremony recognizes status.	Low socioeconomic status. Informal political power. May designate who are sorcerers and witches. Exclusively moral.	Predominantly female; male secondary/rare. Part-time. Collective group practice.	Acts primarily for clients at client residence. Also participates in public ceremonies.
Priest	Propitiation and worship. Protection and purification. Agricultural planting and harvest rites. Socioeconomic rites.	Social inheritance or succession. Political action. Incidental training and/or by group. Ceremony recognizes status.	High social and economic status. Political, legislative, judicial, economic, and military power. Exclusively moral.	Exclusively male. Full-time. Hierarchically organized practitioner group.	Acts to fulfill social functions, calendrical rites. Public rituals.
Sorcerer/Witch	Malevolent acts. Kill friends, enemies, neighbors, even kin. Cause illness, death, and economic destruction.	Social labeling/accusation. Attribution of biological inheritance. Innate abilities, self-taught or learned.	Low social and economic status. Exclusively immoral. May be killed.	Male and female. Part-time. Little or no professional organization.	Acts at client's request or for personal reasons such as envy, anger, jealousy, greed or revenge. Practices in secrecy.

Ritualist Type	Supernatural Power/Control of Power	ASC Conditions	ASC Techniques and Characteristics	Healing Concepts and Practices
Shaman (Forager Shaman)	Animal spirits, spirit allies. Spirit power usually controlled.	ASC in training and practice. Soul flight/journey, death-and rebirth, animal transformation.	Isolation, austerities, fasting, chanting, singing, drumming and dancing. Collapse/ Unconsciousness.	Soul loss, spirit aggression, sorcery. Physical manipulations, sucking, blowing massaging and extraction. Plant medicines.
Shaman/Healer (Agricultural Shaman)	Animal spirit allies and impersonal power (mana). Spirit control, spells, charms, exuvial and imitative. Power controlled.	ASC in training and practice. Shamanic and mystical ASC. Some have soul flight, animal transformation.	Isolation, austerities, fasting, chanting, singing, drumming and dancing. Collapse and unconsciousness.	Extraction and exorcism, countering spirit aggression. Physical manipulations, massage. Plant medicines.
Healer	Superior gods and impersonal power (mana). Charms, spells, rituals, formulas and sacrifice. Propitiate & command spirits.	ASC induction limited. No apparent ASC.	Social isolation; fasting; minor austerities; limited singing, chanting or drumming.	Exorcism and prevent illness. Physical manipulation of body, empirical medicine, imitative and exuvial techniques.

Table 1. *Cont.*

Ritualist Type	Supernatural Power/Control of Power	ASC Conditions	ASC Techniques and Characteristics	Healing Concepts and Practices
Medium	Possessing spirits dominate. Propitiation and sacrifices. Power dominates, out of control, unconscious.	ASC in training and practice. Possession ASC.	ASC induced through singing, drumming, and dancing. Tremors, convulsions, seizures, compulsive behavior, amnesia, dissociation.	Possession and exorcisms. Control of possessing spirits.
Priest	Power from ancestors, superior spirits or gods. Impersonal power and ritual knowledge. Propitiation and sacrifices. No control over spirit power.	Generally no ASC apparent or very limited.	Occasionally alcohol, sexual abstinence, isolation, sleep deprivation.	Purification and protection. Public rituals and sacrifices.
Sorcerer/Witch	Power from spirits and ritual knowledge. Contagious, exuvial and imitative magic, spells. Power can be unconscious, out of control.	Indirect evidence of ASC in reported flight and animal. transformation.	Night-time activities.	Illness by consuming victim's soul, spirit aggression, magical darts that enter victim, unconscious emotional effects of envy, anger, etc.

2.1. Social Predictors of Ritualist Types

Winkelman's (2022) analyses[6] of subsistence and social variables associated with each ritualist type illustrate the source of some of the significant differences among them and a model of sociocultural religious evolution. This involves transformation of primordial foraging ritualists (Shamans) found worldwide in the premodern foraging and horticultural societies through effects of intensive agriculture, warfare and political integration. These specific social effects on religious evolution are illustrated in the following distinctive ecological, productive and social relations associated with each type of ritualist:

- Shamans (Foraging Shamans), the only ritualists in societies with a principal reliance on foraging and without intensive agriculture, supra-community political integration or warfare;
- Shaman/Healers (Agricultural Shamans) found in societies with intensive agriculture but lacking supra-community political integration, and generally with the presence of another ritualist, the Priests;
- Priests are found in intensive agricultural societies with supra-community political integration and are always found in societies with the following types of ritualists:
- Healers, who are generally found in agricultural societies, but significantly predicted by supra-community political integration and the practice of warfare for resources;
- Mediums, characteristic of complex societies and significantly predicted by supra-community political integration and the presence of warfare for captives; and
- Sorcerer/Witches in societies with intensive agriculture and supra-community political integration, but lack community integration (see Winkelman 2022 for analyses).

Since these ecological and social variables were not used to determine the practitioner types, the relationships provide an independent confirmation of the validity of the ritualist types presented (see Winkelman 1986, 1992 for confirmatory analyses). These ritualist types are found in specific configurations related to subsistence and political conditions, and as illustrated in Figure 1, present a model of sociocultural religious evolution (also see Winkelman 2022).

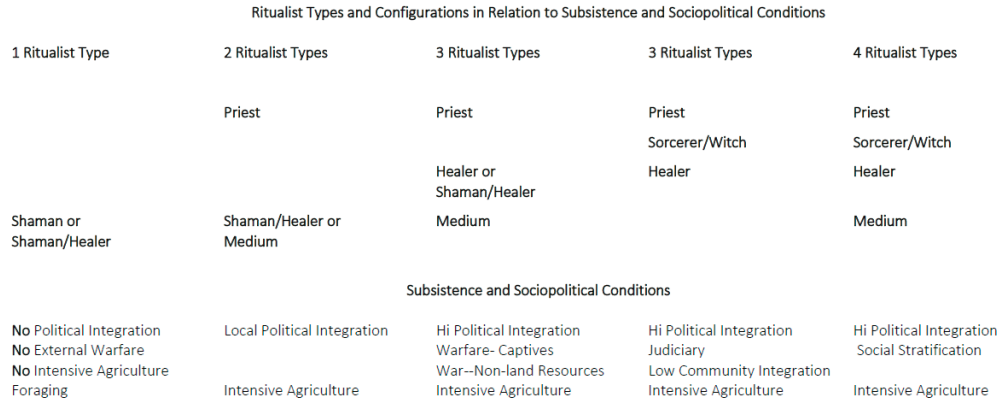

Figure 1. Ritualist Types, Configurations and Sociocultural Evolution.

2.2. Cross-Cultural Features of Foraging Shamans (SCCS Variable 879)

The ritualists in the group (cluster) labeled as (Foraging) Shamans shared the following characteristics, constituting an empirically derived and cross-culturally valid set of features of Shamans:

- Pre-eminent group leader who performs a dramatic night-time communal ritual involving enactments, drumming, dancing and singing;
- Principal ritual functions of spirit communication for healing, divination, hunting and sorcery;
- Selection for the role through spirit encounters interpreted as an illness and experienced in visions and dreams;
- Training with vision quests in the wilderness with fasting, austerities and often psychoactive plants;
- An initiatory experience of death by animals which killed and dismembered the initiate, followed by a rebirth and a reconstruction by animals incorporated as a principal power;
- Ritual preparations of fasting and sexual abstinence;
- Altered states of consciousness (ASC) conceptualized as magical or soul flight (out-of-body experience) and an experience of personal transformation into an animal, but notably the absence of possession in the ASCs;
- Healing practices focused on recovery of patient's lost soul, combating evil spirits and the extraction of magical darts causing illness;
- Causing illness and death through darts, sorcery and soul theft; and
- Directing hunters and calling animals.

2.3. Biogenetic Bases of Shamanism

Support for using this empirically derived cross-cultural pattern to determine what is a shaman is further supported by the correspondences of these features with biologically-based functions that produce these common features. These correspondences have biological bases in the phylogenetic origins and evolution of hominin ritual as a community integration process; mimetic and other ritual effects producing the physiological dynamics of ASC and healing; and central features of spirits and animal powers as personal and social identity, features directly related to innate operators (modules) of the evolved psychology of hominin adaptation (Winkelman 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2021b). These biological

bases producing worldwide uniformities in foraging ritualists (Shamans) derive from the following biogenetic structures:

- A collective night-time/overnight conspicuous display with community drumming, dancing and singing which have deep evolutionary antecedents illustrated in the homologous sociality-enhancing maximal displays of chimpanzees (Winkelman 2009, 2021b);
- Selection for the shamanic role based on spontaneous visions, dreams and sickness involving natural tendencies for ASC that enhance access to and integration of unconscious processes (Winkelman 2010a, 2011, 2021c);
- Training in the alteration of consciousness (i.e., ASC) induced by practices of isolation in the wilderness, fasting, abstinence and austerities that stimulate the neuromodulatory neurotransmitter systems (Winkelman 2017);
- ASC induced by engaging the mimetic operator (dancing, singing, drumming) which produce an activation of the endogenous opioid system (Winkelman 2017, 2021a);
- Ritual activities leading to exhaustion and collapse, producing experiences of communication with spirits and out-of-body experiences reflecting innate modules (Winkelman 2015, 2021c);
- Initiatory experiences of death/dismemberment from attacks by animals and a rebirth that produces experiences of personal transformation and of incorporating animal powers into identity and basic structures of self-consciousness (Winkelman 2010a);
- Spiritual experiences produced by stimulation, integration and dissociation of innate modular cognitive structures operators (Winkelman 2021d); and
- Healing by recovery of lost soul, extraction of objects and removal of sorcery by ritual elicitation of endogenous healing mechanisms (Winkelman 2010a)

The congruences of these shamanic features with features and functions of humans' evolved psychology illustrate they are not arbitrary cultural features but have biogenetic bases; consequently, they show these variables are the most objective criteria for determining an etic transcultural characterization of shamans in comparative perspective. These provide five major biogenetic aspects for the bases of shamans:

- Mimetic community ritual: mimetic enactments in dramatic performances, collective drumming, dancing and singing;
- Traumatic selection: a psychological dynamic manifested in spontaneous visions, special dreams and psychosis-like sickness;
- ASC: out-of-body (soul flight) experiences and initiatory experiences of death and dismemberment by animals followed by rebirth;
- Animal powers: Central roles of animals in formation of personal powers and experiences of personal transformation into animals;
- Healing: involving recovery of soul loss or theft, extraction of sorcery objects and removal of effects of attacking spirits

These biogenetic bases indicate the presence of a shaman is a justified assumption for ancient foraging and simple agricultural societies worldwide. But agricultural intensification produces global changes in the dynamics of societies and religion, with a new form of ritualists in the role of the Priest who predominates with the emergence of supra-community political integration. Nonetheless, the core features of Foraging Shamans are initially maintained in Agricultural Shamans such as healing rituals with drumming and singing; selection by spirits in visions, dreams and illness; training and practices with ASC and experiences of soul flight, animal transformation and death and rebirth; powers derived from animals; and healing practices related to soul loss and spirit aggression.

But intensive agriculture subsistence produces new patterns of ritual behavior manifested in Priests who now lead community-wide rituals, relegating the Agricultural Shamans to private rituals with clients and their families. Agricultural Shamans also typically have professional organizations that provide training and recognition, features reflecting the social complexity and population concentrations enabled by large sedentary communities. Greater complexity of society also supported a role specialization among Agricul-

tural Shamans (i.e., just diagnosis, treating specific kinds of illness or agricultural rites) that would reduce intra-group competition among the practitioners.

Eventually, other ritualists—Healers, Mediums and Sorcerers/Witches—also emerge in societies with intensive agriculture and hierarchical political integration and are associated with war for resources and war for slaves and captives. These represent dynamics that may have led to the transformation and eventual demise of an ancient Chinese Foraging Shaman and the emergence of new types of ritualists illustrated in the distinctive features of various historical *wu*.

3. Comparative Analyses: Different Types of *Wu* in Cross-Cultural Perspective

From the earliest recorded periods, literary sources identify distinctly different types of *wu* rather than a homogenous profile for all practitioners called *wu*. Tong (2002) reviews the evidence for both pre-historic (Neolithic) and historic *wu* and references anthropological theories of religious evolution describing three subsequent types of ancient Chinese *wu* ritualists: magicians (including shamans); priests; and sorcerers and witches. Literary sources from the Shang period reveal a further early differentiation between female religious practitioners called *wu* and male ones called *xi* (覡 *wu xi* and 巫醫 *wu yi*) (see Cai 2014; Lin 2009). This followed a division of labor between men's involvement in government, exemplified in the King's (*wáng* 王) role; and women's role in religion as diviners on the King's behalf, a function that was partially usurped by the male ritualists who controlled them. Lin further distinguished *wu yi* from other ancient *wu* called "commoner shamans" (民巫 *Min wu* (Lin 2016)), a distinction paralleled in Michael's (2015) contrast of two different forms of early *wu*, noting "two separate traditions of early Chinese shamanism that I later call bureaucratic shamanism and independent shamanism . . . [the latter a] tradition of folk shamanism that only tangentially relates the *wu* to official positions of rulership and bureaucratic institution" [pp. 652–53]). While independent shamanism resisted or even rejected central authority and operated independently of the priests and rulers, the bureaucratic shaman was subordinated to centralized authority and "all other functionaries of the bureaucratic structures of state religion, including priests, temple officers, sacrificers, diviners, and scribes" (p. 671). But eventually, *wu* became depreciated and even criminalized, as their practices came to be characterized as sorcery and practitioners were subjected to execution, exemplified in the wū gǔ (巫蠱) described by Lin (2009) and Cai (2014).

These overlapping distinctions illustrate a broad consensus that from the beginning of Chinese religion, there were several distinctive types of *wu* ritualists. My analysis focuses on these distinctive types of *wu* ritualists across the eras of ancient China, oriented by information from Lin (2009); Tong (2002); Cai (2014) and Sukhu (2012) who provide similar distinctions about these types of early *wu*:

(1) Pre-historic Neolithic *wu* revealed in archaeological (Tong 2002) and linguistic (Hopkins 1945) evidence;
(2) Ancient *wu* (focused on the men *wy xi*, rather than women *wu*) from the Shang and Zhou periods;
(3) Commoner *wu* (Lin 2009), called community *wu* by Tong (2002), is a professional class recorded in the late Zhou period, particularly in the south, and strongly contrasting with the bureaucratic practices of the state *wu*; and
(4) State religious officials, the official *wu* (*siwu* (司巫), *nanwu* (男巫), *nüwu* (女巫) and others of the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BC) described by Lin (2009); Michael (2015) and Tong (2002), who labels them as priests.

There are also other forms of *wu* described for the Han and Qin periods:

(5) Female *wu* (巫尪 *Wu Wang* [Du and Kong (2000)] and 巫媼 *Wu Yu* [Takigawa (2015)]) of the Warring States period (from Cai (2014) and Sukhu (2012)); and
(6) Wū gǔ (巫蠱) (Lin 2009; Cai 2014) of the Han period.

Two contemporary examples of ritualists alleged to be Chinese shamans are also reviewed to illustrate the continued use of the shaman concepts for Chinese ritualists and their variable correspondences with the etic model:

(7) the Chinese Reindeer-Evenki, whose indigenous ritualists, the *šaman*, are described by Heyne (1999); and
(8) the *bo* of the Tu ethnic group of Qinghai Province in Northwest China, who is called a shaman by Xing and Murray (2018).

The characters representing prehistorical *wu* (Figure 2), healing *wu* (Tables 2 and 3) and official *wu* (Table 4) illustrate a range of representations. The features of these different types of *wu* are presented in Tables 3 and 5 and in the following material, where they are compared with the etic ritualist types identified by Winkelman (1986, 1990, 1992, 2010a; also see Table 1). In the Tables 3 and 5, the initial letter of the etic ritualist types (i.e., S, AS, H, M, P, S/W) is assigned to those characteristics of Chinese ritualists who exhibit characteristics unique to an etic type (i.e., S for Shamans' animal powers, soul journey; M for Mediums' possession; and H, P for Healers' and Priests' formal political and judicial powers).

3.1. Pre-Historical Wu

There is linguistic, archaeological and mythic evidence of the presence of an ancient Chinese *wu* (Tong 2002) that has central characteristics of Shamans. These ancient *wu* practices, referenced in representations of *wu* characters in Shang and Early Chu dynasty records, are interpreted by Hopkins (1945) as depicting "the unmistakable shape of the dancing Shaman" (p. 3; see Figure 2). Hopkins (p. 4) asserts the religious centrality of these actions of a shaman dancer represented in the *ku wén* character (巽), concluding that *ku wén* and *wu* represent the same sound and word. Furthermore, they resemble representations depicted in "early Bronzes and the inscribed Bones of the Honan Find". Hopkins suggests these Lesser Seal sources present a recognizable portrait of a dancing or posturing figure, a direct mimetic representation using straight and curving lines to symbolically represent an unmistakable dancing figure (see Figure 2). These dancing activities have a direct affinity to the core biogenetic mimetic bases of the practices of shamans.

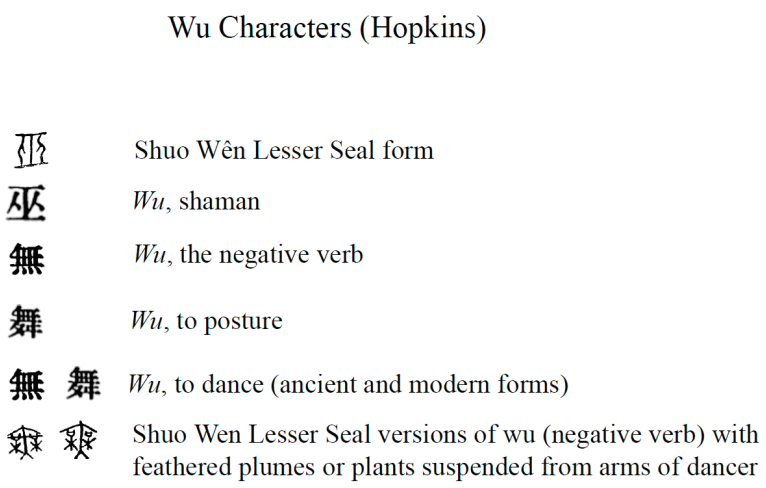

Figure 2. Characters Representing Prehistoric Wu.

In Shang and Early Chu dynasty records, the *wu* character with meanings of "to posture" and "to dance" is found in both the Kangxi Dictionary and the Shuo Wen of Hsu Shen. Hopkins identified the earlier form of representation for the *wu* in the Shou Wen which he says defines the meaning of *wu* (*wu chu yeh* 巫 祝也) as "Invoker" or "Imprecator" (p. 3). Shamans' activities are central to the meanings assigned to this character: "invoker"—with meanings of cause, conjure and incantation—as well as those of "imprecator"—meaning to evoke evil and curse, as well as to pray and ask for and entreat. These vocal activities reflect

the shamans' chanting and singing challenges to the spirits and seeking their removal—or sending them to enemies.

Hopkins proposes that the lower component was not originally *kung* (early form 廾; Lesser Seal form 𠬜), referring to two hands, but rather the character *ch'uan* (舛), referring to two feet (p. 4). Either interpretation confirms the mimetic base in the clapping or dancing figure of the shaman, activities that can induce ASC and are a core feature of shamanism. Hopkins reviews evidence showing that the meanings of the character *wu* are in agreement with the notion of dancing represented in *ts'ung wu chih i*, (從舞之意) referring to the ritual dancing of the typical *yü* (雩) ceremony customary in the Yin Dynasty.

Early Chou texts represent *wu chung* (無終 or *wu tung* 無冬) graphically as meaning "to dance" but functionally, its representation as *wu* has the meaning of "the negative verb". Hopkins proposes that a disentanglement of the three modern characters that are pronounced as *wu* can be achieved by reference to their primitive contours that reveal their pristine meanings. Hopkins proposes the three modern characters represented in English as *wu* have interrelated meanings of "shaman", "the negative verb" and "to posture," and that "all be traced back to one primitive figure of a man displaying by the gestures of his arms and legs the thaumaturgic powers of his inspired personality" (p. 4).

Tong (2002) integrates myth, legend and history with archaeological findings to illuminate the nature of these ancient Chinese ritualists. Tong calls attention to the shamanic significance of drums excavated from a cemetery in Shanxi Province in tombs associated with the Longshan (Lung-shan) period (3000–1900 BC). These pottery drums, several covered with alligator skin and found in association with musical stones and other high-status items, illustrate the ancient association of the *wu* with classic Shaman features of music, dancing and drumming. Tong describes a find of Neolithic pottery bowls that represent a group of dancing figures with depictions of tails which he suggests represents the intimation of animals in a ceremonial dance, another core feature of the Shaman's relationships to animals. A compilation of documents, "The Tongdian," provided similar evidence of this association of pre-historic *wu* with animals illustrated by groups of dancers wearing wooden masks depicting animals (dog and pig). Tong suggests that *wu* activities were represented in many of "the drums, chime stones, whistles, and flutes discovered at various Neolithic sites in China" (p. 51). Tong (2002, p. 52) notably emphasizes a feature core to shamanism: "In all these ceremonies, the drum was the most significant instrument."

These analyses of linguistic and archaeological data provide evidence of ancient Chinese traditions representative of a Foraging Shaman, practices which existed before the differentiation of the functions of the tribal *wu*, before written records and the development of "shaman-king" and a state *wu*. The principal biogenetic aspects of Shamans outlined above are present in the limited evidence about their central societal role in collective rituals; the mimetic complex of dancing, drumming and singing; and the significance of animals, including animal transformation. The available data does not provide a full profile of the etic Shaman but provides confirmatory evidence of the presence of features of the Shamans found in the ethnological research, confirming that *wu* shamans existed in Chinese pre-historic antiquity.

Table 2. Characters Representing Types of Healing Wu.

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
巫	*Wu*	
巫 祝也	*Wu zhu ye*	Invoker, imprecator (Hopkins 1945); Sorcerer (Shuowen Jiezi 2014)
覡	*Wu Xi*	Male Shamans (Cai 2014); Male Sorcerer (Xu 2002)
巫醫	*Wu Yi*	Physicians who treat medical and surgical conditions (Lin 2009)
民巫	*Min Wu*	Commoner *Wu* (Lin 2009, 2016)
官巫	*Guan Wu*	Generic term for officially appointed *Wu* (Lin 2016)
Female Wu		
巫尪	*Wu Wang*	Female witch (Du and Kong 2000)
巫媼	*Wu Yu*	Female witch/sorcerer (Takigawa 2015)
巫蛊	*Wu Gu*	Witchcraft activities (Lin 2009; Cai 2014)

3.2. Ancient Wu Xi

A variety of forms of healing *wu* are reported (see Tables 2 and 3 for characteristics). Literary sources from the Shang period reveal an early distinction of male religious practitioners called *wu xi* (Cai 2014; Lin 2009). Lin characterizes the male *wu xi* of the pre-Qin and Han periods as "ancient shamans." These ancient *wu xi* (paraphrased from Lin (2009)) had central functions of healing and divining, as well as performing sacrifices to the gods and spirits and rites of ancestor worship, assisting the sovereign in mourning rites. *Xi* were people of high status and superior intelligence who held knowledge, respect and high regard. They were hereditary aristocrats who exhibited correct demeanor, loyalty and trustworthiness and brought glory to the Kings. Their societal power was illustrated in overseeing the religious affairs of the ruling class and the entire society (state) and they enjoyed relatively great influence. Their rituals involved special sacrificial vessels, vestments and the use of statues, animal figures and representations of gods and ghosts, using sacrifices, incantations and prayers to gods to obtain blessings. The ancient *xi* likely engaged in ASC as suggested by their use of visions to illuminate matters and their knowledge of how to "ascend and descend," suggesting the shamans' flights to lower and upper worlds. Their rituals involved preparation with special baths and fasting and ceremonies involving beating the drum, striking the bell and hollering to excite the heart, with vigorous steps and dance to stir up the energies. The healing functions of the *Wu xi* were considered their most important role, involving the use of drugs and plants to drive away pestilence, incantations for the removal of illness and exorcisms and blessings to avert misfortune.

Table 3. Comparisons of Shamans, Ancient Xi, Commoner Wu, Healers and Evenki *šaman*.

Ritualist Type	Principal Magico-Religious Activity	Selection and Training	Social and Political Power	Professional Characteristics	Motive and Context of Ritual
Shaman (Forager Shaman = S; (AS for added Agriculture Shaman feature)	Healing and divination Protection from spirits and malevolent magic. Hunting magic (S) Cause illness, death (S, S/W) Assist Priests in agricultural rituals (AS)	Dreams, illness, and signs of spirit's request (S) Vision quest by individual alone in wilderness (S) Group training (AS). Ceremony recognizes status (AS)	High social status. Charismatic (S) Communal and war leader (S) Makes sorcery accusations. Informal power Moderate judiciary decisions (AS)	Predominantly male, female secondary (S) Part time. Individual practice (FS) Group ceremonies (AS) Specialized role (AS) Ambiguous moral status (S)	Acts at client request in community-wide ceremony Ceremony overnight (S) Performance in client group at client request (AS)

Table 3. *Cont.*

Ritualist Type	Principal Magico-Religious Activity	Selection and Training	Social and Political Power	Professional Characteristics	Motive and Context of Ritual
Xi-"Ancient Shamans" (Shang and Zhou periods	Healing & divining Divine people's fate, regarding illness Sacrifices for deceased, spirits and gods (M, H) Ancestor worship (P) Harvest, livestock (H, P)	Hereditary aristocrats (P)	Ruling class (H, P) Religious affairs of state (H, P) Very important and great influence	Males (H, P) Correct demeanor, the value of loyalty and trustworthiness People of superior quality, with high intelligence and respected (*S)	Religious functions of government (H, P)
Commoner Domestic Professional *wu* Shang and Zhou periods	Healing and protection Arts of divination Determine causes of misfortune Rituals to harm people and gain advantage (S) Worship ghosts, animals and natural phenomena	Hereditary family trade Innate selection or from disease (S, M) No formal group (S)	Commoner class (M) Familial/tribal function (S) Prestige but little power (S, M) Influence communal decisions, warfare and hunting (S) May be sanctioned, executed (SW)	Male and Female (S) Made a living but part-time (S, M) Often defective in body or handicapped (S*) Both heal and harm (ambiguous moral status) (S)	Services for clients Covet goods and heat people Profession for gain (H)
Healer (H) Etic Ritualist Type	Healing and divination. Agricultural and socioeconomic rites (H, P) Propitiation (H, P) Life-cycle rituals.	Voluntary selection, large payments to trainer. Learn rituals and techniques Ceremony recognizes status.	High socioeconomic status. Judicial, legislative, and economic power (H, P) Denounce sorcerers.	Predominantly male (H, P) Full-time (H, P) Collective training, practice and ceremony. Highly specialized role Predominantly moral	Acts at client request and treatment in client group. Collective public rituals with Priests
Chinese Reindeer-Evenki *šaman*	Treatment of illnesses Ward off misfortune Seasonal celebrations Life-cycle (marriage, funerals and memorials) Divining and predicting Malevolence (S, S/W)	Dreams and visions Illness/hysteria (S, M) Could be inherited Solitude and fasting in wilderness (S) Self/Spirit taught (S) Death-and-rebirth (S)	Great significance for community = charismatic (S) Unofficial leader (S) Not official clan head or political leader No material advantage	Male & female (S) Part-time More mentally capable(S) Courageous & strong Ambiguous morality—required altruism but might abuse power (S)	Altruism for benefit of community (S) Acted when person or community was disturbed Community obliged the ritualist to perform (S)

Ritualist Type	Supernatural Power/Ritual Techniques	ASC Conditions	ASC Characteristics and Techniques	Healing Concepts and Practices
Shaman (Forager Shaman = S) (AS Additional Agriculture Shaman features)	Animal spirits & allies (S) Spirit power usually controlled (S) Impersonal mana (AS) Spells, charms, exuvial and imitative techniques (AS).	ASC in training and practice. Soul flight/ journey (S) Death-and rebirth (S) Animal transform (S) Mystical ASC (AS)	Isolation, austerities, fasting, chanting, singing, drumming and dancing. Collapse during ritual Unconsciousness (S)	Soul loss (S) Spirit aggression, sorcery. Sucking, blowing, massaging and object extraction (S) Plant medicines. Incantations for removal
Xi-"Ancient Shamans" (Shang and Zhou period)	Animals (S?) Sacrifices (H, P) Pray for blessing (H, P) Use statues and icons (H) Incantations Bone Oracles (H)	Knew how to ascend and descend (S?) Vision illuminated matters and hearing penetrated them (S?)	Bathe and fast Beat drum, strike bell and holler Excite the heart, body Music, dancing, and drumming	Knowledge of plants Removal of illness Exorcism (H) Pray to gods for blessing to averting misfortune (H, P) Dream interpretation

Table 3. *Cont.*

Ritualist Type	Supernatural Power/Ritual Techniques	ASC Conditions	ASC Characteristics and Techniques	Healing Concepts and Practices
Commoner Domestic Professional *wu* Shang and Zhou Periods	Spirits and ghosts of dead, not "orthodox gods" Incantations, blessings, praying (H) Curses, charms (AS) Sacrifice (H, P) Animals (?) (S)	Communicate with spirits Imaginary travel around heaven & earth (S)	Drumming and music performed by practitioners Purgative drugs (S*)	Expelling baleful influences, Exorcism (H, M) Pray to invoke the ghosts and gods for blessings (H, P) Sacrifice (H, P)
Healer Etic Ritualist Type	Superior gods and impersonal power (mana). Charms, spells, rituals, formulas and sacrifice. Propitiate & command spirits. Material divination system	ASC induction limited No apparent ASC (H, P)	Social isolation; fasting; minor austerities; limited singing, chanting or drumming.	Exorcism and prevent illness. Manipulate body Empirical medicine Imitative and exuvial techniques.
Chinese Reindeer-Evenki *šaman*	Supernatural qualities of animals (S) Changed themselves into animals (S*+) Master of the spirits who were subservient (S)	Techniques of ecstasy Soul travel to spirit world (S) Death-and-rebirth (S) Change into animal (S)	Drumming and singing central elements for trance Unconscious trance (S) May use alcohol (P*)	Soul loss/recovery (S) Remove malevolent influences of spirits Drum and singing had hypnotic influence on patient Medicinal herbs and plants

Letters indicate contrastive features of practitioner type: S = Shaman feature (FS & AS), AS = additional Agriculture Shaman feature, H = Healer feature, P = Priest feature; S/W = Sorcerer/Witch feature; ? = questioned by authorities; * = often attributed to ritualist type but not part of etic model.

3.2.1. Comparisons of Ancient Wu Xi and Shamans (SCCS Variable 879)

Table 3 provides the characteristics of the *Wu xi* and other healing *wu*. The *xi* did have healing as a principal function, including the removal of illness characteristic of Shamans, but their healing practices of exorcisms and blessings reflect Healers. The ancient *wu* acquired their power through formally learned prayers and rituals rather than selection by the spirits and spontaneous and deliberate ASC characteristic of Shamans. The activities of ancient *wu xi* were based in ritual sacrifices and manipulation of ritual objects dedicated to the ancestors and gods of rain rather than the animal powers of Shamans. *Xi* notably lack central qualities of Shamans such as malevolent acts and hunting rituals; selection through illness and training alone in the wilderness; the focus on patient's needs rather than state functions; extensive ASC experiences involving soul flight/journey, death-and rebirth and animal transformation; and healing of sorcery and soul loss through a soul journey.

The *xi* did maintain some of the Shaman's core ASC activities in their engagement with practices of fasting, rituals involving beating the drum, striking bells and hollering, as well as activities that excite the heart and exercise the body, such as dancing. But despite statements about flight into the heavens and the mingling of divine and human entities suggested in some texts about *wu*, these accounts do not have contexts where they attest to experiences of ecstatic flights or out-of-body experiences characteristic of shamans (Keightley 1998). Keightley proposes instead that the spirits did not descend into or enter the *wu* (*xi*), but that instead they were descending to receive the sacrifices that were offered. In an analysis of ancient texts on the *xi*, Liu (2022, P 10 of 14) notes that "If we emphasize that ecstasy is a judgment criterion for a shaman, *Wu* and *Xi* cannot be categorised as shamans because this chapter did not mention ecstasy at all."

As Boileau (2002) noted, while ancient (archaic) *wu* and Siberian hunting shamans shared concerns with the well-being of the community, the *xi*'s involvement in the religious functions of sacrifices for the state and ancestors sharply contrast with Shamans' primary

role in communal healing. Similarly, the *xi*'s use of sacrifices, praying to gods for blessings and uses of statues and representations resemble Healers and Priests, not Shamans (See Table 3). While *xi* shared Shamans' healing features with the use of plant drugs for the treatment of illness, they differed in an emphasis on exorcism and praying to gods for blessings to avert misfortune. While some Shaman healing features related to soul loss that are typical of Siberia and the etic model are attributed to *xi*, closer examinations reveal that it is only a superficial resemblance. Williams (2020, p. 191) reviews a poem called "Summons to the Soul" from the Elegies of Chu reflecting activities involving shamanic concepts of soul recovery. The poem describes the ritual activity of summoning a soul back to save the patient's life, with chants designed to impede the soul's travel to heaven, the underworld or four directions. Williams notes, however, that this concept of a soul that can leave the body and the practices of soul loss recovery expressed do not involve the personal soul journey recovery involving ecstatic flight to the spirit world which is characteristic of Siberian practices and Shamans' soul recovery. Michael Puett (2002, cited in Michael 2015) illustrates central features of shamanism were absent even in early China, which was lacking the beliefs in three spiritual realms and the connecting axis mundi which were central to Eliade's characterizations of the central features of Siberian shamanism. Notably lacking in the ancient *wu* are Shamans' trauma and illness-related selection procedures and training involving ASCs (i.e., soul flight, death and rebirth and animal transformation). *Xi* also lack special relations with power animals, healing of soul loss and sorcery.

3.2.2. Comparisons of the Ancient Xi Wu with the Healer (SCCS Variable 881)

Healers provide healing and divination as principal functions, offering individual healing services rather than collective healing ceremonies. The Healers also participate in activities involving collaboration with Priests in collective agricultural rites and rituals of propitiation of gods. Healers also have an important function in officiating life-cycle rituals (i.e., naming, marriage and funerals). Healers acquire their roles through payments for training by other Healers, and when completed, a professional group certifies their status with a ceremony recognizing their professional status. Their activities as full-time specialists earn them a lucrative income. Healers are normally only males of high social and economic status and participate in political, legislative and judicial processes.

Healers' supernatural power comes from ritual knowledge, particularly the creation of charms and knowledge of spells and ritual techniques such as incantations and sacrifices used to propitiate the spirits. Their rituals do not seem intended to produce ASCs in patients. Nonetheless, clients may experience minor ASCs because of placebo and other consciousness-altering effects of the elaborate rituals, recited spells and incantations. In the divination of information, the Healers do not rely on ASC experiences but instead manipulate material systems (i.e., like I Ching or Tarot cards) that they randomize to produce patterns that they interpret for diagnoses. Exorcism, removing spirits that afflict or possess the patient, is the central healing ideology of Healers and Mediums. Healing rituals involved the repeated recitation of spells that appear to have hypnotic effects and powerful encouragements apparently intended to have suggestive and placebo effects. Although the Healers did not emphasize obvious ritual ASC, these are nonetheless suggested by their training and pre-ritual periods of social isolation and fasting and limited singing, chanting and percussion.

Xi features also characteristics of Shamans involving ASC induction (beating the drum and vocalizations) and healing through plant medicines and expelling bad influences—these are not unique to Shamans but are shared by Healers as well. *Xi* more closely resemble the Healers of Winkelman's etic model, sharing characteristics such as the following: religious functions such as propitiation of deities (King's ancestors); social qualities such as high socioeconomic status and governmental powers; being only males who engage in functions with priests for collective rituals; providing sacrifices to appease superior gods; seeking blessings/propitiation; and healing through exorcism and the prevention of misfortune. The Ancient *xi* use of oracle bones, a material system for divinatory purposes, reflects

typical divinatory practices of Healers (use of mechanical systems rather than intuition), not Shamans.

3.3. Commoner Wu

Commoner *wu* (*Min wu* 民巫 Lin 2016) were members of a professional class of the late Zhou period. Tong (2002, pp. 62–65) summarizes the characteristics and functions of what he referred to as "community" practices corresponding to the commoner *wu*. The primary functions of these Commoner *wu* were providing healing services and prayers, blessings and invocations to protect from disasters. Commoner *wu* were also skilled in divination to determine causes of illness and other misfortune but notably lacked the formal ancestral worship system characteristic of state rituals. Instead, these "community" practices provided ceremonies for individuals and families with rituals involving the worship of ghosts, animals and natural phenomena and provided spiritual support, particularly to determine the client's fortune or misfortune. Commoner *wu* also performed rituals to harm people and gain advantage; consequently, the commoner *wu* were also seen as potentially dangerous figures that needed to be controlled, or even banned.

The Commoner *wu* frequently practiced an inherited family trade but were selected on the basis of innate abilities or as a consequence of disease, or were even bodily handicapped. They could be male or female and acted on a part-time basis in providing services at low expense to clients. Their functions were based on their abilities to communicate with the gods and other spirits whom they queried with divinatory rituals and addressed with sacrifices to obtain their favor. They used charms and spells, as well as prayers, exorcisms and sacrifices.

While their role included services as tribal functionaries, they were without political powers, formal organization or political privileges; nonetheless, they had prestige and influenced communal decisions regarding agricultural activities, as well as warfare and hunting. Their performances were conducted without written scriptures but with singing, drumming and dancing performed by the practitioners themselves. A significant service was exorcism rituals performed with incantations and sacrifices. Beyond singing, drumming and dancing, there is evidence of their ASC in purgative drugs used and reported ecstatic states of "imaginary travel around heaven and earth in chariots drawn by dragons and phoenixes" (Tong 2002, p. 64).

Tong concludes that, in contrast to the state *wu* religious officials of the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties, the southern areas persisted with the ancient traditions and that these "practitioners of southern folk religion still can be called *wu*" (p. 65). Tong also proposed other translations for these earlier ritualists as magicians, sorcerers and even physicians.

Comparing the Commoner Wu and Shamans (SCCS Variable 879)

A comparison of the characteristics of Commoner *wu* with Foraging and Agricultural Shamans (referred to here as Shamans) shows both similarities as well as some divergences. Sufficient detailed historical information is lacking for all relevant features of the Commoner *wu,* but they reflect Shamans in their principal functions such as healing services, divination and engaging in practices of sorcery. Commoner *wu* also exhibit Shamans' features in selection on the basis of innate abilities or as consequences of disease, as well as family tradition. The tribal and familial focus of Commoner *wu* is consistent with the Foraging Shamans' communal activities, as is their role as familial or tribal functionaries without political power, formal organization or special privileges but instead having prestige and influence in communal decisions.

But community-wide rituals are not reported for Commoner *wu*; instead, client-based practices characteristic of Agricultural Shamans are reported, as illustrated in their emphasis on economic gain from their clients. Commoner *wu* also perform agricultural rituals characteristic of Agricultural Shamans, as well as the worship of ghosts, animals and natural phenomena, rituals more typical of Priests, Healers and Mediums. Both Foraging Shamans and Agricultural Shamans' features are also present in the commoner *wu's*

part-time profession and reported involvement with activities of warfare and hunting and malevolent rituals. But it is Agricultural Shamans that attempt to harm through their use of curses, witchcraft (black magic) and charms, as do Commoner *wu*. Commoner *wu* performances conducted without written scriptures or temples but with drumming and music performed by practitioners themselves are consistent with, but not exclusive to, Foraging and Agricultural Shamans. The Commoner *wu*'s engagement with mimetic activities (singing, drumming and dancing performed by practitioners) are features which are widely shared by other etic types (Healers, Mediums). But there is a suggestion of uniquely Shamans' ASC in ecstatic states of imaginary travel around heaven and earth and even animal relations in the ecstatic travel via dragons and phoenixes and the worship of animals.

Like Foraging and Agricultural Shamans, commoner *wu* provided healing services; but while the healing functions of Commoner *wu* involves Shamanic concepts in expelling baleful influences and presumably countering sorcerers and witches, the Commoner *wu* also focus on exorcism, prayers, blessings and invocations to protect from disasters and sacrifices; these are not like Shamans' healing features, but instead reflect activities typical of Healers and Mediums. Notably lacking in Commoner *wu* are the Shamans' practices of the healing of soul loss. Furthermore, commoner *wu's* healing functions differ from Foraging and Agricultural Shamans' healing in the focus on spiritual support of the client's fortune or misfortune and their emphasis on economic gain from their clients.

While some aspects of Shamans' ASC are present, the typical experiences are not directly reported for Commoner *wu*, and notably absent are the death-and-rebirth experiences and the central role of animals as powers, identities and a form of personal transformation, characteristic of Foraging and Agricultural Shamans. Features more characteristic of Agricultural Shamans and Healers are seen in the Commoner *wu's* involvement with agricultural rituals and charging for services to clients. Features of the Commoner *wu* such as agricultural rituals resulted from the effects of intensive agriculture, features also found in Agricultural Shamans and Healers who also assist the Priests in agricultural rituals. Similarly, the Commoner *wu's* lower status likely reflects the higher status *wu* priests, a feature also exhibited by Agricultural Shamans. Techniques reported for Commoner *wu*—incantations, blessings, praying, curses and charms—appear to reflect the increasing commodification of healing practices manifested in the Commoner *wu's* focus on earning from clients. These more resemble features of Agricultural Shamans and Healers—ritual techniques involving spells and charms with exuvial and imitative rituals.

The Commoner *wu* far more closely resemble Foraging Shamans than did the Ancient *wu*. These similarities include the evidence of trauma and illness in selection; the presence of ecstatic ASC reflective of soul flight; the relationships to animals; and healing involving extraction of illness and addressing sorcerers. But notably, the Commoner *wu* lack a communal audience and instead perform agricultural rites, use ritual techniques of charms and spells, have lower social status and perform client-focused rituals, as do the Agricultural Shamans with which they most directly correspond.

Lin (2009) characterizes the appearance of commoner or domestic professional shamans in the literature as representing a major change. Lin attributes the appearance in the literature of information about Commoner *wu* as a result of the effects of the collapse of the Zhou feudal system (7th–6th centuries BC). But commoner *wu* practices are unlikely to have been a consequence of the decline of the feudal system, although it may have elevated their relative societal importance in the ensuing vacuum. If the Commoner *wu* did not exist in the broader society during the Shang and Zhou dynasties, from where did it originate? It was not a devolution of the bureaucratic *wu* or ancient *wu yi*, who had already long departed from the Foraging Shaman pattern. Rather, this appearance of the Commoner *wu* in the literature must reflect the emergence of record-keeping related to these ongoing activities that undoubtedly had continuities with the pre-historic *wu*.

3.4. Bureaucratic Wu Priests

While archaeological evidence and texts lack sufficient detail to infer all of the social functions and characteristics of the *wu* before the emergence of writing and the state system, evidence indicates an ancient differentiation of functions of the tribal *wu* in the development of "shaman-king" and a state *wu* (Tong 2002). Tong points out ancient changes in the functions of the *wu* in the emergence of a new polity formed through their symbiosis with the tribal elite, leading to a "religious elite of *wu* [who] reconstituted themselves and became priests" (p. 53). Tong (2002) reviews ancient texts on the consequences of these religious and political transformations during the emergence of chiefdoms ("Period of the Five Legendary Emperors", third millennium BCE) when functions of the new elite ritualist's centralized religious activity by organizing the worship of the ancestors of the ruling clan as gods of the whole polity. These bureaucratic functionaries of the government during the Xia, Shang and Zhou periods nonetheless had *wu* in their titles, along with other formal designations that revealed their distinctive roles as officials of the state (see Table 4 for characters).

Table 4. Characters and Names of Wu Officials.

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English Terms Used by von Falkenhausen (1995) and Lin (2009)
男巫	*nanwu*	Male shamans
女巫	*nüwu*	Female shamans
司巫	*siwu*	Manager of the Spirit Mediums
師巫	*shiwu*	Officers
巫師	*wushi*	Instructors of Spirit Mediums
巫恆	*wuheng*	Spirit Mediums
無數	*wushu*	Male and Female Spirit Mediums
宗	*zong*	Temple Official
祝	*zhu*	Invocators
大祝	*dazhu*	Great Invocator

Michael (2015, p. 685) reviews texts that illustrate the distinctive characteristics of these *wu* bureaucratic functionaries that he refers to as priests (*zhu* 祝) and temple officers (*zong* 宗). Michael (p. 685) characterizes the primary functions of these ritualists as involving the performance of rituals for the ancestors. And rather than seances or face-to-face communication with these spirits, the ritual performances involved sacrifices and other offerings, devotional prayers and songs and liturgical performances. Their religious functions are assisted by temple officers who manage ritual objects such as vessels and jade and administer the sacrificial offerings of animals and fruits of the harvest. Michael notes that with the institutionalization of these roles in activities of the ancient Chinese state religion within the spirit temples and ancestral halls that "the *wu* are no longer recognized: shamanic authority has given way to centralized authority" (Michael 2015, p. 685).

Tong characterizes the activities of these *wu* state religious officials as involving primary responsibilities for state affairs and the needs of the royal family. These full-time religious practitioners were formally appointed as government officials to exercise political powers and direct economic activities. Their positions depended on skills and knowledge from study and long-term training, not supernatural gifts. They held high prestige from their positions and were affiliated with important political groups. The state *wu* engaged in political and economic activity for the state, with each ritualist type holding specific and delimited responsibilities. Some controlled groups of mediums (also called *wu*) accompanied religious officials in dancing during the rainmaking rituals and addressed great calamities in rituals of crying, praying and singing. Their rituals followed clearly established practices dictated in written texts and performed in special temples on scheduled days. Their rituals emphasized sacrifices, with some divination (dream interpretation) and exorcisms.

Table 5. Comparisons of Priests, Mediums and Sorcerer/Witches with Tu *Bo*, State and Female Wu and Wugu.

Ritualist Type	Principal Magico-Religious Activity	Selection and Training	Social and Political Power	Professional Characteristics	Motive and Context of Ritual
Priest (P) Etic Ritualist Type	Propitiation and worship. Protection and purification. Agricultural planting and harvest rites. Socioeconomic rites.	Social inheritance or succession. Political action. Incidental training and/or by group. Ceremony recognizes status.	High social and economic status. Political, legislative, judicial, economic, and military power. Exclusively moral.	Exclusively male. Full-time. Hierarchically organized practitioner group. High social and economic status.	Acts to fulfill social functions, calendrical rites. Public rituals.
Official *wu* (*siwu*, *nanwu*, *nüwu*)—Zhou dynasty	Sacrifices to gods in ancestral temple (P) Protect from disaster (P) Rituals for rain-making, driving away pestilence, protect harvest (H, P) Funerary services (H)	Selected/appointed by government personnel (P) State officials in charge of training (H, P)	Part of official structure and ruling circles (H, P) Regular members of the bureaucracy (H, P) Political and economic activity (H, P)	Male , full-time (P, H) Specialized hierarchy (H, P) Skills and knowledge from study High prestige from their positions (H, P)	Social functions-Formal rituals at temples (P) Calendrical rituals at temples at specified times (P)
Bo of the *Tu* (Xing and Murray)	Ensure good weather and agriculture (P, H) Ancestors worship (P) Life cycle events Community well-being Resolve conflicts Not a source of healing	Hereditary, passed down from one generation to the next within the same family (P)	Leadership in collective rituals (P) Intervene to resolve conflicts (P)	Only males (P, H) Part-time specialist	Annual festival (P) Organized by village association Public festival in temple (P) Entire community participates (S)
Medium (M) Etic Ritualist Type)	Healing and divination. Protection from spirits and malevolent magic. Agricultural rituals. Propitiation.	Spontaneous possession by spirit. Training in practitioner group. Ceremony recognizes status.	Low socioeconomic status. Informal political power. May designate who are sorcerers and witches. Exclusively moral.	Predominantly female; male secondary/rare. Part-time. Collective group practice.	Acts primarily for clients at client residence. Also participates in public ceremonies
Female *Wu*—Qin and Han dynasties, especially Warring States	Communicate with gods Assure well-being of king and state Control rains for agriculture (P, M) Healing rituals Funeral rites	Appointed to positions in the royal courts Group training (M) Male spirit or god descends on person (M)	Generally low status (M) Contributed to bureaucratic and political decisions with divination (H, P)	Female (M) Organization served the royal court (M)	Assure well-being of king and state (P) Regular times throughout year (P)
Sorcerer/ Witch (SW) Etic Ritualist Type)	Malevolent acts. Kill friends, enemies, neighbors, even kin. Cause illness, death, and economic destruction.	Social labeling/accusation. Attribution of biological inheritance. Innate abilities, self-taught or learned.	Low social and economic status. Exclusively immoral. May be killed.	Male and female. Part-time. Little or no professional organization.	Acts at client's request or for personal reasons such as envy, anger, jealousy, greed or revenge. Practices in secrecy.
Wugu	Cause illness and death (S, SW)	Denounced by government officials (SW)	None May be killed, executed (SW) Condemned as immoral (SW)	Males and females (S, SW) Lower class (SW)	Personal gain, payment (SW) Revenge (SW)

Table 5. *Cont.*

Ritualist Type	Supernatural Power/Control of Power	ASC Conditions	ASC Techniques and Characteristics	Healing Concepts and Practices
Priest (P) (Etic Ritualist Type)	Power from ancestors, superior spirits or gods. Impersonal power and ritual knowledge. Propitiation and sacrifices. No control over spirits.	Generally no ASC or very limited	Occasionally alcohol (P) Sexual abstinence, isolation, sleep deprivation.	Purification and protection. Public rituals and sacrifices.
Official *wu* (*siwu*, *nanwu*, *nüwu*)—Zhou dynasty (1046-256 BC)	Relate to royal ancestors, high gods (H, P) Knowledge of texts and rituals (H, P) Appease ancestors (P)	Not reported/ apparent (P, H)	Music, dancing, and drumming	Exorcisms (M, H) Sacrifices (M, H, P) Protection (P) Prayer (H) *
Bo of the *Tu* (Xing and Murray)	Protective, ancestor and tutelary spirits of village (P) Spirits not controlled--may refuse to help (P, H, M) Procedures in hopes of coercing spirits Knowledge & skills	Possessed by spirits (M?) Become different spirits Spirits answer through mouth of *bo* (M)	Shivering with presence of a spirit (M?) Uses a drum and special chants and dances	Not source of help in illness (P)
Medium (M) (Etic Ritualist Type)	Possessing spirits dominate. Propitiation and sacrifices. Power dominates Unconscious.	ASC in training and practice. Possession ASC	ASC induced through singing, drumming, and dancing. Tremors, convulsions, seizures, compulsive behavior, amnesia, dissociation.	Possession and exorcisms. Control of possessing spirits.
Female Wu-Warring States period	Appealed to deities with sacrifices & prayers (P, M) Decision maker the possessing male spirit (M) Spirit or god descends on person (M)	Gods merged with personality of *wu* (M) Possessing male spirit or god descends on person (M)	Induction with dancing, incantations, singing and wailing	Spirit responsible for disease Perform exorcisms (M, H) Herbal healing Sacrifices, prayers, spells, incantations Anointing and ablutions
Sorcerer/ Witch (SW) (Winkelman Etic Ritualist Type)	Power from spirits and ritual knowledge. Contagious, exuvial and imitative magic, spells. Power can be unconscious, out of control.	Indirect evidence of ASC in reported flight and animal. transformation.	Night-time activities.	Illness by consuming victim's soul, spirit Aggression, magical darts that enter victim Unconscious emotional effects of envy, anger, etc.
Wugu	Incantations and Poisons Imitative magic (S, S/W) Cursing (SW) Burial of puppets		Nighttime activities (S, SW)	Ambition, greed (S/W)

Letters indicate contrastive features of practitioner type: S = Shaman feature, AS = Agricultural Shaman feature, M = Medium feature, H = Healer feature, P = Priest feature, SW = Sorcerer/Witch feature; ? = questioned by authorities; * = often attributed to ritualist type but not part of etic model.

Comparing Bureaucratic Wu and Priests (SCCS Variable 884)

The features of the bureaucratic *wu* and Priests are presented in Table 5. There are direct correspondences of the features of the Priests discovered in Winkelman's cross-cultural research with the characteristics of these *wu* state functionaries and bureaucratic ritualists central to Chinese religion and the clan institutions of ancestor worship. The Priests hold dual political–religious roles, with supreme secular and religious power generally invested in the group's highest-level Priest. The central societal roles of Priests give them high social status. The principal activities of Priests involve collective agriculture (or pastoral) rituals that propitiate group deities with public sacrifices and feasts. This worship of the gods is to secure well-being in agricultural or other economic activity through the performance of the most significant calendrical rituals at the crucial annual planting and harvesting cycles. The rituals associated with the agricultural cycle are intended to aid the fertility of animals and crops, and the harvest rituals focus on offering thanks to the deities for the abundance provided.

The supreme leader of the Priests is typically selected by patrilineal succession, although political action and armed conflict with competing relatives may be necessary to secure the top position. Priests are normally limited to males, with females generally serving only as assistants or servants unless it is the empress or queen who assumes the position of high Priest by virtue of her royal position or widowhood. The head Priest is assisted by diverse Priests who may have specialized training, often of a technical nature. ASCs typically were not considered significant in the training of Priests, but the training did involve periods of social isolation, sexual abstinence and prolonged wakefulness.

Priests are typified by ancestor cults led by the senior lineage member who assumes the role of the Priest for the group. Lower priests are senior lineage members and typically have power over extensive economic resources and often hold important political positions and exercise judiciary functions. Priesthoods are hierarchically organized in a system of administrative control over society. Priests may exercise legislative functions establishing the moral order of society. Priests obtain significant economic resources from their functions and their full-time profession.

Priests' power comes from their close ancestral relations with spirits of collective importance, especially ancestor spirits, village spirits and high gods. Priests are ritual intermediaries with the spiritual world, petitioning deities on behalf of the community, but do not normally enter into the spirit realms nor claim to control the gods. Priests' high prestige and personal power related to their divine descent may also give impersonal power such as mana (spiritual life-force energy). The Priest's ritual knowledge guides the timing of official public ceremonies and typically includes the sacrifice of domestic animals (cows, pigs, chickens, etc.) to the gods, which are consumed by participants in community-wide festivals. The collective rituals often involved collective alcohol consumption and feasting in prominent public places in collective ceremonies.

Healing is not a focal activity of Priests except in so far as to secure protection through purification and well-being from the worship of the gods through sacrifices. Although individual healing services were not Priestly functions, healing effects were provided through the psychological effects of purification and removing contaminated conditions such as offending spirits or taboo violations. Propitiating and worshiping the gods was also focused on well-being in seeking protection for the whole group, assuring abundance and preventing future illness.

The close correspondences of these bureaucratic functionaries and the Priests described in Winkelman's cross-cultural research illustrate furthermore that they do not remotely resemble Foraging Shamans. Michael asserts that the bureaucratic ritualists have "direct contact or face-to-face communication between humans and non-bodily beings in séance events" (Michael 2015, p. 671), suggesting ASC. This interpretation of the direct communication of these *wu* with spirits is questioned by Keightley, who notes that the spirits silently enter (descend) and leave the ritual after partaking in the sacrifices they have been offered.

"There is nothing particularly shamanistic about the quality of the religious experience described" (Keightley 1998, p. 10).

The Priests and bureaucratic *wu* share virtually every characteristic:

- primary religious activities (ancestor worship, agricultural well-being);
- selection (for the highest level, social succession/inheritance and political action);
- socio-political power (highest political, economic and judicial power);
- professional characteristics (male, full-time, specialized hierarchy, high status);
- motive and context of ritual (social functions, public calendrical rituals);
- supernatural power (ancestors, superior gods, ritual knowledge);
- ASC (very limited); and
- Healing (sacrifices).

On the other hand, the bureaucratic *wu* and Shamans differ on virtually all features besides high status. There is no empirical or rational justification to refer to the bureaucratic *wu* as Shamans. As Tong (2002, pp. 53, 60) notes "From then on, it is no longer proper to use the term *wu* to cover all the religious practitioners indiscriminately. Henceforth, part-time folk magicians may still be referred to as *wu*, but the religious elite of the community had become something closer to priests . . . . In their social status, activities, functions, and beliefs, they were in fact priests."

3.5. Female Wu

Literary sources from the Shang period emphasized the ancient distinctions of female *wu* from male practitioners, but there was little description of their activities in comparison to the male *wu xi* and *wu yi*. They were represented with a variety of characters (i.e., 巫尪 *Wu Wang* and 巫嫗 *Wu Yu*; also see Table 2). But by the fifth to third centuries BCE, only accounts of *wu* who were females were well documented in literary sources and government records because they held positions in the royal courts as advisors to supreme rulers (Sukhu 2012) and performed rituals for the state religion, including funeral rites (Michael 2015). The female *wu* were members of a coven who served the royal court through the ministry of ritual and accompanied rituals in the temples where they appealed to the ancestors and gods through sacrifices.

These *wu* were appointed to positions in the royal courts as advisors to supreme rulers and engaged in rituals involving dances and spirit communication to assure the well-being of the king and state, especially through rituals for rain which were seen as important for agricultural abundance. Cai (2014, p. 145) characterizes the various functions of these *wu* based on their abilities to communicate with the gods and other spirits whom they queried with divinatory rituals and petitioned with sacrifices and spells to obtain their favor. Female *wu* played important roles in political decisions with divination practices based on dream interpretation. But despite their employment by the king during the Qin and Han dynasties to make sacrifices to numerous spirits, especially ancestors, the social status of the female *wu* was generally low, a petty position comparable to court musicians and entertainers (Cai 2014, p. 145).

The ASC of female *wu* involved possession, a spirit communication in which a spirit descends from heaven upon the person who is possessed, with the personality of the *wu* entirely merged with that of the possessing male spirit. These experiences were also vital for receiving divinatory revelations by the *wu* which were important in political decisions, particularly decisions regarding war. Sukhu emphasizes their healing role as well, with interconnected skills of communicating with spirits for divination to determine the spirit responsible for a disease and treatments with exorcisms, sacrifices and herbal healing. Their healing rituals involved exorcisms carried out with incantations and sacrifices for appeasing the ancestors.

Comparing Female Wu with Mediums (SCCS Variable 882) and Shamans (SCCS Variable 879)

The principal functions of Mediums involving healing, divination and spirit communication are the same as Shamans, but their features are generally different. While Mediums are similar to Shamans in dramatic experiences of ASC and an engagement with spirits, their ASC are distinct in experiences of possession by a powerful spirit or god, rather than the soul flight, death-and-rebirth and animal transformation of Shamans. This selection through possession experience characteristic of Mediums presents psycho-biological factors involving dissociation and trauma responses, including convulsions, tremors and amnesia (Winkelman 2018). Mediums' initial episode of spontaneous possession typically occurs in late adolescence or early adulthood and is manifested with tremors, convulsions, seizures, compulsive behavior and post-ASC amnesia. This episode is considered an illness caused by an affliction of a possessing spirit, and the required treatment initiates their training as a Medium. This training involves the ritual induction of ASCs through singing, drumming and dancing during which the patient learns how to control the possessing spirits and vocalize their demands. Once they achieve this control they are cured and begin to serve in the capacity of a healer for the community. These features of possession are not typical of Shamans.

Mediums lack the hunting ritual and sorcery features of Shamans. Instead, Mediums are involved in agricultural rituals and the propitiation of spirits and deities, especially in rituals to worship and propitiate their possessing spirits and make sacrifices to them to assure personal and collective well-being. Mediums are generally of low social and economic status but have respect among women and beyond since they express the personas of dominant male spirits. Mediums are subordinate to Healers and Priests but may exert social influence in the community because they manifest powerful spirits and convey their messages. Mediums have supernatural power by virtue of their possession; their bodies and voices are taken over by powerful spirits who communicate divine orders for others to follow. Mediums are not thought to control these entities, but to express their will. The Mediums' primary ritual involves entry into a possession state to allow the gods to work their influence. Mediums also attempt to influence these superior spirits through sacrifices.

Mediums' diagnosis of illness and healing involves exorcism to remove the influences of possessing spirits and protection from malevolent spirits and witches. Mediums produce their healing first through control of their own possession episodes, as well as through the general effects of ritual and ASC in eliciting endogenous healing responses (i.e., relaxation response, dissociation, placebo effects, hypnotic responses). These possession experiences produce personal transformations by allowing women to assume roles and express socially prohibited emotions. The widespread manifestations of similar possession phenomena illustrate it is not to be understood in cultural particulars, but instead as a manifestation of an evolved mechanism. This adaptation involves the compartmentalization of consciousness to accommodate to accepting long-lasting relationships and situations that are oppressive or even abusive (Winkelman 2018).

The features of female *wu* that are also typical of Mediums (but not Shamans) include the following: agricultural rituals, their control by possessing spirits, lower social status, predominantly female, a professional group, propitiation and sacrifices and healing involving exorcism. Lacking in these female *wu* are the central features of Foraging Shamans, such as powers derived from animals and a belief in their transformation into an animal; death and rebirth experiences during formation and an ASC of soul flight or journey; and healing practices involving the recovery of soul loss and the extraction of illness-causing sorcery objects. Furthermore, in those cases where the spirits descended into the *wu* and spoke "through the mouths and bodies of the *wu*" (Michael 2015, p. 684), we see evidence of possession rather than the shaman's ecstatic or out-of-body experience. Instead of the Shaman's control over spirits, the spirits have control over the possessed Mediums. Mediums are not typically associated primarily with animal spirits, but are instead important

to the gods, reinforcing Mediums' reputation as exclusively moral agents in contrast to the Shamans, who have moral duality balancing a reputation for both healing and sorcery.

In spite of some literary mentions of the female *wu*s' flights to heaven (Williams 2020), characteristics typical of shamanism of the traditions of north Asia, this soul flight feature of Shamans' ASCs is notably lacking in female *wu*. Rather than supporting Michael's argument for shamanism, the presence of possession is a clear indication of the female *wu* being Mediums rather than Shamans. Michael reviews evidence in Chinese commentarial precedents for this interpretation of possession in the classic texts in the word *jiang zhi* which means 'to descend and arrive', with the spirit descending into the person to possess the *wu* (also see Lin (2009, pp. 397–99), who argues that the meaning was clearly possession). Their identity as Mediums is further reinforced by the distinguishing ecological and social features of societies typified by Shamans (foraging) versus Mediums (agricultural, with warfare and political integration) exemplified by these female *wu* in a state-level agricultural society with rampant warfare between states (Warring States Period). Other principal characteristics of these *wu* during the Warring States era (paraphrased from Sukhu 2012) that correspond to features of Mediums but not Shamans included being only women, their focus on the ancestors and gods, and their experience of possession in training and professional practice, which they addressed with exorcisms.

3.6. Wugu as Malevolent Wu

Both earlier independent and bureaucratic *wu* underwent a further change at the end of the Han dynasty, a "radical transformation, in which they were systematically identified with the popular religion of the masses and became the targets of the active suppression by the functionaries both of the Confucians and Daoists and, a bit later, the Buddhists" (Michael 2015, p. 673). While Lin (2009) considers the criticism and doubts of social leaders to have damaged the social image of the *wu*, it was the political interdictions and attacks that led to their loss of political and social status. Although complete repression and interdiction did not occur in the pre-Qin periods, it was well-developed by the Warring States Period. After the transition from the feudal states to a unified imperial empire, this tendency to forbid practices of the *wu* accelerated, leading to a dramatic reduction in their status by the Han Period. Schafer also notes these dramatic changes in the *wu*, astutely observing that "After the Chou dynasty, the female shaman . . . was forced into sub rosa channels for the practicing of her magic arts, analogously to the witch of medieval Europe" (Schafer 1951, p. 134). Once the imperial system was in force, the *wu* fell into the lower classes and were not able to recover their former glory (Lin).

Although *wu* were generally considered to be benevolent, performing white magic, some texts indicate they also might engage in witchcraft. While this may have been a confusion with practitioners referred to in some texts as *wugu*, some texts have attributed malevolent practices to *wu* as well, who were employed by the powerful to cast evil spells on the victim (Sukhu 2012, p. 75). In contrast to the generally benevolent *wu*, "*Wugu* was the art of directing malevolent spirits to harm people" (Cai 2014, p. 146). The *wugu* performed malevolent rituals with the use of poisons and the invocation of evil spirits for personal reasons or to assist others to obtain power and wealth or take revenge against enemies (Cai 2014, p. 146). Inscriptions of oracle bones indicate practices of manipulating various insects and poisonous snakes to produce *gu* poison and the performance of nighttime rituals involving the manipulation of wooden dolls used to represent the intended victims (Cai 2014, p. 146). Accounts of these practices of *wugu* attest to ritual incantations to cause an evil spirit to invade a victim to cause illness and even death. Such practices were prohibited, and people accused were publicly executed.

The importance of witchcraft and the execution of witches came to the forefront when the aged and infirmed Emperor *Wu* accused a royal family of using a (foreign) *wu* to perform a curse and manipulation of sorcery dolls to kill him. They were arrested and tried and the entire family was executed. The notion that these practices came from outside of the culture was indicated by the prosecutor Jiang who likewise hired *wu* from central Asia

to find the sorcery items and exorcise the ghosts, leading to the arrest of suspects who were tortured and put to death (Cai 2014, p. 145).

Wugu as a Sorcerer/Witch (SCCS Variable 883)

The features of the *wugu* correspond to the type of ritualist Winkelman labeled as Sorcerer/Witch. The Sorcerer/Witch is devalued: an immoral aspect of the supernatural. These ritualists generally deny the accusations of being a Sorcerer/Witch. They are thought to be exclusively evil, to violate the moral order and even engage in acts of incest and cannibalism. The Sorcerer/Witch is found in complex agricultural societies and is significantly predicted by political integration and warfare. Sorcerers/Witches are considered to be exclusively malevolent, even causing illness and death to their own kin. A Sorcerer/Witch is often tortured and may be publicly executed. They are denounced for the destruction of economic resources, especially agriculture and livestock. The Sorcerer/Witch may perform their evil for clients but are generally thought to act out of revenge and for their own personal benefit or being motivated by negative emotions (anger, jealousy, envy, greed). Because of these emotions, the effects of the Sorcerer/Witch may operate unconsciously. They may, however, have learned techniques or acquired their power directly from their parents. Sorcerers/Witches exercise control over spirits and use techniques generally involving curses and spells; contagious, exuvial or imitative rituals; and discharges of power or darts that enter the victim. The Sorcerer/Witch engages in nighttime rituals and is believed to be able to fly or transform into an animal.

The *wugu* do exhibit many of these features—devalued, immoral, being publicly executed, acting out of envy and greed and using curses, spells and imitative magic. And like the Priests and Healers who hold government positions, governmental officials were central in designating who is this antithesis of morality and accusing, judging and executing those whom they considered to be guilty. In Winkelman's (1992) research, Sorcerers/Witches appear to generally be innocent victims, or local shamanistic healing traditions, rather than evil ritualists primarily engaged in malevolence. These competing ritualists are persecuted in a conflict between local culture and hierarchical power, reflected in the significant correlations of the Sorcerer/Witch with political integration beyond the local community—such as a kingdom or empire. Winkelman's model of the formation of the Sorcerer/Witch is therefore consistent with the actual nature of the ambiguous *wu* practices, being used for good (healing, worship) as well as for evil (curses, spells). Chinese history in the Han period provides clear evidence of this malevolent activity by certain parties, as well as the persecution of the guilty and innocent alike by government authorities.

3.7. The Chinese Reindeer-Evenki Shaman

If there is and was a "Chinese" shaman within the contemporary era, it clearly would include the ritualist of the Chinese Reindeer-Evenki, who appropriately use the indigenous term *šaman* to refer to their practitioners. Heyne (1999) integrated his own and others' research on their characteristics and activities; this is paraphrased and summarized below.

The principal religious activity of the *šaman* was the treatment of illnesses, divination and predicting the future and the performance of various sacrifices to ward off misfortune. The *šaman* also served as guides for the departed to the land of the dead and led seasonal and social rituals (e.g., annual celebrations, weddings and memorials for deceased persons). While the *šaman* was expected to act in an altruistic manner, they were also regarded with feelings of fear for their ability to perform malevolent rituals. Rival shamans engaged in magical battles that might end in the death of one of them.

The call to be a *šaman* came in mysterious illnesses, dreams and visions received from the tutelary spirit of deceased ancestors, reflecting the inheritance of the ability to become a shaman. Once they fell victim to the call, the initiate often became depressed, distracted and unresponsive and suffered attacks of hysteria accompanied by convulsions and periods of insensibility. When the clan system was still intact, the neophyte received orientation from an experienced shaman of another clan, but now the shamanic initiation always

occurred as self-initiation, as a purely individual endeavor. The *šaman* sought long periods of solitude and fasting in the wilderness where the person fell into a state of ecstasy and lost consciousness. In this state, they received the call and teachings of the spirit powers that gave the *šaman* the strength to conduct a new life through conversing with the spirits. During their long meditation, the candidate was killed and cut into pieces by the spirits who consumed the flesh of the initiate and afterwards reassembled the bones and brought the initiate back to life. When the initiate returned to the community the person was already a shaman.

The *šaman* was a person of great significance for the community but was never the head of the clan or a political leader. The *šaman* could be male or female and their part-time service did not generate any material advantage. The *šaman* had greater mental abilities and courage than other clan members: a capable and inspired person. But despite their altruistic service, the *šaman* had an ambiguous moral status based on the possibility that he or she might abuse their power someday. Nonetheless, their rituals were performed for the benefit of the whole community when the normal life of a group member was disturbed, or the group as a whole was falling into disorder. The community's feelings of confidence obliged the shaman, who could not avoid this duty once the call was received. The shaman's task required an entirely altruistic behavior and did not generate any material advantage.

The supernatural power of the *šaman* was derived from relations with animals, especially the red deer, whose natural and supernatural qualities were transferred to the costumed *šamans* as they rapidly danced around the fire. The *šaman* were thought to be capable of changing themselves into animals, i.e., into the animal-shaped bearers of their souls, such as bear, elk or reindeer. The *šaman* was a master of the spirits who were subservient and pliable to the needs of their shaman master. The *šaman* had command of techniques of ecstasy. Singing and drumming were the most important techniques for inducing the *šaman* to fall into a trance. The beat of the drum carried the Evenki shaman to mount the magic elk or deer to travel to the otherworld. The soul of the *šaman* traveled into the spirit world, changing into their alter ego in an animal shape world while lying unconscious on the floor. *Šamans* might also use alcohol to facilitate their spirit journey and increase their powers over spirits.

The healing concepts of the *šaman* involved belief in the malevolent influences of spirits which could cause many forms of misfortune. The *šaman* had to overcome and chase out the spirits. Soul recovery was used to recover the lost soul of a patient on its way to the realm of the dead and bring it back safely. The shamanic ritual, particularly the singing and drumming, had a hypnotic influence on the patient. The *šaman* provided protection for all members of the group with spiritual safeguards erected to help prevent abnormal states of mind and misfortunes, illness, accidents and suicide. The *šaman* also knew how to apply medicinal herbs and plants.

Comparisons of *Šaman* with Foraging Shamans (SCCS Variable 879)

Virtually all the exclusive features of Foraging Shamans are exhibited by the *šaman*. The healing and divination, as well as malevolent acts, are shared, as is the selection based on illness, dreams and visions from spirits. The formative period alone in the wilderness, with fasting and visions leading to death-and-rebirth experiences are shared features; as are the high status, lack of economic gain, both male and female part-time functionaries and the altruistic action on behalf of the community they were obliged to serve. *Šamans* controlled the spirits and their powers came from animals into which they were believed to transform for journeys to the spirit world. These and other classic features of shamanism and Shamans such as healing through soul recovery, removal of malignant spirits and use of medicinal plants all illustrate features of the *šaman* which correspond to Foraging Shamans.

The fact that the Chinese Reindeer-Evenki were hunters and pastoralists who immigrated to China around 200 years ago and constitute an ethnic group outside of mainstream

Chinese culture is instructive. It is only outside of the core of Chinese culture, in the tribal groups at the margins and periphery, that the Shaman is found in recent history.

3.8. Is the Contemporary Chinese Tu Bo a Shaman?

The information that Xing and Murray (2018) present on the religious system of the Tu ethnic group of Qinghai Province in Northwest China focuses on the *bo* 博, whom they translate as shaman, but the actual descriptions they provide make it clear that it has nothing to do with Foraging Shamans or Agricultural Shamans. Xing and Murray (2018) note the ambiguous meaning of shaman and the problems of being "exported somewhat willy-nilly to other religious specialists around the world . . . [but] nonetheless use the term shaman" (p. 7 of 22). "What remains ambiguous, however, are the features that define shamans as a group, that justify a special label, and that distinguish them from other religious specialists" (p. 6 of 22), but they arbitrarily characterize the shaman as simply involving principally diagnosing and healing illness (also weather control and contacting spirits).

But in discussing the Chinese ethnic Tu and their ritualist *bo*, whom they label a shaman, they note the contrary, "that among the Tu there has been a radically diminished involvement by shamans in the diagnosis and healing of illness" (p. 14 of 22), and instead document the importance of the *bo* in agricultural (rain-making) rituals. The only additional features they attributed to justify the label of shaman is that the *bo* are part-time specialists who let spirits enter the community and are possessed by spirits to find solutions to individual, familial and collective problems through rituals of public drumming and special chants and dances. All the core features of Foraging Shamans are notably lacking.

While Xing and Murray suggest that the *bo* "fits neatly into the category of shaman," there is nothing about the *bo* that resembles the characteristics of the Foraging and Agricultural Shamans, as seen in the characteristics of the *bo* discussed below (also see Table 5). The authors explicitly recognize the inappropriate application of the term shaman to the *bo* in stating "This public climatological function of shamanic performance is compatible with, but differs in ritual emphasis from, the cross-culturally more common role of the shaman as a healer in private diagnostic and therapeutic sessions." So why call the *bo* a shaman? The features of *bo* enumerated in Table 5 illustrate no resemblance to Shamans but rather closely resemble Priests.

Xing and Murray are paraphrased below to characterize the principal religious activity of the *bo*. The *bo* officiates a festival to help ensure good weather, making agriculture possible by sending rain and protecting against excessive rain. The *bo* also performs rituals for life cycle events, such as weddings and for female fertility and childbearing. The authors emphasize that the *bo* no longer provides a principal source of help in illness.

The *bo's* political power is illustrated in their role in providing solutions to collective, familial and individual problems, and their leadership in collective rituals. Only males may become a *bo*, but while not a full-time specialist, it is a hereditary position passed down from one generation to the next within the same family (patrilineal succession). *Bo* function principally in an annual festival coordinated with the planting season and perform a public village festival in the temple where the entire community participates in rituals to protect from natural disasters and to secure blessings for the community.

The rituals solicit the protective spirits *longwang* (dragon kings) and the *niangniang* (queen mothers), benevolent figures associated with water and rainfall, as well as tutelary and ancestor spirits for the care of the village and agrarian plots. The ancestors are worshiped with rituals at ancestral altar gravesites with gifts. Notably, while the *bo* is ascribed special knowledge and skills that bring the spirits to the community, he does not control these spirits who may even refuse to keep their part of the ritual bargain. The *bo* is ascribed an ASC, being possessed by spirits during ritual dancing in which he becomes the various spirits who provide information through the mouth of the *bo*. The ASC is induced by a drum and special chants and dances but is only notable from shivering which indicates the presence of a spirit. While *bo* provided healing as a principal activity in the past, they are no longer a principal source of help in illness.

The authors note that in the past, females typically functioned as *bo*. "Tradition has it that in the past, not only could females function as bo, but that the bo were typically females. That is now emphatically no longer the case. The contemporary absence of females among the *bo* may be the result of a transition that came as an adaptation to Han Daoist influence" (p. 12 of 22). This suggests that the mediumistic functions of the *bo* were usurped by men, who brought more of a priestly role to the position, reflecting "syncretic incorporation of Han Daoist practices into the inventory and repertoire of the *bo*." (p. 12 of 22). The role of *bo* as Priests is illustrated in the most important contemporary role of the *bo* involving performance in a public festival whose principal objective is the recruitment of spirits to help in controlling the weather for assuring the success of agriculture.

4. Results: A Summary of Shared Features and Divergences

The analyses above have provided direct comparisons of the *wu* ritualists with Shamans and other etic types of ritualists. This section provides a summary assessment of the similarities of *wu*[7] based on the characteristics they share with Shamans or the other ritualists they most closely resemble. The comparisons focus on differentiating features, those characteristics which distinguish Shamans (i.e., soul flight and soul loss), as opposed to general characteristics shared by many types of ritualists (i.e., spirit interactions or healing). Thus, the comparisons are based on the following 19 unique or diagnostic features of Shamans:

- Ritual: (two variables) Community-wide ritual held over-night
- Distinctive Functions: (two variables) Malevolence/Sorcery, warfare
- Selection & training: (four variables) Dreams and illness as signs of spirit's request, vision quest alone in the wilderness, death-and-rebirth experience, self/spirit taught
- Social Characteristics: (three variables) Charismatic leader, informal power, male and female
- ASC: (two variables) Unconscious period, out-of-body (soul flight),
- Animal powers: (three variables) Animals as a personal and supernatural power, experiences of animal transformation, hunting magic
- Healing: (three variables) Soul loss and recovery, sucking/object extraction, the expulsion of attacking spirits (vs exorcism of possession).

Ancient *wu* (focused on the men = *xi* or *wu yi*, rather than women *wu*) have at most 2 of the 19 contrastive distinctive features of Shaman (perhaps out-of-body [soul flight] and animal powers). On the other hand, the Ancient *wu* exhibit 11 distinctive features characteristic of Healers and/or Priests. These include Priest—ancestor worship and hereditary aristocrat status; Healer and Priest—agricultural and livestock rituals, members of the ruling class, attendance of religious affairs of state, only males, the performance of sacrifices and prayer to gods for blessings to avert misfortune; Healer—use of statues and icons, mechanical system of divination i.e., bone oracles and healing through exorcism.

Commoner *wu* of the late Zhou period had 9 of the 19 contrastive characteristics of Shaman (Foraging and Agricultural), including malevolence/sorcery, warfare, dreams and illness as signs of spirit's request, charismatic leader, informal power, both male and female, out-of-body experience (soul flight), animals as personal and supernatural power and hunting magic (as well as many other Shaman features which were not unique to Shamans, i.e., part-time, ASC, communicate with spirits, no formal group, etc.). On the other hand, the Commoner *wu* had only four contrastive features characteristic of Healers or Priests.

State religious officials did not have any features unique to Shamans, but instead had virtually all of their features diagnostic of both Priests and Healers (12) or just Priests (six) or Healers (two).

Female *wu* of the Warring States period had none of the unique contrastive features of Shamans. Instead, the female *wu* had six[8] variable areas exclusive to Mediums (group training, male spirit or god descends on person, possessing spirit, gods merged with the personality of *wu*, low social status, principally or exclusively female); three that Mediums share with Priests or Healers (control rains for agriculture, perform exorcisms and

appeal to deities with sacrifices and prayers) and three characteristics typical of Priests (assure well-being of state, rituals held at regular times throughout year and contributed to bureaucratic and political decisions with divination).

Guwu of the Han period had only four characteristics shared by Shamans and the Sorcerer/Witch type (nighttime rituals, males and females, imitative magic [AS] and cause illness and death) and seven which were uniquely characteristic of the Sorcerer/Witch type.

The Chinese Reindeer-Evenki *šaman* had 15 of the 19 contrastive features characteristic of Shamans (community-wide ritual, malevolence/sorcery, dreams and illness as signs of spirit's request, vision quest alone in the wilderness, death and rebirth experience, self/spirit taught, charismatic leader, informal power, both male and female, out-of-body (soul flight) experiences, animals as a personal and supernatural power, experiences of animal transformation, healing of soul loss and recovery and expulsion of attacking spirits (vs exorcism of possession).

The *bo* of the Tu ethnic group of Qinghai Province Northwest China only has one feature diagnostic of Shamans (community-wide ritual activity), but eight characteristic features of Priests, three shared by Priest and Healers and three possibly indicative of Mediums. I say possibly because the assertion of possession for the *bo*, while a characteristic of Mediums, does not have the features of Mediums cross-culturally (convulsions, amnesia, erratic behaviors, etc.; see Winkelman 2018).

These assessments indicate that the etic categories for the Chinese ritualists are as follows:

- Ancient *wu xi* or *wu yi:* Healer
- Commoner *wu*: Agricultural Shaman
- State religious officials, bureaucratic *wu:* Priest
- Female *wu* of the Warring States period: Medium
- *Guwu* of the Han period: Sorcerer/Witch
- Chinese Reindeer-Evenki *šaman:* Foraging Shaman
- *Bo* of the Tu ethnic group of Qinghai Province: Priest

5. Discussion: Critical Assessment of Translating *Wu* as Shaman?

Determining whether a *wu* is a shaman or other type of ritualist should depend on their correspondence to cross-cultural patterns of shamanism and other religious ritualists described above (Tables 1, 3 and 5). Keightley (1998) made astute criticisms of the hypotheses that early Chinese ritualists were shamans in any way related to Eliade's conceptual framework. Williams (2020) further reviews studies (von Falkenhausen 1995; Keightley 1998; Boileau 2002) that have illustrated the error in labeling as shamans the various early Chinese religious practitioners referred to as *wu*. Yet many publications have promoted confusion by asserting a false equivalence of *wu* and shamans.

Michael (2015) notes "Confusion in using the category of shamanism arises in part because of a lack of consensus on which features to include in it, and that consensus can only be informed by adherence to culture-specific representations that then can be utilized in wider, cross-cultural studies" (p. 664). But it is the culturally specific allegations (definitions) of what is a shaman independent of some objective criterion that undermines efforts after consensus. We need cross-culturally valid concepts of shamanism such as those discovered in Winkelman's research, not some concept that loses comparative utility by changing from culture to culture.

But Michael seems to absolutely reject a cross-cultural definition of shamanism in asserting shamanism "does not exist as a natural piece of human behavior demonstrating essential qualities to be discovered and cataloged" (p. 665). The cross-cultural research of Winkelman and the biogenetic features shows that Michael is wrong. Cross-cultural studies can create a consensus about just what the concept of shaman represents, and whether it can be appropriately applied to culture-specific phenomena. A problem with Michael's approach is that he defines a shaman in a manner inconsistent with his own criteria. He alleges that "The presence of shamanism in any society is recognized by their representa-

tions of a séance event of direct contact (possession) or face-to-face communication (spirit journey) between human beings and bodiless beings for the benefit of the community" (p. 665). But such characterizations are so broad that it frustrates other aspects he emphasizes in his effort after a definition, which "also has to differentiate the shaman from all other religious and political functionaries; any definition that does not attend to this will inevitably be so open-ended that it will lose all tractability" (p. 659). The resolution of this problem of excessive open-endedness demands an ethnological perspective such as presented above, but which has not previously been applied to uses of the term *wu*.

Such cross-cultural characteristics of the empirically derived etic typology of ritualists determined by Winkelman's research provide an empirical framework to assess what is a shaman in a cross-cultural perspective and across Chinese history. The comparisons of this framework with Chinese ritualists presented above show that most types of Chinese ritualists called *wu* do not correspond to Foraging or Agricultural Shamans, but rather to other types of ritualists. This illustrates the necessity to distinguish the diverse types of ritualists called *wu* and relate them to cross-cultural patterns of ritualists besides shamans. Since the contrastive features of *wu* ritualists clearly map onto the ethnological cross-cultural model, it shows that such perspectives help articulate Chinese ritualists in comparative perspective and remove the erroneous perception that all *wu* are shamans. As illustrated above, while principal aspects of the features of the pre-historic and Commoner *wu* do correspond to the features of Foraging Shamans, the other types of *wu* (Ancient, State, Female and Wugu) do not correspond to the features of the Foraging & Agricultural Shamans, but rather other types of ritualists (Healers, Priests, Mediums and Sorcerers/Witches, respectively).

Boileau (2002, pp. 354–55) illustrates these diverse meanings of the *wu* character in its reference to many different types of ritualists and supernatural roles, including diviner, a possessed medium, a ritual scapegoat, a sorcerer, healer, priest and even ancestor worship practices and eventually activities suppressed by government officials who prosecuted and even killed *wu* during the imperial period for their practices, which were called sorcery and witchcraft. What these associations of *wu* with such diverse functionaries reflect is change, a socioeconomic transformation of ancient shamanic ritual practices into other kinds of ritualists.

Michael (2015, p. 685) proposes the experiences at the basis of Chinese state religion and centralized authority were "instituted, not by ancient, all-too human shamans or sages, but by the will of the spirits (speaking through the possessed *wu*) at a time before there were institutionalized priests and temple officers." This suggests that by the time of the early Chinese civilization with its state religion of ancestor worship, whatever may have been the early remnants of an aboriginal Chinese shamanism had already been transformed into Healers and Mediums and the Priests who controlled them. Since the Shang dynasty is considered the origins of Chinese civilization and was characterized by diverse forms of *wu* ritualists (male *wu yi*, female *wu* and official *wu*), Shamans were absent from the core of society at the beginning of Chinese civilization and only persisted at the peripheries of culture and power. This is exemplified in the two clearest cases of Chinese shamans presented here: (1) the Commoner *wu*, an Agricultural Shaman and (2) the Chinese Reindeer Evenki *šaman,* who reflects the classic features of Foraging Shamans.

Winkelman's (2022) cross-cultural analyses show that these processes involved agricultural intensification, supra-community political organization and eventually warfare. These processes lead to the elimination of Shamans and the assumption of religious and ritual functions by new types of ritualists that are not Shamans but rather Priests, Mediums and Healers. This was the dynamic present at the beginning of the Shang Dynasty—male *xi* Healers, the poorly documented female *wu* of that epoch and the bureaucratic *wu* Priests. This dynamic expanded in the Warring years with the development of the Female *wu* Mediums and the *Wugu* Sorcerer/Witch who was persecuted by the Chinese state. These dynamics of evolutionary change in Chinese ritualists are clearly reflected in the sociocultural evolutionary mode of religion presented in Figure 1.

What all the *wu* share is being a ritualist, not sharing the features of a Foraging or Agricultural Shaman. The use of the root *wu* in denominating diverse types of Chinese practitioners indicates that the best translation of *wu* is a religious ritualist.

So What Is a Shaman?

While cultural relativism might suggest that it makes sense to let each society define shamanism, there exists a problem that becomes clearer when asked in reference to other concepts. By analogy, should each culture or society decide what a democracy is? Does Putin's claim to run a democratic country receive obligatory acceptance by scholars of political systems? Or alternatively, should there be objective academic and scientific standards of what a democracy is?

By analogy, if we are to have cross-culturally relevant characterizations of the definition of a shaman, it must be based on empirical comparative data rather than arbitrary or culturally specific definitions. Determination of whether a ritualist is a shaman is not an issue of where the term originated or the culture where a particular ritualist is found, but whether the ritualist resembles a well-delineated cross-cultural phenomenon which justifies the etic use of a word as a transculturally relevant concept.

Concepts such as bands, tribes and chiefdoms are commonly used in comparative political assessments of the political complexity of societies. While each category shows variation, the differences among them are clear and useful. No informed anthropologist would confuse a band for a chiefdom. And even if people in chiefdoms band together for some reason, they are still a chiefdom, not a band. By analogy, the differences between Shamans and Priests are clear, not arbitrary. Winkelman's (1990, 1992, 2022) cross-cultural research found a consistent pattern of characteristics associated with the ritualists in foraging societies, and these features correspond closely to the core concepts identified by diverse scholars researching the nature of shamanism. This cross-cultural pattern of Foraging and Agricultural Shamans is the most objective criteria to use as a framework for characterizing and evaluating what a shaman was. And even if a priest heals, divines, talks to spirits, exorcises a patient and takes care of animals, his core features are that of a Priest, not a Shaman.

6. Conclusions: The *Wu* Is a Religious Ritualist, Not a Shaman

As illustrated in the ethnological studies presented above, there are consistent objective criteria about what the concept of shaman represents in foraging societies cross-culturally, and the consistent beliefs and behaviors associated with these ritualists are the criteria that should be used to determine whether the label shaman can be appropriately applied to culture-specific phenomena.

But despite decades of publications documenting the inappropriateness of the term shaman as a translation for *wu*, the use persists even among those who note that it is an inappropriate term. Fu's (2022) book has "shamanic" in the title, and in a chapter (6) on "The northern shaman", he writes about the well-preserved shamanic culture in myths and legends, and in spite of appearing to claim otherwise, clearly rejects the notion of any northern Chinese shamans: "on the basis of years of field surveys on the peoples of northern China, studies of shamans' biographies and historical documents, and interviews with the elderly and with old and new shamans, we can safely say that no northern Chinese shaman really performs practices that accord with Eliade's theories . . . While performing sacrificial rites for clan ancestors and nature deities, northern shamans remain conscious and sober-minded . . . . northern shamans do not actually lose consciousness, and their spirit certainly does not leave their body. Rather, they remain in control of the emotional vortex of the rite. In a large-scale ritual, their seeming trance state is actually a well-designed performance. In entering that state, their own human subjective activity, not divine power, is what is mainly at work" (Fu 2022, p. 158).

To appreciate the nature of Chinese *wu* ritualists in a cross-cultural perspective, particularly with respect to the concept of the shaman, we need what Feng Qu (2018) calls

for in assessing Chinese Mongolian ritualists, a two-way dialogue to resolve the problematic aspects of both Western and Chinese perspectives on what has been called shamanism. What is important is not just any Western perspective, but one informed by ethnology rather than the romantic traditions Qu criticizes. Clarity in academic discourse requires the unambiguous meaning of technical words. Translating *wu* as shaman obfuscates, confuses and misleads. A *wu* is a ritualist and may be a Shaman, but more likely is a Medium, Healer, Priest or even Sorcerer/Witch. Consequently, *wu* should be translated into English as "ritualist, or as "religious ritualist" if a distinction from other bureaucratic functionaries is needed.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Magico-religious-Practitioners data available at the Mendeley data repository at https://data.mendeley.com/datasets/34pjbr4kg4/2 Published 18 November 2020.

Acknowledgments: Many thanks to Liang Liu for assistance with Chinese characters, pinyin and English words used in Tables 2 and 4. Also thanks to the anonymous reviewers who requested revisions that contributed to the robustness of the methods employed and findings presented here.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

1 For updated variables, values, variable descriptions, coding instructions and data see Winkelman and White (1987) or the Mendeley data repository at https://data.mendeley.com/datasets/34pjbr4kg4/2.

2 This access was made available by Doug White (RIP) but no longer appears available to the public.

3 Also referred to here as a Foraging Shaman.

4 Also referred to here as an Agricultural Shaman.

5 Winkelman (1992, p. 29) reports that the variables were attributed to a type if it was reported for 67% of the practitioners of the type or if the incidence of the variable for the practitioner type was at least 50% of all cases reported for the variable. In the case of Shamans, all cases of variables of less than 100% were correlated with data quality sources, with the consistently positive correlations indicating missing data (under reporting) rather than true absence.

6 Analyses were performed in the CosSci program housed at the University of California, Irvine at http://socscicompute.ss.uci.edu/. This system is no longer publicly available.

7 I have not provided a comparison with the Pre-historic Neolithic *wu* because of the lack of adequate data for a meaningful assessment.

8 Table 5 shows more than six matches with Mediums, but they are overlapping features.

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Deconstruction of the Trance Model: Historical, Ethnographic, and Contextual Studies of Manchu Shamanism

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Abstract: Social trends and historical contexts have popularized Eliade's trance model in shamanism studies and have contributed to a famous academic debate. A case study on Manchu shamanism conducted in this article shows that a Manchu shaman functions primarily as a sacrificial specialist rather than a mental state adept. Three types of Manchu shamanism—court shamanism, clan shamanism, and wild shamanism—are examined based on historical and ethnographic analyses. This study deconstructs the trance model and demonstrates that shamanism among Manchus has a dynamic, reactive, constitutive, and unstable historical process.

Keywords: trance model; Manchu; court shamanism; clan shamanism; wild shamanism

1. Introduction

The introduction should briefly place the study in a broad context and highlight why Trance theory in shamanism studies was popularized by Mircea Eliade (1964) and continues to be popular until today. Although scholars debate if trance includes only soul flight or both soul flight and spirit possession (Eliade 1964; Lewis 1971; Hamayon 1993, 1998; Harner 1980; Hultkrantz 1973; Riboli 2002; Rouget 1985; Siikala 1978, 1992; Vitebsky 1995; Walsh 2007), the trance phenomenon has been considered the definitive hallmark of shamanism. If a trance state can be identified, regardless of historical periods and geographical regions, the religious practitioner will be right away categorized as a shaman; if no trance is recognized, the adept will probably be called seer, healer, diviner, or sorcerer instead of shaman. In this way, a trance has been seen as the innate nature and a universal human psychological attribute of an archetypal, timeless, and worldwide shamanism. Thus, the current debate is centered on the identification of a trance phenomenon but fails to question if the trance experience is an indispensable condition with which to define the term shaman.

As best-known, the word "shaman" in Western literature originated from the West-Ewenki word *šamān* through German-speaking explorers (Znamenski 2003, p. 1; also see Knüppel 2020). Sergei M. Shirokogoroff (Shirokogoroff [1929] 1979, pp. 50–83), according to geographic and linguistic distribution, has categorized Siberian Tungus groups (such as Evenki, Solons, Oroqen, and Udehe) as Northern Tungus and has categorized Manchu in Northeast China as Southern Tungus. All these Tungus peoples share the same word shaman to refer to their religious practitioners (Shirokogoroff 1935). Manchu, as the largest Tungus group, historically and traditionally has two types of shamans: clan shaman and "wild" shaman. Comparatively, the wild shaman utilizes spirit possession as a method to create a communication between spirits and the community, but the clan shaman does not fall into an ecstatic state during the ritual performance (He 2000; Shirokogoroff 1935; Zhuang 1995, pp. 34–35). Although they are categorized as shamans in the Manchu language, clan shamans do not fit the trance model; thus, they may not be considered shamans in Western anthropological theory. This contradiction inevitably requires us to rethink the anthropological concept of the term shaman.

Citation: Qu, Feng. 2023. Deconstruction of the Trance Model: Historical, Ethnographic, and Contextual Studies of Manchu Shamanism. *Religions* 14: 496. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14040496

Academic Editor: Daniel M. Stuart

Received: 5 March 2023
Revised: 25 March 2023
Accepted: 31 March 2023
Published: 4 April 2023

The trance theory as an archetypal framework has attracted increasing criticism. The methodology in pursuit of a universal rule worldwide downplays social and historical context, thus failing to provide an in-depth understanding of magico-religious phenomena in a particular culture (Astor-Aguilera 2014; Gibson 1997; Hutton 2001; Kehoe 1996, 2000; Klein et al. 2002; Sidky 2010). Given that shamanism has been treated as a timeless and ahistorical phenomenon reflected by the human central nervous system, ethnographic and historical materials have been regarded as "superfluous" to shamanism study (Sidky 2010, p. 223). However, ethnographic research shows that, even in Siberia, the regional variation is considerable, and "obvious adaptations to historical circumstances" are different (Kehoe 2000, p. 16). In-depth research on the function of shamans, according to Astor-Aguilera (2014, p. 6), requires a focus "on one population within their dominant region." Hutton has also pointed out, "There is no doubt that the best method of providing a better understanding of the functioning of shamans within native Siberian society would be to concentrate upon one of the peoples of the region, or even on one community within them" (Hutton 2001, p. ix). For Sidky, the criteria for recognition of the shaman can be generated through cross-cultural studies. However, this does not lead to a manner to neglect ethnographic contexts. Whether theoretically or methodologically, it is still necessary "to pay meticulous attention to the ethnographic complexities within and between cultures" (Sidky 2010, p. 229).

My case study on Manchu shamanism in this article follows this trend in the critical thinking[1] of trance theory and relies on historical and ethnographic analyses in order to scrutinize how shamans ritually and socially function in Manchu societies. I argue that the shamanism in Manchu societies is not centrally featured by body phenomena and trance experiences, but by the spiritual knowledge and sacrificial rites to link human communities and non-human worlds. Data sources consist of historical texts and ethnographic records. First, the literature of the last imperial dynasty—Qing (from the Seventeenth century to the early Twentieth century) and the Republic period (1912–1949) preserve valuable information on Manchu shamanism. These texts include the imperial code Qinding manzhou jishen jitian dianli 钦定满州祭神祭天典礼 (Imperially Commissioned Code of Rituals and Sacrifices of the Manchus)[2] and numerous writings of travelers and exiles to the Northeast region of China. Second, since the founding of the People's Republic (1949), especially after 1981, Chinese scholars have provided detailed ethnographic accounts of Manchu ritual activities. Yet it should be noted that ethnographic studies of Manchu shamanism were actually pioneered by the Russian scholar Sergei Mikhailovich Shirokogoroff, whose monograph Psychomental Complex of the Tungus (1935) still remains a great influence on the field of Manchu shamanism study in China today.

2. Trance Model: An Anthropological Assumption of the Shaman

In the twenty-first century, more and more scholars have realized that the term "shamanism" or "shaman" is a notion constructed by Western scholarly imaginations (Bumochir 2014; Dubois 2011; Hutton 2001; Kehoe 2000; Pharo 2011). In Eliade's definition (Eliade 1964), the shamanic trance or ecstasy is characterized by the soul flight from the shaman's body to the supernatural world, by which the shaman is able to directly communicate with supernatural beings. The later scholars, however, have pointed out that this definition that is used to differentiate shamans from other religious specialists seems to be inefficient and inaccurate because many shamans in Siberia and North America more often employ the technique of spirit possession rather than the journey of the soul (Hultkrantz 1973, 1978; Lewis 1971; Siikala 1978).[3] Although these researchers disagree on what the trance is, they all construct their arguments based on Eliade's definition of shamanism, namely, "shamanism = technique of ecstasy" (Eliade 1964, p. 4).

Without any doubt, the trend that equals shamanism with the ecstatic technique has reduced the concept of "shamanism" into a biological construction. In this way, a psychological term "altered states of consciousness" (ASC) has been employed in shamanism studies by scholars since the 1960s (Furst 1972, 1976; Harner 1973b, 1980; Krippner 2000;

Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1988; Locke and Kelly 1985; Ludwig 1966; Noll 1985; Price-Williams and Hughes 1994; Rogers 1982; Walsh 2001, 2007; Winkelman 1997, 2000, 2002, 2004). In Atkinson's words, ASC "has been the buzzword in interdisciplinary studies of shamanism" (Atkinson 1992, p. 310). Following Eliade's trance model, the use of ASC in defining shamanism was thus lifted. As Walsh writes, in broad definitions, "the term shaman refers to any practitioners who enter controlled ASCs, no matter what type of altered state. Such definitions include, for example, mediums and yogis" (Walsh 2001, p. 32). This academic trend, combined with the counter-cultural movement, arose in the 1960s, and it allows that the terms "shaman" and "shamanism" "are widely used to designate any individual, irrespective of their sociocultural setting, who practices some form of 'healing'" (Jones 2006, p. 11).

Whether the term "ecstasy," "trance," or the behavioristic notion "ASC," they all have problems defining the concepts "shaman" and "shamanism." Winkelman's psychophysiological research shows that not only shamans but also many kinds of magico-religious practitioners are able to fall into a trance state or ASC by the effects of a variety of trance induction techniques (Winkelman 1986). As Pharo writes, "The problem with a definition based on the presence of a state of ecstasy or an altered state of consciousness is that it allows an alcoholic, a drug addict, a psychopath, or for that matter any type of human being or religious specialist to be categorized as a shaman" (Pharo 2011, p. 31). For this reason, Walsh provides a "phenomenological mapping of the shamanic journey state of consciousness" in order to differentiate shamanic ASC from other consciousness phenomena such as schizophrenic, Buddhist, and yogic states (Walsh 2001, p. 34; 2007, pp. 243–49). Harner also endeavors to separate shamanic experiences from other ASC phenomena, hence proposing the term "shamanic states of consciousness" (SSC) to replace ASC in shamanism studies (Harner 1980). However, problems are still there. Whether Harner's SSC or Walsh's narrower definition is used, they are still very broad, because all modern Westerners who pursue personal empowerment and self-healing by practicing techniques of soul flight can be considered "shamans". Based on the trance model, Harner organized many workshops in the early 1970s and afterward established the Center for Shamanic Studies in 1979 (it was integrated into the Foundation for Shamanic Studies in 1987) to teach clients the shamanic journeying for personal problem-solving such as self-healing, divination, and soul retrieval (Harner 2005). Needless to say, these modern lay people who seek individual spirituality considerably differ from a specialist in traditional societies "who can manipulate the weather; who is both considered malevolent and benevolent; who is both feared and respected within their culture; who must experience a radical form of a calling; who can manipulate their appearance (that is, shape-shift); who at any moment may lose their special abilities if particular physical and metaphysical precautions are not taken; who helps with the subsistence regime of the culture; and who partake in many other activities to the present understanding consisting of techniques that are explicitly focused on healing" (Jones 2006, p. 11).

Vision-request individuals also exist in Central and South American indigenous societies. Anthropological studies of psychedelic substances, led by UCLA (University of California Los Angeles) anthropologists such as Myerhoff (1974), Furst (1972, 1976), and Harner (1973b), reveal that not only ritual leaders, but also many indigenous lay people take hallucinogens in order to achieve the trance experience. South American Indian men often experience "the desired hallucinations" by ingesting tobacco snuff or the vine leaves under the ritual leader's supervising (Kehoe 2000, p. 65). Harner has realized that almost all members among the Jivaro Indians of the Ecuadorian Amazon have trance experiences. He writes, "The use of the hallucinogenic natemä drink among the Jivaro makes it possible for almost anyone to achieve the trance sate essential for the practice of shamanism" (Harner 1973a, p. 17). In this way, should we categorize only ritual leaders or all hallucinogen practitioners who induce trance as the shaman? If we identify such ritual use of psychedelic agents as shamanic practice, as stated by above UCLA scholars, how should we explain the significant differences between the Siberian and American "shamanism"?

The trance model has also been employed in archaeology as a fundamental criterion for measuring prehistoric shamanism. The most pre-eminent research comes from Lewis-Williams, who borrowed the laboratory data of neuroscience to construct an archaic shamanic cosmology through an exploration of prehistoric art. Using the so-called neuropsychological model, Lewis-Williams and his collaborators argue that most geometric forms and animal images in prehistory are derived from shamans' subjective visions (Lewis-Williams 2002; Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1988, 1993; Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2005). Doubtlessly, this timeless, universal approach heavily relies on Eliade's ecstasy/shamanism equation theory and fails to have satisfied other scholars (Bahn 1997, 2001; Díaz-Andreu 2001; Dronfield 1996; McCall 2007; Quinlan 2000). First, in my point of view, it is difficult to see the subjective visions generated from modern Westerners' nervous systems with prehistoric iconic and abstract forms as a homogeneous phenomenon. How can we know prehistoric images are really derived from ASC but not from non-trance sources? What are the morphological differences between images from altered states and ordinary states? As Michael (2017, p. 463) has correctly stated, "It must, however, be recognized that shamanism and art, even of the prehistoric kind, are two different things." Second, even if we could identify the prehistoric images that reflect subjective visions, it is still difficult to prove if they are derived from the shamanic consciousness or from other types of practitioners' ASC experience. The primary problems with Lewis-Williams' neuropsychological model include that (1) he has never provided a critical analysis of current shamanism theory; and (2) based on the trance model, he simply equates ASC with shamanism and further equates ASC with prehistoric images. As Wallis has criticized, "The danger with a neurotheological approach is of biological reductionism and the reifying of metanarrative" (Wallis 2013, p. 9).

The concept of the shaman is even much looser in the fields of art history and art critique. Mark Levy asserts that a number of modern and post-modern visual artists, such as Vincent van Gogh, Salvador Dalí, and Remedios Varo, can be defined as "shamanic" because they "have used dreaming, psychedelics, drumming, ritual, and meditation to induce ASC" (Levy 2011, p. 328). Some art critics have claimed that artists are able to access the spiritual world through their creative process. The consciousness travel, visions, and enlightenment that artists may have experienced are assumed to be analogical to shamanic consciousness. They are thus identified as "the artist as shaman" (Benyshek 2015; Hirsch 2010). It is obvious that such internal visual experiences are shared not only by classical shamans, but also by Judaic, Buddhist, and yogic practitioners, contemporary self-healers, neuroscience lab-test participants, hallucinogen consumers, and artists. Yet a question arises: why do we see vision-experienced artists as "the shaman" but not as the Jew, Buddhists, or yogi? Thus, as Wallis (2019, p. 2) has argued, the affinity between prehistoric art and shamanism "is a problematic modern concept based on misleading stereotypes of shamanism, such as hypersensitivity, neurosis, individual genius, divine inspiration and transcendental creativity, operating outside of social norms, that are counter to anthropological knowledge of shamans."

Two aspects contribute to the popularity of the trance model. First, the mind–body problem occupies a central position in the history of the concept "shaman." Whether for the Enlightenment scientists in the Eighteenth century who demonized shamans, or for the Romantic writers in the Nineteenth century who romanticized shamans, the mental state of the shaman was always centered in their observations, descriptions, and studies. As Flaherty has emphasized, "Great attention was usually given to the trance state: not only to attaining it and recovering from it, but especially to its genuineness" (Flaherty 1992, p. 10). Flaherty also found that the concept of "ecstasy" was already used by Joseph François Lafitau (1681–1746), a French Jesuit missionary, in describing North American shamans: "The shamans have some innate quality which partakes still more of the divine. We see them go visibly into that state of ecstasy which binds all the senses and keeps them suspended" (Flaherty 1992, p. 63). Synthesizing data from European explorers' reports and Russian sources about Siberian cultures, Czaplicka asserts that the ecstasy or trance phenomenon

is "the essential characteristic of a shaman" (Czaplicka 1914, p. 198), and this interpretation, in Hultkrantz's words, "has dominated the research perspective until the last decades of the 20th century" (Hultkrantz 1998, p. 59). Shirokogoroff's study of Tungus (including Manchu) shamanism is also centered on psychological elements. He even uses trance as a crucial criterion to determine the genuineness of the shaman (Shirokogoroff 1935). Based on this mind-centered tradition, finally, Eliade (1964) built a broad, cross-cultural, and universal framework on shamanism studies and "made shamanism go global" (Znamenski 2007, p. 180).

Second, the trance model found a large market in the "Countercultural Movement" arising in the Western world in the 1960s. Many educated and middle-class Westerners who pursued spiritual freedom and self-healing believed that shamanism as well as yoga, Vedanta, and Zen could assist them in achieving their purposes (Boekhoven 2011, pp. 165–67; Kehoe 2000, pp. 29–34). Castaneda's *The Teaching of Don Juan* (Castaneda 1968) and other UCLA anthropologists' monographs (Myerhoff 1974; Furst 1972, 1976; Harner 1973b, 1980) became sources of shamanic knowledge for these spiritual seekers. "Core Shamanism" theory was thus proposed by Harner and his publications were used as a practical manual to teach his workshop participants how to master ASC techniques with which they could create contacts with spiritual beings (Harner 1980, 2005). It is obvious that the "self-justifying concept of shamanism as a worldwide and ancient phenomenon is very much the vision provided by Eliade", and shamans, therefore, "can be anybody willing to learn the core set of practices" (Hutton 2001, p. 159). In many ways, social context has dramatically shaped today's academic trend in shamanism studies.

Some scholars have realized that the trance model downplays the social role of the shaman (Noll 1985, p. 444; Peters and Price-Williams 1980, p. 408; Rock and Baynes 2005, p. 56; Walsh 1989, p. 5). Yet they fail to provide an explanation of what the shaman's social role is, or they offer only a shallow understanding of social aspects of the shaman. For Peter and Price-Williams, this "social role" refers to merely the shaman's entering ASC "on behalf of his community" (Peters and Price-Williams 1980, p. 408). Walsh (1989, p. 5) also emphasizes the importance of the shaman's service for his community. Rock and Baynes (2005, p. 56) thus contend that a definition of shamanism consists of two aspects: the shaman's ASC experience and his social role. However, these scholars' attention is still firmly restricted to the shaman's mental state, failing to establish a balanced argument to bridge psychological elements and social functions of the shaman.

Both Humphrey (1994) and Hutton (2001) have noted that some magico-religious specialists in North Asian societies do not need trance as a technique to communicate with non-human beings. According to Humphrey and Onon (1996, pp. 30–31), the Bagchi ritualists among the Daur Mongols are responsible for carrying out sacrifices, prayers, and divinations. Although they communicate with spirits, they are normally not able to use trance techniques. The yadgan is the other type of specialist. Distinct from Bagchi, yadgan shamans have abilities to travel in the cosmos. However, they often do not need to enter such an ecstatic state in the shamanic routines of contact with spirits. Among Manchus, a type of specialist is called a clan shaman, p'oyun saman, or boǐgon saman in Manchu language (p'oyun or boǐgon means "clan"). Although p'oyun saman deal with the souls of ancestors by servicing the regularity of sacrifices and prayers to ancestors, like the Daur Bagchi practitioners, they are not masters of trance techniques. For this reason, Shirokogoroff argues that they are not "real shamans," and should be categorized as "the clan priests" (Shirokogoroff 1935, p. 218). Shirokogoroff's mind-centered definition is very much like the trend in the second half of the twentieth century. This identification overlooks two primary aspects. First, the shaman among Manchus is the name from the Manchu's own language. Second, the chief function of a clan shaman is to carry on sacrificial rites for his community rather than perform a séance with an ecstatic technique to the audience. In this way, at least in Manchu culture, the "social role" of the shaman is much more important than the body technique of ASC performance. The trainees at Harner's workshop or individuals ingesting psychedelic plants could successfully attain the talent to enter a

trance state in which they are able to explore the supernatural world. However, they can never have the ability to perform religious duties and ritual functions like a Manchu clan shaman. In this way, I contend that a definition of the term shaman should move away from the focus on the individual mental state and turn to investigations of the shaman's social functions.

Based on their analysis of Daur religious systems, Humphrey and Onon question the use of "ecstasy" or "trance" in defining the concept shaman (Humphrey and Onon 1996, p. 30). In a discussion of shamanic practices in Northern Asia, they further suggest that "[w]e should try to discover what shamans do and what powers they are thought to have, rather than crystallize out a context-free model derived from the images they may or may not use" (Humphrey 1994, p. 192). Pharo argues that, for a definition of shamanism, there are three aspects which are much more important than the shaman's mental state: "training in an esoteric religious tradition, correct performance of the mystic ritual, and a belief in the extraordinary powers of the religious specialists by their co-believers in the community" (Pharo 2011, p. 32). My approach in this article accordingly draws attention away from the psychology-centered tradition and considers the shaman's social and ritual functions as key elements in order to better understand the morphology of the concept shaman.

3. Problems in Studies of Manchu Shamanism

Manchus are distributed mostly in Manchuria of China, and their population today is estimated at 10 million people.[4] Whether contemporarily or historically, the Manchu group has remained as the largest branch of the Tungus peoples. Manchus in the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912) were descended from Jurchen people in the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). Earlier than the Mongolian Yuan (1271–1368) and Ming periods, Jurchen established the Jin Dynasty (1115–1234) and controlled most of North China (Jin and Zhang 1992; Sun and Sun 2010).

The word "shaman" in Chinese history first appeared in a Southern Song Dynasty's (1127–1279) document collection compiled by Xu Mengxin 徐梦莘 (1126–1207) by mentioning Jurchen Jin,[5] suggesting shamanism and shamans existed among Jurchen peoples as early in the twelfth century. During the Qing Dynasty, Manchu shamanic practices were largely documented in Chinese sources, as well as in Manchu texts. Since the 1980s, Chinese scholars have collected numerous ritual books from Manchu clans,[6] which record shamanic prayers, spirits, and rituals. They are dated from the eighteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century (Shi and Liu 1992; Song and Meng 1997; Zhao 2010). These historical materials and contemporary ethnographic data provide us a general picture of Manchu shamanism.

Shamanic practices vary greatly in different cultural milieus, even among Siberian peoples (Hutton 2001). The central feature of Manchu shamanism is various sacrifices, including seasonal, annual, and irregular rites. According to previous scholarly works (Fu and Meng 1991; Shirokogoroff 1935; Song and Meng 1997), these sacrifices can be divided into two categories: the domestic sacrifice (or household sacrifice) and the wild sacrifice.[7] The differences between the two types of rites include the following. (1) The deities and spirits involved are different. The domestic sacrifice worships the heaven and ancestral spirits and the clan's protective deities (they are called domestic spirits or clan spirits), while the wild sacrifice involves animal and human clan heroic spirits (they are called wild spirits). (2) The domestic sacrifice does not need ecstasy to be performed by the shaman, but inspirational performance is used in the wild sacrifice. Ancestral spirits are invited by the shaman's chanting and dancing and are supposed to be present in the ritual to receive offerings in the ritual, while the spirits in the wild sacrifice descend to the rite by possessing the shaman's body and communicate with the shaman's assistants and the community. (3) The dancing and chanting are more formalized, and the paraphernalia are relatively simpler in the domestic sacrifice than those in the wild sacrifice. (4) The domestic rituals are performed indoors, while the wild rituals are usually placed outdoors (see Song and Meng 1997, pp. 73–74). However, two types of sacrificial rituals share general

common features: they both involve drumming, dancing, praying, and invocation chanting; use food offerings and animal sacrifices; and have all clan members to participate in the ceremonies.

The ritual specialists who carry on domestic rites are called p'oyun saman in Manchu (meaning clan shaman) and jia saman 家萨满 in Chinese (meaning household shaman or clan shaman). The specialists providing service for the wild sacrifice are called amba saman in Manchu (meaning great shaman or master shaman) and ye saman 野萨满 in Chinese (meaning wild shaman). A clan which keeps only the domestic sacrifice usually has several clan shamans. However, only one chief shaman (ta saman in Manchu) is among them. A clan which keeps he wild sacrifice has only one amba saman but also has a number of assistants (jari in Manchu and zaili 栽立 in Chinese) who are required to communicate with the spiritual beings abiding in the shaman's body during a séance. The clans providing the wild sacrifice service also carry on the domestic sacrifice. The domestic sacrifice, which does not require a trance, is usually conducted by those assistants, and thus, they may also function as clan shamans. A new clan shaman and an amba shaman's assistant are elected through the clan meeting. However, the amba shaman is usually chosen by the spirit of an ancestral shaman (Fu and Meng 1991; Song 1993; Shirokogoroff 1935).

Concerning these two types of shamanic rites, there are two basic problems in the study. The first is whether domestic sacrifice was started after state regulation and codification of Manchu rituals or had already existed in the pre-conquest period. The second is if only amba shamans/wild sacrifices can be defined as shamanic or both amba shamans/wild sacrifices and clan shamans/domestic sacrifices are shamanic.

Wild shamanism is assumed to be the classical religious complex among Jurchen before the rise of the Manchu state (Fu and Meng 1991; He 1999, 2000; Shirokogoroff 1935). However, it was strictly banned by the Emperor Huangtaiji 皇太极 (1592–1643; r. 1627–1643), and the restrictions caused the declining of Manchu wild rituals throughout the Qing period (Jiang 2018). According to He (1999, p. 75), Hongtaiji's prohibitions of inspirational rituals were due to two reasons. First, he attributed the client's death to the wild ritual if the shaman failed to heal the sick person. In 1636, the emperor ruled, "[It is] forever prohibited to shamanize (tiaoshen 跳神) for people [in order to] exorcise evil, [and] to speak recklessly [about] misfortune and fortune, to delude people's hearts. If there are those who disobey, we will kill them."[8] Second, the slaughtering of animals in the ritual resulted in wasting social finance and properties and negatively affected the economic development and the military needs. Hongtaiji thus ruled, "[It is] forever prohibited to slaughter cattle, horses, mules, and donkeys in the sacrificial rite, the huanyuan 还愿ritual,[9] the wedding, the funeral, and the grave-visiting."[10].

It should be noted that what Hongtaiji forbade is only trance practices. The imperial clan's domestic sacrifice continued, and Hongtaiji even placed this tradition in the service of the state. The court shamanism was thus practiced first in the Mukden (today's Shenyang) palace and later in the Forbidden City in Beijing until the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1912. While the non-ecstatic clan rituals were practiced among ordinary Manchu clans, wild shamanism survived in the remote areas of Manchuria and is even alive today.

The engagement of Manchu shamanism with politics is also evidently reflected by the Code commissioned by Emperor Qianlong 乾隆 (1711–1799; r. 1736–1795) and was completed in 1747.[11] Most scholars hypothesize that the Code was aimed at standardizing clan rituals among all Manchus and, thus, further promoted the decay of the ecstatic practices (Elliott 2001; Fu 1990; Fu and Meng 1991; Rawski 1998; Song and Meng 1997; Wang 1988). However, Jiang Xiaoli 姜晓莉 (Jiang 2018) argues that there is no evidence to support this restriction theory. First, the preface of the Code written by the Emperor Qianlong states that the primary goal of the work is to provide correct prayers and invocations only for the Imperial family, the household of Imperial Princes, and noblemen due to the waning of Manchu customs and language. The first chapter of the Code ("Talk of Sacrifices and Offerings") especially stresses that these households who worship Imperial family's deities are allowed to copy the Code down. Second, the Code was never promulgated to ordinary

Manchu clans nationwide, and the Manchu version of the Code had rare copies. Because of the loss of the ritual knowledge and failing to find it back, even some aristocratic households were not able to perform the shamanic rites anymore. Third, structures and forms of ordinary clan rituals are not fully identical to the Code and the court rituals. Di Cosmo has also found "no evidence that the rules established in the Code were followed at a level below the court and the members of the aristocracy" (Di Cosmo 1999, p. 376).

Nevertheless, the imperial codification seems to have provided a mode to fix the ritual contents, spirits, offerings, and prayers; hence, Manchu religious practices and clan sacrifices were being transformed toward a more formalized way. Manchu is the only ritual language among all Manchu clans. Owning to the loss of the Manchu ritual words, most Manchu clans imitated the Code to create their own books of rites and prayers, and the oral transmitted tradition thus declined (Shirokogoroff 1935, p. 218). Song and Meng (1997, pp. 96–100) found that all collected clan ritual books noticeably post-dated the Code. Among them, the earliest are those from Emperor Xianfeng 咸丰 period (1831–1861; r. 1850–1861). Whether the Imperial codification or the fixation of rituals by writings among ordinary Manchu clans, both phenomena show a liturgical tendency of a native belief system which is unprecedented in the history of North Asia. Accordingly, some scholars are inclined to conclude that domestic shamanism (including court shamanism) is a late-occurred form stimulated by reforms of the Qing court, evolved from wild shamanism which is considered the classical and original form. As Shirokogoroff has speculated, the clan shaman "appeared at a rather late period," namely, "only during the eighteenth century" (Shirokogoroff 1935, p. 341). Fu Yuguang 富育光 and Meng Huiying 孟慧英 suggest that the domestic sacrifice refers to the modified rituals only after the Qing court's regulation. The original Manchu shamanism had no distinction between the domestic and the wild (Fu and Meng 1991, p. 67). Song Heping 宋和平 and Meng Huiying argue that the domestic sacrifice had been a long-standing ritual form and existed before the time of the formation of the Manchu state. The domestic and wild rituals were originally embraced in one religious and spiritual complex (Song and Meng 1997, p. 104). In my point of view, this is probably true. We must keep in mind that what had been banned by the Qing government were those components related to the sacrifice to animal and human heroic spirits who came to the ritual by possessing the shaman's body, but the components related to the sacrifice to ancestors who silently descended to the rite were kept Ethnographic data show that today's survived wild shamanism among some Manchu clans evidently embodies both the domestic and wild components (Shi and Liu 1992; Song and Meng 1997; Yu 2013; Yu et al. 2014).

If we base our understanding on the Eliadian trance model, we may simply define the Manchu wild rituals and amba shamans as shamanic while considering the domestic rituals and clan shamans non-shamanic. Much earlier than Eliade, Shirokogoroff firmly held this point. He writes,

> Among the Manchus the clan system and "ancestor worship" are so intimately connected that one cannot be understood without another. Yet, the Manchus used the institution of shamans for creation of a special kind of clan officials dealing with the souls of dead clansmen. There are p'oyun sāman, poĭxun saman (Manchu Sp.), boĭgon saman (Manchu Writ.), who are not usually the shamans, as they will be later treated, but who may be better regarded as clan officials whose function is that of THE CLAN PRIESTS. (Shirokogoroff 1935, p. 218)

Shirokogoroff believes that the p'oyun saman in Manchu "are shamans only by name," because "they do not introduce into themselves the spirits and they do not 'master' spirits" (Shirokogoroff 1935, p. 145). A few Chinese scholars also advocate this trance theory (He 2000; Liu 2000; Zhao 1989; Zhao and Zhao 2002). He Puying 何溥滢, for instance, puts forward, "The rituals conducted by [Manchu] clan and court shamans actually imitated Chinese ancestor-worship rites. Although they remained the name of the shaman due to their unchangeable linguistic habit, and even inherited some shamanic forms such as the use of shamanic paraphernalia, they were already heterogeneous shamans, not the

shamans in shamanism" (He 2000, p. 80). However, most Chinese scholars have never proposed that it is a problem in the definition of the Manchu shaman. For them, the word shaman originally came from the Jurchen/Manchu languages; hence, there is no reason to regard any Manchu shaman as non-shamanic (Fu 1990; Fu and Meng 1991; Fu and Zhao 2010; Song 1993; Song and Meng 1997; Song and Gao 2021; Wang 2002).[12]

More reasons may indicate the invalidity of the trance model in studies of Manchu shamanism. First, the wild sacrifice to animal spirits and the domestic sacrifice to ancestors constituted a singular shamanic complex in the pre-conquest period, and this classical complex has even been kept by several clans until today. The clan shamanism (including court shamanism) is a component taken from the pre-conquest complex, and it continued to be active in the Qing period as a transformed shamanic form. There is no reason to view the domestic sacrifice as antithetical to shamanism. As Guo Shuyun 郭淑云 suggests, the opinion of denying the shamanic attribute of Manchu clan shamanism inevitably relies on an ignorance of historical and political contexts, "thus is not persuasive" (Guo 2007, p. 16). Second, except for ecstatic trance, the shaman in the domestic rite also uses drumming, chanting, prayers, offerings, animal sacrifices, and professional clothes. These elements certainly represent shamanic essence rather than Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucius features, although Manchu culture, including their language and customs, witnessed the forces of sinicization throughout the entire Qing period. For Wilhelm Schott (1844, pp. 261–68), the most important characteristics for Manchu court shamans are sacrificial rites and contacts with spirits. Thus, he describes nothing about the trance states. As Di Cosmo emphasizes, even though the Manchu officiants did not use trance, the rituals including sacrifices to the spirits and invocations "cannot be regarded as foreign to the shamanic belief system and worldview" (Di Cosmo 1999, p. 363). Third, inspirational elements are not excluded in domestic shamanism. The court shamans, in Humphrey's words (Humphrey 1994, p. 214), "if they did not go into trance, certainly invoked the spirits" and invited them to descend to the ritual space by prayers and invocations. Through his analysis of textual data during the Qing period, Udry (2000, p. 185) also points out that, for those rites conducted to ancestors, the heaven, and protective deities, "[p]ossession was not the purpose", because inspirational elements "remained within these rites as spirits were asked to descend to receive the offerings, but no incorporation occurred".

4. Historical Reviews of Court Shamanism, Clan Shamanism, and Wild Shamanism

Interestingly, if comparing Qing rulers' attitude to Manchu rituals with modern anthropological theories, one may find two distinguished understandings or definitions of shamanism. For anthropologists, trance is the fundamental characteristic of the shaman. However, for Manchu emperors, spirit possession and wild spirits were not necessary elements. Rather, worship of ancestors and heaven, ceremonies, sacrifices, offerings, prayers, and invocations were regarded as central characteristics of their shamanic practices. Whether court or clan practices, they were both considered the continuity of their ancestral and ethnic tradition and were believed by Qing rulers to play a significant role in keeping a Manchu cultural identity. As the Emperor Qianlong writes in the preface of the Code,

> Our Manchu from the beginning have been by nature respectful, honest, and truthful. Dutifully making sacrifices to Heaven, Buddha and the spirits, they have always held the highest consideration for sacrificial and ceremonial rites. Although sacrifices, ceremonies, and offerings among the Manchus of different tribes vary slightly according to different local traditions, in general the difference between them is not significant. They all resemble each other. As for the sacrifices of our [Aisin] Gioro tribe, from the imperial family downwards to the households of Imperial Princes and noblemen, we consider all invocations to be important. The shamans of the past were all people born locally, and because they learned to speak Manchu from childhood, [in] each sacrifice, ceremony, ritual, offering of pigs against evil, and sacrifice for the harvest and sacrifice to the Horse God, they produced the right words, which fully suited the aim and cir-

> cumstances [of the ritual]. Later, since the shamans learned the Manchu words by passing them down from one to another [without knowing the language], prayers and invocations uttered from mouth to mouth no longer conformed to the original language and to the original sound. [13]

There are two fundamental points in this account. One is that Emperor Qianlong refers to Manchu religious practices as "sacrificial and ceremonial rites" or "sacrifices to Heaven, Buddha and the spirits." The second point is that the officiants of these sacrifices and rites are called shamans (saman).[14] From the account, one can also learn that the language used in the rites must be the Manchu. Shamans in the past used the right words in Manchu to pray and chant, but later, shamans gradually forgot how to produce original language and original sound. Since the term shaman is used by the Manchus to call their sacrificial specialist, these ritual elements mentioned by the emperor, such as sacrifices, offerings, ceremonies, prayers, and invocations, certainly constitute Manchu shamanism. Here, two crucial factors need to be emphasized. First, sacrifices and ceremonies are the fundamental feature not only of court shamanism but also of ordinary clans' practices, including both domestic shamanism and wild shamanism. Second, the technique of ecstasy is not the purpose not only in court and clan sacrifices but also in wild sacrifices. In wild shamanism, the trance performed by the shaman is regarded as a means to invoke spirits to descend to receive offerings and sacrifices; thus, it does not constitute the ultimate purpose of the religious practices. All three types of Manchu shamanism are centered on regular sacrifices for asking for blessings, thanksgivings, and harvest-celebrating and irregular sacrifices in the times of calamity for healing, exorcizing evil spirits, and asking for protections.

I start my historical reviews of Machu court shamanism, clan shamanism, and wild shamanism in this section with the Emperor Qianlong's account because his attitude was most likely to represent native Manchu's conceptualization of their own religious practices and systems. It is important to keep in mind that the emperor is not only the ruler of the Qing empire but also the chief of his Aisin Gioro clan. His perspectives can surely be visioned as what Geertz has famously proposed "from native's point of view" (Geertz 1983, pp. 55–70). Therefore, the Emperor Qianlong's writing as well as the Code are vital for today's anthropologists to understand Manchu shamanic traditions.

4.1. Court Shamanism

The Qing court rituals in Beijing took place at the Tangse, an octagonal building to the southeast of the Forbidden City and at the Kunninggong 坤宁宫, one of the main palace buildings inside the Forbidden City. According to Fu Yuguang, Tangse, also known as Dangse, an old Jurchen word, refers to archive (In Chinese, it was called tangzi 堂子, meaning hall). It is argued that the Tangse as a shrine was built when a sedentary lifestyle was adopted among the Jurchen clans in the pre-conquest period, and Tangse rituals were used to worship heaven and ancestors.[15], all Tangse of others were destroyed. Eventually, the Aisin Gioro clan's own Tangse was placed in state rituals (Fu 1988; Fu and Meng 1991). The Emperor Hongtaiji, Nurhaci's successor, further strictly prohibited other clans from erecting the Tangse shrine. As he ruled, "To all officials, common people, etc., as for those who would build a Tangse to [perform] the great offering, it is forever to be stopped."[16] By the prohibition of access to the Tangse ritual, the early Manchu rulers tried to monopolize the tie with the heaven spirit. However, as Udry argues, such a "control of shamanic rites outside of the Tangse was never achieved," and the ordinary clans never really discontinued worshipping the heaven spirit and continued to conduct the ceremony in the courtyard of a household instead of in the public shrine Tangse (Udry 2000, p. 31).

Nevertheless, the Tangse ritual seems to be singular in the cultural and religious history of Northern Asia and played a significant role in the political process of the Manchu state. The Tangse was built in stages when Manchu rulers were based first in Dongjing (today's Liaoyang), afterward in Mukden, and finally in Beijing (Bai 1996; Du 1990; Fu 1988; Jiang 1994).

Rites taking place within the ritual space of the Tangse include the New Year's Day rites, the Monthly rites, the Grand Sacrifice Erecting the Pole, the offerings to the Horse-spirit, the Offerings in the Shangsi-spirit pavilion, the Washing-The-Buddha rites. Except for these regular rites, there was also a Ceremony for sending-off and welcoming-home the troops, which was performed only as necessary. While the first four rites were also performed in the Kunninggong, the latter three rites solely took place in the Tangse (Jiang 1995, pp. 18–19; Rawski 1998, pp. 236–38; Udry 2000, pp. 55–113).

The most frequent rite at the Kunninggong was the Daily sacrifice. There were also five other calendarial ceremonies: the New Year's Day offering, the Monthly Sacrifice, the "Bao" Sacrifice, the Grand Spring and Autumn Sacrifice, and the offering of Seeking for Good Fortune (for children). Except for the New Year's Day ceremony, each rite of all other ceremonies included the morning sacrifice and the evening sacrifice. The evening sacrifice includes the so-called "light-extinguishing" ritual (tuibumbi in Manchu, beidengji 背灯祭in Chinese, held at midnight) in which shamans chant and pray in the dark. The sacrificial animals are pigs in the Kunninggong, whereas no animals were sacrificed in the Tangse rites. While the deities such as Buddha, Guanyin, and Guandi were worshipped in the morning sacrifice, the evening sacrifice addressed three deities called weceku in Manchu.[17] The deities involved in the morning rite, namely Buddha, Guanyin, and Guandi, were shared with the Tangse rites, and these statues and images were then moved from the Palace to the Tangse. Rituals in both the Monthly Sacrifice and the Grand Spring and Autumn Sacrifice include the Offering to Heaven (Elliott 2001, pp. 238–41; Jiang 1995, pp. 18–42; Rawski 1998, pp. 238–40; Udry 2000, pp. 71–113).

Shamans played roles as chief ritual actors in both the Tangse and Kunninggong sacrifices. Theses court shamans, also called Zansi nvguan 赞祀女官 in Chinese texts, were noble women who were chosen from the upper three banners of the Aisin Gioro clan (Du 1990, p. 45)[18]. During the rule of Emperor Shunzhi 顺治 (1638–1661, r. 1644–1661), there were 186 staff involved in the Kunninggong rites. Among them, 2 were head female shamans, and 10 were female shamans (Jiang 1994, p. 77; Jiang 2021, p. 86). In 1681, under the Kangxi 康熙 Emperor (1654–1722, r. 1662–1722), the number of female shamans was increased to 12 (Tao 1992, p. 228).

There were no possession and trance techniques used by shamans in the court rituals. However, they performed drumming, chanting, singing, and dancing, as did Siberian shamans. It is tendentious to view court shamans and court shamanism as non-shamanic, as suggested by Shirokogoroff (1935) and others (He 2000; Liu 2000; Zhao 1989; Zhao and Zhao 2002). First, as Udry has argued, "the Manchus themselves used the terminology of their particular type of shamanism" (Udry 2000, p. 42). Therefore, "it seems perverse to refuse the term shamanism to an intentional practice by people actually called saman" (Humphrey 1994, p. 214).

Second, in Shirokogoroff's view, these court shamans, who were chosen from the wives of high officials, might not be seen as a "real shaman" because they did not perform trances like those wild shamans (Shirokogoroff 1935, p. 219). However, in Udry's argument, these noble women "do fulfill" a shamanic role; thus, "it does not mean that those rites are in any way 'un-' or 'counter-' shamanic" (Udry 2000, p. 45). Humphrey also emphasizes the importance of court shamans in these imperial ceremonies. She writes, "Their presence was necessary to invoke the spirits, to conjure and address them, to make libations and prayers over the sacrificial pigs and wine, and actually to kill the animals. The emperor was present at the ceremonies, but his part was limited to bows and genuflections (Harlez 1896, pp. 60–61). Thus, taken together, we see a range of practices in the patriarchal (shamanism) mode. There is no reason not to call them shamanic" (Humphrey 1994, p. 213). She also lists ritual tasks of court shamans: invoking the spirits; giving thanks for blessings; ritually washing the Buddha statue; making sacrifices for the prosperity of horses; driving evil spirits; praying over offerings; and burning incense and paper money (Humphrey 1994, p. 214). All these elements point to typical shamanic characteristics in Siberian and Manchurian shamanism. Furthermore, according to Jiang Xiaoli's recent re-

search, not every noble woman from the Aisin Gioro clan could fulfill a court shaman's duty. The chosen one must be initiated in the ritual by following the Manchu shamanic tradition (Jiang 2021, p. 88).

Third, according to Jiang Xiaoli's scrutiny of the Emperor Qianlong's Code, except for the possession performance, the Kunninggong light-extinguishing sacrifice in the dark at midnight followed the ritual process of a traditional wild rite exactly, which included three phases: invoking spirits, spirits descending, and sending off spirits. In the first phase, shamans chanted names of the spirits; in the second phase, shamans chanted prayers and invocations when assuming the descendance of spirits in orders; and in the third phase, shamans kneeled while giving thanks to spirits when assuming the leaving of spirits. During the ritual, female shamans donned the professional shamanic costume with the spiritual skirt, wearing metal bells on their hips and holding the drum with the hand. They danced, spun, and drummed by following the rules. When spirits were assumed to come down, the ritual performance reached its climax with speedy spinning and highly-frequent drum-beating (Jiang 2021, pp. 113–15). All these elements evidence the continuation of the prior wild sacrificial tradition in the Court.

Differences between the Tangse and Kunninggong rites have been observed by scholars (Di Cosmo 1999; Fu 1988; Jiang 1994, 1995; Udry 2000). Since Kunninggong rites were clan rites of the Aisin Gioro, it is not different from domestic rituals conducted in the Manchu commoners' household. Only members of the Aisin Gioro could participate in the Kunninggong ceremonies (Jiang 1994, p. 75; Udry 2000, p. 40). However, the Tangse rites possessed unambivalent political and public natures. As Fu has observed, "The Tangse rites were with great solemnity. It was public state rituals for asking blessings and worship of heaven" (Fu 1988, p. 207). The participants of Tangse rites were non-Han members of the Qing court, including officials from other Manchu clans and Mongolian kings (Jiang 1994, p. 72; Udry 2000, pp. 48–49, 59). The Ceremony for sending-off and welcoming-home the troops performed in the Tangse demonstrated that the public Tangse ritual was closely tied to military expeditions (Fu 1988, p. 205; Udry 2000, p. 23). The Shangsi spirit worshipped in the Tangse Monthly Rites was originally a Mongol spirit, demonstrating "a public affirmation of the Gioro ties to the Mongols" (Udry 2000, p. 111). Thus, as Udy argues, the Tangse rites publicly manifested "both the power of the state and its direct, proprietary relationship with heaven, as well as the particularly Manchu nature of the relationship" (Udry 2000, p. 86).

According to the above analyses, it is not surprising that shamanism may be compatible with the state and "may even emerge from the core of the state" (Humphrey 1994, p. 193). When the clan society was superseded by the hierarchical state structure, Di Cosmo argues, its "shamanic rituals, practices, and beliefs change accordingly" (Di Cosmo 1999, p. 363). To some extent, institutionalization, formalization, and liturgification became characteristics of Qing court shamanism (Elliott 2001, p. 238). This is to mean that when shamanism is closely combined with the state structures, it may transform into what Michael (2015) has defined as bureaucratic shamanism.

4.2. Clan Shamanism

Two doctoral dissertations provide deep analyses on documents of the Qing Dynasty which pertain to shamanic rituals conducted by ordinary Manchu clans, as well as texts about the Court rites. One is in Chinese, from Chinese scholar Jiang Xiaoli. Her degree was completed in 2008, and the revision of her dissertation was published in 2021. The other one is in English, from American scholar Stephen Potter Udry, and it was completed in 2000. Both dissertations have outlined a general picture of shamanic practices of the Manchu clans during the Qing period (Jiang 2021; Udry 2000). According to Jiang (2021, pp. 130–37), five accounts in the early Qing Dynasty document shamanic sacrifices of Manchu clans on Manchurian land. The first account is *Jueyu Jilue* 绝域纪略, authored by Fang Gongqian 方拱乾, who was exiled to Ningguta 宁古塔 from 1659 to 1661. The second is *Ningguta Shanshui Ji* 宁古塔山水记 (published before 1670), which was authored

by Zhang Jinyan 张缙彦, who was exiled to Jingguta in 1661. The third account is *Ningguta Jilue* 宁古塔纪略, which was authored by Wu Zhenchen 吴振臣, who was born in Ningguta in 1664 during his father's being exiled to the region. The fourth account is *Liubian Jilue* 柳边纪略, authored by Yang Bin 杨宾, who visited his father Yang Yue 杨越 in Ningguta in 1689. The father was exiled there in an earlier year. The fifth account is *Longsha Jilue* 龙沙纪略, authored by Fang Shiji 方式济, who was exiled to Qiqihar with his father in 1710 and stayed there for 10 years until his passing away in 1720. Among these documents, Zhang's *Ningguta Shanshui Ji* and Fang Shiji's *Longsha Jilue* provide vivid descriptions of the séance and the shaman's possession experience, demonstrating that wild shamanism still continued in remote areas in Manchuria.

Udry's research is mainly of court/clan sacrifices and domestic rituals; thus, his analyses only focus on the other three documents, namely Fang Gongqian's, Wu's, and Yang's accounts. Four aspects of the rites are pointed out by Udry (2000, pp. 123–27). First, the general structure or sequence of events described in these three accounts is similar, demonstrating that Manchu clans in Manchuria share a common ritual tradition (Udry 2000, pp. 123–24). Second, regular or seasonal rites play a central part in Manchu clan shamanism. Although Fang's account does not clarify what rite the shaman performed, he does provide an outline of a regular shamanic rite characterized by the shaman's paraphernalia (spiritual hat, skirt, and metal bells), shamanic performances (dancing and prayer-chanting), pigs as sacrifice, divination, horse-spirit worship, and a wooden pole in the front courtyard (Udry 2000, pp. 120–21; also see Fang 1985a, pp. 111–12, cited by Jiang 2021, pp. 131–32). Both Wu and Yang provide descriptions of the spring and autumn sacrifice, implying that this was likely the most important regular rite among ordinary Manchu clans. As Wu puts it, "(they also) have tiaoshen. Whenever it is either of the two seasons, spring or autumn, this is done" (Udry 2000, p. 122; also see Wu 1985, p. 250, cited by Jiang 2021, p. 133). Yang writes, "Among wealthy and noble families, some tiao each month and some each season. At the end of the harvest there are none who would not tiao" (Udry 2000, p. 122; also see Yang 1985, p. 19, cited by Jiang 2021, p. 134). It is noted that tiaoshen is a normal term used in Chinese documents during the Qing period, which means "to shamanize" or "to perform shamanic ceremonies."[19] In Yang's accounts, there is the other term huanyuan that refers to the irregular sacrifice for people who encounter either fortune or infortune occasions (such as illness) and that literally means "returning promises" (Udry 2000, p. 120). The huanyuan ritual was usually performed around the spiritual pole in the courtyard. As Wu writes, "All households large and small set up a wooden pole in front of their courtyard which they take as a spirit. Whenever they encounter either happy occasions or sickness, then (they perform) huanyuan" (Udry 2000, p. 121; also see Wu 1985, p. 248, cited by Jiang 2021, p. 133). Yang writes, "Whenever the Manchus have an illness, they are to tiaoshen" (Udry 2000, p. 122; also see Yang 1985, p. 19, cited by Jiang 2021, p. 134). In my point of view, it seems that tiaoshen is a general category including both sacrifices for seasonal rites such as the spring and autumn sacrifices and irregular huanyuan rites. Third, the ancestors played a prominent role among spirits to receive offerings in the seasonal rites. In both Fang's and Wu's accounts, the ancestors are distinguished from other spirits to be regarded as a separate category (Udry 2000, pp. 125–26). Fang writes, "Tiaoshen can be likened to invoking ancestor. . . . . Ordinarily there is certain to be a pole in the yard, and atop this pole they tie cloth strips, explaining that 'the ancestors rely on these; if you move them, then it is the same as excavating their graves.' After they have cut open the pig, if flocks of crows come down and peck at the leftover meat, then they joyously say, 'The ancestors are pleased.' If not, then they sadly say, 'Our ancestors are dissatisfied; disaster will come'" (Udry 2000, p. 121; also see Fang 1985a, pp. 111–12, cited by Jiang 2021, pp. 131–32). When describing the preparation of indoor ritual space, Wu writes, "Above this table they put threads crosswise upon which they hang silk strips of the five colors. It seems the ancestors rely upon these" (Udry 2000, p. 122; also see Wu 1985, p. 249, cited by Jiang 2021, p. 133). This phenomenon recalls my recent years' field survey on the Hulun Buir land, the northwestern part of Manchuria, where colored threads as well as hide strips are still used

by contemporary indigenous shamans to create ritual space. It is said that these strips are the spiritual road upon which ancestral and natural spirits travel between the human and other worlds (Qu 2021). Fourth, according to Udry's analyses, the "most significant point which can be drawn from these accounts is the peripherality of the shaman" (Udry 2000, p. 126). This is to mean, while the irregular huanyuan rites were usually performed by a professional shaman, the regular and seasonal rites could be performed by a woman of the household. As Wu writes, "They take the wife of the house as master. On the outside of her clothing they tie a skirt, and all around the waist of the skirt are attached many long metal bells. Her hand grasps a small paper drum, and when she strikes it the sound is tang-tang like. She chants Manchu, her waist shakes and the bells ring, all brought into harmony with the drum" (Udry 2000, p. 122; also see Wu 1985, p. 248, cited by Jiang 2021, p. 133). Yang was likely to have witnessed a similar performance. As he writes, "The one who performs the tiaoshen is sometimes a female shaman and sometimes a regular woman of the household. They take bells and tie them on her hips. As she drags the bells, they make a noise, and she beats on a drum with her hand" (Udry 2000, pp. 122–23; also see Yang 1985, p. 19, cited by Jiang 2021, p. 134). Accordingly, Udry boldly concludes that "it is evident that 'shamanism' is not solely defined by the acts or performances of a single actor called a shaman" and "the shaman is not the sole chief actor, other categories of actors may take the leading role in rites" (Udry 2000, p. 127). To my knowledge, similar phenomena also occurred among other indigenous peoples in North Asia. Russian ethnographers Bogoras and Jochelson have both noted that family shamanism played an important part in ritual practices among Chukchi and Koryak tribes. Almost every household had at least one member who possessed one or more drums and had the ability to communicate with spirits and to essay soothsaying. Meanwhile, these Far North tribes did have professional shamans who were parallel to family shamanism. They performed séance and ceremonies in the outer tent (Bogoras 1904–1909, pp. 413–68; Jochelson 1908, pp. 47–59). According to Jochelson (1908, p. 47), the Koryak family shamans served "the celebration of family festivals, rites, sacrificial ceremonies." This phenomenon reminds us that the shaman should not be considered the sole element to define the concept shamanism. In this way, the Eliadian trance model obviously misleads scholars to an inaccurate understanding of the native points of view.

Both Jiang and Udry have examined documents about Manchu shamanic practices in the Late Qing period, although their textual sources are different. Jiang's research focuses mainly on clan archives transmitted from the ancient time to today. According to her research, Northern Manchuria (today's Heilongjiang and Jilin Provinces) have both regular and irregular rites. Wild rituals and shamanic performances are seen in several Late Qing accounts. Generally speaking, the shamanic sacrifices of the Late Qing period in this region still continued the tradition of the early Qing period (Jiang 2021, pp. 139–40). However, comparatively, the Shengjing region (today's Shenyang) in Southern Manchuria has only seasonal rites performed, and these rites appear to be simplified forms. Clan archives mostly exhibit elements such as animal sacrifices (including pigs, sheep, geese, chicken, and ducks), kowtow, the light-extinguishing ritual, spiritual pole, and huansuo 换索.[20] These rites were usually presided over by the woman of the household with no chanting and dancing (Jiang 2021, pp. 140–44). Archives from the Guwalgiya Clan in Fengcheng, for an example, has such words: "The ritual presider must be a lawful wife, a woman wearing six earrings" (Fu et al. 1996, cited by Jiang 2021, p. 141).

Udry provides a scrutiny of two nineteenth century texts of Manchu sacrifices in the Beijing area. One is the *Miscellaneous Note from the Bamboo Leaf Pavilion* 竹叶亭杂记, which was written in the first half of the century and authored by Yao Yuanzhi 姚元之, a Han Chinese dignitary in the Court, who even held the position of Vice Minister of the Board of Rites. The other one is *Tianzhi Ouwen* 天咫偶闻, which was written toward the end of the century and authored by Zhen Jun 震均, a Manchu noble (Udry 2000, pp. 139–66).

A section of Yao's text particularly describes two cases about the rites of Manchus. The first case is of the spring and autumn rite, which is characterized by a morning ceremony,

an evening ceremony, an offering to heaven in front of the spirit pole, a huansuo ritual, a pig sacrifice, a light-extinguishing ritual, and deities including Guanyin, Guandi, and the earth god. For Udry, all of these aspects greatly resemble the Kunninggong rites. However, there is no shaman described by Yao. One may assume that the host of the rite was possibly the master of the household. However, the shaman who practiced dancing and chanting do appear in the second case. According to Yao's description, it is not difficult to recognize that this second case is of wild shamanic rituals (Udry 2000, pp. 139–49).

The ceremony described in Zhen's account is similar to the first case in Yao's account, structured with four major rituals: morning offerings, evening offerings (light-extinguishing ritual), an offering to heaven, and a huasuo ritual. The host of the offering to heaven is called "prayer-reader" in Zhen's text. In Udry's opinion, this specialist could be a shaman, but his role was not active in the ceremony (Udry 2000, pp. 149–58).

In Udry's argument, the first case in Yao's account and Zhen's account are in consonance with the Kunninggong rites described in the Qianlong compendium. However, this does not mean that the Manchu non-Imperial clan rites were greatly influenced by the court rites. Rather, it is most likely that the shamanic ceremonies of all Manchu clans "are basically same, with differences in the details and agreement in general" (Udry 2000, p. 158). For Jiang (2021, pp. 150–51), it is possible that the Qianlong's compendium possibly remained influences on clan sacrifices to some extent in the Beijing area, but not dramatically.

4.3. Wild Shamanism

Although wild shamanism was prohibited by the Qing authority since the Emperor Hongtaiji's ruling, it was never discontinued in the remote Manchurian areas. The second case in Yao's account demonstrates that the shamanic séance was also performed by the Manchu shamans even in the Beijing area. The paragraph begins with a description of the person shaman. Yao writes, "As for the Manchu's tiaoshen, there is one, or more, person (who) specializes in and is practiced in dancing, chanting, and saying prayers. (He/She/They) is/are called shaman" (Udry 2000, p. 147; also see Yao 1982, p. 63, cited by Jiang 2021, p. 152). When the shaman "is chanting to the most crucial moment, he/she is crazy and wild as spirits will come. The more fast the change is, the more acute his/her dancing is, and the more rapid drum-beating is and many drums are rumbling. After a moment, when the chanting is at the end, the shaman again looks faint and drunk because spirits are already arriving at and possessing his/her body"[21] (see Yao 1982, pp. 63–64, cited by Jiang 2021, p. 152). Both Jiang and Udry have agreement to conclude that Yao's account exactly describes the trance state of a Manchu shaman (Jiang 2021, p. 152; Udry 2000, p. 149).

More descriptions of wild rituals can be seen in some Early Qing texts about remote Manchurian regions. A shamanic séance for healing and spiritual miracles is recorded in Zhang Jinyan's *Ningguta Shanshui Ji*. As he describes, "Whenever (people) have an illness, they are certain to tiaoshen to ask for blessings. (The actor) is called chama, donning an iron horse on the head, wearing a colored costume, bearing bells on the hips, and holding a drum with the hand. (The chama) is leaping and spinning. When spirits are coming, he/she swallows fire in mouth, has arrows to thrust his/her chest, and steps on the knife. He/she has no fear. The illness is always healed" (see note 21) (Zhang 1984, p. 32, cited by Jiang 2021, p. 132). Fang Shiji's *Longsha Jilue* documents the shamanic rituals in the Qiqihar region. He writes, "A wu who is possessed by spirits is called sama. The hat is like a metal helmet and its edge has five-colored silk strips pendulous. Strips are too long to cover his/her faces. Two small mirrors hung on strips are like two eyes. He/she is wearing a purple-red skirt. When the drum sound is rumbling, the sama is dancing on beats. The most miraculous magic is to perform bird-dance indoors and to throw the mirror to exorcize the evil. He/she can also use the mirror to heal the illness" (see note 21) (Fang 1985b, p. 212, cited by Jiang 2021, p. 136). The original text of "to perform bird-dance indoor" is "wu niao yu shi 舞鸟于室." This sentence can also be understood as "directing

the bird in the room." However, these two cases both indicate the shaman's being in the trance state. While the first case implies that the shaman is possessed by a bird spirit, the second case indicates that the shaman has the power to control the bird by being possessed by spirits.

It is worthy to note that Yang Bin's *Liubian Jilue* has such words: "When the prayer is over, she leaps and spins with various types of actions such as tiger and Moslem" (Udry 2000, p. 123; also see Jiang 2021, p. 134). Udry argues that the shaman leaps and spins in mimicry of a tiger or a Moslem, and this does not mean an ecstatic state (Udry 2000, p. 123). The "Moslem," in Udry's understanding, may represent a new outside spirit from the Islamic world (Udry 2000, p. 123). I believe that this is a mistake by Udry. The original word in Yang's account, translated as "Moslem" by Udry, is "huihui." The word "huihui" in oral Chinese does mean a Hui person, namely a Moslem. However, there is no evidence to relate Manchu shamanism with Islam and Moslems in historical and ethnographic texts. According to my personal communications with a contemporary Manchu shaman Shi Guanghua 石光华, the word "huihui" is closer to the Manchu word "hiung," which refers to the flying sound of a bird and is often used to describe the descending of a bird spirit.[22] Thus, in my opinion, the sentence should be corrected as "she leaps and spins with various types of actions such as the tiger and the bird." Recalling the shaman's bird-dance in Fang's text, I argue that Yang is also a witness to the shaman's ecstatic performance.

Late Qing texts demonstrate that wild shamanism continued throughout the whole Qing period. *Heilongjiang Waiji* 黑龙江外记, which was authored by Xiqing 西清 and completed in 1810, is one of the books that describe the shamanic trance among Manchus. As Xiqing describes, "When the sama perform séance, he/she also beats the drum. When spirits come, the sama loses his/her own appearance. For example, if the tiger spirit comes, he/she looks ferocious; if the mom spirit comes, he/she looks soothing; if the girl spirit comes, he/she looks shy" (Xiqing 1984, p. 192, cited by Jiang 2021, p. 138).

Shirokogoroff's field surveys among Manchus were conducted mainly in the Aihui area of Heilongjiang province in the second decade of the twentieth century. As Shirokogoroff has noted, even at his time, every Manchu clan had its own clan shamans, and the number of clan shamans was very large. What is more significant is that he also recognized ten or eleven amba saman (wild shamans) in villages of the Aihui area (Shirokogoroff 1935, pp. 386–87). Shirokogoroff's field data confirm that the tradition of wild shamanism was never abandoned by remote Manchu clans. Through analysis of Qing's textual materials, Jiang argues that, in the Heilongjiang area, the shaman was invited only to tiaoshen (shamanize) if a clan member had illness but was not used for regular clan sacrifices (Jiang 2021, pp. 139–40). Fu Yuguang, according to his father Fu Yulu's narrative, also documents a healing sacrifice conducted by the Zhang family for the elderly lady who had been caught by illness for a half year. Four shamans were invited to perform wild rituals, and wild boars, cows, and pigs were sacrificed (Fu and Zhao 2010, pp. 133–52).[23] This may evidence that the wild ritual was indeed often used for healing. However, the amba saman is present in both irregular healing rituals and regular sacrifices among Manchus in Shirokogoroff's ethnography. Several healing cases are listed to show how Manchu shamans were possessed, and they were imbued with spiritual power to treat the sick (Shirokogoroff 1935, pp. 313–14). A wild ritual performed during the New Year sacrifice by a Manchu clan is also documented by Shirokogoroff in details. Various spirits are introduced into the body of the shaman, who is assisted by his assistants (jari) (Shirokogoroff 1935, pp. 370–71). Referenced with Shirokogoroff's records, Jiang's argument is likely biased. This is probably because that Qing travelers' and exiles' accounts provide only fragments about local rituals on a superficial level.

Numerous ritual books were collected by Chinese scholars in the 1980s and 1990s, which were dated to the period from Late Qing to the first half of the twentieth century. Most of them use Chinese characters to note the oral Manchu language because of the decline of the Manchu writing system. According to their scrutiny of ritual books, Song

and Meng have identified that a few books such as those collected from the Shi clan, Yang clan, and Guan clan include chanting words of both domestic and wild rituals. These texts inevitably evidence that wild rituals were utilized in both irregular healing sacrifices and regular clan rites (Song and Meng 1997).

5. Ethnographic Analyses of Contemporary Manchu Shamanism

The Manchu shamanic tradition was broken by the Cultural Revolutionary movement during the period from 1966 to 1976. Shamanic paraphernalia and ritual books from many clans and families were destroyed. At the end of the 1970s, the political restrictions were removed. Since then, a few Manchu clans have begun to revive their ritual and sacrificial practices. After 1980, more and more scholars have conducted fieldwork projects on Manchu shamanism, and numerous journal articles and monographs have been published (e.g., Fu 1990; Fu and Meng 1991; Fu and Zhao 2010; Guo 2007; Shi and Liu 1992; Song 1993; Song and Meng 1997; Song and Gao 2021; Wang 2002; Yu et al. 2014). According to Fu and Zhao (2010, p. 82), in the 1980s, the revitalized Manchu rites were distributed mainly among Machu villages alongside the Heilongjiang River (or Amur River) and in the Ningan area and the Fuyu County of Helongjiang Province, the Hunchun area, the Yongji County, Jiutai County, and Yitong County of Jilin Province, and the Fushun area, Fengcheng County, and Xiuyan County of Liaoning Province.

The ethnographic data show that there are four categories of sacrifices among historical Manchus. The first is regular and calendarial rites which are performed in festivals during the year. The most important rite is the spring and autumn sacrifice. The second is called shaoguanxiang 烧官香 (meaning public-insane-burning), which is performed when the clan encounters disasters such as floodings, epidemics, or earthquakes. If no catastrophe occurs, the clan usually holds the public-insane-burning every five years or approximately ten years. The sacrifice is usually performed on a large scale, and all clan members distributed everywhere are asked to participate. The third is the haunyuan sacrifice for healing or problem-resolving. It can be held on any day and for any family in need. The fourth is the xupu 续谱 (meaning continuation of clan genealogy) sacrifice, held for the updating of clan ancestral archives (Fu and Meng 1991, pp. 70–71). However, according to ongoing fieldwork, the yearly regular rites are rarely practiced nowadays among most Manchu clans, while the public-insane-burning or xupu sacrifices with a longer cycle are still practiced. The cycle and frequency of the rite vary among Manchu clans. Clans in the Jiutai County of Jilin Province, such as the Shi clan, Yang clan, and Zhao clan, perform the xupu sacrifice in the tiger year or dragon year in the Chinese lunar calendar once every 12 years. The public-insane-burning is usually combined with the xupu rite (Yu et al. 2014; Zhu 2017). For the Guan clan of Yilangang Village in the Ningan County of Heilongjiang Province,[24] members follow the rule of performing a small-sized public-insane-burning rite every three years and a grand public-insane-burning rite every five years (Guan 2015; Guo 2010; Jiang and Jing 2006; Yin and Han 2020). Additionally, sacrificial rites are also performed for scholars for the academic observations, or for the public as a part of the governmental Intangible Cultural Heritage Project. Obviously, this is a new category which responds to the social need of the contemporary changing world (Figure 1).

Both domestic and wild shamanism are alive among today's Manchu clans. The Ningan area of Heilongjiang Province is best known for the domestic rites performed by many Manchu clans such as the Yang clan, the Guan clan of Yilangang Village, the Guan clan of Xiamahezi Village, the Xu clan, the Fu clan, and the Guan clan of Shaerhu village. The rites performed in Ningan generally continue the Qing Manchu tradition, although ritual details may vary between different clans (Guan 2015, pp. 61–71). The wild rites are practiced by the Shi clan and the Yang clan in the Jiutai area of Jilin Province today. However, it is important to note that the wild sacrifice does not appear to be an independent ceremony. Rather, trance performances are combined with domestic rituals into a holistic clan ceremony (Fu and Zhao 2010; Yu 2013; Yu et al. 2014).

Figure 1. The shaman Shi Guanghua and Shi Zongduo of the Manchu Shi Clan performed a ritual for the author's observation in January on 30 January 2023. Photograph by Feng Qu.

Observations and interviews of the Guan clan's shamanic practices at the Yilangang Village have been conducted by scholars in the last two decades (Guan 2015; Guo 2010; Jiang and Jing 2006; Yin and Han 2020). During the Qing period, the Guan clan in Ningan (or Ningguta) performed the autumn rites every year. According to the narratives of Shaman Guan Yulin (关玉林), the wild rituals were included in the autumn rites before the arriving of the Hongtaiji's restriction. The sacrificial tradition for the Guan clan remained only semicontinuous because of regime changes after the fall of the Qing Dynasty. In the 1940s, the clan sacrifice was ceased probably because of the communist Land Reform Movement.[25] Fortunately, the ritual objects, ancestral archive, and "deities' box" were kept by clan members at this moment. However, when the Cultural Revolution Movement arose, most of them had to be destroyed, and only a part of them were secretly saved by some elders (Guo 2010, pp. 116–17).

The Guan clan's sacrificial tradition was resurrected in 1993. In 2002, a cultural house as the ritual-performing space was built, supported by clan members' donations. The ritual process is obviously not much different from that in the Qing period. According to ethnographic writings, the rite usually lasts for three days. The first day's ceremony begins with the zhenmi 震米 ritual in the afternoon, which literally means shaking grains. While the glutinous millet is washed to prepare for cake making as ritual offerings, two shamans chant and drum to give thanks to the spirits for the year's harvest. Other rituals include star sacrifice at the first night, worship of ancestors on the second day, and worship of heaven and the huansuo ritual on the third day. On the second day, the ceremony includes morning sacrifice, noon sacrifice, evening sacrifice, and the light-extinguish ritual (Guan 2015; Guo 2010; Jiang and Jing 2006; Yin and Han 2020). It is argued that the Manchu clan shamanism of today has been substantially shaped by the Qianlong code (Fu 1990, pp. 9–10; Song and Meng 1997, p. 95). However, from ethnographic observations of the Guan clan's sacrifices, the influence of the Code is not evident. First, the ritual process still follows the ancient tradition. The general elements such as pig sacrifice, the shamans' performance, heaven-worship ritual, the spiritual pole, and the huansuo ritual not only can be seen in late Qing's texts and the court shamanism, but are also similar to those seen in early Qing's texts. According to an observation of the three-day grand sacrifice in November 2017, shamans were wearing belts, drumming, and dancing during the noon sacrifice and the light-extinguishing ritual in the ceremony on the second day. On the third

day, clan members performed heaven-worship under the spirit pole in the front yard. All these elements show a persistent tradition from the antient time (Yin and Han 2020). Second, the star sacrifice plays an important part in the Guan clan's sacrifice. According to Fu's ethnographic records, the star sacrifice can be traced back to the Jurchen people. It was still popular among many tribes and clans during the Qing period. Some descriptions are documented by late Qing texts (Fu 1990, pp. 99–111). However, star sacrifice was not seen in the Qianlong code. Additionally, the noon sacrifice is also a particular element in the Guan clan's rite. These seem to demonstrate that Manchu clan shamanic practices, whether in early Qing or after the Qianlong code was published, even today, "are basically same, with differences in the details and agreement in general" (Udry 2000, p. 158).

The wild ritual is well preserved in the sacrificial rite of the Shi clan (Manchu, Sikteri clan) in the Jiutai County of Jilin Province. However, the so-called "wild" ritual and the "domestic" ritual are combined and constitute a single event. According to the clan archive, the Shi clan originally belonged to the Haixi 海西 Jurchen tribe and once dwelled at the foot of Changbai Mountain. The clan joined the Manchu Yellow Banner when the Manchu were conquering China. In the first year of Emperor Shunzhi's reign (1644), the Shi clan's ancestor Jibaku followed the emperor to enter Beijing. In the same year, he was appointed as an official in charge of the affairs of fishing pearls and hunting marten for the Court and stationed in today's Wulajie Town of Jilin City. Later, his descendants moved to today's Dongha village and Xiaohan village of Jiutai County and have inhabited this area alongside the Sungeri river until today. The clan archive and oral legends both manifest a clear genealogy of the clan shamans. Since the first generation of the shaman whose name is Chong Jide, there have been eleven generations of shamans. Shi Zongduo 石宗多 and Shi Guanghua are the eleventh generation of shamans in the Shi clan today (Guo 2008, 2009; Shi 1985; Yu 2013; Yu et al. 2014). The Shi clan's sacrificial tradition continued even to the first half of the 1960s but ceased during the Cultural Revolution period. Two elderly men, Shi Lianfang 石连方 and Shi Qingzhen 石清真, took risk by hiding the ritual books, archives, and ritual objects and successfully saved them. This is why the clan could recover its sacrificial tradition in the 1980s (Yu et al. 2014, pp. 16–17). In the winter of 2004, the Shi clan held xuewuyun classes to train new shamans and assistants in order to keep the continuation of the clan's sacrificial tradition.[26] Both the shaman Shi Zongduo and Shi Guanghua are graduates from the 2004 xuewuyun training (Guo 2008).

The year 2012 was the Chinese Dragon year in which a Manchu clan could perform the xupu rite. At the beginning of January in the lunar calendar, the Shi clan held a three-day xupu sacrifice, followed by two-day public-insane-burning.[27] Professor Meng Huiying of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences organized a research team of seven members to participate in the whole sacrificial process and to conduct observations and interviews. The field report was published in 2014 as a monograph (Yu et al. 2014). According to their participatory observations, the domestic sacrifice was performed on the evening of the last day of the xupu rite (8 January, lunar calendar) and in morning of the second day, and followed by the wild sacrifice performed on afternoon and evening of the second day. The domestic ceremony begins with the zhenmi ritual, which is the same as that performed by the Guan clan. The next is the South-Bed ritual to worship the spirit of the Changbai Mountain.[28] The shamans' chanting words recall the clan's immigration history. The last ritual of the day is to give thanks to the Changbai Mountain God Coohai Janggin (which literally means military general) and his two assistants as warrior heroes. This ritual is called the worship of West-Bed gods because shamans performed the ritual by facing the west wall beside the bed. A large-sized painting depicting images of the Coohai Janggin god and his two assistants is hung on the wall. On the morning of the second day, the huansuo ritual is performed by the clan. During the ritual, a goddess Mother Fodo 佛多妈妈 is worshipped, who is believed to have power to multiply the clan's descendants (Yu et al. 2014, pp. 133–69).

All dances and chanting in the Shi clan rites are performed by jari, the assistant shamans, rather than the chief shaman (Yu et al. 2014, pp. 133–69). Similarly, the actors perform-

ing dancing and chanting for the Guan clan at the Yilangang in Ningan are also normal shamans. Instead, the chief shaman Guan Yulin is responsible only for presiding over the rites and leads all clan members to kowtow to spirits and gods at the end of each ritual. These shamans of the Guan clan are clan members in both genders who have received shamanic trainings (see Jiang and Jing 2006). This phenomenon recalls Wu's and Yang's accounts in the early Qing period which state that regular housewives may undertake the shamanic tasks in the ritual (Udry 2000, pp. 122–23). Considering that the Court shaman ladies are usually initiated specialists and based on the above ethnographic data, I argue that those identified as regular housewives to perform rituals in the Qing documents are most likely normal shamans or shaman assistants under the chief shaman. Thus, this may not confirm the "peripherality of the shaman" as suggested by Udry (2000, p. 126).

The wild sacrifice was performed by the Shi clan in the afternoon and evening of the second day. The chief shaman Shi Zongduo as the central actor was leading the whole process. A large painting scroll was opened and hung on the wall above the altar. Images in the painting included Coohai Janggin as the Changbai Mountain lord, six shaman ancestors, and animal spirits such as the tiger, the winged tiger, the snake, the boar, and the wolf, backgrounded with the Changbai Mountain. A wooden idol symbolizing the coohai janggin god, and 35 other wooden idols representing the clan's manni (which means warrior or hero in Manchu) spirits are placed below the scroll on the altar (Figure 2). The wild ritual started with invoking spirits. All the clan's spirits were invited by the shamans' chanting to descent. There was no body possession that occurred. But it is believed that spirits are all present with people to share praises, offerings, and sacrifices. The possession was performed after that, and four spirits were selected this time. The first spirit is bageta manni (which means clement warrior in Manchu, see Song and Meng 1997, p. 328), who was invited to come down to purify the sacrificial pig by stepping on it. The other three selected spirits are the vulture spirit, the Golden Flower fire spirit, and seletai manni (which means iron warrior in Manchu, see Song and Meng 1997, p. 328). The first three spirits all successfully arrived in the shaman Shi Zongduo's body. Dialogs were conducted between the spirits and the shaman assistants. However, the last spirit arriving in the shaman's body was not Seletai Manni, who was invited, but Huyaci Manni (means shouting warrior in Manchu, see Song and Meng 1997, p. 329), who was not invited. Such phenomena occasionally occur in Manchu wild rituals (Yu 2013; Yu et al. 2014, pp. 170–235).

Based on ethnographic records of the Guan clan rites and the Shi clan rites, we may deduce that both Manchu domestic and wild rites evidently share basic ritual characteristics. These include inviting gods and spirits; dancing and chanting to praise, giving thanks to, asking for blessings from, and amusing spiritual beings; sending spirits off by chanting; slaughtering pigs as a sacrifice; beating drums and shaking bells; and wearing shamanic costumes and headgears. Nevertheless, there are certainly some differences between the two types. First, the domestic rituals are usually performed by normal shamans or shaman assistants, while the central actor in the wild rituals is the chief shaman, the so-called amba shaman. Second, spirits are different. Gods and spirits invited in the domestic rituals are usually ancestors of the Manchu group and the clan. Non-corporeal beings who are present in wild rituals include shaman ancestors, manni spirits, animals, and other non-human beings such as the fire god. Last and most important, there is no trance performed by the shaman in the domestic rites, although the ritual might be also inspirational, namely, spirits are believed to be present. Comparatively, the spiritual possession plays a central role in the wild ritual, and the shamanic séance is performed by the chief shaman. All non-human spirits have channels to communicate with humans face-to-face through the shaman's body.

Figure 2. The spirit painting scroll and idols of the Shi clan exhibited in the Manchu Museum of Jinlin City. Photograph by Feng Qu in 30 January 2023.

Ethnographic observations of the Shi clan's public-insane-burning show that domestic and wild sacrifices constitute an undivided ritual process as a whole. Whether to perform ecstatic séance or not depends on which spiritual beings humans communicate with, because some non-human beings need only to be worshiped and invited to be present quietly, while others need to contact humans directly. Song and others are correct to point out that the division between domestic and wild sacrifices happened only after the Qing ruler's restrictions of ecstatic elements. Before the Qing period, there should be no such division (Song and Gao 2021, p. 4; Song and Meng 1997, p. 104). In this way, it is not reasonable to define the domestic ritual as non-shamanic and the ecstatic ritual as shamanic, as suggested by Shirokogoroff (1935) and others (He 2000; Liu 2000; Zhao 1989; Zhao and Zhao 2002).

6. Conclusions

The trance model not only decontextualizes and universalizes but also psychologizes and individualizes the shamanic phenomenon in the world (Astor-Aguilera 2014; Johnson 1995; Sidky 2010; Wallis 2013, 2003). On the one hand, trance theory reduces indigenous shamanisms into techniques centered on individual psychological states. It thus downplays "the role of cultural specificity" and homogenizes shamanic phenomena in a much-lost way (Wallis 2003, p. 51). In this way, boundaries between shamanism and other magico-religious practices are blurred, and everyone in the modern world can be a shaman if he/she is trained to learn the ecstatic technique to contact spirit worlds, as suggested by Harner (1980, 2005). On the other hand, religious specialists among many indigenous peo-

ples in North Asia such as the Manchu and the Yakut who do not perform ecstatic séance are excluded from the category of the shaman, although they are named by their own communities as the shaman (or an equivalent term) (Qu 2018).

Two different social contexts have shaped two different approaches to Manchu shamans. The first is the "Western context," which is characterized by the elements of romance, imaginations, and discovery in ethnographic writings. These elements constitute academic foundations for Shirokogoroff's ethnographic writings on Manchu shamans. The second is the "non-Western" Chinese context, which has shaped Chinese scholars' ethnographic writings based on non-Western experience (Qu 2018).

Based on the non-Western context, this article has provided an in-depth scrutiny of historical accounts and ethnographic records of Manchu shamanism. I have placed my analyses within a historical, social, and political context, demonstrating that shamanism among Manchus has a dynamic, reactive, constitutive, and unstable historical process. While interactions and relationships between humans and ancestors and other non-human beings are sustained through sacrificial rites, shamanic practices are also engaged with political, cultural, and environmental ecologies in both historical and contemporary societies. Ritual processes, practitioners, performances, and symbols have been greatly shaped and continuously re-shaped by social and environmental transformations. In Humphrey's words, the contents of Manchu ritual practices "have responded to the different configurations of power in changing historical circumstances" (Humphrey 1994, p. 194). Before the establishment of the Manchu state, there was possibly no domestic/wild division in Manchu shamanic practices (see Song and Gao 2021, p. 4; Song and Meng 1997, p. 104). However, from my point of view, although the ecstatic séance was abandoned by the Qing authorities, the court/clan shamanism without trance does not signal a reduced form of the Manchu shamanism. The court/clan sacrificial rites continued the ancestral and ethnic tradition not only for "an identity for the Manchus" (Humphrey 1994, p. 216), but also for keeping their social relations with ancestors and the cosmos (Qu 2021).

Trance techniques indeed play a vital role in Manchu shamanism. Without any doubt, amba shamans who are chosen by spirits and have the abilities of spirit possession are greatly honored in the Manchu community. However, historiographic and ethnographic data show that this is only one of many ways for humans to connect with the spiritual realm. Prayers, vision-request, offering giving, sacrificing, dancing, chanting, and dreaming are also powerful means to cross the border between the human and non-human worlds. In a recent field survey of mine, Shaman Shi Guanghua of the Manchu Shi clan told me, "The most important thing for a shaman is not if he or she has techniques of spirit possessing. A real shaman should have knowledge to understand the universe and spirits. Also, he or she must have power and capacity to communicate and interact with spirits."[29].

Whether from the Emperor Qianlong's or an ordinary Manchu clan member's perspective, as above-discussed, the sacrificial and ceremonial rites are the most important way to maintain a cosmic balance among Manchus. Therefore, the definitive hallmark of Manchu shamanism is all social acts conducted in the sacrificial ceremony rather than the shaman's individual psychological states. In this way, Shirokogoroff's psychomental complex model is obviously biased, imbued with Western scientific assumptions and ignoring the "native's point of view" (Geertz 1983, pp. 55–70), to reduce a Tungus social complex into a "psychomental" phenomenon (Shirokogoroff 1935). For Manchus, both amba shamans of the Shi clan and domestic shamans of the Yilangang Guan clan are "real" shamans. Nonetheless, Shirokogoroff is correct in proposing the concept "complex" (Shirokogoroff 1935). However, I prefer to revise "psychomental complex" to "social complex" here, in which human habitus, cosmic powers, historical trends, political elements, natural forces (such as Changbai Mountain and fire gods), and non-human acts are all engaged to each other to socially become a relational network in a broad sense.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Acknowledgments: I am grateful to He Xinsheng, Stephen Udry, Jiang Xiaoli, Yu Yang, Shaman Shi Guanghua, and Shaman Shi Zongduo for their assistance in my data collection. Special thanks are given to the three anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

1 As Kehoe points out, "'Shamans' and 'shamanism' are words used so loosely and naively, by anthropologists no less than the general public, that they convey confusion far more than knowledge." Therefore, as she continues, resolving problems with the word shaman needs "a more ethnographically ground usage" and "critical thinking is always has beepeopn the fundamental method" and "a means to window out distorting stereotypes and parroted slogans" (Kehoe 2000, pp. 2–3).

2 This English translation is taken from Di Cosmo (1999, p. 355).

3 Thomas Michael (2015, p. 678) writes, "Modern shamanism theory has not been content to maintain the strict separation between shamanism and possession, although it has continued to produce various definitions of shamanism built upon various conceptions of ecstasy and trance that are not limited to soul flight; possession is regularly seen as a typical element of the shamanic séance.".

4 In China's 2000 census, the Manchu population numbered 10,682,300 (Zhao 2010, p. 29).

5 In the third chapter of his *Sanchao Beimeng Huibian* 三朝北盟汇编, Xu Mengxin writes, "Wushi was cunning and talented, he himself created the laws and the script of the Nuzhen [Jurchen], and unified the country. The people of the country called him a shanman. As for the word shanman, it is the Nuzhen equivalent of (the Chinese) 'shamaness' [wuyu]" (Kósa 2007, pp. 117–18).

6 These books are called *Enduri Bithe* in Manchu, meaning spiritual books. In Chinese, they are named *Shenbenzi* 神本子. A few of them among the collected texts are recorded in Manchu, but most books adopt a special writing: they use Chinese characters to represent the Manchu oral language (Zhao 2010, p. 43).

7 Stephen Udry (2000) defines the domestic sacrifice and clan shamans' practices as "clan shamanism" and the wild sacrifice and wild shamans' practices as "wild shamanism.".

8 *Qing Taizong shilu* 清太宗实录稿本 (Liaoning daxue lishixi 1978, pp. 13–14). The translation is taken from Udry (2000, p. 29).

9 Huanyuan, meaning "redeem a vow to the spirits," is a kind of irregular sacrifice among Manchus and is performed by the shaman when people encounter either fortune or infortune occasions (Udry 2000, p. 120).

10 *Qing Taizong Shilu* 清太宗实录稿本(Liaoning daxue lishixi 1978, pp. 13–14), translated by the author of this article.

11 According to Di Cosmo (1999, p. 355), the Code "was completed in 1747 in Manchu, and in manuscript form. The printed editions in Manchu and Chinese were commissioned in 1777 and completed respectively in 1778 and 1782.".

12 As Humphrey (1994, p. 214) states, "[I]t seems perverse to refuse the term shamanism to an intentional practice by people actually called saman.".

13 This English version was translated by Di Cosmo (1999, p. 358) from the Manchu version. For Chinese version, please see Qinding Manzhou jishen jitian dianli (Yun 1986, p. 619).

14 Samasa (plural for saman) is the word used in the original Manchu version of the Code. In Chinese version, the word is translated as sizhu 司祝, meaning priest (See Jiang 2021, pp. 88–89; Udry 2000, p. 43).

15 Fu Yuguang also hypothesizes that the Tangse altar likely originated from the portable "deities box" which preserved the figures or portraits of the ancestors due to the mobile hunting lifestyle in the earlier era (Fu 1988; Fu and Meng 1991). Liu Xiaomeng 刘小萌 and Ding Yizhuang 定宜庄 (Liu and Ding 1990, pp. 135–36), however, argue that the word Tangse is a Manchu transliteration of the Chinese word "tangzi 堂子," a term used to refer to the Buddhist temple. Udry (2000, p. 108) agrees with Liu and Ding and further points out that the foreign deities such as Buddha and Guanyin worshipped in Tangse evidence the Chinese origin of the word Tangse. When the first emperor of the Later Jin Dynasty, Nurhaci (1559–1626, r. 1582–1626), successfully conquered rival Jurchen tribes in Manchuria

16 This English version is taken from Udry (2000, p. 28). For Chinese version, please see Qinding Manzhou jishen jitian dianli (Yun 1991).

17 Buddha (or Shakyamuni), Guanyin, and Guandi were outside deities absorbed from the Buddhism and Taoism of the Han people. Weceku included Monggo, Murigan, and Nirugan. Monggo was a protective deity, and Murigan was a mountain god in the Jurchen traditional belief system. Nirugan refered to ancestral paintings (Rawski 1998, pp. 238–39; Udry 2000, p. 100).

[18] Du Jiaji 杜家骥 writes, "The palace had a number of staff in charge of court sacrifices. The main actors were sizhu. Sizhu, also named as head of Zansi nuguan, who were called 'shaman' or 'shaman ladies' by the public" (Du 1990, p. 45). Jiang Xiangshun writes, "Head of Zansi nuguan and Zansi nuguan all were shaman ladies, chosen from noble women of the upper three banners of the Aisin Gioro" (Jiang 1994, p. 77). However, as Wang Wei 王伟 has noted, sometimes female shamans could be also chosen from other clans during the Emperor Qianlong period (Wang 2020, p. 111).

[19] According to Udry (2000, p. 120), in the literal translation, tiaoshen means "to jump spirits," "jumping spirits," or "make the spirits jump.".

[20] Huansuo literally means changing rope or braid. Suo is siren or futa in Manchu, referring to a rope or braid composed of colored strings. The huansuo ceremony "involves a change of a strand of strings which is worn around the neck by children" for "seeking good fortune" (Udry 2000, p. 152) In the rite, children were asked to wear the rope for a year until the next year's ceremony to change a new one (Udry 2000, p. 157).

[21] This English version is translated from the Chinese text by the author of this article.

[22] From my personal communication with Shi on Wechat on 1 January 2023.

[23] According to Fu and Zhao (2010, pp. 133–152), the rite lasted 7 days, and the elderly lady was finally healed.

[24] Ningan is called Ningguta during the Qing period. Shamanic rites in Ningguta are documented in the exile's writings of the Qing Dynasty (see Guo 2010).

[25] According to Tang Ge's field survey of Sanjiazi Village in Fuyu County of Heilongjiang province, the three Manchu clans in this village ceased their shamanic sacrifice in 1947. Tang argues that the Land Reform Movement and the communist atheism should be responsible for the decline of the shamanic traditions in the Sanjiazi village (Tang 2004, p. 121).

[26] Xuewuyun means learning wuyun classes. "Wuyun" is the number "nine" in the Manchu language, which is usually regarded as a lucky number. Because xuewuyun training periods are divided into sections of nine days, such shamanic trainings are called xuewuyun (Guo 2008, pp. 50–51).

[27] The heaven-worship ritual was omitted in this sacrifice because it can be usually performed in the autumn. Therefore, the length of the rite this time is shorter than the usual three-day public-incane-burning (Yu et al. 2014, p. 169).

[28] According to Shi Guangwei and Liu Housheng (Shi and Liu 1992, p. 49), the shamans face the south to perform this ritual because the Changbai Mountain is located in the south to the village.

[29] From my personal communication with Shi Guanghua in 31 January 2023, in Jinlin Manchu Museum, China.

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Shamanism and the Manchu Bannermen of the Qing Dynasty

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Abstract: With the Qing armies marching into Beijing through the Shanhai Pass, the Manchu bannermen under the Eight Banners system saw great changes in their everyday lives. However, they continued with the practice of shamanic sacrifices. This paper analyzes the "Sacred Books", genealogies, and other historical materials about shamanic rituals, to place shamanism in the lives of the bannermen of the Qing Dynasty. It explores the relationship between this religion and the lives of Manchu bannermen, their clan organizations, and their livelihoods. The paper helps strengthen our understanding of shamanism that continued to flourish during the Qing Dynasty by playing a vital role in the lives of Manchu bannermen.

Keywords: shamanism; Manchu bannermen; clan; livelihood of the Eight Banners

1. Introduction

During the Qing Dynasty, the Manchu people were organized into the Eight Banners system, a type of military-socio-economic organization, developed by Manchu leader Nurhaci (1583–1626). Under this system, they no longer had to earn their living by fishing, hunting, or farming, but were garrisoned in various places to fight on the battlefield when required. They depended on the state for their livelihood.

Shamanism is an animistic and polytheistic religion that believes in many gods and spirits. The worship of these gods and spirits is believed to bring favor, health, and prosperity. Shamanism holds that many deities were born and lived in mountains, forests, and rivers, and blessed the production and life of fishing and hunting. In this sense, the ancient religion seemed not to be aligned with the everyday lives of the Manchu people and was believed to have fallen into disuse.

However, the surviving shamanic "Sacred Books", genealogies, and personal notes kept by Manchu clans, show that Manchu bannermen adhered to the practice of shamanic sacrifices and tried their best to uphold their tradition in northeast China, Beijing, its environs, and the garrisoned cities. Shamanic rituals and other related activities were an important part of the Manchu community of the Qing Dynasty.

Previous studies of Manchu shamanism in the Qing Dynasty have focused more on the shamanic rituals observed by the ruling house, but owing to a lack of historical records few papers have explored the shamanic sacrifices followed by folk society. Based on the collection of a large number of Manchu and Chinese documents, the paper tries to focus on the grassroots Manchu bannermen in the Qing Dynasty, revealing the important role played by Shamanism in their everyday lives, their clan organizations, and their livelihoods. This will deepen our understanding of the relationship between shamanism and the society, economy, and politics, of its ethnic group.

In the Qing Dynasty, Manchu bannermen held sacrificial ceremonies in many everyday scenarios. They habitually sought the blessings of deities for common life events, such as moving into a new house. A sacrificial ceremony for erecting an "ancestral shelf" was a must to invite deities to the new house to bless the family. If things did not go well after a relocation, the "ancestral shelf" had to be replaced by holding another sacrificial ceremony. Under the Eight Banners system, the primary duty of the men was to be battle ready. Whether preparing for a military operation, a battle victory, a promotion in the

Citation: Jiang, Xiaoli. 2022. Shamanism and the Manchu Bannermen of the Qing Dynasty. *Religions* 13: 884. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13100884

Academic Editors: Thomas Michael and Feng Qu

Received: 5 September 2022
Accepted: 20 September 2022
Published: 22 September 2022

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troops, or a triumphant return home, the clan members would hold shamanic sacrifices either to seek the blessings of the deities or report the good news to them.

Shamanism shares the same elements between both faith-based and blood ties-based organizations. *Mukūn* (Manchu for clan) was the basic blood ties-based organization of the Manchu people in the Qing Dynasty and formed the basic unit in the practice of shamanism. The clan leader was responsible for managing and supervising sacrificial rituals for the clan. As the succession of shamans was one of the major events for the clan, the clan leader was responsible for organizing the training of the successor. At a shamanic sacrifice, all the relatives and friends, far and near, had to be present to help unite the clan.

The popularity of shamanic sacrifices was closely linked to the livelihood of the Eight Banners in the Qing Dynasty. Holding a shamanic sacrifice was a costly affair and imposed a considerable burden on an ordinary Manchu family. In the early Qing Dynasty, the Manchu bannermen were prosperous and hence these sacrifices were held in a grand manner. However, by the mid- and late-period of the Qing Dynasty, the lives of the bannermen had become increasingly difficult and the sacrificial activities were scaled down.

2. Shamanic Rituals and the Daily Lives of Manchu Bannermen in the Qing Dynasty

The Manchu shamanic rituals could only be conducted in the Manchu language. With its use fading after the mid-Qing Dynasty, the shamans, or some of the clansmen who were proficient in sacrifices, recorded the prayers in Manchu or in Chinese characters, that showed the Manchu pronunciation. These "Sacred Books" have become the primary source for scholars wishing to study Manchu shamanism. The "Sacred Books" written by various clans detail the procedures to be followed while offering prayers. First, the devotees were required to report their last name ("*hala*") and zodiac ("*aniyangga*") to the deities, then spell out the reasons for the sacrifice, and only then offer their prayers. Typically, the "Sacred Books" would list the many reasons for offering sacrifices, so the ritualists could compose the prayers themselves. Manchu bannermen of the Qing Dynasty held sacrifices for many different reasons. Listed below are some of the shamanic sacrifices, mentioned in the "Sacred Books", as recorded by the Yang, Shi, Haizunfu, Zang, Fu, and Guan clans.

For erecting an "ancestral shelf", the "Sacred Books" of the Yang clan contain the following instructions:

"Building a new house: A new house has been built and to please the *mafa* (shamanic god) and deities, an ancestral shelf niche has been set up for their blessings" (Song and Meng 1997, p. 213).

"Erecting a new ancestral shelf to celebrate the buying of a used house: As a used house has been bought, we need to erect a new ancestral shelf. Today, a sacrifice will be held to worship the deities and *mafa* and make them happy" (Song and Meng 1997, p. 217).

"Erecting an ancestral shelf for a rented house: Shaman entertains and worships *sefu* (an assisting god), *mafa*, and deities with sacrificial offerings. Today, in the rented house, we set up an ancestral shelf to worship ancestors, deities, and *mafa* and hope to please them" (Song and Meng 1997, p. 218).

"Changing an ancestral shelf to drive away evil spirits: The house is haunted by something dirty and evil, leaving the parents, wife, and sons sick. Today, we pray in person for the safety and health of family members. We need to change the ancestral shelf to worship the ancestors and deities" (Song and Meng 1997, p. 286).

These examples of prayers show that whether the Manchus in the Qing Dynasty built new houses, bought used ones, or rented homes, they held a sacrificial ceremony for erecting an "ancestral shelf". Folk surveys also reveal that before they moved into new houses, the Manchus had to put up an "ancestral shelf", a horizontal shelf attached to the upper part of the west wall in the west room of the main house, on which offerings and incense burners were placed. Although the shelf was called "ancestral shelf" or "*weceku*" in Manchu, it was not the blood ancestors who were worshipped but the symbols of many shamanic deities enshrined by the family. Behind the erection of an "ancestral shelf" for moving into a new house was an underlying faith in shamanism. It spoke of the belief that

a family must invite deities to first move into their new house, and bless it, and that in a new home thus sanctified and made safe, everything would go well. If things went awry and the family was beset with misfortunes in the new house, it would be deemed lacking in the deities' blessings, and another "ancestral shelf" would need to be erected by holding one more ritual.

The residences of the Manchus in the Qing Dynasty, apart from the ones built by them in northeast China, were mostly those built officially for the garrisoned troops in Beijing, its surrounding regions, and other provinces. All of them had ancestral shelves in different forms. In the *Miscellaneous Records from the Bamboo Leaf Pavilion*, Yao Yuanzhi, a Qing dynasty official, describes the layout of homes of the Manchus in Beijing thus: "Whether they were born of rich, noble, or official families, their inner chambers must be equipped with wooden shrines free of any words." (Yao 1982, pp. 63–64). The houses of the Manchus garrisoned in Qingzhou, Shandong, were described thus: "In most cases, on the west gable, above the center of the west brick bed, hung the sacred *weceku* or ancestral shelf. Mostly made of pear wood, this shelf, without any words, is over two *chi* long (66.66 cm) and about one *chi* wide (33.33 cm) and carries the genealogy box and wooden incense holder" (Li 1999, p. 55).

The layout of the homes of Manchus garrisoned in Yinchuan, Ningxia, were described thus: "In the west part of the house is an ancestral shelf, and the sacrificial ceremony is held once in spring and fall" (Minzu Wenti 1985, p. 165).

Thus, we see that the ancestral shelf was common to homes of Manchu bannermen across the country, and its erection was always accompanied by a sacrificial ritual. The above records point to the universality of shamanic sacrifices in the Qing Dynasty, as well as the important role that shamanism played in people's everyday lives. Although the Manchu bannermen moved to different regions, they still prayed to the deities of shamanism for the safety of their family and their home.

Second, for military operations, the "Sacred Books" of the Guan, Haizunfu, and Yang clans, record the following prayers to be offered for success:

"For military operations in the Guan clan: With the imperial edict being issued for a military operation, we rush to visit the *ejen* (or command-in-chief) and submit the petition to the emperor before embarking on a military expedition. Rich sacrificial offerings are made to seek the blessings of the *mafa* and deities" (He and Zhang 2016, pp. 96–97).

"For military operations and promotion in the Haizunfu clan: A man is promoted in the troops and given the honor of wearing an official headgear with a rank button and blue plumes. May the deities bless him" (Fu and Zhang 2016, p. 301).

"For worshiping ancestors after winning a battle in the Yang clan: A ritual is launched to congratulate the members of the Yang clan who serve in the troops on winning victory in the battle, hoping this will make the deities and *mafa* happy" (Song and Meng 1997, p. 217).

"For wishing soldiers a safe return home in the Yang clan: May the deities and *mafa* bless the soldiers so they come home soon to reunite with their families and are safe and healthy" (Song and Meng 1997, p. 215).

The above prayers show that whether it was preparation for a military operation, a battle victory, a promotion in the troops, or a triumphant return home, the Manchus offered sacrifices to their deities, sought their blessings, or reported good news. Under the Eight Banners system, joining the army and fighting on the battlefield was the duty of every Manchu man. Since wars broke out frequently throughout the dynasty, male members from nearly every family went to fight on the battlefield. The Zhao clan in Jilin, known previously as Manchu Irgen Gioro, collected many genealogies of its own dating back to the Jiaqing Emperor (1796–1820), which detailed the involvement of the clan members in military operations in different regions. According to these genealogies, from the 3rd to the 8th generation, a total of 47 members joined military operations, among whom seven went to Jiangxi; fifteen to Barkol, Kashgar, and Altai of Xinjiang; four to Jinchuan; four to Sichuan; and others to Yunnan, Henan, Shandong, and other regions. They held many positions, including *uksin* (common soldiers), *bosoku* (lower-level official), *tuwasara hafan*

i jergi janggin (defence commissioners), *niru i janggin* (company captain), *jalan i janggin* (regiment captain), and *meiren i janggin* (lieutenant general). Many of them died in battles, with their names followed by an annotation of "childless" (*enen akū*). This was the epitome of many clans in the Eight Banners who dedicated themselves to the country (Xu 2015, p. 99). Once a military operation began, a soldier had to fulfill his mission. Out of concern for the safety of the male members, the family would hold a shamanic ceremony to pray to the deities for their blessings.

Third, for sacrifices for official errands, the "Sacred Books" of the Haizunfu clan contained the following prayers:

"Pearl harvest: Prayers for the man who seeks to harvest East pearls. May the deities bless him with safety and good luck".

"Delivering pearls to Beijing: Prayers for the man who will deliver East pearls to Beijing. May the deities bless him with safety and good luck".

"Catching fish in winter: Prayers for the man who will catch fish in winter. May the deities bless him with safety and good luck".

"Delivering salmonid fish to Shenyang: Prayers for the man who will deliver salmonid fish. May the deities bless him with safety and good luck" (Fu and Zhang 2016, pp. 300–1).

For generations, the Haizunfu clan lived on Wula street of Jilin City, where the government office of Butha Ula in the Qing Dynasty was located. Around this place lived later generations of pearl pickers and fish catchers. Their responsibility was to harvest the specialties of Northeast China, including East pearls, sturgeons, salmonid fish, honey, and pine nuts. Moreover, they had to regularly deliver a certain amount of their harvests to Shengjing (known as Shenyang today) and Beijing. Their work carried considerable risk, including loss of life. The Qianlong Emperor (1736–1795) issued an imperial edict that said: "Previously, the drowned East pearl pickers were never rewarded. From now on, they will be rewarded doubly—an amount comparable to soldier funerals" (Chang 1986, p. 15).

The "Sacred Books" of the Haizunfu clan show that these pickers and catchers took their work and tributes very seriously, and held shamanic sacrifices to ask for the deities' blessings.

Additionally, the "Sacred Books" written by some clans also recorded the sacrifices held for various others reasons, such as for the good health of the whole family; to recover from diseases like smallpox; to protect their animals, like horses, from sickness; or to recover lost items.

Thus, although the Manchus of the Qing Dynasty lived in more modern environments, shamanism as their traditional faith still served as a pivotal stabilizing factor in their culture. When faced with challenging situations, the people turned naturally to the deities for blessings. There is no denying that shamanism played an important role in the Manchu community of the Qing Dynasty.

3. Shamanism and Clan Organization of Manchu Bannermen

As an ancient religion, shamanism shares the same elements between both faith-based and blood ties-based organizations. These shared elements help cement blood ties-based organizations. For a long time, the Manchu people were organized as tribal societies, where *hala* (the surname) and *mukūn* (clan) based on the ties of blood served as the basis of administration. In the late-Ming Dynasty, the *mukūn i da* (clan leader) often led his clansmen to submit to Nurhaci. Given the features of the blood ties-based organizations, the Eight Banners system of the Qing Dynasty established the hereditary *niru* system, such as "*shiguan niru*" (company captain is hereditary in one clan) and "*huguan niru*" (company captain is hereditary but rotates among two or three clans). The *niru* were mostly based on a single, two, or three clans, and were hereditary in nature. Despite not being a formal official, a clan leader could assist the *niru i janggin* in administering the internal affairs of the clan. According to the *Regulations and Precedents for the Eight Banners*, the clan leader was ordered to work with *niru i janggin* to help deal with such affairs as the succession of *shiguan niru*, the tracing of the bannermen to their ancestors, and the selection of those to

be included in the emperor's harems. If found to conceal the truth, the clan leader could be brought to trial and punished. This meant the Manchu people garrisoned in different regions had to form a small-size clan and elect a clan leader to help manage the affairs of the Eight Banners. Meanwhile, shamanism continued to guide the clan organization of the Manchu bannermen.

Shamanic rituals were an important activity for a clan. The clan leader was obligated to manage and supervise the rituals. For example, the *Genealogy of the Kuyala Clan in Heilongjiang* records the origin of the clan, its relocation and garrisoning, family mottos, and sacrificial rituals, among others. According to the genealogy, the clan members garrisoned in Beijing, Jilin, Ningguta, Aihui, and Qiqihar, among other places, had to pay allegiance to the Qing government during the reign of Nurhaci Emperor and that of Kangxi Emperor (1662–1722). Their family motto stated: "When a sacrificial ceremony is held, the clan members living in the same town must show up as must those residing in other villages. Any absent members that fail to give a justifiable reason will be hauled up by the clan leader in stern words. The repeat offender could be beaten with a stick as a punishment for his or her failure to observe family discipline. By comparison, those absentees who reside in other distant counties and could not show up will be treated leniently" (Ming 2003, p. 575). The genealogy also details the rules of sacrificial rituals: "A family must pick an auspicious date to launch a sacrificial ritual. Each family set to launch the ritual must be notified of the need to clean the west house and prepare clean offerings. On the appointed date of the ceremony, the male head of the family should be devout and avoid acting hastily, and the elders of each clan are obliged to keep the ritual on track, ensuring that the established rules are not changed at will just to simplify the process" (Ming 2003, p. 575). Additionally, the *Genealogy of the Tatara Clan in Jilin* stated: "For a family ritual, . . . members of the clan in other villages should, according to circumstances, make their presence while those in the same village must participate in the activity. Anyone who is absent without a justifiable reason will be hauled up by the clan leader. The purpose is to cement the ties of members. At the ceremony, the officiating person should be devout and every family and its elders must maintain order. The participants and deacon must faithfully exercise their duties" (Jin 1981, pp. 109–11). The clan leader urged the clan members to attend the sacrificial ritual and oversaw the ritual to ensure the shamanic sacrifices were conducted as per the protocols. This role further raised the prestige and position of the clan leader.

The shaman, the person responsible for the shamanistic ritual, was selected within the clan, and the clan leader was tasked with the launch of training for the shaman. The *Learning Procedure and Rules on Being a Shaman,* written by the Guwalgiya clan in Guochen, Ningguta, which was handed down through generations, details the shaman succession process in this clan in the late-Qing Dynasty. The clan organized four shaman training activities in the seventh year of Tongzhi's reign (1863) and in the second year (1876), the 14th year (1888), and the 16th year (1890) of Guangxu's period, getting six shamans ready to perform the sacrificial rituals. The shamans enjoyed successful careers, which were attributed by the clan members to the blessing of deities. "If one learns to become a shaman to serve the ancestors, he will be respected and honored with noble status. Shamans are indispensable to the clan" (Guan Clan 1941, pp. 5–6).

Shamanic sacrifices were seen as integral to cementing ties among members of a clan. The high-ranking official, Na Tong, of the late-Qing Dynasty, greatly valued the sacrificial rituals of the clan. His diaries contain a detailed description of the rituals in his family. In October of the 33rd year of Guangxi's reign (1907), he recorded: "On the 14th day, my family launched a sacrificial ceremony. We conducted livestock sacrifices at 8:00 a.m., offered prayers at 16:00 p.m., and burned joss paper at 12:00 a.m. The whole family members congratulated each other. On the 15th day, we sacrificed an entire pig on the makeshift altar in front of the ancestral shelf, worshipped the deities, ate meat from 7:00 a.m.–9:00 a.m., and had more than 10 families of relatives and friends join us. The ceremony ended at 12:00 p.m." (Na 2006, p. 615). The practice of the sacrificial ritual by his family still continued throughout the Republic of China (1912–1949) (Na 2006, p. 811). At

every sacrificial ritual, the larger family as well as friends made an appearance. Thus, the ritual offered a chance for them to meet, unite, and reinforce emotional ties, strengthening kinship, and cohesiveness of the entire clan.

In a faith-based organization, religion serves to integrate the organization. Since in shamanism, faith-based and blood ties-based organizations overlap, shamanism plays a pivotal role in integrating and cementing the bonds among Manchu clans. It has played a great role in ensuring the existence of the clan organization of Manchus throughout the Qing Dynasty.

4. Shamanic Sacrifices and the Livelihoods of Manchu Bannermen

There was a considerable cost attached to the sacrificial rituals of shamanism. According to genealogy records, a shamanic sacrifice called for two to five pigs, millet and beans of all kinds, joss paper, cloth, and flax threads, among other items. Of these, the pigs were the costliest items.

Commodity prices varied considerably between the early- and late-Qing periods. According to court documents from the reign of the Qianlong Emperor: "a pig (for sacrificial offerings) cost 10.8–11.5 taels of silver" (Yun 1989, p. 48). According to other scholars, during the reign of Daoguang Emperor (1821–1850), a medium pig weighing 100–200 *jin* in Songjiang Prefecture (under the jurisdiction of Shanghai today) was priced at 8000 copper coins or 6.15 taels of silver, and a piglet at 100 copper coins or 0.77 taels of silver. (Li 2007, p. 61).

During the Qing Dynasty, an ordinary soldier earned in money and grain, and this slightly varied by army type or region. For example, a cavalryman could receive two taels of silver every month, about 15 *dan* (unit of weight in the Qing Dynasty) of rice every year, and a horse-feeding pay of 20 taels of silver. (Tuo 1991, pp. 9331–35). Thus, he could earn up to 44 taels of sliver every year. The earnings varied by garrison too. According to available records, in the Jingzhou garrison: "every year, a soldier could receive 24 taels of silver in pay, medium-quality rice worth 36.75 taels of silver, horse-feeding pay of 20.304 taels of silver, and an extra 3.276 taels of silver for raising horses." (Xi 1990, p. 102). Converting the rice into silver meant a cavalryman could receive about 84 taels of silver. Generally, a sacrificial ceremony required the use of between two and five pigs. If a pig weighed 50–100 kg, such pigs were equivalent to 12–30 taels of sliver during the reign of Daoguang Emperor. Additionally, millet and beans of various kinds were needed. All these offerings consumed one-seventh to one-third of the annual income of a common cavalryman. In the northeast garrisons, only silver was given to a soldier, and a cavalryman could earn 24 taels of silver in pay every year, as the land was granted by the Qing government to soldiers. Therefore, one sacrificial ritual almost used up a cavalryman's annual pay. The income of the soldier also had to be used to support his family, including his offspring. Given this, a sacrificial ceremony meant a considerable financial burden for a common Manchu family.

Despite the expense involved, people were still full of zeal when it came to conducting sacrificial activities. The *Genealogy of the Kuyala Clan in Heilongjiang* reads: "Each family should do its best to hold the sacrificial ritual. The rich held it every year, the common people did it once every two or three years, and the poor did it once every five years" (Ming 2003, p. 575). The *Genealogy of the Tatara Clan in Jilin* also states: "The rich should hold a family ritual once a quarter; the common people should do it three times every two years; the poor once a year" (Jin 1981, pp. 109–11).

Unfortunately, the lives of the bannermen became ever harder halfway through the Qing rule. In the later Qing Dynasty, in particular, troubled by domestic unrest and foreign invasions, the Qing government became increasingly financially strapped. In the third year of Xianfeng's reign (1853), the silver paid to officers and soldiers of the Eight Banners was converted into copper coins, leaving their real incomes much smaller. From the 10th year of Xianfeng's period (1860), grain and silver for soldiers started to drop so that common soldiers received just 60 to 70% of their original pay. Furthermore, low-ranking soldiers were exploited by the higher-ranked officials. The Manchu soldiers could barely afford

to hold the sacrificial rituals. According to the *Genealogy* of the *Nara Clan*: "the rules for sacrificial rituals were not recorded in ancient times. Since livestock and food were cheap, it was not hard for people to hold grand sacrificial offerings. Almost everyone was acquainted with the rules as sacrificial ceremonies were held every year. Later, as family size grew and prices of goods rose, the number of families that performed sacrificial practices declined. That is why the younger generation was unclear about sacrificial rituals" (Fu and Zhang 1996, p. 165). Some people even came up with other ways to worship deities. In Qingzhou garrison: "there lived a poor Manchu surnamed Fu in the north of the city, who prayed to deities for a son. Later, his wish was fulfilled as his wife gave birth to a son. During the ritual, this man made a paper pig as the sacrificial offering because he could not afford a real one. For this reason, he named his son 'Paper Pig'" (Li 1999, p. 136).

Therefore, the future of shamanic sacrifices hinged on the livelihood of the Eight Banners in the Qing Dynasty. In the early Qing Dynasty, Manchu bannermen were prosperous and their sacrifices elaborate. In the middle and late period of the dynasty, the lives of the bannermen became harder, which was one among several factors that led to the gradual decline of shaman sacrifice activities.

5. Conclusions

In the Qing Dynasty, Manchu bannermen were garrisoned in different places and were subject to dramatic changes in the way they lived. However, shamanism continued to thrive and play a vital part in their community and daily lives. Even when misfortune occurred, people observed the shamanic rituals for the help of deities, and as always, remained devout and cautious during rituals. Shamanism brought together clansmen in a sacred way and regulated their conduct in the name of the religious authority. For these reasons, *mukūn* became an active, effective organization that could assist the Eight Banners system in administering grassroots society. Shamanism provides another perspective of the community of Manchu bannermen of the Qing Dynasty, which has been ignored in previous studies. As an ancient religion, Shamanism was closely intertwined with the society, economy, and politics of the ethnic group, and endowed the ethnic group with unique cultural characteristics, which is the harvest that the study of Shamanism brings to us from the historical perspective.

Funding: This research was funded by The National Social Science Fund of China, grant number 19VJX136.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Re-Exploring Origins of the *Qixiang* Sacrificial Rite Practiced by the Han Army Eight Banners in Northeast China

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Abstract: *Qixiang* is a unique sacrificial culture created by the Han army eight banners in northeast China. This culture not only has elements such as shamanism and Han people burning incense, but also has military sacrificial elements. This paper argues that *Qixiang* is the evolution and legacy of *Maji*, a military sacrificial ritual in ancient China. The Han military banner people in the Qing Dynasty took *Maji* as the main body, combined the Manchu Shamanism with the Han incense burning, and created a cultural symbol representing their own ethnic group. At present, the study of *Qixiang* not only helps to understand the complexity of the development and evolution of Manchu shamanism, but also helps to reveal the ethnic identity of Han bannermen under the Eight Banners system of the Qing Dynasty.

Keywords: Han bannermen; *Qixiang*; rite; Manchu shamanism; *Maji*

1. Introduction

For a long time, scholars have mainly focused on the Manchu people and their Shaman culture in Northeast China, while ignoring a ethnic group that is still Han in nature, although it is called Manchu people. This ethnic group is the Han bannermen. They created and inherited a unique sacrificial culture—*Qixiang* (旗香), which combines a variety of cultural elements including shamanism, Han people burning incense and military sacrificial rites. Studies on this culture have been carried out since the 1980s and 1990s, and five theories have emerged.

1.1. Five Theories

The first theory holds that *Qixiang* originated from Manchu culture. Liu Guiteng compared the instruments, drum-beating techniques and tunes of *Qixiang* and Shamanic divine dance and found that they had many similarities. He therefore believed that *Qixiang* was a branch of Manchu Shamanism (Liu 1991, pp. 9–17).

The second theory holds that the *Qixiang* rite stemmed from the eastern expedition by Emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty. Cheng Xun investigated the legends and folk customs in northeast China and found that the expedition to Liaodong (辽东, the area east of Liaohe River in China) during the Tang dynasty had been transformed into a local collective memory. Over time, this memory has been condensed into the story of "the king of Tang's expedition to the east" and the sacrificial ceremony of Taiping drum-beating and finally formed *Qixiang* culture (Cheng 1988, pp. 229–47). Fu Yuguang (Fu 2010, p. 175) and Yin Yushan (Yin 2016, pp. 5–8) both support this view.

The third theory is that *Qixiang* was derived from the sacrificial rite observed by the Han people. Its proponent, Ren Guangwei, discovered from his study of deity worship, ritual processes, instrumental performances and the like that the rituals of *Qixiang* were similar to those of the Nuo opera of southwest and northwest China. He thus inferred that Nuo opera evolved into the sacrificial rite of the Han people in northeast China and was absorbed by the Han bannermen to create the *Qixiang* sacrificial rite (Ren and Sun 1998, pp. 37, 51, 79, 80, 87, 89).

Citation: Zhao, Lina, and De Zheng. 2023. Re-Exploring Origins of the *Qixiang* Sacrificial Rite Practiced by the Han Army Eight Banners in Northeast China. *Religions* 14: 195. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14020195

Academic Editors: Thomas Michael and Feng Qu

Received: 31 December 2022
Revised: 26 January 2023
Accepted: 29 January 2023
Published: 1 February 2023

The fourth theory holds that *Qixiang* represents the integration of Manchu and Han cultures. Cao Lijuan studied the sacrificial objects, sacrificial environment, program structure, performers, costumes, props, music, dancing and other aspects of the *Qixiang* and found that *Qixiang* not only contains the elements of the Manchu Shamanic ritual trance dance, but also contains the elements of Han sacrifice, thus concluding that *Qixiang* is a fusion of Manchu and Han cultures (Cao 1993). Guo Shuyun also holds a similar view that Qixiang is "a form of comprehensive shamanic ritual based on the traditional ancestor worship of the Han people" (Guo 2019).

The fifth theory is that *Qixiang* was created independently by the Han bannermen. Zhang Xiaoguang analyzed the sacred prayers and ritual phrases of *Qixiang* and found that content regarding the eastern expedition during the Tang Dynasty accounted for only a small part of the rite. He argued that *Qixiang* could not have originated from the eastern expedition but was just a form of commemoration created by the Han bannermen to unite their clans and express their homesickness (Zhang 1989).

Although each of these theories can be justified, they all have their failings. In the first theory, the similarity in musical instruments cannot be seen as the reason for the Han bannermen to form a branch of Shamanic culture; in the second theory, the similarity in the deities worshipped cannot be taken as proof that the sacrificial activities associated with the Tang Dynasty Taiping drum-beating ceremony continue to be observed by descendants of the Han bannermen today; in the third theory, the similarity in rituals cannot prove that *Qixiang* originated from the sacrificial activity of burning incense among ordinary Han people; although the fourth theory integrates various streams of thought, it does not define the cultural characteristics of *Qixiang*; and the fifth theory is a bold hypothesis that highlights the Han army's talent for—and spirit of—innovation but it lacks empirical support. Thus, all of these five theories fall short in presenting a good understanding of *Qixiang* culture.

These confused definitions are detrimental to a proper understanding of the complexity of the Manchu Shamanic revival. If we regard *Qixiang* as an element of Manchu Shamanism, then we must recognize that "Manchu Shamanism revival" is not the reconstruction of Manchu and its faith in the new era, but a religious phenomenon of syncretism (Leopold and Jensen 2014, pp. 338–41), including Manchu, Mongolian, Han and other nationalities and their religious cultures. Obviously, integration is complex, and our research on *Qixiang* helps to understand this complexity. In addition, these confused definitions are not conducive to promoting the study of religious belief in Manchu society in the Qing dynasty. Although the study of the history of the Qing dynasty is grand and full of topics, the religious issue of Manchu nationality is an especially important topic for people to discuss; we have to admit that the spiritual belief of the Han army has not been thoroughly studied. If we take the Han army's acceptance of Shamanism as the only answer, it only serves to make the problem superficial and simple. In this regard, it is necessary to recognize the attributes of *Qixiang* again.

1.2. Military Identity and Maji (祃祭*) Culture*

The military status of the Han bannermen is key to understanding *Qixiang* culture. Although artifacts, institutions and rituals are important in cultural studies, all these elements fade into insignificance if little heed is paid to the group that participated in this kind of culture. The military status of the Han bannermen has always been neglected, and this is the main reason for continuing ignorance about the essence of *Qixiang* culture. This paper proposes that the Han army was a military group in which the Han people served and made great contributions to the founding of the Qing dynasty. The Han army was a unique and relatively independent group, whose members were neither purely Manchu nor ordinary Han. To underscore their uniqueness, they forged a distinctive military culture that included other cultural elements, such as the shamanic ritual trance dance, the incense burning of the Han people, and the *Nuoji* (傩祭) sacrificial rite, which then became *Qixiang* culture.

Thus, at its core, *Qixiang* is a military culture that evolved from the ancient *Maji* sacrificial rite as recorded in the *Book of Rites* (礼记) and the *Book of Songs* (诗经), two great ancient Chinese texts of the pre-Qin period. Wars were one of the major concerns in ancient China, which was underpinned by the belief that "the military makes a big difference to the survival of the nation" (Peng 1991, p. 211). Before marching to the battlefield, ancient Chinese would offer sacrifices to the god of war and pray for protection and victory. *Maji* sacrificial culture evolved gradually in this environment. During the Qin dynasty, the *Maji* was observed strictly as a sacrificial ceremony by the military; during the Sui and Tang dynasties, the military flag became the object of worship in the *Maji* rite (Ai 2009). This sacrificial rite survived through the Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties into the Qing dynasty. As a military group, the Han army under the Eight Banners system of the Qing dynasty not only observed the *Maji* sacrificial rite during wartime but also integrated the rite into their daily life in times of peace. Based chiefly on the *Maji* sacrificial rite, the Han army forged *Qixiang* culture, which brought together various cultural elements.

1.3. Field Investigation and Research Methods

This paper attempts to garner relevant information about *Qixiang* culture using three methods. The first one was field investigation. In the past few years, we have investigated Han bannermen's descendants and their sacrificial rites through observation and interviews. For instance, in February 2014, we delved into the *Qixiang* sacrificial rite practiced by the Han army Zhang clan in Wulajie Township, recording many videos and pictures, and interviewed a great number of officiants during the three-day rite. In August 2014, an investigation was made into the *Qixiang* sacrificial activities held in the Changbai Mountain Scenic Area in Jilin Province, finding the development trends of *Qixiang* culture in a modern market-oriented economic context. In January 2016, we looked into the "wake up the lake" (醒湖) ritual activity held by the Zhuanshanhu Reservoir in Jilin Province, in which the *Qixiang* officiating group led by Zhao Hongge (赵洪阁) staged a sacrificial performance; the shape of the gourd on the top of their banner effigies (旗像) made a deep impression (see Appendix A, Figure A7). In December 2020, we made another investigation into the *Qixiang* sacrificial rite by the Zhang clan in Wulajie Township, reflecting on the inheritance mechanism of *Qixiang* culture.

The second method was research on museum collections. In northeast China, many universities, counties and cities have built Shamanic culture museums, where physical collections, video clips, pictures and written materials about *Qixiang* culture are preserved, to which we paid much attention. In the process of investigation, a very valuable video of a *Qixiang* sacrificial rite recorded in 2005 was discovered.

The third method was study of local chronicles from the Republic of China. During the Republic of China (1912–1949), governments at all levels in northeast China recorded the local Han bannermen groups and *Qixiang* sacrificial rites in written text, forming what are known today as "local chronicles" of *Qixiang* culture. In this regard, a comparative study was conducted of the local chronicles, figuring out the degree to which *Qixiang* culture symbolizes the soldier status of Han bannermen.

Given this background, this paper will analyze the traces of the *Maji* sacrificial rite in *Qixiang* culture, demonstrate the connection between them and identify the basic characteristics of *Qixiang* culture.

2. Han Bannermen

The term "Han bannermen" refers to members of the Han army under the Eight Banners system in the Qing Dynasty. Most of them were ethnic Han. The Eight Banners in the Qing Dynasty were divided into eight army groups, namely Plain Yellow Banner, Bordered Yellow Banner, Plain White Banner, Bordered White Banner, Plain Blue Banner, Bordered Blue Banner, Plain Red Banner and Bordered Red Banner. Each group comprised Manchurians, Mongols and Hans. The army composed of Hans was called the Han Army Eight Banner. This army was in its infancy in the fifth year of the Tiancong reign of the Qing

dynasty (1631), grew in the second year of the Chongde reign (1637) and finally matured in the seventh year of the Chongde reign (1642). They were the imperial bodyguards for emperors of the Qing dynasty (Editorial Committee of Chinese History, the General Editorial Committee of the Encyclopedia of China 1992, p. 349).

The members of the Han Army Eight Banners were mostly those who voluntarily joined the later Jin (后金) dynasty at the end of the Ming dynasty or those who were captured in war by the Qing dynasty in the Liaodong region. Most of these people were Han, with a small number of Nuzhen people who had been assimilated into the Han and Mongols who were officials in the Ming Dynasty making up the rest (Yao 1995). In April of the third year of the Tianming reign (1618) of the Qing dynasty, Nurhaci, the Manchurian chieftain, attacked the Ming dynasty and launched military operations in Ningyuan, Songshan, Xingshan and Sarhu in Liaodong, capturing many Han people and inducting them into the Han army. As Hong Taiji (皇太极), Nurhaci's son, launched bigger offensives against the Ming dynasty after ascending the throne, more Han people were captured and sent to Northeast China. From the third year of the Tiancong reign (1629) of the later Jin dynasty to the seventh year of the Chongde reign (1642) of the Qing dynasty, Hong Taiji attacked the Ming dynasty five consecutive times. In 1636, 1638 and 1642 alone, he accepted the surrender of more than one million Han people. In June of the seventh year of the Chongde reign (1642), Hong Taiji created the Han Army Eight Banners, comprised of a large number of Han troops, which shared the same flag colors and official system as the Manchu Eight Banners and Mongolian Eight Banners. The Han soldiers were considered distinctly different from ordinary Han, as they were seen as conquerors who had helped consolidate the country's territorial gains (Sun 2005). Although their status was lower than that of Manchurians and Mongolians, it was much higher than that of ordinary Han people (Wu 2005).

The Han army in northeast China was divided into two types. One was called the Old Han Army, which referred to those Han who had joined the Eight Banners before the Qing armies broke through the Shanhai Pass (山海关). These people joined the Qing armies for military operations, leaving only a few of them settled in northeast China. In 1657 and 1740, a group of bannermen in the Old Han Army were transferred from Liaodong to Jilin as the Qing government set up two government agencies (the Zongguan Yamen of Dasheng Wula and the Ula Brigade Yamen) (Yin 2002, p. 42). A small number of bannermen in the Old Han Army also served in the garrison in Heilongjiang and Liaoning.

The other group was called the New Han Army and it comprised those Han who had joined the Eight Banners after the Qing armies entered the Shanhai Pass. The establishment of the Qing dynasty left northeast China a barren land. To rebuild Liaodong, the Qing government recruited people to rebuild this inhospitable land. In the first year of the Shunzhi reign (1644), the government urged farmers to participate: "the displaced people into the *Baojia* system (neighborhood administrative system), regardless of their origins, to rebuild the barren land" (Tuojin and Cao 2012). In the tenth year of the Shunzhi reign (1653), the *Regulations of Liaoning on Recruiting People for Reclamation* (辽宁招民垦荒条例) were promulgated to encourage people to move from Zhili (northern administrative region of China), Henan, Shandong, Shanxi and other provinces to northeast China. Some of these immigrants joined the Eight Banners and became the Han army (Agui and Gao 1997). For instance, according to the *Genealogy of the Lu Clan in Fengcheng* (凤城卢氏家谱), "the Lu clan in Fengcheng, with their ancestors from Lujia Dajie in Qixia County, Dengzhou Prefecture, Shandong Province, fled from Shandong Province to Northeast China because of a severe famine in the eighth year of the Shunzhi reign (1651). The Lu clan joined the Han Army of Border Yellow Banner of the Eight Banners under the jurisdiction of Shengjing" (Lu 1993).

There was another group of the Han army in northeast China, and this comprised those who were exiled for crimes during the Kangxi and Yongzheng reigns of the Qing dynasty. Volume 167 of the *Fengtian Tongzhi* (奉天通志) records that "In the early-Qing Dynasty, a total of 884 households of surrendered soldiers of Three Feudatories were

transferred from Yunnan and distributed across the borders to guard the frontiers, dig trenches, and deliver official documents to post stations"(Bai et al. 1927). The *Liaozuo Jianwenlu* (辽左见闻录) records that "The rebellious population of Three Feudatories who had been exiled to Guandong (older name for Manchuria) came in an endless stream for several years, and they were all distributed across various posts in villages, stations, and roads" (Wang 2013, p. 173). This group of Han bannermen was also a relatively large one.

It was the Han bannermen who forged *Qixiang* culture. According to some scholars, the *Qixiang* sacrificial rite would have arisen at the time of establishment of the Han Army Eight Banners in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties (Ren and Sun 1998, pp. 37, 51, 79, 80, 87, 89). In June of the first year of the Chongde reign (1636), Hong Taiji asked officials to report immediately "if any Han people were found who claimed to be shaman and used charms and incantations to deceive people and practice witchcraft to deceive the country". Soon after,, he ordered the implementation of a unified sacrificial rite: "On June 18, following the edict of the Holy Khan, a ritual system was formulated for holding sacrificial activities in *Tangzi* (堂子, in Manchu Tangse, the Palace Temple where the private offerings of the Manchu family took place) to worship deities in a specific order" (Erdeni and Kuerlen 1990, pp. 1512, 1514). In addition to the officially prescribed sacrificial rituals, "other forms of arbitrary sacrifice are prohibited forever". This prohibition confirms the fact that burning incense was a common practice among the Han people (including the Han bannermen). When the Manchurians entered the Shanhai Pass, the activities of burning incense and offering sacrifices gained even more momentum among the Han bannermen. The *Altar Records* (坛续), written by the Zhang clan, now available in Wulajie Township, Jilin Province, record the emergence of the *Qixiang* rite during the Kangxi reign in the Qing dynasty: "During the reign of Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty, there was a Liaoyang man named Yang Zhong. He was smart and studious since childhood. In his youth, he met a talented person who taught him exceptional martial skills and breathing techniques. From then on, he practiced day and night according to the motion laws of star clusters. He endured the hardships of an arduous journey and devoted himself to practice in the Kanli Cave of Changbai Mountain. After two decades, he returned to society and assumed the Taoist name of Old Master Qingyang. He taught people how to set up altars to worship gods and how to beat drums rhythmically to invite the gods to religious rituals. He imparted his profound knowledge to disciples from eight clans: Wang, Liao, Chang, Zeng, Xie, Wan, Hu and Hou, and this gave rise to the Eight Altars of Guandong". With the passage of time, the Eight Altars saw countless successors. This sacrificial rite of the Han army spread across Guandong. This shows that holding the *Qixiang* rite was a common practice in the everyday lives of the Han bannermen of the Qing dynasty.

3. *Qixiang* Sacrificial Rite

At present, only a few groups are familiar with the routines of a complete *Qixiang* sacrificial rite, and most of them are found in rural areas, such as Wulajie Township and Yongji County of Jilin Province in northeast China. A complete sacrificial ceremony takes three days and involves four stages.

Stage 1: Offering livestock sacrifices and putting together all items necessary for the rite.

This part of the rite, carried out during the day and at twilight of the first day, mainly involves preparations and includes the arranging of artifacts, painting new portraits, offering livestock to the deities and making banner effigies (旗像). The artifacts include a bow, three arrows, two hay cutters, a pig head, three stacks of steamed bread, two "holy bottles", snacks, fruits and bouquets of yellow incense (see Appendix A, Figure A2). "Painting new portraits" means that the household owner burns the old portraits of deities and then invites someone to paint new ones. "Offering livestock" refers to the sacrifice made with black pigs by the head of the household to ancestors and deities. They pour wine into the pig's ear before killing the pig, and the pig will shake its head and ears, indicating that the ancestors and deities have received the pious wishes of the householder. They then kill the pig and sacrifice it with all the meat (see Appendix A, Figure A1). When the divine

craftsman (神匠) (who presides over the ceremony) invited by the householder arrives, they make the banner effigies with colored paper, corn straw and other materials.

The banner effigy is a unique implement of the *Qixiang* rite, which is not seen in any other kind of sacrificial activities. It symbolizes the flag, camp, generals, money, grain and military orders, etc. of gods and ghosts. When it is made, it means that a sacred space where people and gods co-exist has been constructed in the courtyard of the head of the household. In general sacrificial activities, two banner effigies (one high and one low) should be made, the high one is called the "god flag image" and the short one is called the "ghost flag image", while in special sacrificial activities where the master enrolls disciples, four flag images (two high and two low) should be made, two of which belong to the master and the other two belonging to the disciple, which means that the master grants the power to command people and gods to the disciple. In 2014, we saw four banner effigies in the sacrificial rite performed by the Zhang clan (张氏家族, the former Old Chen Hanjun Bannerman) in Gongtong Village, Wulajie Township, Jilin Province. Each effigy was composed of a flag top, collar, coned garment (made of colored paper) and pole. The flag top was made of hardboard and shaped like a pointed spearhead (Figure 1). The shape, structure and symbol used in the banner effigies bore a striking resemblance to the "*Dadao*" (大纛 The most authoritative flag in the army) used in ancient times. In this ceremony, the Zhang clan's officiating master awarded the "*Dadao*" to the new generation of inheritors, giving them the right to take charge of the clan's sacrificial rite.

Figure 1. Four banner effigies placed on either side of the table with offerings at the Zhang clan's *Qixiang* sacrificial rite. Photograph by Zheng De on 17 February 2014.

Ren Guangwei observed and recorded another form of banner effigy in the *Qixiang* sacrificial rite of the Leng clan in Xinbin County, Liaoning Province. This kind of banner effigy was directly called the "*Dadao*" by the local Han bannermen, which is consistent with its name in the ancient army. Its shape is as follows:

As the iconic feature of the *Qixiang* rite, the *Dadao* comes with a frame made of sorghum stalks. A grasshopper cage-shaped frame is first woven with sorghum stalks, with four thick stalks inserted obliquely into the cage as four legs to make it stand firmly on the ground. Then, multi-colored paper is cut into ripple-shaped fishing nets (the ripples are supposed to represent the "rising tide of seawater" and allude to the Emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty conquering northeast China via the sea route) and placed layer by layer

on the framework. The framework with the nets on it, measuring 1.5 m high, is called the "camp" for the soldiers of the Tang Dynasty. On the top of the "camp" are two lotus flowers crafted with colored paper, which are overlapped to represent the memorial ceremony. On the flowers sits an eight-sided *diaodou* (刁斗, copper army pot) made of gold and silver foil, which serves as an altar. Inside the *diaodou*, standing upright, is a triangular wolf-teeth flag made of yellow paper or cloth, on which is a circle with the Chinese character "tang" (representing Li Shimin 李世民, Emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty) or "wang" (representing Wang Junke 王君可, a general of the Tang Dynasty) in its center. Red, blue, white and black pennants are inserted in the four directions, which, along with the yellow flag, represent the Chinese Five Elements as well as the Tang soldiers coming from five directions. On the top of the "camp" sits the big army banner of the Tang camp, which stands 50 cm high. The total height of the flag is 2 to 2.5 m. There are two *Dadao* in this form. In most cases, they are placed on either side of the front gate of the host family, while sometimes they stand on the two sides of the altar in the courtyard. They are burnt after the completion of the incense-burning ceremony (Ren and Sun 1998, pp. 37, 51, 79, 80, 87, 89).

In contrast, the banner effigies in Xinbin Town, Liaoning Province, have greater military significance than those in Wurajie Town, Jilin Province, and are more similar to the ancient military flag.

Stage 2: Inviting the gods.

This stage of the rite extends from the night of the first day through the morning of the next day and involves the specific activities of *Jieshenxiang* (接神像, welcoming divine portraits), *Songjian* (送箭, shooting arrows), *Anzuo* (安座, placing the portraits of gods in a specific order), *Nianshen* (念神, chanting prayers) and *Dawulu* (打五路, opening the five paths).

"*Jieshenxiang*" refers to inviting the ghosts of ancestors and gods back home in the form of portraits that are worshipped (see Appendix A, Figure A4). When investigating the Qixiang ceremony of the Zhang family, the author found a total of 15 portraits, including: *Xiangfeng* (先锋), *Guangye* (关爷), *Shangshen* (上神), *Wangzi* (王子), *Qishen* (旗神), *Hushen* (虎神 tiger god), *Fengdu* (丰都 the god of the netherworld), *Jiatang* (家堂 the genealogy with the names of ancestors), *Yanguang* (眼光 the goddess of eye disease control), *Wudao* (五道 the god that drives away ghosts), *Choujin* (抽筋 the god that controls muscle cramps), *Chouchang* (抽肠 the god that controls abdominal pain), *Kelao* (咳唠 the god that controls coughs), *Toutong* (头痛 the god that controls headaches), *and Erming* (耳鸣 the god that controls tinnitus).

Of these, the first five are associated with military campaigns. *Xianfeng* refers to Xue Rengui (薛仁贵), a celebrated general of the Tang dynasty (618–907); *Guanye* to Guan Yu, a famous general in the Three Kingdoms Period (220–280); "*Wangzi*" to Li Shimin, the emperor of the Tang dynasty; *Shangshen* to the 120 generals of Li Shimin's military expedition to Liaodong and *Qishen* to the god of the *Dadao* worshipped by the Ming armies in the *Maji* sacrificial rite. These five deities are placed in front of the shrine and worshiped first, demonstrating their very important position. Other gods, such as *Hushen* and *Taiwei* originated from Shamanism and are worshipped to appease wild animals; *Fengdu*, *Yanguang* and *Wudao* are the gods of Taoism and of folk religions and *Kelao*, *Erming*, *Chouchang*, *Toutong* and *Choujin* are the gods who control diseases of body organs. These gods rank behind the military gods, indicating their slightly lower status. "*Jiatang*" (Figure 2, covered with red cloth) is the ancestor god of the household head's family and is ranked higher than the gods responsible for health but lower the military gods. (Figure 2, arranged from right to left).

Figure 2. In the Zhang clan's *Qixiang* sacrificial rite, 15 portraits were placed on the god table, with Jiatang (covered by red cloth) in the middle. From right to left, they are *Xiangfeng, Guangye, Shangshen, Wangzi, Qishen, Hushen, Fengdu, Jiatang, Yanguang, Wudao, Choujin, Chouchang, Kelao, Toutong, and Erming.* Photograph by Zheng De on 17 February 2014.

"*Songjian*" means that the householder shot three arrows at the lintel of the main hall of the house. This part of the rite alludes to the legendary story of General Xue Rengui's "three arrows as a mark of resolution to defend the frontier" in the Tang dynasty. The symbolic meaning is to show that the leader of the gods, *Xianfeng*, demonstrated his martial arts to calm the war in the Tianshan Mountains, shocking all the gods and dead souls who have been invited into the house so that they cannot move at will, and ensuring the safety of the head of household and his family. "*Anzuo*" refers to the placing of the portraits of the deities in the shrine in the correct order. "*Nianshen*" means that the person leading the rite will chant the words of the gods in the form of divine songs for the host family (see Appendix A, Figure A5). "*Dawulu*" refers to the officiant performing the martial skills of the legendary general Wang Junke using a broadsword. In essence, the rituals and gods observed and worshiped in the second stage have more military elements.

Stage 3: *Fangshen* (放神, performing the role of gods).

This stage lasts throughout the second day until midnight and covers the rituals of *Qijian* (启箭), *Kaijinkou* (开金口), *Fangshen* and *Shaozhi* (burning paper money). "*Qijian*" refers to the taking down in the morning of the three arrows that were shot the previous night into the main hall of the house to lift *Xianfeng*'s order, indicating that the other gods and dead souls can move at will. "*Kaijinkou*" refers to the officiant worshipping the ancestors with chicken blood in front of the shrine and decorating the ancestors with combs and colorful flowers.

"*Fangshen*" means that the officiant performs the spirit appendage, displaying the magic and martial skills of *Xianfeng*, *Wangzi*, *Taiwei*, *Yingsheng* (鹰神, eagle god), *Fengdu*, *Hushen*, *Jinhuahuoshen* (金花火神, the god of fire) and *Wudao*. The officiant first performs the role of *Xianfeng*—he walks to a horse, feeds it, saddles it, tightens the girth, puts on the bridle, pulls the reins, mounts the horse, and shoots arrows in a symbolic demonstration of the martial skills of marching and fighting. The second role to play is that of *Wangzi*. The officiant mimics the actions and facial expressions of Li Shimin, the Tang dynasty emperor, when he saw soldiers die and beat his breast and stamped his feet in sorrow. Other performances are related to deities linked to animals and Taoist or folk deities. Thus, the first performances that symbolize the roles of *Xianfeng* and *Wangzi* were of great importance because they refer to military operations.

At midnight, the officiant leads the head of household and his family in burning the banner effigies and throwing the sacrificial food and wine into the fire, indicating that money and food have been delivered to the gods and late relatives. This is what is referred to as "*Shaozhiqian*." In this ritual, special attention is paid to the role of the banner effigies. The erection of the banner effigies indicates the creation of a sacred space for the

coexistence of gods and humans in the courtyard. When these effigies are burned, the sacred space also goes with them. In this sense, the banner effigies play a pivotal role in the *Qixiang* sacrificial rite (see Appendix A, Figure A6).

Stage 4: Warnings and taboos.

This stage lasts from the early morning of the third day until noon. After daybreak, the head of the household hangs the *Xiliu* (喜绺, a straw pole tied with red rope) on the door, indicating that the family held incense-burning and sacrificial activities. Black cattle, white horses, people in mourning, and unclean people were forbidden to enter, hoping that passers-by would know. A month later, the householder takes down the *Xiliu* and throws it into a clean, isolated place. This signals the wrap-up of the sacrificial rite.

In the above four stages of the *Qixiang* sacrificial rite, we found that the most important symbolic objects were banner effigies (see Appendix A, Figure A3), while *Xianfeng*, *Wangzi*, *Qishen*, *Shangshen* and *Guanye* were the most-worshipped gods and "*Songjian*" and "*Qijian*" were the most military-order sacrificial ceremonies. All performances imitating gods are full of military flaunting elements. These characteristics show that the *Qixiang* is closely related to the ancient *Maji* sacrificial rite.

4. *Maji* Elements in the *Qixiang* Sacrificial Rite

4.1. Maji Was a Military Sacrificial Ceremony Performed in Ancient China

Firstly, *Maji* was a sacrificial rite that was held in ancient China before the launch of a military operation. The *Songshi* (宋史) says, "*Maji* is a kind of military sacrificial rite that overrides all other types of military rituals" (Tuotuo and Alutu 1985, p. 2829). *Maji* was highly valued by the ancients, and livestock and even people were used in the sacrifice. The *Yuanshi-liezhuan* (元史•列传) recorded that "On June 30, ... Dali (答里) responded with war, killing the messenger HarHarHarun Aruhui to sacrifice the military flag" (Song 2001, p. 3334).

Secondly, from the Sui Dynasty (581–618) and the Tang Dynasty (618–907), the state took the military flag as the object of sacrifice and formed a complete system. In the etiquette system of the Song Dynasty, the flag that led the army forward was called *Ya* (牙A large flag with a zigzag shape at the edge), and the army must hold a sacrifice to it before the expedition. This system reached its peak in the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). In order to worship the military flag, the Ming government set up flag temples across the country, dedicated to the worship of *Dadao* in the army and called *Dadao* "Flag Head General" (Guo 2013).

Thirdly, there were music and dance performances in the *Maji* sacrificial rite. According to the *Xihu Liulan Zhi* (西湖浏览志) of the Ming dynasty, "At the flag temple ... on the day before the military flag sacrifice ceremony, the soldiers marched around the city with weapons to display, and the drums and orchestras were played frequently, which was called "show the army". On this day, people show various skills and compete with each other, which is very lively (Tian 1991, p. 229). Obviously, the *Maji* rite had developed into a folk custom festival dominated by military elements, promoted by state officials and participated in by ordinary people in the Ming dynasty.

In military activities or wars, in order to achieve the desire of victory, the ancient Chinese placed their hopes on the flag god, which prompted them to worship the flag god regardless of the changes of the dynasty. In this regard, *Maji* rite has strong vitality.

4.2. Maji Was Preserved by the Han Bannermen

Since the Han bannermen of the Qing dynasty were all soldiers, they inevitably believed in *Maji* culture. On the one hand, they inherited the traditional practice of the *Maji* sacrificial rite from the Ming dynasty. In the battle with the Qing army, they failed and surrendered. Although the goal of the battle has changed, as soldiers, they still maintain the belief of sacrificing the flag. Therefore, the Han troops who performed the *Maji* sacrificial rite during the Ming Dynasty retained their tradition of worshiping the flag after their surrender to the Qing Dynasty.

On the other hand, the Han bannermen had to follow the system of the *Maji* sacrificial rite in the Qing dynasty. Volume 84 of the *Qing Shi Gao* (清史稿) records: "To celebrate the pacification of Shenyang in the tenth year of the Tianming reign, the Manchu armies withdrew to the Huhun River to kill cattle and worship the banner. The armies waged a war against Korea in the first year of the Tiancong reign (1627) and returned triumphantly in the second year, with a big banner erected to worship the heavens. Since then, the armies have often worshiped the banner for a military operation or battle victory, and the banner worshipped every time is enshrined in the Guandi Temple" (Wang 1977). This shows that the *Maji* rite in the Qing dynasty had also become a state system, which lasted until the end of the dynasty. As soldiers of the Qing dynasty, the Han bannermen had to follow this system. The *Suijun Jixing* (随军纪行) says: "On August 29, the general led all *jalan i janggins* (regiment captains) and *janggins* (captains), among others, to kill eight oxen and offer them on the earthen altar while blowing the conch shell horns in worship of the banner" (Zeng 1987, p. 5). This is a historical record of how the Han bannermen worshiped the big army banner, demonstrating that the *Maji* rite was quite a common practice at that time.

For Han bannermen, *Maji* sacrifice is not only the military system of the country but also the spiritual belief of the ethnic group. It entered the field of life from the military field and has become the identity symbol of Han bannermen—*Qixiang*. Stephan Feuchtwang believes that folk religion is the metaphor of empire. People imitate the orthodox politics of the empire by means of metaphor, complete the construction of self-worth and ethnic identity in the form of folk religion (such as festivals, temples, genealogy, ancestral halls, worship, etc.) and create a new meaning to redefine imperial power (Feuchtwang 2001, pp. 71–104). Although this theory does not answer the question of the legitimacy of imperial authority, it relatively accurately describes the relationship between folk religion and national politics. Looking at *Maji* and *Qixiang* from this perspective, we can explain the relationship between the military gods, martial arts performances (such as throwing spears, shooting arrows and wielding the sword, etc.), banner effigies and *Maji* rituals.

4.3. The Dadao in Maji Evolved into the Banner Effigies in Qixiang

The banner effigies are the most important object in *Qixiang* and have many similarities with *Dadao*.

Firstly, both share almost the same nomenclature. When Mr. Ren Guangwei studied *Qixiang* in Liaoning Province, he found that the local people called the banner effigies "*Dadao*" (Ren and Sun 1998, pp. 37, 51, 79, 80, 87, 89), which is consistent with the name of *Dadao*, the object of *Maji* sacrifice in the ancient army. Zhang and Chang, the Han bannermen in Jilin Province, called the banner effigies "flag logans" and "benchmarks", to refer to the icons of the general and his commands for operations, which was the basic function of *Dadao* in the ancient army. In addition, and more importantly, in the Zhang's god system, there is a god called "flag god", which is one of the most important gods (Zheng 2021, p. 254), and its source should be the "Flag Head General" god in the Ming Dynasty *Maji* rite.

Secondly, both share a similar structure. According to ancient Chinese military books, *Dadao* was usually decorated with gourd-shaped or pointed spearhead parts. The *Jixiao Xinshu* (纪效新书) of the Ming dynasty records that "the Banner of the Middle Troop" was decorated with a gourd-shaped head (Figure 3), and "the Flag of the Commanding General" was decorated with a pointed spearhead (Figure 4). The "Banner of the New Gun Camp of Plain Yellow Banner", as seen in the *Qinding Daqing Huidiantu* (钦定大清会典), was decorated with a gourd-shaped head (Figure 5). This decorative element also exists in the banner effigies of Han bannermen. The top of the banner effigies of the Chang clan in Yongji County, Jilin Province, is shaped like a gourd, while the banner effigies of the Zhang clan in Wulajie Township is shaped like a pointed spearhead, which is consistent with the *Dadao* recorded in ancient books. In addition, the *Taibai Yin Classic* (太白阴经) of Li Quan of the Tang Dynasty recorded that "there are five flags in five directions, each with its own color . . . They are placed behind the six big banners in a military march or in the military camp" (Li 2007). The so-called "Five Direction Flags" refer to the five colors

of blue, red, white, black and yellow, representing the five directions of east, south, west, north, and center, respectively. The meaning of the "Five-faced Tooth Banner" of the Leng clan's *Dadao* in Liaoning Province is aligned with that of the "Five Direction Flags" in this book.

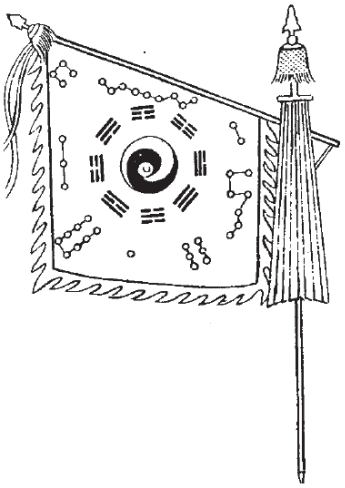

Figure 3. Banner of the Middle Troop (Qi 2017).

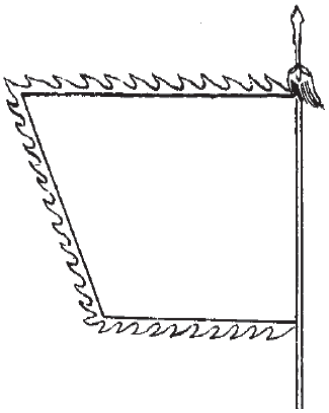

Figure 4. Flag of the Commanding General (Qi 2017).

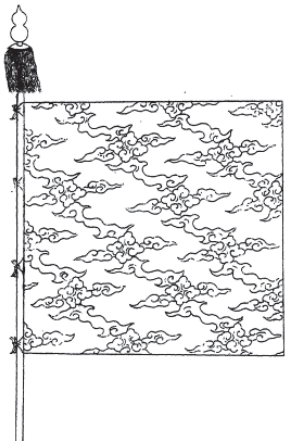

Figure 5. Banner of the New Gun Camp of Plain Yellow Banner (Kungang and Li 1899).

Thirdly, both share similar functions. The *Dadao* is located at the place where soldiers gather and where the command post of the general stands. Likewise, in the *Qixiang* sac-

rificial rite, the sacred space created by the banner effigies brings together not only those living but also the souls of dead soldiers and generals. In this respect, the two are completely consistent.

Fourthly, both share a similar symbolic significance. The *Dadao* is not only an object of adoration by the soldiers, but also symbolizes the military generals' power to authorize troops to wage war. Similarly, in the *Qixiang* sacrificial rite, the banner effigies symbolize the master's power to authorize disciples to command the people and gods. The two are consistent in this respect.

4.4. The Space Dedicated to the Maji Rite Evolved into the Space for the Qixiang Rite

Maji was a national military sacrificial ceremony, which was held in military camps, training grounds or flag temples (Guo 2013). These places evolved and condensed into the family courtyard marked by the flag image in the *Qixiang* ceremony.

Firstly, the place where the banner effigies are located symbolizes the military camp. The Leng Divine Song of Liaoning Province says: "A pair of *Dadao* stand squarely in front of the gate. Flags on the poles with the *diaodou* (刁斗, copper army pot) on it are flying in the wind. Wang Junke has issued a military order to mobilize his soldiers under the banner. The general has given the command to pitch a camp under the *Dadao*, with the ghosts of soldiers prohibited from breaking out of the camp" (Ren and Sun 1998, pp. 37, 51, 79, 80, 87, 89). Judging from this song, the banner effigies set up at the gate of the courtyard are like the erecting of the *Dadao*, showing that a military camp has been established.

Secondly, the place where the banner effigies are located symbolizes the *Yamen*. (衙门, government office). At the beginning of the *Qixiang* sacrificial rite, the Zhang clan in Wulajie Township, Jilin, sang a divine song that went like this: "New gods, horses, and banners are invited to the new altar, and new gods and horses are welcomed to settle in your *Yamen*." The reason why they use "*Yamen*" here to refer to the ordinary household courtyard is that the Han bannermen deemed the place where there is a "new flag" (namely the banner effigy) to be a *Yamen* that could command large groups of troops and horses, instead of being just a place for ordinary life.

Thirdly, the place where the banner effigies are located symbolizes the temple. The Leng Divine Song of Liaoning Province states: "My emperor, my lord, please quickly gather the ghosts and order them to settle in the temple. The Emperor of Tang Dynasty has signed a decree to announce outside the tent that 3000 souls of loyal soldiers should hear clearly that you are admitted to any temple you see in *Guandong* (关东, refers to the area east of Shanhai Pass in China) and can be worshipped only at those temples" (Ren and Sun 1998, pp. 37, 51, 79, 80, 87, 89). According to the song lyrics, when the divine craftsman finished making and erecting the banner effigies, it meant that the courtyard was converted into a temple, and all kinds of gods and dead souls would enter this sacred space.

4.5. The Flag God in Maji Evolved into the Qishen (Flag God) in Qixiang

The gods of the flag in the *Maji* of the Ming Dynasty include "Flag Head General", "Six Flag General", and "Five Direction Flag" (Guo 2013). After the fall of the Ming dynasty, these gods were continued and integrated into one in the *Qixiang* sacrifice of Han bannermen, which is called "*Qinshen*". As mentioned earlier, *Qinshen* has a high position among all the deities worshipped, and is one of the few major gods to be worshipped in the form of divine portraits, showing a unique significance.

4.6. The Drum-Beating in Maji Evolved into the Single-Drum-Beating Dance in Qixiang

As with the *Maji* sacrificial rite, drum-beating, juggling, weapons display and martial arts performances also featured in the *Qixiang* ceremony. The officiant not only performed a single-drum-beating dance and shook waist bells but also presented dramatic performances to show the activities of the gods. In addition, the officiant showed off various weapons such as bows and arrows, broadswords, and spears, as well as displaying such

arts as archery, sword fights and breaking pigs' heads. All the rituals were accompanied by music and chants, creating a scene very similar to that of the *Maji* rite.

5. *Qixiang* Evolved from *Maji*

Many details show that *Qixiang* sacrifice originated from the ancient *Maji*, which can be described and analyzed as follows:

> After the founding of the Qing dynasty, the Han bannermen in northeast China became a group with unique emotional needs and were different from both the Manchu and ordinary Han people. They were the people who helped the Manchus win the war, so they declared their war achievements to the rulers and hoped to be respected, but they were also the people who submitted to the Manchu army, so they must express their obedience to the supreme ruler to gain trust. Their political and economic status was higher than that of ordinary Han people, so they show their sense of superiority in various ways, but they still belong to the Han nationality, so they must rely on Han culture for spiritual and emotional support. These attributes determine that Han bannermen must take *Maji* as the core, integrate Manchu Shaman dance and Han people's incense-burning, and create the cultural symbol of their own ethnic group—*Qixiang*.

The Han bannermen imitated and reshaped a new *Maji* rite in folk life. From the perspective of "Empire Metaphor" (Feuchtwang 2001, pp. 71–104), *Maji* is one of the orthodox military politics of the empire, and the Han bannermen are both participants and imitators of this politics. The so-called participants refer to Han bannermen's participation in orthodox sacrificial activities as national soldiers and the so-called imitators refer to the Han bannermen's integration of sacrificial rites into life as a folk mass. This dual identity is not the intention of the Han bannermen, but was determined by the social and political environment, that is, the nature of military and civilian integration of the "Eight Banners" system (八旗制度) in the Qing dynasty. Therefore, the Han bannermen were both soldiers and civilians, and their religious symbols needed to adopt the *Maji* sacrificial element.

At the same time, the attribute of subordinating to the Manchu rulers determined that Han bannermen must accept Manchu Shamanist beliefs while the emotional dependence of Han culture required that they must accept the Han people's incense-burning sacrifice. These two and *Maji* were integrated into each other to form the *Qixiang* sacrifice. This phenomenon can be explained by the so-called religious syncretism theory of Leopold and other scholars, which believes that the cultural symbols shared by different human groups are often fused together in another way, showing different meanings, so "it is no great leap to declare that all religion is syncretic" (Leopold and Jensen 2014, pp. 338–41; Light 2014). From this theory, *Qixiang* is indeed a product of the syncretism of multiple religious cultures.

However, we must see that much important information contained in the *Qixiang* still has not been effectively interpreted. For example, what kind of emotion does the *Qixiang* ceremony, as the cultural symbol of the Han bannermen, express to the ruler? Does the *Qixiang* mark that the Han bannermen have become an independent ethnic group? What kind of Chinese-style religious belief system does the *Qixiang* ceremony contain? Is it only because the ruler is the winner that the Han bannermen imitate the *Maji* sacrifice? Does the evolution and formation of *Qixiang* indicate the direction of the evolution of Shamanism in China? These issues are obviously very important and are closely related to China's political, historical and cultural traditions, especially the history of the Qing dynasty, Shamanism and folk beliefs. In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to learn from Qu Feng's viewpoint of reconstructing the Shamanism theory through a dialogue between China and the West (Qu 2018), based on the connotation of China's "civilization" and around the theme of *Qixiang* culture, to carry out "dialogue" in the fields of modernity and tradition, reality and history, politics and religion, and to obtain practical answers.

Author Contributions: L.Z.: Funding acquisition, Investigation, Data curation, Resources, Writing, original draft. D.Z.: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing, review & editing. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Acknowledgments: I am grateful to reviewers for their constructive comments. Thanks are also given to Thomas Michael and Feng Qu for their editing work.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A. Field Research Picture

Figure A1. In the preparation stage, Zhang Zonghua (张宗华), the master of the altar, sacrificed a black pig to the gods and ancestors (17 February 2014, *Qixiang* sacrificial activity of the Zhang family in Wulajie Town, Jilin Province). Photo: De Zheng, 2014.

Figure A2. In the courtyard, four banner effigies, divine portraits and offerings have been prepared. On the table lie a bow and three arrows (17 February 2014, *Qixiang* sacrificial activity of the Zhang family in Wulajie Town, Jilin Province). Photo: Zheng De, 2014.

Figure A3. People took the banner effigies from the yard to the house, symbolizing that under the leadership of *Dadao*, gods and ghosts were invited to the house (17 February 2014, *Qixiang* sacrificial activity of the Zhang family in Wulajie Town, Jilin Province). Photo: Zheng De, 2014.

Figure A4. Zhang Hongnian (张宏年), the son of Zhang Zonghua, carrying a bow and arrow across his body, holding yellow incense under his arms and a treasure bottle in his hands, bending down and carrying all the divine portraits (including military gods, tiger gods, wild boar gods, etc.) and ready to follow the banner effigies into the house. His gestures and actions expressed his piety and awe for gods and ancestors (17 February 2014, *Qixiang* sacrificial activity of the Zhang family in Wulajie Town, Jilin Province). Photo: Zheng De, 2014.

Figure A5. The divine portraits were consecrated in the shrine. The craftsmen beat drums and sang divine songs in front of the shrine and banner effigies (18 February 2014, *Qixiang* sacrificial activity of the Zhang family in Wulajie Town, Jilin Province). Photo: Zheng De, 2014.

Figure A6. The banner effigies were burned outside the courtyard, and the family knelt to send the gods and ghosts away (18 February 2014, *Qixiang* sacrificial activity of the Zhang family in Wulajie Town, Jilin Province). Photo: Zheng De, 2014.

Figure A7. Drums were beaten and divine songs were sung to worship the gods. The banner effigies standing at the table have a gourd-shaped top, which is eye-catching (On 17 January 2016, Zhao Hongge (赵洪阁), Taiping Township, Yongji County, Jilin Province, led the incense squad to hold a wake-up ceremony at Zhuanshan Lake, Yehe City). Photo: Zheng De, 2016.

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Article

Social Maintenance and Cultural Continuity—Folk Religion among the Tu Ethnic Group in Northwest China

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Abstract: Despite economic development and social changes, folk religion in China has not died out, but has survived and has even experienced a revival. Oscillating state policies have in general had a strong impact on religion in China. Though there is no official recognition of ethnic folk-religions, the state classifies them positively as manifestations of local cultural heritage and in this context has supported—not stifled—public folk religious practices among the Tu. This study deals with folk religious' practice among the Tu ethnic group in Northwest China. The article highlights animist ontology as a theoretical perspective for analyzing the religious practices of the Tu ethnic group in China. The authors carried out anthropological procedures of participant observation and interviewing in the Tu community distributed in Qinghai Province and now present a portrait of the folk religion in typical Tu communities located in Minhe County and Huzhu County. The article also discusses the tripartite cosmology of the Tu and the positive interactions with national authorities. Quite apart from the issue of the impact of the state, the authors document, via prolonged ethnographic immersion in two regions, that the folk religion of the Tu is also closely linked to, and continues to have an impact on, daily life, particularly with regard to the construction and maintenance of ethnic community structure. This paper is organized as follows. First, we present ethnographic information on the religious beliefs and ritual practices of the Tu. The subsequent section then discusses how public folk-religious performances receive support from the state in the context of tourism and local economic development and how they contribute to the maintenance of community structure and social order. The conclusion summarizes the process by which ethnic folk religions have not only survived, but, in part as a result of state support for ethnic cultural heritage, experienced a revival.

Keywords: the Tu ethnic group; folk religion; social order; animist ontology

Citation: Xing, Haiyan, and Mengting Huang. 2023. Social Maintenance and Cultural Continuity—Folk Religion among the Tu Ethnic Group in Northwest China. *Religions* 14: 714. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14060714

Academic Editors: Thomas Michael and Feng Qu

Received: 18 April 2023
Revised: 15 May 2023
Accepted: 17 May 2023
Published: 29 May 2023

1. Introduction

Secularization theory states that economic modernization may threaten the existence of religion. It is evident that modernization did bring a decline in religion in some regions. The improvement of China's economy in recent years, however, has had the opposite effect: for example, a revival, rather than a dwindling, of the folk religion of the Tu.

Our fieldwork in Qinghai Province of Northwest China revealed that folk religion contributes to the internal order of ethnic communities and plays a role in the daily life of ethnic groups with distinct cultural traditions. Various researchers have argued that the folk religion of many ethnic groups focuses more on codes of social behavior than on cosmological or theological issues (Draper and Baker 2011; Wu 2019; Zeng et al. 2020). Among the Tu and other ethnic groups, however, cosmology, in the form of clearly articulated spirit beliefs, continues to play a role.

The Tu ethnic group, also known as the Monguor, is an ethnic minority living in the northwest region of China. The Tu population is estimated to be around 250,000. Animism is a fundamental aspect of the Tu people's ontology, shaping their understanding of the world around them and their relationships with other beings. In the indigenous Tu belief system, there is a tripartite cosmological classification that separates heaven, earth, and

humans. In this light, the cosmological paradigm of the Tu posits that spirits, humans, and things co-construct and share the whole world. In their view of the world of daily life, the Tu perceive a symbiosis of different elements. The Tu religious pantheon consists of numerous anthropomorphic spirits and the ritual practices directed to these spirits play a role in the construction of social order. The folk religion of the Tu thus functions to maintain and stabilize the social order of this ethnic community.

In this article, we have selected the Tu ethnic group of Qinghai as the research population. We discuss how folk religion shapes the community's overall world view and the role that folk religion plays in the construction of social order. Our analytic paradigm is informed by concepts of animist ontology. Animist ontology "conceptualizes a continuity between humans and nonhumans" (Descola 1994), an apt representation of the landscape of the Tu ethnic group. Humans are believed to share a common culture with animals, plants, and other nonhuman entities. Differences among various living beings or natural objects are viewed as products of their individual characteristics.

This paper is divided as follows. First, we analyze the belief system and ritual practices of the folk religion of the Tu, with particular focus on communal dimensions. The next section delineates the role of folk religion in the construction of social order. In the conclusion, we discuss these findings as they apply to the Tu folk religion.

1.1. Literature on Chinese Folk Religion

Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism are the five religions officially recognized by the government of the People's Republic of China (hereinafter PRC). The PRC, however, does not forbid the folk religious spirit beliefs and ritual practices found in villages. Should they not also be classified as "religions"? There has been scholarly disagreement on this issue. For some sinologists and historians, "Chinese folk religion" may be a valid taxonomic concept (De Groot 1854; Daniel 1976). In this sense, folk religion refers to as popular "unofficial" forms of Daoism and Buddhism with their own local textual traditions. Yang (1991) divides Chinese religion into two categories: institutional and diffused. Diffused religion, that is, folk religion, is embedded deeply into secular social institutions. In this regard, folk religion has been described as the religion of non-elite groups (Teiser 1995). Wang (1996) argues that folk religion was only a minor part of Chinese culture, not representative of major elements in Chinese culture. Folk religion is not only different from the religious systems of the officials and scholar-officials, but also cannot be confused with institutionalized Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Fenchtwang (2001) analyzed how folk religion functioned to create bonds among individuals, having an influence on the organizational elements of Chinese society.

As previous studies have pointed out, believers in various Chinese folk religions outnumber the population of believers of Judaism, which is considered to be a major world religion. In this regard, folk religion can arguably be included in the comparative study of world religions (Sharot 2002). One author argues that folk belief can be seen as "quasi-religion" (Qiu 2016). Folk religion is embedded in the internal order of local communities and is diffused in daily life, forming part of a community's way of life. Another author views folk religions as creative syntheses constructed by ordinary people to meet their psychological needs (Ho 2005).

Broadly speaking, a great deal of scholarly attention has been paid to the rituals and social functions of Chinese folk religion. The landscape of Chinese folk religion has been described from different angles. Some scholars have carried out research on the intricate relationship between folk religion, national belief, and national ideology. Sangren (1987) illustrates how religion works as a major vehicle for maintaining social order. Siu (1989) offers a convincing explanation on how folk religion can be transformed into an element of folk culture that facilitates governmental reform efforts. In that light, Li (2015) examines how Nuo—one of popular religions in southeast China—has survived under the initiative of state-sponsored socioeconomic policies. Other researchers have focused almost exclusively on the personal, cultural, and socio-political aspects of religion. Adam Yuet

Chau (2005) focuses on the way religious practices have been embedded into social life and the way popular religion plays a role in the social life of populations in contemporary China. Goossaert and Palmer (2011) utilize the concept of "social ecology" to analyze the changes that have occurred in Chinese religious life in the wake of modernization.

In recent years, religion in China has been accepted as a possible vehicle for promoting socialism with Chinese characteristics. Folk religion has a huge living space in contemporary society (Lin 2007; He 2010). Gao (2015) takes villages in Zhejiang, Fujian, Jiangxi Province as examples to analyze how folk religions continue to promote the integration of society during periods of secularization. Folk religious customs play an important role in stimulating the vitality of traditional villages and in promoting the modernization of farming (Zhang 2019). Folk religion, in short, has practical implications in the process of modernization. However, most of the research on Chinese folk religion cited above has been carried out among the Han, particularly those in southern China. Relatively fewer studies deal with folk religion among ethnic minorities in the northwest, the region in which we conducted research. Furthermore, there has been little research on the role that folk religion plays in nation-building and in modernization.

Overmyer (2005) posits that Chinese folk religion is distinguished by its absence of structured organization, its plethora of deities and spirits, and its diverse array of rituals such as offerings, divination, possession, and exorcism. Nevertheless, our research has uncovered that the folk belief system of the Tu ethnic group in Northwest China not only encompasses a multitude of deities and elaborate ritual practices, but also incorporates an associated religious organization. In our case, folk religions can, without a doubt, be classified as religions. In this article, we emphasize the practical functions of folk religion, viewing it as an embodiment of ritual beliefs and practices which reflect the local beliefs and practices of the people.

1.2. The Literature on Animist Ontology

Animist ontology is a belief system that ascribes spiritual or supernatural qualities to objects or phenomena in the natural world (Harvey 2006). According to Harvey (2006), animist ontology is based on the belief that "everything in the world is alive and has a soul". This belief system is often associated with indigenous peoples and traditional cultures around the world.

Here, we define "ontology" as a complex of principles through which people conceptually organize the human and nonhuman elements in their environment (Pedersen and Rane 2001). Categorical distinctions between persons and objects and between nature and society are the cornerstones of the ontology underlying Cartesian science. Modernity, in a sense, emerged from this objectifying stance, including the underpinning of the Western notions of "multiculturalism" and "uni-naturalism".

Are humans truly the subject and animals the object? Animism presents the antithesis of Cartesian objectivism (Hornborg 2006). Animism is "an ontology which postulates the social character of relations between humans and nonhumans: the space between nature and society is itself social" (de Castro 1998). However, Cartesian dualism and animism are both based on multiculturalism, which emphasizes the cultural distinction between humans and nonhumans. Nonhumans can be seen as active entities with agency, intentionality and subjectivity (Shumon and Harald 2015). According to Qu (2019), animist ontology is a holistic worldview that emphasizes the interconnectivity and interdependence of all things.

An increasing body of ethnographic data demonstrates social continuity between nature and culture (Descola 1994; Ingold 2000; Fausto 2007; Ogden et al. 2013). Philippe Descola and Viveiros de Castro's discussion of Amerindian cosmologies illustrates this point about animist ontology. Ethnological studies carried out by Descola (1994) present a new ontology; they posit naturalism as the fourth mode of understanding the changing world, the other three modes being animism, totemism and analogism. Descola paints a picture of ontological pluralism (Ingold 2016) and a framework for carrying out compar-

ative analysis. Castro coined the term "perspectivism" as a reference to ontologies that explore the subjectivity of humans and nonhumans. Perspectivism is founded upon the concept of "spiritual unity and corporal diversity" and on the principle that "the point of view creates the subject" (de Castro 1998). This constitutes a new way of rethinking the relationship between humans and nonhumans.

From the abovementioned, we can clearly see that the perspective of animism presents an alternative way of thinking about the relationship between humans and nonhumans. Within the theoretical context of animism, an ontological turn occurs in the way the world of being is presented. Among the Tu ethnic group, we found a tripartite cosmology consisting of heaven (the spirit world), earth (the natural world) and the human world. We found a linkage between folk religion and social practice. The social order consists of anthropomorphic spirits, other living entities, and human beings. In this light, we have selected animist ontology as the theoretical perspective within which we analyze the religious practices of the Tu.

1.3. The Literature on Tu Folk Religion

In the mid-twentieth century, the religious traditions of the Tu were mentioned by Schram (1957). Subsequent studies of the Tu religion fall into two distinct categories. Some studies focus on individual religious currents among the Tu, such as their involvement in Tibetan Buddhism (Tang 1996; Zhai 2001), shamanism (Lv 1985; E 2009; Xing and Murray 2018), folk religion (Wen 2008) and so on. Other studies document the interaction between the Tu religion and other religions, showing that religions interact and syncretize with each other (E 2002; A 2018; Wang 2016). In this latter sense, religious systems can be analyzed as cultural systems that are dynamically linked to other systems. In these pages, we hope to point out that folk religion among the Tu contributes to the construction of social order.

The religious beliefs and practices of the Tu have been the object of several scholarly research pieces. Among the topics studied are the Tu rituals (E 2002; Cai 2007), the Tu spirit pantheon (Qi 2007; Xing and Murray 2019), the Tu shamans and other specialists (Yang 2007; Xing 2018), the Tu symbol systems (Wen 2008) and the Tu religious groups (Pei and Li 2007; Zhao and Zhong 2014). This earlier research provides a valuable frame of reference for this study.

However, scholars have seldom ventured beyond the structure and overall features of the Tu folk religion. Less attention has been paid to the interaction between the folk religion and the social environment in which it is practiced. Through questionnaires and several years of participant observation and interviewing, we found many ways in which the Tu folk religion is embedded in the communal life of the Tu. In addition, with respect to idea systems, Tu religious practices reflect a cosmology that guides the Tu in their conceptualization of human and nonhuman social life. In this light, this paper focuses on the relationship between folk religion, cosmology, and the social order of the Tu.

In order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the folk religion of the Tu, our research team undertook multiple fieldwork sessions in the Tu areas of Qinghai between 2016 and 2020. During these visits, we observed several significant festival ceremonies, including the *Nadun* (纳顿节), the *Liuyuehui* (六月会) and the *Biangbianghui* (梆梆会) Festivals, etc. Furthermore, we conducted extensive interviews with local religious professionals, elderly individuals, and government officials to gain a deeper understanding of the local religious beliefs and practices, and more than fifty cases were collected. Our research also involved the distribution of 120 questionnaires through a simple random sampling method, from which we retrieved 104 responses. In addition, we collected a vast amount of oral tradition material. The data collected from these fieldwork activities played an instrumental role in shaping our subsequent analysis. This study will in effect be a case study on the landscape of Tu folk religion that reflects animist ontology.

2. Folk Religion and Animist Ontology of the Tu

As one of the ethnic minorities in northwest China, the Tu live principally in a swath of contiguous regions that include Huzhu County, Datong County, and Minhe County, all of them in Qinghai Province. In addition, a small population of the Tu is distributed in Ledu County and Tongren County in Qinghai Province and Tianzhu County in Gansu Province. Qinghai has historically been a mixed ethnic area characterized by the interaction of distinct ethnic groups. This had led the population in this area to engage in mutual learning of different cultures. As a result, the religious system of the Tu is characterized by complexity in its spirit beliefs and rituals.

In general terms, the spirit world of the Tu is a tripartite combination of the spirits of Tibetan Buddhism, Daoism, and local village religion. The specifics vary by community. Forming an organic part of the Tu's culture, folk religion is closely intertwined with the daily life of the Tu. At the same time, there are positive interactions with national authorities. As a result, folk religion has come to play an important role in maintaining the harmony and stability of the Tu community and in maintaining social order within the community.

During several years, we carried out standard anthropological procedures of participant observation and interviewing in the Tu community distributed in Qinghai Province. In addition to contact with local people, our observation and interviewing also included contact with religious specialists and government officials. In addition, we participated in various religious activities. Based on this fieldwork, here, we present a portrait of folk religion in typical Tu communities located in Minhe County and Huzhu County. We first focus on the "surface" features of the Tu religion, providing ethnographic descriptions of its major spirits and rituals. We then explore the cosmological issues and conceptual structure that underlie these surface practices and spirit beliefs.

2.1. Ethnography of the Tu Religious System

The folk religion of the Tu is characterized by internal diversity, in that the spirits and rituals differ from region to region. As can be seen in Table 1, the spirit world of the Tu is a tripartite combination of spirits from Tibetan Buddhism, Daoism, and local village religion. These three different religions co-exist harmoniously. The folk religious component is most closely related to the natural ecology and to the interactions among different groups of living beings. Animism is defined as "the belief that natural objects, animate and inanimate, have souls or spirit" (Bird-David 1999), and this belief system is central to the Tu people's understanding of the world. The spirit world of the folk religion includes zoomorphic spirits linked to trees, theriomorphic spirits linked to animals, and local anthropomorphic spirits, both male and female. The Tu spirit world reflects local geographical features and local lifestyle patterns.

Table 1. The composition of the Tu religious system.

Category	Contents
Folk Religion	Veneration of animals and plants (frogs, trees, and others).
	Worship of natural objects, such as mountains, water, fire, sky, etc.
	Territorial spirits: *longwang* (dragon kings), *niangiang* (queen mothers), *maoguishen* (evil cat spirits), and so on.
Daoism	*erlangshen* (a Daoist guardian), *guangong* (a Daoist guardian), etc.
Tibetan Buddhism	Shakyamuni Buddha, Manjushri Buddha, Maitreya Buddha, Medicine Buddha, Tsongkhapa, and so on.

Each local community, however, has its own unique features. Table 2 shows clearly that the spirit worlds of the two communities have different characteristics. The spirits in Huzhu County are more closely related to animals, such as the mule king and the goat

deity. On the one hand, these theriomorphic spirits were inherited from the earlier nomadic culture. However, they also reflect the influence of Tibetan Buddhism. In contrast, the spirits found in the pantheon of Minhe County, such as the *erlangye* and *wenchangye*, are associated with farming culture and with Daoism. The specific spirits of the two communities are different, but these spirits are all related to the local ecology and community and are tutelary spirits protecting each community. The major functions of spirits in both communities are to manage rainfall, nourish crops, protect the safety of the village, and cure diseases.

Table 2. Folk deities in Huzhu and Minhe County (Fan 1997).

	Huzhu County		**Minhe County**
Deities of the village	Lemu Sang (mule king), Luyi Jiale (a Daoist lord), *Nidang* (Buddhist guardians), Chailiang Busang (mountain king), Danmu Jiansang (a goat-headed god from Tibetan Buddhism), and so on.	Deities of the village	Longwang (dragon kings); lordly spirits from Daoism such as Wenchangye, Wulangye, Tuzhuye, Zuoshenye, Sizhuye, Silangye, Dawangye, and Heichiye; Suojia Dadi (a Daoist emperor); Meijiao Longwang (dragon kings with no feet); black tigers, Heima Zushi (black horse patriarch); Douwa Niangniang (a queen mother of the kitchen) and so on.
Deities of the family	Black tigers, Nidang (Buddhist guardians), Danjian (Buddhist guardians), and so on.	Deities of the family	Zushiye (patriarchal lord), Zaojun Niangniang (queen mother of the kitchen), Baima Tianjiang (white horse general), Jinsi Mianyang (a golden sheep), Niutou Hufa (a bull-headed deity from Tibetan Buddhism), and so on.
Other deities	various Bodhisattva.		

These tables capture the essential syncretism of the Tu folk religion. In the Tu community, the pantheon maintains the original spirits but also incorporates religious elements from Daoism and Tibetan Buddhism. Some scholars point out that the more spirits the ethnic groups invoke, the more likely that interreligious conflicts will be reduced and harmonious interreligious relationships will emerge (Zhang 2014). This is precisely what the folk religion of the Tu reflects—a pluralistic, syncretic spirit world.

2.2. Folk Religious Practice in the Tu Community

In the Tu community, folk religion is expressed in daily life and internalized as behavioral rules. The Tu people perceive every aspect of the natural environment as possessing a spiritual force, which is deemed vital to the world's operation. This spiritual force is characterized as potent and unpredictable, and it is believed to materialize in various forms. In the context of their folk religion, the Tu have formed a series of festivals, temple fairs and rituals that are separate from the Tibetan Buddhism which many also practice. These activities embody and reflect the folk wisdom and creativity that inform the daily lives and spiritual world of the Tu. In the following part, we explore the animist ontology of the Tu ethnic group and the ways in which it shapes their cultural practices, cosmology, and worldview.

2.2.1. Folk Festival: Entertaining Villagers and Thanking Spirits

Through our fieldwork, we found that the animist ontology of the Tu people is closely related to their shamanic practices. Especially the *bo* (博, folk religious specialist) and the *fala* (shaman) are seen as the mediators between the human and spirit worlds.

Taking the Minhe Tu community as an example, *nadun* (纳顿, a regional festival) is a series of annual harvest celebrations. Beginning on July 12th of the lunar calendar, *songjiazhuang* (宋家庄) hosts the first round of *nadun*. The other villages in the region then take turns holding the festival. The last round of *nadun* is held by *zhujiazhuang* on September

15th of the lunar calendar. With its duration of two months, *nadun* may qualify as the longest carnival in the world. Local people sing, dance, and perform dramas to celebrate an abundant harvest and to relax from the exhaustion and strain of farming.

Nadun consists of two separate events: *xiaohui* (小会, the preparation phase that precedes the festival) and *zhenghui* (正会, the actual performance of the festival). *Xiaohui* is a ritual for venerating the deities, while *zhenghui* consists of *huishouwu* (会手舞 Huishou dance), *mianjuwu* (面具舞, mask dance), and *tiaofala* (跳法拉, shaman's dance). It is worth mentioning that the most important deity venerated in the *mianjuwu* is Guan Yu (关羽, a Daoist deity). The mask of Guan Yu can only be worn by the *paitou* (牌头, religious leader), the person who is in charge of *nadun* for that particular year (the role rotates from year to year).

The donning of the mask is an important ritual act. The mask represents the local deity and transforms the human body into a spiritual body which conveys energy to the human wearing the mask. Those who perform the ritual of *tiaofala* enact the ritual dance and any other ritual activities that may be selected by the spirits. *Fala* involves a bodily transformation similar to that of *mianjuwu* to permit communication with deities. Since the largest number represented by a singular character is "nine", the Tu abide by a rule of "three times three make nine" in the veneration of spirits during *nadun*. For that reason, the repertoire of different rituals includes three kinds of motions, and each motion should be performed three times.

An important element in the festival is that of "rewarding the help of the spirits", particularly with regard to the agricultural cycle. The growing crops are vulnerable to the danger of excessive rain or of destructive hail. In order to protect the fields from natural disasters, villagers invoke the spirits to plead for favorable weather and an abundant harvest. Thus, *nadun* is an annually reoccurring festival of thanksgiving to the spirits for crop protection. Because different villages enact *nadun* sequentially in any given year, the festival promotes the interaction between different villages. *nadun* thus unites the entire Tu community and in addition connects the human population with the spirits. As such, the animist ontology and shamanic practices of the Tu may be regarded as a means of navigating their connection with the natural world.

2.2.2. Folk Ritual: Resolving Problems and Conflicts

In addition to *nadun*, other folk rituals of the Tu function to resolve conflicts in the community. The most important ritual is enacted to bring rain when the community is confronted with the danger of drought. As each village enshrines its own individual deity, the details of the rain-making ritual differ from place to place. Take *wenjiacun* in Minhe County as an example. If there is a severe spring drought, or if little rain falls after sowing, the villagers ask the *fala* (the folk religious shamanic specialist) to summon the spirits. At that time, in preparation for the ritual, the villagers begin collecting funds and purchasing the items (such as black bowls and other ritual paraphernalia) needed in the ceremony. Out of collective respect for the spirits, the villagers actively cooperate in the financing of such rituals. The rituals thus function not only to resolve intra-community conflicts, but also to maintain those informal structures of local governance that are distinct from the system of formal governmental authority.

During fieldwork, we came across many examples of spirits being embedded in the daily life of the Tu. One young man was surly, disrespectful to his parents, and addicted to gambling. His parents were helpless. When the villagers learned of this situation, they intervened and asked the image to invoke the authority of spirits to punish the young man for his misbehavior. The effect of this intervention was quite positive.

In addition, official governmental village cadres occasionally call on local folk religious specialists to intervene in matters of theft, quarrels over land, and other conflicts. In this way, village temples and folk religious associations are called upon to become involved in matters that are technically under governmental control. In this sense, folk religious specialists can be seen as intermediaries who function not only in local religious life,

but also in local politics. Respected by the villagers because of their special powers over the spirit world, they can intervene to relieve tensions and conflicts between party cadres and the local population. Such cases illustrate a local adaption of homogeneous national laws to the local realities of ethnic minority villages.

In a similar vein, Lv and Liu (2017) point out that in some ethnic regions of northwest China, informal local folk religious patterns can influence the formal political structure of a village. In this ethnic minority world, governance relies on three pillars: religious power, clan authority, and official village committees. As illustrated above, certain villagers play the dual role of a religious specialist and a local power broker. Local religious leaders thus invoke their spiritual authority not only to act as mediators between ordinary people and the spirits in religious activities. They also function as local elites who can connect ordinary people with local government officials in public affairs.

In brief, a religious specialist can acquire insight into the spiritual forces that govern the world through ritual communication, which can be utilized to aid both individuals and the community.

2.2.3. Informal Village Association: Maintaining Religious Order and Space

In various Tu communities of northwest China, some village informal associations are closely related to the practice of religion. *Qingmiaohui* (青苗会 Qingmiao festival), *nadunhui* (纳顿会 Nadun festival) and *manihui* (嘛呢会 Mani Festival) are religious groups involved with spirits, village temples, and local family clans. Most ritual action occurs within and around village temples, which are considered to be sacred sites by the local population. Every village venerates its own cluster of spirits, which may differ from the spirits venerated in other villages. The spirits are housed in village temples. Every temple may thus have a unique configuration of statues and images.

Every village likewise has an association in charge of the local temple. Their mission is to organize and officiate religious activities and to maintain community order in accordance with the will of the local spirits. For example, at the time of the Tomb Sweeping Festival, the crops are maturing. The *paitou* go to the village temple to hold a pre-harvest ritual to call on the local spirits to ensure the fertility of the crops. In the following weeks, the village holds a regular series of rituals. In addition, the Tu of Minhe County have a special ritual, the *manihui*, during the summer harvest season. To request a bountiful harvest from the spirits, the head of the *manihui* organizes the elderly (especially elderly women) to recite Buddhist sutras in the village temple for 15 days (neither the temple nor the *manihui* ritual is Buddhist, but the Tu rituals incorporate elements from Tibetan Buddhism).

The heads of the village associations mentioned above are mostly respected elders in the village. Not only do they function in regular religious rituals, but they are also the elites of the village with high authority to enforce laws and maintain order. In the past, when political concerns moved the state to place limits on religious rituals, folk religious leaders adapted flexibly to the restrictions. Village religious leaders simply redefined village temples as centers of cultural heritage, labeling them as centers of "community service for the elderly". Under this rubric of social welfare, folk religious sites began to receive—and continue to receive—financial support from the government.

Some arrangements that have emerged in ethnic areas achieve a compromise between national law and local realities. The heads of the village associations are elected by a rotation system. They can mobilize the community in the name of the village's tutelary spirits (Zhao and Zhong 2014). This informal organization in the Tu villages justifies its existence largely in terms of its role in securing protection from the spirits on matters of concern to the village, particularly those related to the agricultural cycle and to matters of internal harmony. However, though involved with rituals directed toward the spirit world, we can see that the folk religious system of the Tu villages also serves as a vehicle for maintaining the social unity of the village.

2.2.4. Agriculture and Ecology: Establishing Harmony with Nature

Scholars have suggested that animist ontology has implications for environmental ethics and conservation, and animist ontology "offers a unique and powerful philosophical basis for conservation" (Dove and Kammen 2015). In Huzhu County, a 21-member village organization referred to as the *qingmiaohui* enacts rituals during the fourth and fifth lunar months to protect the growing crops and to petition the spirits for a good harvest. Ritual activities led by the head of the *qingmiaohui* are on the whole focused on and synchronized with the local agricultural cycle. The religious specialists are expected to determine auspicious days in advance and to so advise the villagers. On an appointed day, all the male villagers gather in the village temple at dawn and carry out an inspection of the fields. After that, the head of the *qingmiaohu* informs the community of the rules and regulations to which local villagers must adhere to please the spirits and assure their cooperation. Mistreating livestock, cutting trees, and trampling on planted fields encumbers the growth of the crops. Those behaviors are therefore forbidden from the moment in which the *qingmiaohu* ritual is terminated. These ritual rules and regulations are believed to ensure both ecological protection and village harmony. In addition to his ritual role associated with the agricultural cycle, the head of the *qingmiaohu* also participates in the resolution of intra-community conflicts.

Animistic beliefs, which assume that all beings have spirits, are still prevalent among the Tu. There is a widespread belief that the spirits of human relate to the spirits of all other beings in the universe and that different beings can be transformed into each other. This concept creates among the Tu a connection of gratitude and reverence toward nature. They refrain from destroying the trees and grassland around temples. The *qingmiaohui* and other village associations also play a prominent role in protecting the natural environment for farming.

Furthermore, the Tu have rituals of fasting for round-hoofed animals such as donkeys and horses, etc. These practices play a positive ecological role in the dry and grassless regions common in northwest China. The practice of fasting donkeys and horses exerts a protective influence on these animals, as they are not amenable to large-scale farming in Tu area. This reduction in the herbivore population could lead to more effective preservation of scarce grassland and wild vegetation. From this perspective, we can see that the folk religion of the Tu has potentially positive environmental consequences.

In this light, we see that there is a harmonious linkage between the religious practices of the Tu and their local ecosystem. The ecological restraint promoted by the local belief system works to protect and conserve natural resources and promote the prosperous development of the local environment. This positive ecological function occurs when the local folk religion guides the environmental behavior of local people, alleviating the current deterioration of the natural environment, and promoting a harmonious relationship between humans and nature.

2.3. Cosmological Conception of the Tu Ethnic Group

The spirit beliefs and rituals of local folk religion are closely linked to the historical development of the Tu ethnic group. Throughout the centuries, the Tu minority has been heavily influenced in its historical development by the local Han majority and by the locally prominent Tibetan ethnic group. The cultures of Han, Tibet, and Tu have co-existed peacefully over the centuries. The ordinary Tu comfortably and simultaneously oscillate between three different religious systems. These three systems generate tripartite cosmological understandings and thought patterns with three components.

For this reason, in the communal life of the Tu, the number three enjoys great symbolic power in many contexts. Firstly, it represents the harmonious coexistence of the three ethnic groups consisting of Han, Tibet, and Tu, and the three corresponding religious traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, Daoism, and the Tu folk religion. Secondly, the number three also symbolizes heaven, earth, and human beings. Thirdly, the number three stands for health, wealth, and longevity. The special respect shown to the number three thus reflects

the cultural traditions, living habits and social thoughts of the Tu. It exerts an identifiable impact on the material, spiritual and institutional culture of the region. This three-part cosmology of heaven, earth and human society affects how the Tu perceive the world. In their concept, the world is shared by spirits, humans, and other natural beings, both living and inanimate.

As is true of Daoism and Buddhism, the spirit world of the Tu is largely anthropomorphic in character. The spirits are conceived of as being quasi-human both in physical form and in their emotions. The *niangniang* (queen mothers) housed in the village temple are jealous of beautiful girls; like many humans, the *niangniang* do not like competition. Girls cannot be prettier than *niangniang*, and a woman may not remarry even if her husband dies. More often than not, villagers pray to the *longwang* (dragon kings) to manage rain in times of drought or flooding. Sometimes, the *longwang* cannot fulfill his duty with respect to the rain. At this time, the villagers place the *longwang* on the Shen Jiao (神轿, a wooden litter for housing spirits) and transfer the *longwang* to the Buddhist Shakyamuni Temple. The sedan chair is placed on the ground and the image of the *longwang* is made to kneel penitentially in front of the statue of the Buddha. The power of the Buddha is in effect being used to punish the local spirits who have not fulfilled their duties. In this religious tradition, humans are viewed as having enough power over the spirits to punish them for failing to perform their traditional climatological duties.

Inanimate things are also seen as having spiritual power. The *tangka* (a Buddhist painting) is originally a kind of traditional folk handicraft. However, when the *tangka* is used to represent the entire monastery, it is equivalent to Buddha and possesses spiritual power.

The Tu recognize that their own activities can have an unintended negative impact over the earth on which they live. The population may thus react with surprising equanimity to an earthquake or some other natural disaster. It is believed that the natural disasters may be a result of humans harming the body of the earth. In this sense, folk religion can play a role in reassuring people and in maintaining social order during catastrophic natural events such as earthquakes and floods.

Furthermore, humans who inhabit the material world and spirits who inhabit the invisible sacred world are viewed as being in a relationship of mutual symbiosis. This can be seen in the *mantang* (曼唐), a kind of medical wall chart that reflects the implicit theory underlying much of traditional Tibetan medicine (the *mantang* typically has the form of a tangka painting). It depicts the ailments that afflict the human body as deriving from parallel spiritual forces, from the *avidya* of *raga*, *dvesha,* and *moha*. In addition, the drawing of a dead body is viewed as a symbol of the moral character of the dead person during life. For example, the soul of an evildoer will be sent to *pretagati.* Furthermore, the Tu people have a variety of customs related to the number three that hold symbolic significance in their daily lives. Examples include consuming three portions during meals, reciting three sacred scriptures during funerary rites, and so on. The number three is regarded as a mystical and propitious symbol. In the Tu language, *Gurangewu* refers to the act of proposing three toasts of wine to welcome guests. This is also related to the powerful magical symbolism surrounding the number three. This belief is rooted in the Tu people's perception of the interdependent relationship between the three entities of heaven, earth, and human beings. The trinity is considered to comprise a cohesive community in their daily lives.

Overall, the animist ontology of the Tu people and their shamanic practices are integral to their folk identity and play an important role in their relationship with the natural world.

3. Folk Religion and Social Order of the Tu

As with all religions, the folk religion of the Tu can be analyzed as a system with three components generally found in all religions: (1) an inventory of invisible spirits, (2) rituals to interact with the spirits, and (3) religious "specialists" who are recognized as having expertise in interacting with the spirits. In addition, as Radcliffe-Brown (1968) proposes, the study of a religious system should also deal with the social functions of the system, in

particular with the role of religion in the formation and maintenance of social order. The components of a religious system (spirits, rituals, specialists) are logically and analytically distinct from the functions that the system performs. In our treatment of the Tu folk religion, we deal with the beliefs and rituals of the system. However, our interest is also in the social and communal functions which the religious system fulfills, particularly with respect to the maintenance of social order.

3.1. Folk Religion and Social Integration

With respect to the basic components of a religious system, Durkheim (2008) argued for the existence of two basic categories: beliefs and rituals. Belief concerns concepts and cognitive representation, while rituals involve behavior. Turner (1967) defines ritual as "prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings and powers". In the Tu community, the belief in spirits defines and inhibits deviant behavior by local people. The beliefs surrounding spirits not only recognize the authority of spirits, but also form an "ideology" to maintain the unity of the villagers. Some villagers believe that taboos against swearing and cursing in the presence of supernatural force create an informal control mechanism. People believe that spiritual forces would punish villagers who promote disunity or break promises. In this sense, the supervision of behavior by the spirits subjects everyone's behavior to the conventions of the village.

An example can be provided. After its introduction into Minhe County, the Daoist deity *erlangshen* has become a local folk deity worshiped by multi-ethnic villages. Subsequently, the *erlangshen* spirit became a collective symbol with supernatural power that functioned to strengthen the local identity of the community members. The most important ritual entails the participation of *erlangshen* in the earlier-discussed *nadun*. At the beginning of the *nadun* ritual, *erlangshen* is brought out of the temple and carried by a group of men to the place where the ritual is to be performed. The ritual is performed by villagers to coincide with the local crop harvest. The fact that this harvest ritual is locally widespread is the result of long-term interaction among the villages. The coordination of the time and the place of the ritual in different villages serves to integrate the whole community. This integration is achieved by common beliefs and gives birth to a sense of inter-community integration. As a collective representation of the village, the local spirits create cohesion within the village. That is, the belief in *erlangshen* creates unity among different ethnic groups and regions (Wen 2007). In this respect, folk religion has shaped the integration of the Tu communities in Sanchuan for nearly a century.

Another example can be provided. The *liuyuehui* (六月会, June festival) in Tongren, a Tu community, promotes integration in the name of the spirits. The completion of a *liuyuehui* ceremony requires the joint efforts of the whole ethnic group. There is usually a leader, *fala* (法拉, a folk religious shaman), who coordinates and controls the ritual process. The *fala* achieves local respect; he is symbolically viewed as representing the will of the spirits. During the ceremony, people tacitly obey the requests of *fala*, fearing to disobey. We learned the following in an interview: "At least one family member must participate in *liuyuehui*. The village now stipulates that all men over the age of 16 must perform *shenwu* (神舞, a sorcery dance). If someone refuses to do so, they will be punished by fines of other measures" (field notes in 2017).

Moreover, the *fala* usually punishes local village troublemakers (such as local toughs and wrongdoers who gamble or promote sexual promiscuity). This occurs on the last day of *liuyuehui*, which corrects community values and strengthens social restraints. "During *liuyuehui*, the *fala* will single out people with bad behaviors in the village, then point out mistakes and give admonitions. In general, those criticized will accept the *fala's* demands, because the *fala* is believed without doubt to represent the power and will of the spirits" (field notes in 2016).

In this regard, folk religion serves the function of community building. The folk religion does not invent or impose new ethical rules, but reinforces the existing ones (Ho

2005). Traditional virtues are passed on by believers, enter into their minds, and express themselves in the form of behavior norms.

Moreover, folk beliefs provide spiritual legitimization to ethical norms, thus rendering them more durable and powerful. For example, when one interviewee was asked about the effect of religious belief on individuals, the answer was as follows: "There is a sense of constraint. Faith creates fear in my heart, which constrains my behavior. In the age when our country did not have external guides, we were born with inner guides. The good spirit on the right side of our body and the evil spirit on the left side of our body will record the things we have done. For example, although no one is around to see us when we commit an act of villainy, there are spirits, that is, guardians, who create reverence in the heart" (field notes in 2019).

The folk religion of the Tu is rich in rituals and manifests itself in the daily life of local people. The practice of rituals is a core component of the religious system, and the social integration which beliefs achieve is mainly expressed through rituals. The internal beliefs of the people are externalized into highly visible behaviors, which in turn legitimize social norms. The functions of social control and social integration are principally achieved in the following two ways. Firstly, the behavior of those who violate social norms is regulated and controlled, thus maintaining social order and stability. Secondly, rituals function to bring together social groups who subsequently maintain social order or even create new forms of social order. Ceremonies themselves are shaped by cultural norms, which in turn shape and produce social order. Therefore, annual collective religious activities such as the *nadun* and *liuyuehui* in the Tu community promote social integration and ensure orderly life among the villagers.

Based on the discussion above, we have documented that folk religion encourages conformity to established social codes, thereby contributing to good social governance and benefitting the population at large. Folk religion contributes to the fulfillment of social needs, the creation of public associations, and the mobilization of cultural resources. Those elements create a religious system whose spirit beliefs and spirit-directed rituals have an impact on the behaviors of the social system. This system pursues multiple functions: the integration of society, the resolution of social conflict, the construction of governance networks, and the development of ethnic identity (see Figure 1 below).

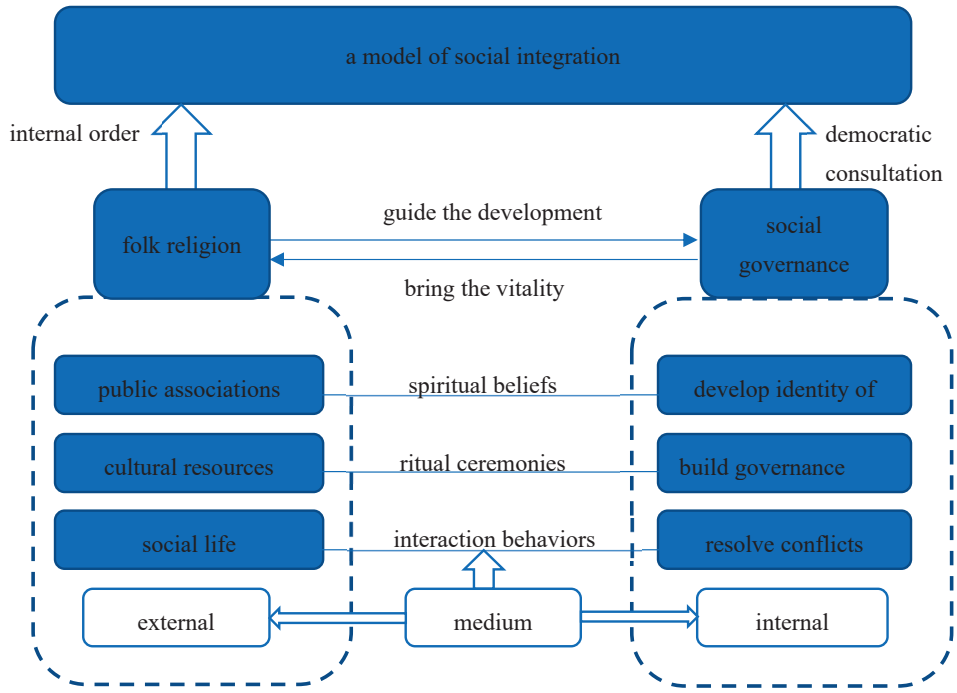

Figure 1. A model of social integration in an ethnic minority.

3.2. Folk Religion and Ethnic Identity

The issue of the relationship between folk religion and ethnic identity warrants discussion. Ethnic identity is related to intangible factors such as religion, language, customs and others. Throughout human history, language, religion, and social rules have been the building blocks underlying social organization. Religious and linguistic bonds not only function as factors that connect members within an ethnic group here and now, but have also reflected a common cultural origin that transcends time and space.

According to Claire Mitchell, religious identity often plays a significant role in shaping an individual's ethnic identity, and religious beliefs, symbols, and practices can help to establish a shared sense of history, culture, and community among members of a particular ethnic group. (Mitchell 2006). For the Tu people, the traditional embroidery *Taiyanghua* (太阳花, sunflower) is regarded as the totem and symbol of their ethnic group, symbolizing the symbiosis of their folk beliefs. The Tu people adorn their houses and clothing with *Taiyanghua*, which serve as a distinctive marker of their ethnic identity. Individuals who wear clothes embroidered with sunflowers are immediately recognizable as the Tu.

In addition, we interviewed a master in carved wooden mandala. When we asked him whether we could learn to carve mandala, the master told us that "much of the culture in Tongren comes from Tibetan Buddhism. If you do not understand Buddhism, it is difficult to become an accomplished artist in woodcarving. You may become a skilled carpenter. But in order to deeply understand the meaning of artwork, a woodcarver must first be a faithful believer in Buddhism. The skills involved in painting, clay sculpture and woodcarving actually create a linkage between the individual and the Buddha. Carving wooden mandala is a process of spiritual practice that purifies the soul. Making a mandala is not done with the brain, but more with the heart" (field notes in 2018).

It is clear that this artist has a deep identification with his own religious beliefs. The distinction between "us" and "others" has strengthened his identity within his ethnic group. Furthermore, the making of religious artefacts in this spirit endows the objects with spiritual meaning and forges a connection with other members of his group. It can be clearly seen that these symbols and practices often serve as markers of ethnic identity, helping to distinguish one ethnic group from another (Mitchell 2006).

When we asked why the Tu are reluctant to marry people from other ethnic groups, we learned that one important reason, at least with respect to Islam, is related to religious belief. One of our local interviewees claimed that "under normal circumstances, I will not interfere in the choice of marriage partners of my children, and I do not generally require my children to find a marriage partner in our own ethnic group. Tibetans also marry the Tu and Bao'an (保安族, an ethnic group). This is still very common in our region. However, I generally do not let my children marry Muslim Hui because they insist that everyone must believe in Islam after marriage. We can't accept this" (field notes in 2018).

From what has been discussed above, we find that that religious and ethnic identity are deeply intertwined, with religion often serving as a key element of ethnic identity. On the one hand, religious identity plays a positive role in strengthening ethnic cohesion. On the other hand, fundamentalist religious identity and militant ethnic identity may also lead to ethnic conflicts. A proper balance is required. Through shared religious beliefs and practices, individuals can establish a sense of community and belonging within their ethnic group and reinforce the boundaries that distinguish their group from others (Mitchell 2006).

3.3. Folk Religion and Economic Development

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the government has publicly committed itself to the goal of promoting overall economic prosperity throughout the Chinese society. Since then, China has persistently explored ways to overcome poverty in economically disadvantaged areas. In addition to the industrialization of agricultural productivity, the government has targeted the development of tourism. In this

regard, the promotion and display of intangible cultural resources for tourists has become an important vehicle for pursuing local prosperity.

The region of the Tu is poor in natural resources and their economy has consequently lagged behind. However, they enjoy access to heretofore untapped resources in the domain of culture and folk religion. Folk religion, as a local cultural system, is rich in ethnic characteristics and symbolic meanings. These cultural resources have become the seeds that have led to the development of cultural industries to promote economic development. Since 2006, the intangible cultural heritage movement has had a profound impact on local folk religion. That is, ethnic culture, heretofore somewhat hidden, has gradually been transformed into public culture displayed particularly to tourists (Li and Liang 2014). The practice and public display of folk religious traditions among the Tu has therefore now taken on an important economic function. Ethnic culture it is now publicly displayed in the context of tourism by the Chinese from other parts of China.

From the outset of this movement, the Tu embroidery, based largely on the Tu religious symbols, has played an important economic role. In the past, embroidery among the Tu was mainly used within the family (especially as a dowry for women) or displayed in temples to bring down blessings. Gradually, having been defined officially as part of intangible cultural heritage that warrants governmental support, *panxiu* (盘绣, the embroidery of the Tu) has turned into a marketable commodity and has acquired a new economic function.

The income of the Tu women has greatly increased. After *panxiu* was publicly declared to be a major local manifestation of Chinese intangible cultural heritage, Huzhu County began recruiting local women who were engaged in *panxiu.* An embroidery industry was established to respond to the call for poverty alleviation and market involvement. This move not only provided new legitimacy and dignity to traditional female *panxiu* skills, but also dynamized the economic power of the region. The Tu women achieved increased economic and social participation through *panxiu*, with a concomitant increase in their social status.

Support for the Tu cultural heritage was provided not only for embroidery, but also for other elements of ethnic culture. Up till then, the Tu's unique folk festival cycle had been largely ignored by the outside world. However, the growth of the tourism economy changed that. The central government declared that Qinghai should undertake ecological protection and sustainable development. In response, the local government implemented a series of tourism incentive policies. This led to the notion of "Greater Qinghai" and to the development of tourism. One aspect of this was the conversion of displays of local cultural heritage into sources of local income. For example, traditional religious festivals such as *biangbianghui* (梆梆会, folk religious festival) in Huzhu County and *liuyuehui* in Tongren County are now performed for tourists. Local people now view their local beliefs and folklore as potential sources of local economic development.

For instance, *nadun* is supposed to begin on the 12th day of the lunar month of July. Nevertheless, our research team observed that *nadun* was being performed before that day for media coverage. The village association even organized a special performance group to travel to Hong Kong to generate publicity. Similarly, in the case of *nadun* performed in *Qijia* village, *huishouwu* was performed not once, but four times to welcome the provincial and county leaders who arrived at different times. In principle, the purpose of the *nadun* festival is to thank and entertain the spirits rather than entertain people in the secular world. Nevertheless, motivated by the development agenda, local people flexibly use traditional cultural resources to promote the development of a modern economy. One justification for converting sacred rituals into folklore performance alludes to the principle that "spirits follow the needs of people". Defenders of this process argue that communication between people and the spirits should be equal, reciprocal, mutually respectful and filled with understanding. People should worship the spirits, but the spirits in turn should address people's actual needs. A symbiotic compromise emerges between sacredness and secularity.

3.4. Folk Religion and Harmony among Spirits, Nature, and Human Beings

Religious beliefs can also serve the function of psychological adjustment, providing people with psychic comfort and a sense of security. In other words, folk religion as practiced by ordinary people helps to fulfill their psychological needs (Ho 2005). As can be seen in the table below (Table 3), our questionnaire research documented the impact of local religion on the psychological adjustment of the Tu.

Table 3. Religious and psychological adjustments (N = 104).

Questions \ Options	Strong Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strong Disagree
When I feel depressed or stressed, I will visit temples and other religious places to seek psychological comfort	20.19%	18.27%	26.92%	17.31%	17.31%
Faith guides my life in the right direction, leads me to be a good person, and makes me feel a sense of belonging	27.88%	20.19%	24.04%	15.38%	12.5%
Fate is preordained, people can't change their lives through hard work. Only spirits can solve difficulties.	6.73%	4.81%	17.31%	31.73%	39.42%

We found that many people attribute events that they cannot control to external supernatural powers. Religious belief allows people to deal with anxiety in their daily lives and to gradually develop self-confidence and optimism. Religion helps people to deal with suffering and with adversities in life (Ma 2010). Religious beliefs within the Tu community serve different psychological needs for different people. Beliefs from different religious systems occupy different functional niches for the Tu. For example, at burial, the hope is for the dead to enter Paradise as quickly as possible. For that purpose, local people call on a Buddhist *Lama* (喇嘛, Tibetan Buddhist monk) to recite the sutras. However, in order to prevent the souls of the dead from misbehaving and from harming the living, Daoist priests are invited to chant sutras and choose the places and the days for burial. To maximize the likelihood of good fortune, the Tu even invite Buddhist and Daoist specialists to participate together in a mixed ritual. In addition, the folk religious specialists such as *bo* and *fala* serve as mediators between the human and spiritual world and are believed to have the power to communicate with spirits. They perform rituals and ceremonies to heal the sick, protect against evil spirits, and ensure good harvest.

In short, people use religion as a vehicle for the pursuit of psychological comfort. Folk religion among the Tu motivates people to make efforts to improve their lives. Only 8% of the Tu surveyed believe that "fate is preordained, people can't change their lives through hard work. Only spirits can solve difficulties". Moreover, the interviewees stated that we cannot believe in illusions; our beliefs have to be based in the real world: "Above all, we have to be realistic. If I don't work today, money will not fall from the sky. We are born with hands, eyes, and feet. Everyone should work hard, right? Self-reliance is essential. We can't count on God for everything. People can't just sit around and expect to eat. There is nothing for free in this world" (field notes in 2019). The general assumption derived from the Tu folk religion is that "wealth comes from being industrious" and that "a happy life has to be created with our own hands". In that sense, the religious beliefs of most of the Tu are still rooted in the real world rather than in fatalistic dependence on the spirit world.

4. Conclusions

This paper discussed the folk religion of the Tu as practiced in Minhe and Huzhu County. We examined several Tu spirit beliefs as well as several Tu rituals. We have seen that in terms of actual daily practice, the Tu folk religion is embedded in the community life of the Tu in several domains: folk festivals, folk rituals, village associations, and the local

farming system. The Tu folk religion, as practiced in the daily life of the community, does not create a rift between nature and society. Popular beliefs in coexistence and symbiosis lead the Tu to consider different species as participants in the same life and general culture. People and other life forms share the same world. Furthermore, The Tu folk religion provides the community with a general interpretive framework for seeing the world. The religious system functions to create a community that is socially integrated and has its own ethnic identity, pursues common economic development, and values external–internal harmony. In the conceptual world of the Tu, humans and nonhumans are in constant communication with each other and in essence belong to the same social order.

In addition, we are concerned that the Tu folk religion has been negatively affected by certain social challenges created by waves of secularization and rationalization. Folk religion is struggling to survive, to find its own living space and protect its own identity. It must also accommodate itself to the evolving policies of the Chinese government. We have seen that the worldview prevailing among the Tu has to some degree motivated the revival of folk religion. Folk religion reflects the internal cultural fabric of the Tu community. The Tu folk religious practice offers us a portrait of the daily lives of the Tu. By maintaining interaction and communication with spirits and nature, the Tu have successfully revived their folk religion within the context of state power—even securing for themselves governmental support for their cultural heritage in the context the tourist industry. However, they also carry out cultural production on their own, independently of government officials or tourists. The Tu cultural belief that spirits, nature and humans can be seen as a trinitarian unit is a central element that has permitted the Tu folk religion not only to survive but also to energetically revive.

We consider that the Tu constitute an interesting research population and that their folk religion is a valid focus of research. We used the analytic paradigm of animist ontology and the distinction between synchronic and diachronic patterns to understand the beliefs and practices of the Tu folk religion. In doing this, we have attempted as well to explore effective explanatory strategies for understanding the survival and revival of folk religion.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, H.X.; methodology, H.X. and M.H.; formal analysis, H.X.; investigation, H.X. and M.H.; resources, H.X. and M.H.; data curation, M.H.; writing—original draft preparation, H.X. and M.H.; writing—review and editing, H.X.; funding acquisition, H.X. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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The Changes of Chinese Oroqen Shaman Culture in the Context of Social Transformation

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Abstract: With the settlement under the mountains, the Chinese Oroqen has started comprehensive interaction with other ethnic groups, and gradually adapted to the wider society. During this process, the shaman culture, which has accompanied the Oroqen's daily life and social development for a long time, has changed accordingly. Through looking at the changes of shaman culture, the self-adjustment process of Oroqen people in the transition from traditional to modern society can be better understood. It is also an important entry point to understand the social and cultural transformation and community consciousness of Oroqen people, which helps to understand their cultural self-confidence and identity consciousness. Grounded in ethnographic observations, especially "the last shaman" Guan Kouni's life story, this paper traces the shaman culture and its social significance in the traditional society for Oroqen people. With the help of the research paradigm of "embedding–disembedding–re-embedding", the article compares the reshaping of the identity of Oroqen shamans under the combined effect of various socio-historical events since the settlement, smoothing out the changing process in the Oroqen shaman culture, and discussing the transformation of the social function of Oroqen shaman. This article offers a more comprehensive picture of the cultural changes of Oroqen shaman since the settlement under the mountains, in order to clarify the role and functions played by Oroqen shamans at contemporary society and provide a reference case for understanding the significant transformation of the original functions and status of the traditional elites of ethnic minorities in the theoretical sense. The study explores motivations for the deepening of cultural consciousness among ethnic groups in the context of modernity.

Keywords: Oroqen; shaman; sacred authority; cultural symbol; traditional elite

Citation: Ni, Zhuo, and Yue Guo. 2023. The Changes of Chinese Oroqen Shaman Culture in the Context of Social Transformation. *Religions* 14: 867. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14070867

Academic Editors: Thomas Michael, Feng Qu and Mark Berkson

Received: 14 April 2023
Revised: 24 May 2023
Accepted: 21 June 2023
Published: 3 July 2023

1. Introduction

The Oroqen previously hunted in the areas of Siberia and the Great Khingan Mountains of China. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Oroqen settled down in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and Heilongjiang Province in 1953 under the guidance of the CPC and the Chinese government, starting a leap forward development. In the same year, China carried out the first national population census and started the work of ethnic identification. Through identifying, the government collected more than 400 ethnic names at first, and then identified 38 ethnics including Oroqen. According to the data of China's first national population census in 1953, the population of the Oroqen totaled 2256 (State Ethnic Affairs Commission and National Bureau of Statistics of China 2008).

After the foundation of the People's Republic of China, the government broke down family and ethnic boundaries and reorganized people according to class and interests, bringing them firmly under the administrative organization (Taylor 1993). At the same time, the Oroqen people also constantly adjusted their understanding of their ethnic, civic, and social identity, gradually integrating from a relatively independent living ethnic group into the Chinese ethnic community and becoming one of the 56 ethnic groups in China.

Subsequently, the Oroqen began to interact with other ethnic groups to varying degrees in the social and cultural fields, constantly dealing with the relationship between the "self" and the "other" in terms of traditional customs, folk practices, ways of behavior and modern life, modern scientific concepts, and information society. With the deep interaction among ethnic groups, more and more modern cultural elements appear in Oroqen society, and the symbolic characteristics such as ethnic language and traditional culture are gradually fading in their daily life—and even within the ethnic group, which has caused many ethnic intellectuals to worry whether the ethnic culture can continue to be inherited (Wu 2006; Bai 2015; Liu and Guan 2018).

According to the data of China's seventh national population census, the population of Oroqen reached 9168 at the end of 2020. They mainly live in "One Town, Five Counties and Eight Villages" ("One Town" is Ulaga Town; "Five Townships" are Baiyinna Oroqen Ethnic Township, Shibazhan Oroqen Ethnic township, Xin'e Oroqen Ethnic township, Xinxing Oroqen Ethnic township, Xinsheng Oroqen Ethnic Township; "Eight Villages" are Baiyinna village, Shibazhan village, Xin'e village, Xinxing village, Xinsheng village, Shengli village, Hashitai village, Elunchunminzu village.) in Heilongjiang Province, Oroqen Autonomous Banner and the Oroqen people Township in Nanmu of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China. The intermarriage rate of the Oroqen reached 88.63% (The data are derived from the author's compilation of the 6th National Census data.) as early as the sixth national population census in 2010, becoming the highest among 56 ethnic groups of China. With the continuous transformation of the Oroqen society, the people are in the process of gradually transitioning from the traditional hunting life to the modern settlement life. Nowadays, some young Oroqen people who are more receptive to modernity and actively try to integrate into modern society are constantly adjusting their understanding of their ethnic identity. However *ethnic boundaries are maintained in each case by a limited set of cultural features. The persistence of the unit then depends on the persistence of these cultural differentiae (Barth 1969)*. When the influence of modernity is deepening, the root factor of Oroqen's cultural self-confidence and self-awareness is changing, and the relationship between culture and identity is becoming detached. What kind of spiritual world and community consciousness should be used to further interact with others, and how to deepen self-awareness and clarify self-identity, so that the "cultural gene" of Oroqen can be passed on, are crucial questions.

In this reflection, Chinese sociologist Fei Xiaotong once put forward the proposition of "save people and save culture" in a conversation with a Oroqen scholar at the end of 20th century. He proposed that preserving culture means preserving life, and preserving people is also the only way to have culture, because culture is created by people and is a tool to save life. So, everything should be people-oriented in order to obtain prosperity and development (Fei 2002a, 2002b). According to the data from the fourth to the seventh national census of China, the population of Oroqen is stable on the whole, and has a small increase, which shows that the protection of "people" has achieved certain results. In the process of protecting "people", especially in the process of interacting with other ethnic groups, the Oroqen face a series of development dilemmas, which appear to be challenges to their traditional livelihood patterns, production life, way of thinking, and behavioral norms. However, *Ethnicity is a cultural construct and its construction materials are cultural as well (Schlee 2008)*. What is challenged is precisely the cultural materials for constructing "what is Oroqen", which directly affects the adjustment of Oroqen's cultural self-confidence, identity consciousness, and the transformation of its root factors. In this regard, taking the shamanic culture as an entry point, which was once in the traditional elite class, as one of the focal points in the game between tradition and modernity, can help to explore the close connection between the significant changes in the original functions and status of the traditional elite class within the Oroqen people. It provides a new perspective for understanding the cultural changes and identity transformation of the ethnic group.

The study of cultural change has a long history in anthropology and ethnology. It has been interpreted by many scholars of different schools from a diachronic, synchronic, or

interactive perspective (Barnard 2000). With the expansion of the scope and depth of the research on cultural change, Pierre Bourdieu proposes that what researchers of our time need to do is not to discover the fracture and causality of cultural change, but to search for the reproduction and interaction agency of fields themselves among different social and cultural fields. It is not about cutting history, but about finding the points of communication between our worldview and behavior in the concrete events of society and human practice. In addition, the Chinese ethnographer He (2019), in his exploration of the epistemological turn in ethnic studies and the reconstruction of ethnology knowledge, suggests that contemporary ethnic studies should establish a relationalist cognitive model, for after all, everything exists in specific processes and interacting relations, objects are nothing but 'ties' in a web of relations, their nature can only be presented in relations, and changes in relations change the nature of things. On this basis, this paper understands ethnic cultural change as the process of continuous absorption of the "other" culture and adjustment of the "self" culture in the interaction of various ethnic groups and the process of social transformation. Since 2017, the authors have begun fieldwork among "One Town, Five Counties and Eight Villages" in Heilongjiang Province and Oroqen Autonomous Banner and Nanmu Oroqen Township in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, where Oroqen people mainly live. This paper focuses on the evolution of Oroqen society in the context of interaction between various ethnic groups in the modernization process, and discusses the transformation of shamans' function and identity in the inter-ethnic interaction and cultural interchange as the main line. It seeks to draw on Giddens' theories of embedding and disembedding, and uses the paradigm of 'embedding–disembedding–re-embedding'. Giddens' theories of embedding and disembedding provide insights into the tensions between cultural and social systems from a relationalist perspective, based on the extension of spatio-temporal processes. However, the concepts of "embedding", "disembedding", and "re-embedding" mentioned in this paper are not exactly the same as those of Giddens and others. Giddens' reference to disembedding is based on the study of the relationship between self and society, meaning that the actor breaks out of the temporal and spatial constraints and breaks free from the original field in order to re-enter a new one. The concepts of "embedding", "de-embedding", and "re-embedding" mentioned in this paper have another meaning in addition to the aforementioned one, i.e., from a structural-functionalist perspective, considering the various components of human society and culture as one. It is in this way that the relationship between the various parts of society and culture and the whole is restructured in such a way that their functions change, leading to the maintenance of a balanced and smooth functioning of society. This is conducive to understanding Oroqen society and its transformation under the influence of modernity, and can provide theoretical inspiration for exploring the transformation of the identity of the traditional elites of ethnic minorities in social transformation, and understanding the survival and development of the less populous ethnic groups and the awareness of cultural self-awareness in social and cultural transformation.

2. On the Mountains: The Shaman Embedded in the Social and Cultural Life of Oroqen People

Shamanism is a universal phenomenon (Eliade 1964) and a traditional religion of the Tungus (Lewis 2003). The shaman itself is self-evident as a religious functionary in Siberia (Harva-Holmberg 1938). In the culture of the Oroqen society of China, which is a Tungus-speaking group, the shaman has the meaning of wise, knowledgeable, and inquiring, and at the same time, the shaman is also a substitute for the great god dancer in the shaman culture, a "prophet" and "the incarnation of wisdom", and is regarded as a special envoy for communication between the gods and humans, able to convey the will of the gods to people and to convey the prayers and wishes of people to the gods, enjoying great respect. Although the atheists among the people usually regard shamanism as a synonym of feudal superstition, treating the shaman as a wizard or a liar in the Chinese context, the Chinese researchers who pay attention to the shaman tend to understand it from the perspective

of folk beliefs and religious culture. The authors acknowledge Thomas' understand of shamanism, that *I understand shamanism to refer to cultural representations of direct comunication between human beings and bodiless beings in a séance event for the benefit of the community*. (Michael 2017).

The Oroqen people have long believed in shamans, and according to the statistics at the early stage of settlement, there were more than 15 Oroqen shamans in the area of Greater Khingan Mountains alone. They presided over rituals, prayed for blessings, dispelled disasters, cured diseases, etc. Guan Uliyan (c. 1898–1978, female, a famous shaman of the Huma River valley in the Greater Khingan Mountains Region), Zhao Liben (c. 1927–1980, male, a famous shaman of the Huma River valley in the Greater Khingan Mountains Region) Guan Baibao (c. 1927–1983, male, a famous shaman in the Baiyinna area of the Greater Khingan Mountains Region), and Meng Jinfu (Meng Jinfu in Chinese, or Chuonasuan in Oroqen, c. 1927–2000, male, a famous shaman in the Shibazhan Village of Shibazhan Township in the Greater Khingan Mountains Region) are among the representatives. To this day, there are still many historical memories and legendary stories of shamans passed down among Oroqen folklore. For example, "the story of hunter and bear", "the story of shaman helping to find things", "the story of sending away gods collectively", etc., all show the importance of shaman culture in the culture of the Oroqen people.

Before the establishment of PRC, Lindgren, Shirokogoroff, Akiba Takashi from Japan, Izumi Seiichi, Iwai taikei, and other researchers from East and West came to the area where Oroqen people lived intensively, conducting field work and collecting relevant information about Oroqen people and Evingian shamans. There were many accounts about Oroqen shamans.

However, after the establishment of PRC, foreign researchers seldom came to conduct shaman research due to the influence of the domestic and foreign environment, and domestic shaman research also stepped into a low point. It was not until the late 20th century after China's reform and opening up that foreign researchers such as Whaley, and Noll and Shi (2009) re-entered China to conduct shamanic research and produced a series of results. At this time, domestic researchers also renewed their attention on shamanic culture; for example, Noll and Shi and others specifically described the life history of Oroqen shaman Meng Jinfu. Because Meng Jinfu was the last Oroqen shaman who passed away in the traditional sense of Oroqen and completed 3 years of shamanic rituals, so many domestic and foreign researchers including Noll and Shi called Meng Jinfu "the last shaman". In addition to Meng Jinfu, there was another Oroqen shaman who experienced the shamanic ritual but did not complete the 3-year training—Guan Kouni. Although it was not as "orthodox" as Meng Jinfu, but as the local government where Guan Kouni lives started to promote ethnic culture tourism in the early 21st century, because of Meng Jinfu's death and Guan Kouni's practice experience, Guan Kouni was called "the last shaman" and this was gradually accepted by the people.

At present, the Oroqen shaman who is relatively well known and influential is Guan Kouni, who passed away in October 2019 and is declared as "the last shaman" by both the officials and the people. From the case of Guan Kouni becoming a shaman, we can recognize the general pattern of Oroqen shaman becoming gods and the general recognition of shamans in Oroqen society at that time. The process of becoming a shaman, as dictated by Guan Kouni in the Oroqen language, translated and supplemented by her niece, and collated by the author, is as follows:

> One morning in the spring of about 1950, Guan Kouni set out from "Cuoluozi (It is also called "Xierenzhu" or "Xianrenzhu", which is the residence of Oroqen people before settling down from the mountains)" to grassy marshland to check on the birth of her mare. On the way, she fell to the ground due to a sudden pain in her chest and waist and difficulty in breathing. When she woke up, she gritted her teeth and returned home. When her stepmother Meng Agu, asked why it had taken her so long to return, she was in so much pain that she could not speak. During the next six months, even though her stepmother took good care

> of her, she still did not get well. During this period, her stepmother even asked a shaman named Guan Uliyan to do a shamanism dance but to no avail. Then she asked another shaman named Guan Baibao to treat her and also do a shamanism dance, Guan Kouni got better later but was still not cured. In the same year, Guan Kouni's family moved from the south bank of the Baiyinna River to Bragahan (now theXingjian Village, Shibazhan Township, Tahe County, Heilongjiang Province), but her condition did not improve and instead worsened.
>
> So, her parents asked the shaman Zhao Liben, and received the following answer: her condition would only improve if she became a shaman. However, Guan Kouni was already engaged arranged by her father at that time. Nonetheless, her grandfather did not agree to do so because Guan Kouni was about to marry and there was no need to receive god. It was difficult for Guan Kouni's parents to disobey the elderly, but considering their daughter's illness, they invited Guan Baibao to persuade Guan Kouni's grandfather. The grandfather proposed that Guan Baibao was a shaman, could he let the gods on Guan Kouni transfer to him, and then he could take the gods away. Then, Guan Baibao tried to do a shamanism dance, but the gods still attached to Guan Kouni after a day of dancing. The grandpa then asked what would happen if the gods do not go? Getting the answer that Guan Kouni might die. Then the grandpa finally agreed to let her receive the gods and become a shaman.
>
> After suffering from a strange illness that had not improved for a long time, Guan Kouni was considered to have the prerequisites to become a shaman. So, her family asked the shaman Zhao Liben to make arrangements. According to the traditional rules, a set of the sacred clothes, including the shaman god clothes, bronze mirror and waist bell, the hat with two pitchforks (The number of pitchforks on the Oroqen shaman's hat symbolizes the level of the shaman, and the more pitchforks, the higher ability, level and grade of the shaman), etc., was prepared by nine people from the same family. In the ritual for treating illness, Guan Kouni followed Zhao Liben's order to invite the gods and do a shamanism dance with the sacred clothes. She quickly entered the "spirit possession" state without being taught, chanting some words, which she said afterwards that she did not know what she was rapping about. After that, she recovered completely and started a three-year shamanic practice in late 1951.

It is recognized from Guan Kouni 's experience of becoming a god that the creation and healing of disease was the key to Guan Kouni's transformation from mortal to shaman, as Shirokogoroff (1935) and Eliade (1964) have specifically discussed the classic model of a shaman being initiated by disease. From her experience, we can also recognize the general recognition and acceptance of shaman among Oroqen before they settle down. However, as a shaman with a supreme status in the secular society, the godhood also led to the necessity of abandoning some general aspects of social life. At the time when Guan Kouni started to practice, a shaman was still considered sacred and inviolable by Oroqen society, with clear taboos and behavioral requirements, and was explicitly given the Charisma as Max Weber (1919) said. The sacred clothes and utensils should not be placed in a dirty position or touched by other women than his wife, and no women are allowed to walk behind the shrine, the shaman's clothes must be made by nine people from one family, and the "pitchfork" on the shaman's hat must match the shaman's own ability and status. The shaman has to offer the appropriate sacrifices when he dances with the gods, and he has to pray to the gods and make wishes with devotion and respect to avoid calamities, and has to worship "Bainacha ("Bainacha" is the transliteration of Oroqen language, meaning god of mountains)" before he goes hunting in the mountains.

All these are evidence of the status and importance of the shaman in the Oroqen society. It can be said that the shaman and shamanism are completely embedded in the social daily life of the Chinese Oroqen.

3. Under the Mountains: The Shaman Disembedding with the Society and Cultural Life of the Oroqen People

The long-term existence of shamanic culture is based on the needs of the daily social and cultural life of the Oroqen people. Such a "person" or "culture" is needed to satisfy their spiritual needs, to comfort their souls, and to provide physiological supplements and healing when necessary. An act occurs because it is worth doing or has meaning, so the "act" is a behavior that is given subjective meaning by the actor, and it must be subordinate to a certain purpose or embody a certain meaning. Believing with Max Weber that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, Geertz take culture to be those webs and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning (Geertz 1973). It is such a cultural dimension that gives meaning to the shaman to play its function in the historical process of the Oroqen for a long time.

After settling down from the mountains, many external factors, such as the introduction of modern science and technology and medical knowledge, the spread of materialistic concept, and the publicity and education to break the feudal superstition, have shaken the position of the shaman in the Oroqen community. As a result of the joint action of internal and external factors of Oroqen society, as well as the attitude of elite group of the Oroqen to the external society, the unprecedented activities of "sending away the God" were carried out in the Oroqen settlement. This is the landmark beginning of the substantial transformation of Oroqen people's understanding of shaman culture, and also the beginning of alienation of the Oroqen society from "shaman" in a general sense. Regarding the Oroqen's practice of "sending away the God", the author has collected the following two different arguments. The Oroqen people in the Greater Khingan Mountains region of China are the main focus of this explanation.

The first theory is the softer "sending away the gods", which has been confirmed by Oroqen folk scholars, the oldest members of the tribe and Guan Kouni herself. In June 1953, under the persuasion of the famous shaman in the Greater Khingan Mountains Region Guan Baibao, many shamans, such as Zhao Liben, Meng Jinfu, and Guan Kouni, held a solemn and unprecedented "farewell-to-the-altar" ceremony on the bank of Huma River. More than a dozen shamans danced for three days and nights, communicating with the gods, explaining the reason for sending the gods away, asking the gods to understand, sending them away and putting shamanic tools like the gods' clothes to a clean place in the mountains (like "Oren". The word "Oren" is the transliteration of Oroqen language, referring to the storage warehouse in the air built with the natural growing trees in the mountains and forests.) for preservation.

The second one is the "view of reformation of shamanism", which is with more violent approaches. This viewpoint originated from an investigation report made in the 1950s. According to the report, due to some cadres' misunderstanding of the party's ethnic policy, they blindly announced to the masses the policy that no one would be allowed to invite gods to treat diseases in the future, and if the patient's medical treatment was seriously affected by inviting the shaman, the patient would be fully responsible for any consequence arising therefrom. Some cadres also rallied support from the shaman activists and encouraged them to take the lead in carrying out reforms without approval from the higher authorities. The prestigious shaman Zhao Liben gradually lost faith in shamanism because he often went out to attend meetings and study scientific and cultural knowledge. He proposed that not only did he have to change the identity of the shaman himself resolutely, but he also wanted to let other shamans change theirs, which was consented and supported by the local cadres unconditionally. One night in 1953, Zhao Liben gathered all the shamans (7–8) in the village together and destroyed all his god clothes and tools one by one in front of all the shamans, which were made into some daily necessities, such as shoes, towels, and foot-covering cloths. Among these shamans who came with the good intention to do a shamanism dance collectively, some were stunned, some immediately stopped him from destroying the tools, and some persuaded or scolded him. After this incident, some

shamans followed suit and threw their sacred clothes, bells, and drums into the river while some shamans hid their tools for shamanism dances for later use. The report concludes: "In views of the reactions of the shamans, it appeared that some shamans did not reform voluntarily but by administrative means. However, there were some shamans who were willing to reform, and they were those who were really willing to make progress".

Regardless of the authenticity of the above statements, shaman's voluntary or involuntary "sending away the gods" accelerated the absence of shamans in the Oroqen society, and many social responsibilities originally performed by shamans were missing and gradually filled by other cultures. Fieldworker Wang Ken in China found that it was difficult to see shaman's clothes and hats in Oroqen village when he carried out field survey in 1956, It was difficult to see the shaman's clothes and hats in the Oroqen village, few people talk about shamans openly, and the former shamans were reluctant to talk about them. For those people who had praised shamans directly, even though they still believed shamanism in their hearts, they were afraid to say anything (Wang 2002). When Wang Ken's investigation team took photos of shaman clothes, they tried by every means to borrow one; the shaman who owned the sacred clothes dared not wear the clothes himself, so the investigation team members had to wear the clothes to complete the photo shooting.

At the beginning of the settlement, most Oroqen people believed in shamans. After "sending away the gods", the number of people who still worshiped shamans was decreasing. The shaman as a social fact was increasingly becoming a popular historical memory, and its sanctity was under attack within the community, as people begin to reflect ideologically on the sacredness of the shaman. Not only those who used to believe in shamans, but even shamans also doubted themselves. Before the settlement, shamans did help the people because of their command of natural knowledge and knowledge of herbs as well as their psycho-spiritual guidance. Hence, the existence of shamans has certain modern medical reasonableness or psychological utility. After all, *Religion, in this stage of belief, marks a new formative agent in the ascent of man (Whitehead 2011).* As a faith or belief, the shamanism dance performed by shamans may be the key to comforting the patient, but its medical effect is far from that of the modern medical treatment. In Baiyinna Oroqen Township, there is a record that, in 1955, a child of a shaman surnamed Ge fell ill and was diagnosed with pneumonia by a doctor. However, the shaman firmly believed that "there must be a god", and proposed a "match" with the doctor. As a result, the shaman did shamanism dances for a long time to no avail. In contrast, the child recovered three days later after being given an injection of antibiotics and taking sulfonamide by a doctor. Then, the shaman conceded defeat, and after that he would go to the doctor when he was sick (Guan and Zhang 2002). The shaman and doctor's "competition" seems to be a joke, but this typical case fully demonstrates the attitude of the Oroqen to modern science. In addition, after nurses of the Oroqen came back after finishing medical school, more and more Oroqen people have learned to use science and medical knowledge to solve problems, and have made it more clear that they cannot rely on the illusory gods but instead rely on their own ability to strive for a better life.

The Oroqen shamans had already "sent away the God". However, under the influence of many political movements, the negation of shamans in the whole society became extreme and reached its peak during the "Cultural Revolution". Shamanism as a crucial part of the Oroqen culture system also suffered a devastating blow, and shamans were criticized by the society and reduced to the bottom of the society. Although Guan Kouni only studied shamanism for one year and participated in "sending away the God" early, terminating her shamanic practice to join the development and construction of the Greater Khingan Mountains Region, she was still criticized as a "monsters and freaks (referring to class enemies)" and a "Soviet agent" during the "Cultural Revolution" because of this history.

Under the combined effect of many social factors, the Oroqen people have deeply reflected on their faith in shamans, which plays a great role in the acceptance of modern science and technology, especially modern medicine. However, this extreme negation completely eliminated the position and significance of shamans in the Oroqen society

and made shamans lose their original sacred glory. This practice negated the important role played by shamans in the development of the Oroqen society and culture and completely cut off the positive function of shamans in condensing Oroqen's ethnic consciousness, strengthening their ethnic identity and enhancing their cultural confidence.

As Max Weber mentioned, the prominent manifestation of modern society is the disenchantment of the world, and the Oroqen shaman is gradually completing the historical disenchantment of "the secularization from the holy to the mortal" and "the return from the spiritual to the physical, from the heaven to the earth". Oroqen society is moving to the stage of modern society at a wider and deeper level. *It is the knowledge or the conviction that if only we wished to understand them, we could do so at any time. It means that in principle, then, we are not ruled by mysterious, unpredictable forces, but that, on the contrary, we can in principle control everything by means of calculation. That in turn means the disenchantment of the world. Unlike the savage for whom such forces existed, we need no longer have recourse to magic in order to control the spirits or pray to them. Instead, technology and calculation achieve our ends. This is the primary meaning of the process of intellectualization (Weber 1919).* With the disenchantment since the settlement, the identity of Oroqen shaman has been deconstructed, and the shamans have been disassociated from the social culture and daily life of the Oroqen.

4. The "Rebirth": The Shaman Re-embedding with the Society and Cultural Life of the Oroqen People

With the reorganization of Chinese society and the emancipation of the mind, shamans like Guan Kouni resumed their normal life as ordinary villagers (see Figure 1 blow). The shaman, as a belief and priesthood, no longer functions as he or she once did, but the shamanic culture and shamanic identity are still inherited by the former shamans as a social, cultural, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1992). A capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field. The 'cultural boom' in China in the 1980s and 1990s brought shamanic culture back into the limelight, which led domestic researchers to start collecting and organizing information on shamanic culture, and published numerous fundamental research materials of great value, such as the co-authorship of Guan and Wang (1998, 2010). For example, the documentary film "The Last Mountain God" (1992) by Sun Zengtian, director of CCTV, recorded the real life and spiritual beliefs of Oroqen shaman Meng Jinfu and his family, depicted the mountain life and spiritual world of Oroqen people, and showed the ancient mountain hunting culture and the pure and beautiful spiritual world of the Oroqen people. The film was awarded the Television Award of Asia Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) in 1993 and the Special Award of the Ninth "Parnu" Film and Anthropology Film Festival in 1995.

The footsteps of foreign researchers also stepped into northeast China again and produced a series of records and research about Oroqen shamans. For example, in 1986, a Japanese television crew from NHK made a special trip to the Greater Khingan Mountains region of China to film the documentary "Secret Xing'anling", which was released by the Japan Broadcasting and Publishing Association in 1988. In the same year, Japanese scholar Hatanaka Sachiko, after visiting Oroqen and other ethnic groups in northern China, wrote an article to put forward the assertion of cultural composite of minority groups in northern China.

With the attention of researchers and public media, since the 1980s and 1990s, the frequency of shamanic cultural exhibition or recording interview activities with the participation of Meng Jinfu and Guan Kouni had increased year by year. By the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century, a series of events such as the Huma County Kaijiang Festival and the Shaman Mountain Ritual Exhibition were gradually restored or created, and shamanic rituals were designed and arranged as an integral part of them.

Figure 1. Shaman Guan Kouni and her assistant Meng Shuqing in daily life, 2018.

On 3 October 2000 (the sixth day of the ninth lunar month), the death of shaman Meng Jinfu (male) marked the passing of all Oroqen shamans who became shamans in the traditional sense and completed their practice. As a result, Guan Kouni became the only living Oroqen shaman in China, and the inheritance of shamanic culture became extremely important and has attracted much attention. Especially with the rise of "intangible cultural heritage" in China, the attention of ethnic culture has increased sharply. In addition, the Oroqen shaman culture drew the attention of all parties again because of its economic value, cultural value, and many other connotations; the inheritance of shamanic culture and heirs of shamans became the focus of social attention. Consequently, Guan Kouni, known as "the last shaman" (The "last shaman" was a verbal reference used by the local government in the early 21st century to promote ethnic cultural tourism, and has been widely accepted and used by the people since then), has also become the core of public opinion.

In the traditional sense, Oroqen shamans do not rely on the master–disciple relationship to pass on, but also have a connotation of "descent". According to the contemporary Chinese Oroqen researcher of Han (1991), only three kinds of Oroqen people can become shamans: the first type is the child whose fetal cell is not broken at birth and needs to be cut to take out the baby; the second type is the person who had not been cured of serious or strange diseases for a long time and has recovered after the shamanism dance by shaman; and the third type is the person who suddenly suffers from epilepsy, gnashing of teeth, and jumping around, and recovers finally. China's first Oroqen doctorate recipient Liu (2015) refers to the second and third of the above as the "sickness-induced gods" highlighted by Shirokogoroff (1935) and Eliade (1964), and points out that two other types of people can also become shamans: the first type is the person who can tell the old shaman's situation after being possessed by the spirit of the old shaman after his death; the second type is the person with high enlightenment, penetrating power, or strong hunch, or the person who can see what others cannot see, etc. These people can also become shamans under the training of the old shaman (Liu 2015). Especially, according to the Survey on the Social History of the Oroqen People" (The Revision Editorial Committee of the Social and Historical Survey Series of Chinese Ethnic Minorities 2009) and Oroqen folklores, if an

ordinary person wishes to become a shaman, he cannot become a shaman without being possessed by gods.

If we follow the above model to do some rational thinking, the selection of Oroqen shamans does not need human intervention. In the view of some Oroqen elders, human intervention may also be punished by the gods. However, *the powers of ordinary men are circumscribed by the everyday worlds in which they live, yet even in these rounds of jobs, family, and neighborhood they often seem driven by forces they can neither understand nor govern (Mills 2000)*. Around 2008, the county and town governments communicated with Guan Kouni many times about the inheritance of shamans for the sake of cultural inheritance and tourism development. As "the last shaman", Guan Kouni had a strong sense of responsibility and mission to inherit shamanic culture, trying to follow the traditional "séance" and practice mode to train heirs of shaman culture. However, due to the urgency of the shaman's cultural heritage, as well as the interference of power and public pressure from the government and society, and in order to gain the attention and importance of the wider society, "the last shaman", as an "ordinary person", finally accepted the selection of the shaman's successor, and took her second daughter as her successor to pass on shamanism as a culture to the next generation in the form of teaching, in which she followed the traditional ritual of the goddess jumping as much as possible.

In the evening of the 55th anniversary celebration of Oroqen settlement in 2008, the shaman inheritance ceremony was held on the Huma River jointly deployed by the party committee and government of the county, and organized by the Civil and Religious Bureau of the county as well as party committee and government of Baiyinna township. During the preparation and progress of the ceremony, all parties wanted to collect more information and take more "interests", which led to the supposedly "pure" inheritance ceremony having some elements of secularization and utilitarian. There were also what were known as ominous omens or incidents in the community (for example, too much human intervention during the ritual, the bad behavior of some individual ritual preparers, Guan Kouni falling down due to exhaustion while doing shamanism dancing, the gods expressing their disapproval of the inheritance of shaman through Guan Kouni, etc.). Nevertheless, the ceremony was finally completed, and Meng Juhua, the second daughter of Guan Kouni, became the recognized successor of the shaman and began three years of practice. However, at the end of the following year, Meng Juhua died in a car accident, which was called "God's will" by some villagers. This not only made Guan Kouni heartbroken, but also caused the shamanic culture to lose its heir. Director Gu Tao began filming the documentary "The Opaque God" in 2007, which was released in 2011 and directly documents the daily life of Guan Kouni and the shamanic ceremony of special significance.

Despite the occurrence of the above incidents and the spread of folk rumors, out of the consideration of many factors like inheritance of national culture, after complicated layers of approval reports and the coordination of multiple relationships, the niece of Guan Kouni—Guan Jinfang—became the officially recognized shaman cultural successor. She also held a ceremony to complete the inheritance of shamanism and began to practice. At about 4:30 p.m. on 3 October 2019 (the fifth day of the ninth lunar month), Guan Kuyuni died, which means that the traditional Oroqen shaman who had gone through the traditional shaman rituals have all gone (see Figure 2 below). Guan Jinfang became the only Oroqen shaman in China (The so-called "the only Oroqen shaman in China" in this paper refers to the Oroqen shaman who basically conforms to the norms and requirements of the Oroqen cultural system through the shaman ritual, and is basically recognized or tacitly approved by the authority and the Oroqen people. If we take into account the case of the shaman who inherits the shaman by the non-Oroqen shaman inheritance system, according to the field work of the author, there are other shamans with Oroqen ethnic components in China).

Figure 2. Wind Burial Ceremony of Shaman Guan Kouni, 2019.

Although the Oroqen shaman is no longer "pure" in terms of shamanic inheritance, the shaman is still a symbol of the Oroqen people, and its capital and value are coming to light. As mentioned, "The shamanic landscape comprised numerous instructed in atheism, but are now beset with economic disaster and new uncertainties. They, and often the shaman's natural sites, such as sacred mountains, springs, trees, or lakes, where ancestral and other spirits were said to dwell." (Humphrey 2020) However, nowadays, shamans' lives have become increasingly distant from nature. With the fame of the shaman, the county and township have created an exclusive "tourism card", and a large picture of the "Chinese Oroqen Shaman" can be seen near the county border; a number of tourists and researchers come for this purpose. When Guan Kouni was alive, she already enjoyed a high reputation and status in the Oroqen community by virtue of her identity as a shaman, and as the oldest person in Baiyinna village. She was able to unite the ethnic consciousness and had the rallying power to unite her people. Even though some have different attitudes towards the "purity" of the shaman identity of Guan Kouni and Guan Jinfang, all the Oroqen people still regard the shaman as an exclusive symbol of Oroqen and try their best to participate in every inter-ethnic communication and external publicity activities hosted by the shaman, such as the Kaijiang Festival and the Shaman Mountain Festival, and even many sons-in-law from other ethnic groups will come to participate and help (see Figure 3 below).

> "We all have special respect to the old shaman Guan Kouni. For instance, when we do small celebrations, and some activities like the Kaijiang Festival and the Shaman Mountain Festival, we all participate and come to help. We all participate in the activities of our own people. Now sometimes when Guan Kouni is not in good health, Guan Jinfang would arrange the activities. And we all go for the sake of our people. Apart from ourselves, in my family, the sons-in-law from other ethnic groups also come to help. They even have special clothing. All of these are very good." (GT, female, Oroqen, 53 years old, whose spouse is Han Chinese).

Figure 3. Shaman Guan Kouni at the time of Huma County Kaijiang Performance, 2019.

In the minds of some Oroqen and sons-in-law from other ethnic groups, it is no longer important whether Guan Kouni has practiced for three years or not, and whether Guan Jinfang's shaman identity is "pure". What is important is that they are able to call on and unite all the human and material resources of the whole ethnic group or region with the shaman identity to manifest the Oroqen spirit of the present time (see Figure 4 below). Emile Durkheim (Durkheim and Swain 2008) analyzed the function of collective rituals for social integration, arguing that the commitment of actors in the process of rituals to procedurally established ritual activities would psychologically create a sense of mutual support for people, thus contributing to the integration of social relations. The worship activities in rituals are essentially worship of the community itself, and participation in common religious activities can strengthen people's sense of familiarity and identity with each other. It is not that people do not understand the scientific principles behind the ice cracking at the river festival, but people who return to the real-life world, through the perception of their own lives, continue the continuous national traditional culture, revisit the established national spirit, break the barrier of time in the same space, and find the roots of Oroqen culture.

Figure 4. Shaman Guan Jinfang at the Huma County Kaijiang Performance, 2019.

It is difficult to combine an atheistic education and a shamanic calling . . . some people cannot bear it. A person may lose their mind or commit suicide (Korotkova 1998). We (the writers) heard the same during field work. It is not that people do not know the scientific principle behind the ice cracking when the river is opened for the activities, but—as does recur in all shamanistic societies, the idea of "play" or "game" (Hamayon 1992)—they were simply enjoying their life in the Oroqen social area and culture area. People who realized the real-life world by the perception of their own mind continue the continuous national traditional culture, revisit the existing national spirit, break the time barrier in the same space, and find the root of Oroqen's culture.

In essence, instead of revering the gods, what people really revere is the law of nature, or the ethnic spirit inherited by the Oroqen people till now. The hunting culture that they were once proud of has disappeared due to factors such as conversion, and if the shaman culture is lost again, there will be a greater impact on the Oroqen. The shaman who could do everything has passed away, but in daily life, the shaman as a common person has been reborn in the new era, the legendary "God" has been transformed into a myth in the mouth of everyone, and the shaman has been sublimated into a symbol of the Oroqen people It can be said that the shamanic culture is re-embedding into the social culture and daily life of Oroqen people in a new form, playing its positive function.

5. Reflections and Discussion

Taking the reinvention of the shaman identity and typical cases as clues, the temporal changes of the shaman culture and Oroqen society in the process of embedding, disembedding and re-embedding are presented. Whether it is the different perceptions of the same shaman held by the government and the Oroqen people at the time of disembedding, or the synergy between them around the shaman in the current re-embedding process, the attitudes and actions of the government and the people towards the shamanic culture always revolve around the original purpose of making the shamanic culture serve to meet the needs of the Oroqen people for a better life.

In the process of satisfying the need for a better life, the rhythm of Oroqen life changes and the cultural field of daily life changes, just as Giddens' discussion about "time-space transformation" and "detachment". In the process of social change from traditional to

modern, the understanding of time and space of Oroqen people has been transformed or separated compared with the traditional society. With the continuous operation of the mechanism of dislocation of Oroqen traditional society, the influence from modernity has increased. Influenced by modernity, the traditional culture of Oroqen people keeps evolving and changing, and nowadays it realizes the re-embedding with the contemporary Oroqen society.

Although the pattern of co-existence of religious beliefs and science and technology in today's world is a more common fact, science and technology as a substitute has led to the collapse of the shamanic belief system, and some researchers pointed out that the Oroqen shamanic culture living in the era of high modernity has "died". They believe that the culture of shamanism is no longer mastered, but displayed in museums, in research laboratories to witness the history of shamanic culture, which has changed into a silent "dead" form to confirm the real existence of the shaman. In fact, in the background of "Shamanism has a strong revival in the 21st century" (Qu 2020), the Oroqen shaman is still "alive", and Oroqen society in the process of modernization and transformation, which is reshaping the spiritual world. With the gradual disappearance of the invisible constraints from nature, subjective initiatives are greatly explored, and new connotation is continuously injected into modern times, so that the future direction of shamanic culture has many possibilities, and modernity gives Oroqen shamanism different meanings from the past.

When Oroqen traditional society under the influence of modernity has undergone transformation and change, facing anxiety and crisis of identity due to the destruction of its traditional self-identity rules, the reshaping and re-embedding of Oroqen shaman culture under the influence of modernity has enabled contemporary Oroqen people to gradually construct a new set of self-identity benchmarks and to reconstruct them through continuous reflective choices. The change of shamanic belief and the transformation of Oroqen people's understanding of shamans directly reveal the root change of their self-identity. In addition, the changed shamanic culture is gradually becoming an important entry point to deepen Oroqen's cultural consciousness.

A living culture does not, by nature, seek to remain static, but rather is ready to find possibilities for adaptation in response to the stimulus of external conditions. As ethnic cultures change, the root elements of a sense of identity often change as well. Cultural traits are often seen as key to a people's identity. The shamanic culture of the Oroqen people is the "living" existence that keeps adjusting itself in the contact with "others", or moderately adjusting, or striving, or selectively changing, and even gradually possesses the inner motivation that can inspire the Oroqen to start to dialogue and exchange with other people with firm cultural confidence. Today's shaman is not the core of power in the Oroqen tribe, nor does it have a very high political status, and has even been replaced by doctors and other professions or modern technology for its once unique medical and other functions. However, the times have given the Oroqen shaman new responsibility and mission, so that it has a key role to unite the consciousness of the community and strengthen the cultural consciousness of the Oroqen. In the process of interaction with other ethnic groups, the deep intra-ethnic cohesion brought by this national cultural symbol presented by the shaman itself is stimulating the strong identity of Oroqen ethnicity in the heart.

The cultural factors scattered in daily life seem to be small and trivial, but in fact they are a living and powerful cultural force (Fei 2004). In the background of globalization where the interaction between various ethnic groups is growing deeper, especially for the young generation of Oroqen people who have been educated by modern civilization and integrated into modern social and cultural life, taking shamanic culture as the starting point, using the reshaped shamanic culture as a symbol to maintain the identity consciousness of the Oroqen people, strengthening their understanding of national culture and strengthening their self-confidence and consciousness of their own culture has become a great manifestation of the contemporary significance of shamanic culture. It can be said that the Oroqen people use their own historical practice to give an ongoing answer to the question of how to integrate into the Chinese national community in the process of inter-

ethnic interaction while maintaining the "self", and also provides a case of the Oroqen people for other ethnic groups to deepen their understanding of "self".

Not only Oroqen, but also other less populated ethnic groups, are undergoing social transformation and structural adjustment compared with traditional societies in the context of globalization with increasing modernization process and deepening influence of modernity, enriching the modernity representation and receiving the consequences of modernity. The traditional elite with Charisma, in the process of continuously dispelling Disenchantment, has gradually become a cultural symbol from the long-regarded sacred authority. As a cultural symbol, the identity of these traditional elites has been given a new mission, with a different value and function from the past, and reveals more contemporary and modern qualities. The new traditional elite identity with cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital as the leader, so that all ethnic groups can enjoy the joy of national culture in their daily lives and realize the real meaning of national culture for themselves and their groups, will definitely become an important source of motivation for all ethnic groups today to deepen their cultural consciousness and become the key to construct their own national discourse and consolidate their collective consciousness, becoming the key to ensure that they do not lose their "self" and do not become the "other" when interacting with other ethnic groups in the wave of modernization and globalization.

6. Conclusions

Based on the presentation of cases such as the shaman Guan Kouni, this paper shows that the Oroqen shamanic culture under the influence of modernity is also changing in the process of transformation, by examining the changes of the Oroqen shaman and the Oroqen society, which are embedded, disembedded, and being re-embedded. In the process of cultural change of the Oroqen shaman, the functions played by the shaman are constantly being adjusted, from once being a sacred figure of authority to becoming a symbol of conformity for the whole nation. Its function in meeting the needs of the people such as medical treatment and divination is no longer or has been replaced, but it still has a positive function in uniting the Oroqen community consciousness, strengthening the community identity and enhancing cultural confidence in contemporary times. It is precisely for this reason that the shaman is constantly taking a new form of integration with the modern Oroqen society, which is different from that of the traditional society, and this form will become one of the important cultural boundaries that distinguish the Oroqen from other ethnic groups.

Author Contributions: Writing—original draft preparation, Z.N.; writing—review and editing, Y.G. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Shamanic Culture's Reconnection of Earth and Heaven (*Xu Ditiantong*) in the New Era in China: The Dialectical Relationship between Material Civilization and Cultural Intimacy

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Abstract: Shamanic culture, which adheres to the worldview of connecting earth and heaven, has been marginalized in the discourse of the modern material world and separated from mainstream society. However, with the increase in personal problems in civil society and the rise of regional cultural identity since the reform and opening up in China, shamanic practitioners have again become active. Adapting to the official ideology, shamanic culture has emerged in China as a new form of folk culture and cultural heritage. Using Michael Herzfeld's theory of "cultural intimacy" to a limited extent, this paper regards the new image of the shamanic tradition that has appeared in the new era as a manifestation of "cultural intimacy", which does not infringe the authority of official discourse, nor damage the interests of government departments, and is in line with the imagination of official discourse about culture. Within the shaman cultural community, the shamanic tradition continues to connect earth and heaven, helping to solve difficult personal problems, alleviating the pressure of the material world, and at the same time making the sacred expression of the members of the shaman cultural community possible. In this way, the shaman tradition, which has emerged in a new image since the new era, has maintained the ecological balance between government and folk practices and formed a more stable pattern of cooperation.

Keywords: shamanic culture; new era; cultural intimacy; reconnecting earth and heaven

Citation: Liu, Xiaoshuang. 2023. Shamanic Culture's Reconnection of Earth and Heaven (*Xu Ditiantong*) in the New Era in China: The Dialectical Relationship between Material Civilization and Cultural Intimacy. *Religions* 14: 500. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14040500

Academic Editors: Thomas Michael and Feng Qu

Received: 14 March 2023
Revised: 1 April 2023
Accepted: 3 April 2023
Published: 5 April 2023

1. Introduction

Shamanism is one of the important cultural characteristics of ethnic minorities in northern China and has been an important part of the collective identity of these groups from ancient times to the present, exemplified especially in the Tungus–Manchu, Mongolian, and Turkic languages. After the founding of the new China, the shamanic beliefs of ethnic minorities along China's border were initially regarded as "cultural dross" and were long prohibited. During the Cultural Revolution, shamanism almost disappeared. After the reform and opening up, with the liberalization of governmental policies, folk shamanic activities were gradually restored. To date, shamanic belief activities have been staged to varying degrees in the folk lives of Manchu, Mongolian, Xibo, Hezhen, Oroqen, Ewenki, Daur, Uygur, Kazak, Kirgiz, Korean, and other northern frontier ethnic groups. At the same time, in the new situation that has emerged in the new era[1], some changes have taken place in shaman activities. One of the most important changes is that shamanic activities are presented mostly in the form of folk customs and intangible cultural heritage recognized and supported by the government (Se 2015b).

Qu Feng believes that intangible cultural heritage is a worldwide theme recognized by mainstream society and marginal indigenous societies, coming not only from the interior of the frontier national culture but also from the outside that lies in the mainstream society's

imaginative construction of the frontier. Based on the recognition of this theme, presenting shamanic culture as a form of intangible cultural heritage can enable successful cooperation and connection between frontier national culture and mainstream society, which is in line with the Project Identity defined by the American sociologist Manuel Castells (Qu 2020). Using the theory of "cultural intimacy"[2] put forward by Michael Herzfeld, Naran pointed out that the shamanic tradition presented in the image of "cultural heritage" has created a new space of "cultural intimacy" that has neutralized the tension between shamanism characterized by connecting earth and heaven and official ideology in the way of "culture" and has become a social and cultural ecological tie between local practices and official ideology (Naran 2021, pp. 214–25). Based on differences in worldviews between shamanic culture and the material world and the problems each focuses on, this paper further explores the reasons behind the existence and popularity of shamanic culture as a manifestation of cultural intimacy in contemporary society.

2. Shamanic Culture in the Material World: Connecting Earth and Heaven—Blocking the Passage between Earth and Heaven

Shamanic culture is a worldwide religious culture that has deep roots in China. Ethnic minorities in northern China have long practiced shamanic rituals. As early as the medieval Chinese documentary book, *Sanchao beimeng huibian* (三朝北盟会编), compiled by Xu Mengxin of the Song Dynasty (1126–1207), there has been a record of the word "shaman", recorded in the original text as "shanman" (珊蛮), which means wise man and is the term used by Nuzhen, the ancestors of the Manchu people in China, to refer specifically to a "female shaman". Belief in shamanic culture has never been interrupted and is still active among northern ethnic minorities in China. Therefore, like North America, South America, Africa, Australia, and other places, China is also the center of the shamanistic circle in the world (Zhao 2011, pp. 1–2).

It is generally believed that a shamanic culture is a form of local knowledge, which appeared in the Stone Age and was produced in the national culture. In clans and tribes, shamans perform certain social functions. They often connect heaven and earth in trance, communicating with the gods and negotiating with the supernatural on behalf of their followers or believers. Thus, they are a medium between the sacred and the secular and meet the needs of the group in ways such as petitioning for Heaven's blessings, telling fortunes, and treating sicknesses. Based on these findings, scholars such as K.C. Chang have speculated that the earliest leader might have been a shaman (Chang 1983, pp. 337–38).

Clans and tribes form a cultural community around shamanism. Members of shamanic cultures believe that all things have spirits and gods that live in the sun, moon, stars, mountains, rivers, and earth. In addition to the visible material world, there is an invisible spiritual world that is omnipresent. The human world and the spiritual world permeate, influence, and connect each other; exchange information and energy with each other; influence the surrounding situation; and form a larger worldview including both the material world and the spiritual world. Human beings can influence the spiritual world. Similarly, the spiritual world can extend deeply into the human world. When human beings lose balance in their interactions with the supernatural due to negligence, disrespect, or other reasons, society and individuals experience failures, misfortunes, disasters, diseases, and other problems. At this time, the shaman communicates with the gods in trance and exerts influence over the invisible spiritual world. Thus, the shaman uses the knowledge of gods to explain, reveal, and cure diseases and disasters to meet real needs and to recreate harmony with the supernatural. The insiders of shamanic culture formed ancestor worship and nature worship under the belief system. They often harbor a mentality of awe and forgiveness, and "would not hurt others or animals"[3].

Compared with the larger worldviews of shamanic cultures, the worldviews of modern civilization are much narrower as they are limited to the material world that human beings can see and perceive. The material world is based on science and rationality, forming a self-sufficient and independent system, and there is no problem maintaining balance

among the different dimensions of the universe. Although shamans, in a trance state characterized by connecting earth and heaven, once solved problems caused by the destruction of balance, now the government, military, police, churches, hospitals, and other social institutions of modern civilization are entrusted with this function (Marx 2015, pp. 114–15). As a result, in modern society, being sick means seeing the doctor for physical issues, and there are schools, churches, and the police to handle your mistakes. Material society tries to solve everything in life in a "material" way, building effective mechanisms by which to control interconnectedness and balance within the system while losing the sense of awe[4].

Shamans claim to serve not only the material world but also the spiritual world. In the worldview of connecting earth and heaven, the normal operation of the world depends not only on social institutions of the material world but also on the spiritual world and the shamans who communicate with that world. In social institutions of the material world, the shaman appears to be out of place, disloyal, unpredictable, and uncontrollable. As a result, shamans and the larger worldview of connecting earth and heaven in shamanic culture became alien and a threat to material society. Therefore, they were gradually exiled from the social structure; labeled as feudal superstition and backward symbols; and forced into a scattered, marginal, secret, and unpopular state with lower status and strict limitations.

In historical facts and legends, there are metaphorical traces of the struggle between the social institutions of the material world and shamanic culture. One of the best-known is the story of the blocking of the passage between earth and heaven (Jue Ditiantong) in the Chinese classic *Guoyu-Chuyu II* (国语·楚语下):

> . . . At the time of the decline of Shaohao's regime, Jiuli ethnic group from the south brought moral chaos, the world becomes chaotic and gods intermingle with commoners. All turn themselves into shamans or shamanesses . . . The emperor Zhuanxu (颛顼) sends two of his ministers, Chong and Li, to block the passage that connects heaven and earth. Order is restored, and commoners and gods separate again. Gods belong to heaven and commoners to earth. All was put back into order as before, and the mutual interference between gods and commoners was terminated. This is called the blocking of the passage between heaven and earth. (Chen 2016, p. 344)

Among the different interpretations of this document, Chang's viewpoint is representative and has a far-reaching influence. He believes that before the emperor Zhuanxu implemented the plan of blocking the passage between heaven and earth, everyone was a shaman; every family sacrificed; and with the help of witchcraft, power animals, and various magic tools, everyone could connect heaven and earth and communicate with the gods in their way. However, after social development, to a certain extent, witchcraft began to be combined with politics. Chong and Li became full-time clergy, served the ruling class, and became tools and vassals of the imperial family culture. The means of connecting earth and heaven were monopolized by the ruling class, resulting in changes in human relations and the formation of a class society, also known as a civilized society. However, including the harmonious relationship between humankind and nature, many aspects of society have shown important continuity rather than change in the transition from prehistoric shamanism to civilized society. Therefore, "shamanistic civilization" is one of the main characteristics of ancient Chinese civilization. Shamanistic civilization also widely occurred in most ancient civilizations in the world, such as Egypt, the Indus River basin, Southeast Asia, Oceania, and Central and South America. Together, they constituted a worldwide, non-Western, and continuous civilization (Chang 2010, pp. 4–18).

In fact, not only has the relationship between people changed but the experiences and corresponding functions of shamans serving the ruling classes and shamans in clan organizations are also likely to have changed after the blocking of the passage between heaven and earth. According to (Campbell 1996, pp. 63–97), in the clan organizations of the Paleolithic age, religion was a personal mysterious experience that could be directly felt and was also the product of a personal psychological crisis in which people used fasting, hallucinogens, dancing, and other methods to obtain the illusion of divine power in the spiritual world

and serve themselves. While the shaman's words and deeds were subject to the constraints of the king's power, all myths, rituals, and social institutions were concerned mainly with suppressing individualism, rejecting the influence of any mysterious phenomena, and instead identifying with the public sphere in a class society. Obviously, in this context, the shaman's divine experience would also be greatly reduced since the overarching worldview of shamanic culture recognizes personal interests, intuition, and experience and claims that an individual's own spiritual experience is fundamental and dominant. The spiritual experience of a shaman is highly dangerous and unpredictable, and social institutions cannot shake it either, which threatens the power of social institutions.

Therefore, in the narration of legend and history, shamanic culture is often rectified and suppressed by kingship. For example, in the legend of Genghis Khan (成吉思汗) and Shaman Kokchu, when Genghis Khan, who represents social institutions, is not strong enough and needs the shaman's help, he is in great awe of the shaman. At the time, shamans had enormous power, and only shamans could declare candidates to be legitimate rulers. When Genghis Khan created an institution powerful enough to govern everything, the shaman, who was independent of the institution and able to contact the spiritual world, posed a threat because he undermined the credibility of the omnipotent public institution. Therefore, shaman Kokchu was mutilated by the social institution (Marx 2015, pp. 115–16).

The Manchu shaman's dance (Tiao shen) in Northeast China originated from ancient shamanic beliefs. Before the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912), the shaman's dance could be divided into the shaman's dance to the domestic god (the domestic sacrifice) and the shaman's dance to the wild god (the wild sacrifice), hence making a distinction between *jia saman* 家萨满 (meaning domestic shaman) and *ye saman* 野萨满 (meaning wild shaman). The former is also known as the clan shaman, while the latter is also known as the amba shaman (amba means "big" in Manchu). The difference between the two consists in the fact that domestic shamans were not possessed by gods. The domestic shamans just presided over the ancestral sacrifices of the clan with drumming, singing and dancing, and prayer, while the wild shamans presided over the sacrifices to natural gods, such as animal gods, and had the skill of possession by using drumming, singing, and dancing (Qu 2020). As the rulers of the post-Jin Dynasty (1616–1636), although Nurhaci and Huang Taiji believed in shamanism, they could not allow it to remain unrestrained but controlled, regulated, and utilized it to maintain and consolidate the family regime. After they established the Qing Dynasty, due to the excessive killing of animals, the distinct characteristics of the scattered primitive society, and the abilities of shamans to connect earth and heaven, wild sacrifices were not conducive to nationwide unity and were regarded as witchcraft. Therefore, Huang Taiji stated in the imperial decree, "When people sacrifice to gods, redeem vows, die, go to graves, they are never allowed to slaughter cattle, horses, mules, and donkeys any longer." He severely suppressed the shamanistic ritual of wild sacrifices and the practice of the shaman's dance to cure diseases: "Whoever does not obey this shall be executed."

In the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty, the document "*The Manchu Ceremony Determined by the Emperor for the Sacrifice to God and Heaven*" (钦定满族祭神祭天典礼), which reformed and standardized family sacrifices to a certain extent, was promulgated, demanding that the reformed family sacrifice be vigorously promoted again and that wild sacrifices be prohibited. In this document, family sacrifices were based on the sacrifices of the Aisin Gioro clan and referred to the traditional sacrifices of the Han people, which changed the simple, rough, and pungent characteristics of the original family sacrifices and increased the seriousness and etiquette of these beliefs. The family sacrifice activities at this time were limited to praising the merits of ancestors and encouraging future generations to be loyal to the Qing court, which made family sacrifices temple-like and courtyard-like and led to court shamans serving court institutions (Wang 2006, p. 109; Qu and Ren 2006, pp. 321–25).

"Blocking the passage between earth and heaven" was a relatively long process. Chen Wenmin believed that the period of "blocking the passage between earth and heaven" began in the era of Emperor Zhuanxu and ended in the Shang (1600 BC–1046 BC) and Zhou

(1046 BC–256 BC) dynasties. Before that period was the age of gods, and after it came the era of humans. The replacement of the Shang Dynasty by the Zhou Dynasty (周革殷命) marked the overall end of the ancient mythological era. Afterward, the Zhou Dynasty perished, and the seven kingdoms (403 BC–221 BC) competed for hegemony, marking the full development of the "era of humans". With the process of blocking the passage between earth and heaven, the people of the Zhou Dynasty could not understand the mythological life during and before the Shang Dynasty, so they replaced the specific "concept of god" of the Shang Dynasty with the general and vague "concept of people" (Chen 2007, pp. 23–26).

Through the investigation of two ritual systems of communicating with spirituality in the Shang and Zhou Dynasties, ecstasy, and divination, Qu Feng pointed out the successive relationship between the systems and the tendency toward the "historical transition of myths" in the successive relationship. He found that ecstasy was the legacy of the tradition of spiritual rituals characterized by shamanic ecstasy to connect earth and heaven in the Neolithic Age. However, in the middle and late Western Zhou Dynasty, shamanic ecstasy as a spiritual ritual gradually declined in social culture. Divination was a tradition inherited from the Neolithic Age, which was weak in the Neolithic Age and reached its peak in the late Shang Dynasty with the emergence of oracle bone inscriptions, showing a tendency to keep pace with and even surpass the spiritual ritual of ecstasy. Unlike ecstasy, which had a strong sense of mystery because of the connection between earth and heaven, divination was not a direct communication between wizards and gods. Instead, wizards in divination communicated through deceased ancestors as intermediaries to indirectly interact with the gods and obtain news about the fortunes of the future in advance. In this way, the ruling class represented by wizards achieved the goal of seeking advantages and avoiding disadvantages and tried to change the destiny determined by the gods through human efforts. Thus, divination reflected a kind of rationality. The development of the ritual of divination in the direction of documentation, knowledge, and rationalization led to the phenomenon of the "historical transition of myths" in China (Qu 2007).

After the reform of "blocking the passage between earth and heaven", a class society was formed in which people were deprived of equal god-connecting experiences and lost the possibility of becoming a shaman. The functions and god-connecting experiences of shamans as full-time clergy arranged by the state also gradually weakened. In the so-called age of humans or the age of the historical transition of myths, shamanic culture was expelled from mainstream and official ideology. During the more extreme totalitarian historical eras, shamanic culture was almost entirely in a state of collective silence. Due to differences in their worldviews, there are potential competitive and hostile relationships between the traditional shaman culture that identifies with individuality and spirituality, the ancient civilized society that identifies with the king's power, and the later modern civilized society that explicitly identifies only with "materiality". Often, social and cultural organizations can only converge and function smoothly when the collective believes in their worldviews. For social institutions in power, worldviews that are different from and especially opposed to theirs seem to pose a threat. As a result, with the prevalence of modern civilization, shamanic culture has also declined accordingly. However, the shamanic culture did not completely disappear. On the contrary, with the severity of personal problems, shamanic culture became active again in the space of cultural intimacy in the modern form of "intangible cultural heritage".

3. The Current Demand for Reconnecting Earth and Heaven in the New Era

Modern civilization is very good at solving complex social problems with the collective power of organizations and has made great achievements in this regard. However, the absence of social problems does not mean the disappearance of personal problems. In fact, since the beginning of the new era, with the prevalence of technology, bureaucracy, and materialism and driven by economic interests, problems related to nature, the inner world, and the individual are becoming increasingly serious. Anxiety, depression, and poor health have become common states of modern people, while very healthy and happy

people have become rare. Anxiety is particularly prevalent in China. Zhang Li argues that after 40 years of profound structural and cultural transformation and facing a bleak future, "anxiety has emerged as a potent signifier for the general affective condition shared by a great number of Chinese" (L. Zhang 2020, p. 5). However, in the modern civilization typically represented by China in the new era, people are ashamed to admit that they have these psychological problems. This is because in the modern atmosphere where it is rich in "material" and people have the conviction "humans must be able to conquer nature", people are taught that nightmares are imaginary, misfortune is a reflection of helplessness, psychological problems are due to oversensitivity, and internal contradictions are merely reflections of weakness. In short, personal problems arise because people are not strong enough to find solutions through "material" means. Thus, the situation develops in such a direction that personal problems, psychological problems, and related diseases caused by social problems are often treated by the material world as biological problems.

For example, in China, if an individual suffers from mental illness, it is regarded not only as a shame for the patient himself or herself but also as a shame for his or her whole family. Whenever someone in the family suffers from a psychological disease, the whole family will be excluded from other people's lists of people whom they can marry and will be criticized by others for the rest of their lives. Psychological problems such as stress are a key factor in most mental illnesses. However, the Chinese euphemistically refer to mental illnesses as "neurasthenia" with distinctive physical disease characteristics and treat them mainly with drugs and chemical therapy to disguise the unacceptable mental illnesses associated with psychological problems. When heart disease occurs, modern medicine treats it with drugs, surgery, and stents. However, ubiquitous tension, the breakdown of close social relationships, the scarcity of leisure, and a sedentary work environment are the root causes of heart disease (Kleinman 1988, pp. 19–22). In China, 250 million people suffer from hair loss. On average, 1 in 6 people lose their hair. A large number of people in the post-1990s generations have also started to lose their hair. Among the current recipients of hair transplants, young people aged 20–30 account for 57.4%[5]. Anxiety, tension, and mental stress are important reasons for hair loss among young people today. However, modern material society chooses to ignore these social reasons. Instead, hair transplant advertisements and related industries are becoming increasingly blatant. The material world deliberately downplays personal psychological problems and related diseases caused by blindly advocating economic, business, and material practices and tries to limit them to the narrow scope of medical technologies. In addition to leading to further economic development (probably not a benign development), nonsymptomatic treatment does not fundamentally solve these problems and may even exacerbate them.

When material society is unable and unwilling to solve personal problems and is not suitable for solving them, people tend to turn to shamanic culture in situations of psychological discomfort and misfortune, in the face of life and death, and at crossroads in life. Shamanic culture has helped to solve the remaining problems that the material society cannot and will not answer or fails to answer well. Robson, the most famous shaman in Buryat, China, said that people used to seek help mainly with health consultations, but now they seek help mainly with family disputes and psychological problems (Marx 2015, p. 109). The *Ominan* ritual is a famous shamanic cultural practice of the Daur people, and one of its functions is that shamans in the state of connecting earth and heaven invite the gods to pray for the clan. However, recently, with the increase in personal questions, the *Ominan* ritual has been interspersed with new content so that shamans can address participants' concerns such as misfortune, the future, unknown tribulations, and diseases, which mainly relieves the mental stress of the participants (Wu 2013, pp. 183–86). The new shamanic movements that emerged in the West in the 1960s and 1970s mostly used trances to address the psychological and individual problems pervading modern society rather than the major issues of the clan.

In modern society, shamans play the roles of doctors and psychologists. People with personal problems tell the shaman about their misfortune and inner stress. In the trance of

connecting earth and heaven, shamans apply the larger worldview to explain the causes of misfortune and find solutions. Despite the popularity of material society today, shamanic culture has not disappeared. The reason for this is that as long as people feel dissatisfied and lost and cannot find answers to their problems in the material society, they will move toward another worldview—the larger worldview that connects earth and heaven. Regardless of whether the shaman's explanation is correct, in the context of faith, it provides a self-justifying explanation and solution for modern people who are distressed by personal problems—the gods know and answer everything, which relieves people's tensions and psychological pressures to a certain extent. People need shamanic culture, just as they need dreams, music, and movies, seemingly out of some kind of human instinct and nature. In this way, they compensate for impotence in real life and explain matters, such as life and death, to which the material world cannot provide satisfactory answers. Often, when they or their loved ones are facing death, they suddenly begin to favor beliefs such as shamanic culture. As they think about and experience the ultimate problem of death, people are often transformed from atheists to theists to seek some kind of sustenance, often some kind of hope[6].

Chinese people also turn to Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and other religions for help with personal psychological problems. The reason why the mysterious shaman culture occupies a place in the treatment of personal problems is related to its long history in China. Shamanism existed in China as early as the Stone Age. Even after the Cultural Revolution, the shamanism of ethnic minorities in northern China was not interrupted. Therefore, shamanic culture is not strange to Chinese people, and it has a fixed number of believers in China. Based on this historical reason, patients with mental illness will also choose shamanic culture for treatment. A Mongolian girl said to me, "Some people go to shamans because they can't heal the disease in the hospital; some people who are devout to Shamanism go directly to a shaman instead of a doctor". Mental illness, which can only be experienced by feeling, seems to be more compatible with the divine and gods that can also only connect through inner feeling. In the treatment category, compared with physical diseases, shamans have always been better at treating virtual diseases, such as neurological or mental and psychological diseases (Se 2015b). In addition to relying on gods, shamans also use herbal remedies, fire, and complementary remedies. It is also true that people turn to shamans for psychotherapy because of the low price of medical treatment compared to the vast sums paid for the psychotherapy.

In the new era, as personal problems have become more serious, shamanic culture has gradually shown an upward trend in modern society. Villagers and town dwellers, ordinary people, and government officials all turn to shamans, hoping that the shamans, who are still in touch with the sacred world, can guide them, help them overcome their troubles, and bless them. However, in general, due to the conflict between the larger worldview of shamanism with the material world and the material world's indifference to and denial of personal problems, shamanic culture is still in a state of secrecy. When seeking help from a shaman, people tend to go secretly and are reluctant to admit afterward that they have done so, even if the shamanic ritual has helped them.

A proprietress surnamed Fu believes in shamanism. When she becomes sick, she likes to ask the shaman in the village to determine whether she is frightened by the gods. "This is a kind of spiritual sustenance." However, externally, believers such as the proprietress continue to repeat the same words: "We just believe in it ourselves and don't harm our country" (Y. Zhang 2020). Knowing that I study myths and shamanism and often travel for research, my mother sometimes warns me seriously, "Don't get too deep and believe in everything." Shamans are seldom willing to allow people other than clients who trust and need them to know of their existence. Because of my research needs, I tried several times to visit a witch who had a reputation for being good at curing skin diseases, but she refused. Once, I went to investigate another witch who was known to be good at treating mentally depressed children for being frightened or stricken. I felt that she was eager to confide in me as if she had been waiting for someone to listen to her story. However,

whenever we talked about key issues such as dreams and gods, we were held back by her family. Her family was not willing to allow more outsiders to know about this miraculous way of curing diseases, as this knowledge could cause unnecessary troubles. They only hoped that it could help those nearby. Therefore, under the stern scrutiny of her family, I left dejectedly.

Public institutions in the material world regard themselves as powerful and self-sufficient. They believe that they can solve anything and can keep structures and systems in balance; therefore, they refuse to acknowledge any power other than their own. As a result, shamans are driven to the fringes of the social structure, performing few important social functions. However, when people cannot find answers in the material world, they seek ways to obtain help outside social institutions, even if these ways are not recognized by official and mainstream culture. Given the failure of modern society to provide citizens with satisfactory solutions to their problems, an increasing number of people are obliged to seek help from shamans in marginal areas. Shamanic culture seems to be fighting against, threatening, and opposing the material world, but in fact, they are interdependent and complementary, as Marx concluded:

> As for shamanism, it can be said that the shaman complements the social structure and adds a certain stability to it. In fact, those who think society is unacceptable when faced with trouble, or such marginalized representatives, can only find a way out of their predicament through shamans. Therefore, the anti-social structure potential of shamans helps the social structure to reduce stress and maintain stability. (Marx 2015, p. 117)

Shamanic culture helps solve problems that the material world currently fails to solve. If used properly, shamanic culture can enable people to obtain what they need in terms of cultural diversity and richness, allow freedom of thought, relieve pressure in the material world, and keep systems and structures in the material world balanced and stable. Based on an extensive examination of the functioning of nation-states, Michael Herzfeld also found that over time, laws and official codes of conduct can become problematic, contradictory, outdated, and difficult to reinvent. As such, the nation-state relies heavily on what it claims is illegal, informal, and indecent in dealing with complex situations and problems. Cultural intimacy is such a space, accepting and tolerating a certain degree of unofficial cultural forms and ideologies in the official discourse to support the long-term stability of the regime. An example is the government's attitude toward gambling. Gambling can be financially futile and even devastating. However, because of its role as a form of social interaction, gambling can hardly be eliminated. Therefore, in practice, the government's attitude toward gambling is often more permissive than the position set out in the law (Herzfeld 2016, pp. 1–19; Liu 2020, pp. 240–48), which is similar to the complex relationship between "emotion" and "reason". "Reason" consists of the laws and regulations of the government, which has absolute rights and authority. In theory, no changes or challenges can be tolerated. However, in reality, "reason" and "feeling" have the possibility of being accommodating because many kinds of situations and corresponding emotions are involved in life. Without changing the general direction, "reason" and the law will sometimes be flexible and allow a way out for specific and special situations, even those that seem to violate the law. Although the law is "fixed" and "cold", those who interpret and apply it have emotions. They can empathize with the actual situation and use the law flexibly.

The space of cultural intimacy is in a harmonious state of flexible handling of "emotion" and "reason", which is the same as "walking the tightrope and playing the edge ball". Under the condition of not violating the basic system, management agencies in the space of cultural intimacy mostly choose to turn a blind eye to small violations. In the space of cultural intimacy, both officials and members of the public have a certain right of expression and flexible space for each other so that they will not be too tense to confront each other. Nations in the material world require a certain degree of flexibility to remain durable and stable. One form of flexibility is a lenient approach to nonexcessive or not-so-obvious vio-

lations to meet people's real needs. Therefore, we can speculate that allowing the existence and even growth of shamanic culture within the scope of control is an undisclosed strategy for China to achieve structural balance and stability within the system.

4. Shamanic Culture in the Space of Cultural Intimacy

The "blocking of the passage between earth and heaven" of modern civilization is incompatible with the cosmology of shamanic culture. However, in the new era, with the increase in personal problems, people currently demand the reconnection of earth and heaven. Therefore, modern material society allows a certain degree of local shamanism to exist. In China, officials relent to a certain extent when shamanic activities appear in the image of folk culture and cultural heritage.

In 2017, the Shamanic Folk Culture Research Society, to which Mr. Teng Ping made great contributions, was established in An Shan city. There are two main reasons for its success. First, Mr. Teng Ping claimed that the society that he requested government permission to establish involved "shamanic culture", not shamanism, and second, his society was an affiliate of the Anshan Culture Industry Association, which was headed by a former government official. Again, on 10 April 2019, the annual shamanic meeting held by the Shamanic Folk Culture Research Society in An Shan city issued such a statement[7].

Some shamanic cultures presented in the form of "folk customs" are included in the list of intangible cultural heritage. Places such as Jilin, Liaoning, Heilongjiang, and Inner Mongolia have all started to excavate shamanic culture presented in the form of folk customs, turning them into an intangible cultural heritage and using them to develop tourism. Projects related to shamanic sacrifices, such as the Daur "shaman obo sacrifice", Mongolian "Bo dance" and "Bo music" as well as Ewenki costumes and divine paraphernalia, have been included in the district-level intangible cultural heritage list of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. Many Manchu shamanic cultures, such as the Manchu Shi family ancestor worship custom and Manchu Guan family ancestor worship custom, have been included in the list of the intangible cultural heritage of Jilin Province. Family sacrifices were included in the list of the intangible cultural heritage of Heilongjiang Province, and a single drum was included in the list of the intangible cultural heritage of Liaoning Province (Se 2015a, pp. 326–28; Liu 2012, p. 399). Under this general trend, shamanic culture in the Asia-Pacific region, Europe, America, Latin America, and Africa has also been selected as a cultural heritage project in the forms of "oral traditions and performances", "performing arts", "social practices, rituals, festivals", "knowledge and practice of nature and the universe" and "traditional handicrafts".

Even if packaged as cultural heritage, not all content of shamanic culture can be selected. Meng Huiying notes that shamanic projects selected as cultural heritage are only certain aspects of shamanic cultures, and they are outward manifestations of customs that emphasize artistry and performance, such as dancing, singing, and ritual performance, while core rituals such as the trances and healing of shamans are still hidden and excluded from cultural heritage because of the strong features of the heaven–earth connection (Meng 2018, pp. 153–57).

Shamanic cultures that are included in intangible cultural heritage projects because of their artistry and performance have been further recognized and supported by the government. The government regards them as a valuable resource for improving cultural soft power and boosting the regional economy and is thus willing to develop and protect them. For example, related governmental departments have spent large sums of money building a Shamanic Culture Museum in Moqi, where the Daurs are located, and are striving to build it into a "hometown of shamanic culture" to boost the tourism economy (Wu 2013, pp. 188–89). The Guo Baoshan shaman of the Daur nationality also received a letter of appointment from the government and a certain amount of government subsidies. For this reason, the villagers call the Guo Baoshan shaman a "licensed Yadgen" ("Yadgen" is a word in the Daur language meaning "shaman") (Meng 2012, pp. 436–37). The shamanic culture and other ethnic tourism projects supported by the government and es-

tablished by the Oroqen people themselves are the most popular tourist projects in the Da and Xiao Xing'an Mountains and have become an important source of income for the local area. Shaman Guan Kouni of the Oroqen nationality has been ranked as the local inheritor of intangible cultural heritage because of the inheritance of shamanic songs and dances (Guan and Wang 2010, pp. 35–37). Healing rituals in a state of heaven–earth connection will also develop within the officially recognized shamanic culture.

For example, because the aspects of shamanic culture presented in the form of intangible cultural heritage have been recognized and supported by the government, there is an endless stream of people visiting shamans to cure diseases in the Daur Autonomous Banner of Morin Dawa of Inner Mongolia. Shaman dances in trances to heal diseases are also carried out under normal circumstances, which are no longer subject to official interference and restrictions (Meng 2012, pp. 436–37). In South Korea, where the situation of shamanic culture is similar to that in China, a shaman surnamed Jin became the inheritor of "national culture" and was officially recognized. However, for her, shamanic performance and shamanic healing "are not the same thing." On the one hand, Shaman Jin is busy with various official performances and publicity, and on the other hand, she is busy with the increasing number of shamanic healing rituals that are still performed underground. Being officially recognized as a shamanic performer has become a kind of "passport" to protect her shamanic healing activities (Meng 2018, pp. 166–67).

In daily life, the insiders of shamanic culture seem to view and participate in shamanic practices in terms of cultural heritage, but this is only a superficial phenomenon. Privately, they place more value on the sacred ability and corresponding functions of the shaman to connect earth and heaven. For them, participating in external shamanic cultural projects that emphasize artistry and performance is only a tool for expressing sacred beliefs. These external shamanic cultural projects are supported by the government in the name of cultural heritage, which is of great significance to the survival and expression of true shamanism. Even if only some external shamanic content is supported by the government, the core and mystical shamanic rituals make progress more easily with this support. Whether in the performance of cultural heritage or daily life, e.g., getting up in the morning to burn incense or spread milk to heaven and earth, these external ritual actions are still the sacred expression of the shaman cultural community, and they still carry a sense of awe when performing these external rituals. It seems that those external shamanic projects approved by the government limited shamanic culture but expanded the belief expression of the shaman cultural community whose overall belief practice far exceeded the scope specified by the government.

Therefore, regarding the folk culture of their nation defined by others or presented as an expedient measure, some insiders of shamanic culture will choose to participate. However, they know that what others see in the performance of folk culture is different from what they perceive and experience. Some insiders of shamanic culture have directly rejected the title "folk culture". A participant from the Pacific region declared:

> The term "folk customs" is unacceptable to many of our native cultures. Our cultures are not "folk customs" but sacred norm that integrates with our traditional way of life and establishes the logical, moral, and cultural values of our traditional society, which are our cultural identity. (Hoppal 2006, p. 24)

In the field, a Mongolian young man told me about shamanism in his hometown. As he talked, his eyes shone, and he was unconsciously immersed in the sacred atmosphere. He said, "Our feelings about shamanism are different from yours. It is true for us"[8]. At the beginning of August 2020, I participated in the *Ominan* ritual of the Daur people. During the ritual, when the shamans connected with the gods and announced the oracle (Figure 1), the participants in the shaman cultural community were often awed by the divine; their bodies and minds were shocked, and tears streamed down their faces (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Shaman Siqinggua in the state of connecting earth and heaven in the *Ominan* ritual. Photograph by Liu Xiaoshuang, 30 September 2020.

Figure 2. Women are moved to tears by shaman Siqinggua in the state of connecting earth and heaven in the *Ominan* ritual. Photograph by Liu Xiaoshuang, 30 September 2020.

Once I talked with a Daur insider about my confusion. I said, "You have a set of your descriptions about shamanism, and outsiders or researchers have another set of descriptions. Sometimes I am afraid to study it. I revere and fear gods, and I am afraid of getting them wrong." He said, "You must already know that some researchers know our set of descriptions about shamanism, but they are still expressing them in terms that you can ac-

cept instead of ours, which is very good. We are also afraid that you will truly express our things and then cause unnecessary trouble. You can express in your way"[9]. For insiders of shamanic culture, the images of folk customs and intangible cultural heritage are only the external packaging for the smooth operation of shamanic rituals, and the sacred experience and sacred expression of the heaven–earth connection and corresponding functions are its core. The heaven–earth connection is even found in the sacred appeal of ordinary people in the official discourse because the irrational–emotional need seems to be innate to everyone, and everyone is equal in terms of personal issues. It is very likely that ordinary people under the official discourse face more personal problems in the fiercely competitive environment of survival of the fittest and have more need for the shamanic culture.

The shamanic culture is in a very delicate situation in the modern context. On the one hand, the increase in personal problems has led to a need for shamanic culture to "come out again"; on the other hand, shamanic culture should not become too exposed so that it will not threaten the dominance of official ideology and attract another wave of attack. This situation requires a strategic, measured, and partial exposure of shamanic culture to create a new space acceptable to both sides between official discourse and shamanic practice to discover overlapping consensus. Shamanic rituals presented in the form of folk culture, traditional culture, cultural soft power, and intangible cultural heritage have neutralized the tension between shamanic religion characterized by connecting earth and heaven and official ideology in a formalized "cultural" way, thus achieving an ecological balance and forming a compatible space between official surface management and non-governmental practice.

According to Michael Herzfeld's "cultural intimacy" theory, shamanic culture presented in the image of cultural heritage in the new era is a manifestation of cultural intimacy with Chinese characteristics (Naran 2021, pp. 214–25). The shamanic culture in the space of cultural intimacy appears in the new forms of folklore, art, and performance, which satisfies the material society's conception and imagination of shamanic culture and maintains the dignity and interests of the official discourse, allowing shamanic culture to survive and develop in an aboveboard manner. With the support of the government, the shamans' sacred experience of connecting heaven and earth and the corresponding function of healing diseases can be carried out relatively smoothly, constituting the sacred experience and sacred expression of the insiders of the shamanic culture in the frontier areas and helping the material society in modern civilization relieve pressures and address the personal psychological problems that it cannot solve well. In general, the Chinese government regards itself as ontologically complete and capable of meeting all social and public needs. However, to comply with the new situation and emerging problems, the Chinese government will choose to flexibly adjust its actions when the discourse remains unchanged. Although the Communist Party of China claims atheism, with the increase in personal problems, they also need religious beliefs such as shamanic culture to help solve social problems. Therefore, shamanic culture appears in the image of cultural heritage with a cultural tone that more easily obtains government recognition. Shamanic culture in the form of cultural heritage constitutes an elastic space of cultural intimacy. In this space, the government locates shamanic culture in the form of cultural heritage and solves the social problem of increasing individual problems without harming the discourse and general direction, while the shaman community can secretly express and expand their beliefs under the title recognized by the state so that national discourse and shamanism achieve a peaceful coexistence in a space of cultural intimacy.

Obviously, the government has very different attitudes toward shamanic rituals on different occasions. For example, when shamanic rituals as religious practices involve spiritual activities and a larger worldview that cannot be controlled by the material world and threaten the authority of the omnipotent government, the government tends to consider shamanic rituals to be dangerous and decadent[10]. In contrast, when shamanic rituals are treated as cultural performances through formal packaging and promote local tourism with the image of regional cultural soft power, they are considered benign and are offi-

cially recognized, which is a problem related to their extent. How can the official discourse and minority cultures make concessions while adhering to their bottom lines, getting what both sides need to achieve a win–win situation. Some insiders of shamanic culture refuse to convert the sacred shamanic experience into folklore and cultural interests, and the government still secretly observes the scope of shamanic culture. However, in general, the shamanic culture presented in a brand new form in the space of cultural intimacy has achieved the goal of satisfying not only most insiders of the shamanic culture but also social institutions to the greatest possible extent between compromise and perseverance.

The shamanic rituals seen by outsiders of the shamanic culture are just lively and exotic folk performances. However, the insiders of the shamanic culture know that what the outsiders see is only what they can see from their cultural perspective. It is not what the insiders of the shamanic culture experience but rather an observable cultural surface in conjunction with the official ideology. Under this surface, the scared experience of connecting earth and heaven and the corresponding functions are truly the collective identities of insiders of the shamanic culture. Therefore, the insiders of the shamanic culture are not willing to reveal too much of the essence of shamanic culture to the "tourists" who are looking around. When tourists ask questions about the performance of shamanic rituals, the insiders of the shamanic culture often reply that this depends on "understanding". Only when you "understand" can you enter the interior of the shamanic culture circle and get the essential knowledge about shamanic culture. If you can't "understand", it is just an artistic performance you see on the surface.

Shamanic culture and official culture sometimes compete and sometimes cooperate, depending on the temporal situation and the context, which is very similar to relationships among people. Just as cooperation is a healthy state for people in getting along with each other, the shamanic culture that appears in the space of cultural intimacy is a sign of a healthy state of cooperation. The shamanic culture presented in the image of folk culture and cultural heritage not only survives in the official discourse with a reasonable and legal title but also expresses the sacred demands of ethnic minorities in northern China to believe in shamanism. It helps to solve increasingly serious personal problems to meet people's current needs, thus achieving a connection between official discourse and present-day problems as well as compatibility between the official discourse and minority cultures.

5. Conclusions

The shamanic experience of connecting earth and heaven has enabled the shamanic culture to form a larger worldview, including views about the material world and the spiritual world. However, modern civilization limits its worldview to the realm of the material world, regards science and rationality as priorities, and does not consider the issue of maintaining balance in different dimensions of the universe. As a result, shamanic culture was long excluded from mainstream discourse and official ideology, resulting in a state of blocking the passage between earth and heaven.

In the new era, with the increase in personal problems, modern society has failed to provide citizens with satisfactory solutions to these problems, resulting in more people seeking the help of shamans in frontier areas. Thus, the cultural phenomenon of reconnecting earth and heaven has emerged. However, in general, due to the conflict between the larger worldview of frontier cultures and that of the material world and the disregard for and denial of personal issues in the material world, shamanic culture is still in a state of secrecy. Therefore, the shamanic culture in the image of folk culture and intangible cultural heritage in the space of cultural intimacy has come into being. In the space of cultural intimacy, externally, shamanic rituals appear in the form of folklore and art, satisfying the expression of official ideology. With the help of this external image, internally, shamanic rituals are more of a sacred experience that connects earth and heaven to solve personal problems for the masses. This creates a new space between disconnecting earth and heaven and reconnecting earth and heaven, which has been recognized by the official discourse and the insiders of shamanic culture. Therefore, the official discourse and the

insiders of shamanic culture have established communication and cooperation based on "project identity" and built a bridge of dialogue to achieve an ecological balance.

Through such interaction and interpenetration in the space of cultural intimacy, there is reason to believe that one day the veil between shamanism and official ideology may be lifted to achieve real understanding, tolerance, mutual consultation, and harmony. In this case, China can avoid making the appearance of shamanic culture in the form of folklore and intangible cultural heritage a mere formality and art due to the needs of the official discourse and instead allow real and comprehensive shamanic cultural practices to meet diverse current needs (Meng 2013, pp. 346–47; Liu 2012, pp. 425–26). Right and wrong and high and low are the only judging criteria in sociology. From an anthropological point of view, there are no right or wrong or superior or inferior cultures; there are only differences in cultures. Different cultures correspond to their various realities with specific practical needs. It is their very differences that have endowed different cultures with unique charm and color. Regardless of the discourse of power, all cultures should be equal. However, in mainstream society, cultural equality is an ideal, and only sporadic "secret pleasures" can be found in the space of cultural intimacy.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Acknowledgments: My field survey was made possible with support from Shaman Siqingua's family. I am grateful to Naran Bilik at the Inner Mongolia Normal University, Qu Feng at the Arctic Studies Center, Liaocheng University, and the students at Inner Mongolia Normal University, for their assistance in my data collection. Special thanks are given to the academic editor for the insightful comments and excellent proofreading work. I am also grateful for the constructive comments provided by the reviewers.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

1 "The New Era" refers to the time since China's market-oriented reform and opening up since 1978.

2 Through the investigation of the operating mechanism of the nation-state, Michael Herzfeld put forward the innovative concept of "cultural intimacy" in 1995, which means that to achieve the long-term stability of the regime, the official discourse will accept and tolerate the existence of some unofficial cultural forms and ideologies. Official existence and unofficial existence test each other, constantly adjusting the boundaries of norms and practice, thus forming an interactive zone of mutual recognition between official and unofficial, providing a living elastic space for the whole society, which is the space where cultural intimacy can be generated (Herzfeld 2016, pp. 1–19; Liu 2020, pp. 240–48).

3 Data was collated according to the interview on 28 March 2023. The speaker is a Mongolian girl whose mother is a shaman.

4 In one class, a male Mongolian student living in shamanic culture told me that if a ewe did not recognize its new baby, herdsmen would gently sing to the ewe and influence it until it figured out its baby. But now, driven by modern market interests, some herdsmen would take the sheep to the slaughterhouse and brutally kill them.

5 https://new.qq.com/rain/a/20201217A03O5900 (accessed on 2 April 2022).

6 The following is what Professor Chen Jianxian learned about the ancient belief of shamanic culture when his parents were facing death: When my parents were about to leave this world, I suddenly found that my knowledge of the other world was so deficient that I, a so-called professor of mythology, was completely incapable of building their confidence to go to the other world. All that I could do was silently accompany their desperate hearts in pain until the last moment. I asked myself: for thousands of years, people have created so many myths and beliefs about another world, they have effectively helped many generations overcome their fear of death, allowing them to peacefully go to another world. But why, after the word "science" has occupied the minds of modern people, for many centuries, has knowledge about another world been labeled "superstition" and thrown into the garbage dump of history? Science has become a new "superstition"; is this lucky or unlucky for mankind? Even from the perspective of social functions, human beliefs and practices about another world have irreplaceable value. What's more, being unverifiable and nonexistent are two different things. There are countless existences in the universe that we cannot prove yet. Why do we have to eliminate ancient myths and beliefs at all? When we pour out the dirty water of the thoughts of old times, are we also throwing out the "babies" of minds at the same time? (Chen 2015, p. 1).

7 The statement is as follows: On 21 March 2017, the Shamanic Folk Custom Research Society in Anshan has finally been approved by the Anshan Culture Industry Association. The aims of the Society are: Explore, research, and develop shamanic folk culture and fight against feudal superstitious beliefs. Let the essence of ancient shamanic culture be passed down to later generations, and clear the name of our shamanic culture. We will prove through our investigation and research that shamanism originated in the Chinese land. Since its establishment in 2017, society has developed at a fast pace. Now with more than 3000 members, it has 35 offices in seven provinces (regions) and different minority areas . . . Under the guidance of the 19th Communist Party of China National Congress, the Society will promote traditional culture, combine old shamanic culture with modern culture, keep pace with the times, and collaborate with universities and research institutions (Naran 2021, p. 225).

8 Data was collated according to the interview on 9 August 2022.

9 Data was collated according to the interview on 3 August 2020.

10 For example, the Northern Dynasty (386–581) was the first climax of the prosperity of Buddhism in China. Because Buddhism was so prosperous that it threatened the imperial power and even the economic lifeline, the Northern Wei and Northern Zhou dynasties launched two large-scale campaigns to destroy Buddhism.

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Neighbours in the City: "Four Animal Spirits" in Beijing from the 19th Century to the Present

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Abstract: In northern China, four animals—the fox, weasel, hedgehog, and snake—are commonly believed to have the magical power of immortality, and they are referred to as the Four Animal Spirits (四大门, sidamen). Researchers have regarded these spirits as part of a form of shamanism, but what I learned from my fieldwork in Beijing suggests a different understanding. From the 19th century to the present day, many inhabitants of Beijing have consistently believed that the Four Animal Spirits have their own personalities, intentionalities, and social organisation. They can change their status through self-cultivation, and they share the city with humans, who are their neighbours. As humans can understand animals, these animals can understand humans and respond rationally to changes happening in the world. These beliefs are not unique to Beijing's residents; indeed, similar ideas can be found in classical Chinese literature before the Han Dynasty (202–220 BCE); moreover, these beliefs differ significantly from the widely accepted theory of shamanism. Knowing about the Four Animal Spirits does not constitute a window into or a way of organising human societies; the Four Animal Spirits do not represent a cultural structure or deep unconsciousness. They provide knowledge about the relationship between humans and animals and entice people to learn about these animals, live with them, and, ultimately, construct a world in which humans and animals can coexist.

Keywords: Animal Spirit; Beijing city; other-than-human personhood; cult of animals

Citation: Ju, Xi. 2023. Neighbours in the City: "Four Animal Spirits" in Beijing from the 19th Century to the Present. *Religions* 14: 396. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14030396

Academic Editors: Thomas Michael and Feng Qu

Received: 1 March 2023
Revised: 12 March 2023
Accepted: 13 March 2023
Published: 15 March 2023

1. What Are the "Four Animal Spirits" Present in Beijing?

Are cities only inhabited by humans?

Although this question has not been answered directly, many urban studies in the humanities and social sciences have clearly been based on the assumption of an affirmative answer. In contrast to the less densely populated countryside, cities concentrate more people and artefacts, which indicates the isolation of human civilisation from nature (Childe 1936). Animals seem to be less significant in cities. However, it is the relationship between humans and animals that deeply influences the fate of humanity itself. A previous generation of anthropologists already pointed out that animals could be the necessary link in the formation of social connections around which humans live their daily lives (Evans-Prichard 1940), or they could be the symbols through which societies are expressed (Lévi-Strauss 1962, p. 143; 1968). However, scholars who have advocated for the phenomenological and ontological turns in anthropology have been convinced that animal life, like human life, is not predetermined but is instead a particularly dynamic process. Moreover, both realms, while differently positioned, are always unfolding in relation to each other. Animals, like other beings, are necessary for human societies to acquire skills and survive (Ingold 2000).

Scholars of ontological turns have mainly focused on the northern region and the Amazon jungles, with a focus on hunting and domestication (Anderson 2017). Most studies on the relations between humans and animals in China focused on the historical documentation, but few of them have taken an anthropological angle to better understand practices and corresponding ideologies in specific contexts. Thus, Li Wei-tsu's (李慰祖,

1918–2010) Master's thesis on the role of the "Four Sacred Animals" in Beijing and its suburbs remains quite unique (Li 1948; Li and Zhou [1941] 2011).

Beijing's residents refer to *Sidamen* (四大门) to describe four specific types of animals in the city: the fox, hedgehog, weasel and snake. Li Wei-tsu translated this term as the "Four Sacred Animals", based on the Durkheim's sacred-profane dichotomy. However, Kang (2005) translated the term as the "Four Animal Spirits", which is the translation adopted in this article, for as we will see, those magical animals are not so sacred. The fox is called *Hu* (胡, a human's family name) or *Hong* (红, red, indicating its colour); the hedgehog is called Huang (黄, yellow as its colour, also a popular family name), the weasel *Bai* (白, white as its colour, also a family name), the snake *Liu* (柳, willow, and family name of a Daoist deity) or *Chang* (常, only as family name, but pronounced close to "long" in Mandarin). Sometimes, the rat or the hare (both called *Hui*, 灰，grey as its colour) are added to the list. In those cases, the animals are called the "Five Animal Spirits"; however, this is relatively uncommon.

After conducting fieldwork in the western suburbs of Beijing at the beginning of the 1930s, Li Wei-tsu learned that people believed that these animals could become immortal through self-cultivation. Those animals that were only active within a certain family were called "household immortals" (家仙), while those with a higher level of spiritual power had to build an altar and would be called "altar immortals" (坛仙). To build an altar, animal spirits must "force" people to serve them, to which end they possess people, who in turn are called "incense heads" (香头), i.e., these people become spiritual mediums and guide other people to burn incense. Animal spirits can heal, prophesise, and even resolve community conflicts through the mouths of the mediums. The mediums are viewed as members of a sect and are given the same name of *Sidamen* as the animal spirits. Moreover, a series of institutions support this relation, such as the master-apprentice system. There are also rules to follow for building an altar, such as obligatory pilgrimages. In conclusion, Li indicated that this local religion constitutes a kind of shamanism. Enlightened by Durkheim's theory, he believed that animal spirits are only a reflection of society, which is first and foremost a concept. Based on this concept, a religious system has been created, whose fundamental function has been to maintain the social order (Li and Zhou [1941] 2011).

Since Li's thesis, many scholars have continued to study the Four Animal Spirits (Yang 2004; Zhou 2007; Gao 2013; Li and Ding 2014; Wang 2018), but these studies have all been based on documentary sources rather than on fieldwork. In line with Li's conclusions, these studies have all regarded the Four Animal Spirits as imagined deities emanating from a local religion; they are viewed as spiritual, symbolic and representational beings merging out of people's minds. This approach is inconsistent with what I have learned from my own fieldwork in Beijing.

This article is primarily based on fieldwork, which I supplemented by consulting newspapers, folktale records and private diaries from the 19th century to the present day; moreover, I focus mostly on the centre of Beijing, with only scant reference to the suburbs located outside the city wall. I have lived and worked in Beijing for a long time, and I conducted fieldwork there. A family of weasels lives outside my house. These weasels maintain a dual relationship with my cats, at times friends and at times foes. Most residents in Beijing inner city are in the same situation. My neighbours, friends, and interviewees talked about the Four Animal Spirits as real, flesh-and-blood, and specific animals that can interact directly with humans, rather than as fantastic beings or religious symbols. These animals are called spirits, not because they are all immortal, but because they have a greater chance of becoming immortal than human beings. In fact, Li Wei-tsu himself clearly stated that "the four kinds of animals will be spiritually enlightened when they get old enough (i.e., when they reach their respective average life expectancy)" (Li and Zhou [1941] 2011, p. 9). Based on these experiences and studies, this article argues that the Four Animal Spirits provide a body of knowledge about animals, and this knowledge focuses on the human–animal relationship: how animals live, how humans live with them, and

how a world in which humans and animals coexist can be created. If we compare this concept with Western knowledge, the Four Animal Spirits are closer to zoology and ecological ethics than to religion.

2. The Changing Status of the Four Animal Spirits

The concept of change is central in our understanding of the Four Animal Spirits. In the dialect used in Beijing, a Rhotic accent must be added at the end of the word used to describe the Four Animal Spirits; this accent indicates closeness, ordinariness, and slight defiance. The saying that "people are in the light, but animal spirits are in the dark. Animal spirits can always see people, but people cannot always see the spirits" is not merely the fruit of imagination, as these species are indeed all small burrowing creatures. As they grow, these animals gradually acquire the ability to deal with humans, and some of them become immortal through self-cultivation. The spirits with the strongest spiritual powers, who are also in the last stage of their life course as animals, are often called "old grandfathers" (老爷子*Laoyezi*), "great spiritual lords" (大仙爷Da Xianye).

When the Four Animal Spirits are young they are ordinary creatures, and when they grow old, they can become powerful deities. This continuously changing status is quite difficult to define for scholars who adhere to a Western naturalist ontology[1]. Li Wei-tsu first divided these animals into two categories, the sacred and the profane, and in turn divided the sacred animals into two types: household immortals and altar immortals. However, these categories did not emerge out of my interviewees. There is no distinction between sacred and profane animals; instead, only specific animals go through different life stages. As two of my interviewees clearly stated,

> They are just animals that live in your house, not gods. When they get older, they naturally have this ability, which we call "spiritual expertise" (道行 Daohang). A weasel that was just born a few years ago cannot reach this ability; it does not have that kind of expertise.[2]

> The "great spiritual lord" is not the same as the Buddha or the gods; it is a fox spirit, not a real Buddha or god, just a fox that has become spiritual after a long life. It is similar to the story of the White Snake (白蛇传). The white snake took a thousand years to take human form and became the White Lady, and only after her son sacrificed the Leifeng pagoda (雷峰塔) did she become immortal. However, she remained a snake and did not become a god.[3]

Ji Yun (纪昀, 1724–1805), a famous literato in Beijing and senior official in the late 18th century, stated, "In general, things can change in form over time. Fox spirits can go through windows, but their original forms cannot be contained within the windowpane" (Ji 2018, p. 39). This statement expresses the idea that my interviewees also expressed: while animals are different from human beings (only humans can become gods, and animals can only become spirits), there is no distinction between sacred and profane animals, since all of them are born as ordinary babies; the only difference is the life stage that the animal is in.

Generally, the idealised life of one of the Four Animal Spirits follows the following trajectory: (1) a young animal that can neither speak nor change. (2) Through self-cultivation, it acquires the ability to communicate with people. (3) It acquires the ability to possess people. (4) It becomes anthropomorphous and obtains great spiritual power. (5) It attains immortality and leaves the mundane world. The animal spirits that Li Wei-tsu studied were in the third and fourth stages. In particular, the animal spirits at stage 4, who can take human form and live as humans do, are common protagonists in mystery novels and have been the subject of Kang Xiaofei's research (Kang 2005). Young animals in the first two stages, who are numerous and most familiar to people, have attracted little attention from scholars. However, this paper focuses on them.

As the animals slowly grow and eventually become immortal, their bodies, abilities, and spiritualities continue to change but never detach from their essence as animals. While

a human can become a god or a great sage, an animal can only develop to become a spirit: "comparatively speaking, a god is far more valuable than a spirit" (Li and Zhou [1941] 2011, pp. 65–66). However, as they move through the levels, animal spirits are increasingly associated with humans, deities, and other demons or immortals. When an animal spirit reaches the 4th stage, it gains the same magical power than the gods and can enter the "altar immortals" system with them. This is similar to human society in Beijing during the Qing Dynasty, in which all ethnic groups, whether Han or Manchu, could become state servants and officials by studying and passing state examinations. In the spiritual world, the bureaucracy is replaced with the altar, which is open to all species.

In his thesis, Li Wei-tsu mentioned several times that the villagers repeatedly told him that the principle was the same for humans and deities (人神一理). This statement is key to understand the spiritual world. We have explained that the Four Animal Spirits, like humans, can grow and acquire additional capacities through self-cultivation (learning). In the next part of this paper, we will see that spirits also have their own personalities, families, and social relationships. Like humans, they are able to perceive the environment and can respond to its changes intellectually, rationally, and morally. In other words, they have an "other-than-human-personhood".

3. The Other-Than-Human-Personhood of the Four Animal Spirits

The anthropological concept of "other-than-human-personhood", proposed by A. Irving Hallowell in 1960, describes beings who have self-consciousness. They are neither human nor divine, but they have agency and morality. Invoked by de Castro, Tim Ingold and other scholars, this concept has been quite inspirational in understanding the relationship between humans and other beings (Anderson 2017, pp. 134–35). In Beijing, each animal spirit is considered to have its own personality, temperament, and preferences, which depend on that animal's social relations. In a word, animals are not mere products of genetics. Indeed, in addition to relations with other animals, they also have relations with humans. It is in the human–animal relation that people can observe animals and understand their personalities. Therefore, the relationship between humans and animals is always placed at the centre of knowledge of the Four Animal Spirits, and this is where the concept differs most from modern zoology.

(1) Personalities of individual animals

Li Wei-tsu has raised the issue of animal's personality by saying, "Animal Spirits are just like mortal people, some are generous, and some are narrow-minded" (Li and Zhou [1941] 2011, p. 26). For example, the Yellow Lord (黄爷) in the Meng family, who was subdued by Medium Li and his master Great Spiritual Lord, was a two-foot-long female weasel with a lustful nature, so the Great Spiritual Lord had to detain her in East Hill to force her to concentrate on her own development (ibid. p. 20). A fox spirit in Xiang Huangqi village claimed that he was from Shanxi and came to meet a daughter of a certain family because in a previous life they were a couple. The spirit also made it its duty to take the guests out for meals; if the family needed money, it pawned clothes on their behalf (ibid. p. 21). One of Li Wei-tsu's main informants was Medium Wang; her master was a crippled fox known as "Crippled Old Lord", whose real name was Hu Yanqing (胡延庆); moreover, because of the word "Qing" in his name, he particularly hated chimes (*Qing* in Mandarin) (ibid. p. 88). The spirit possessed Medium Si Guangyuan who lived in Beichang Street in Beijing inner city; it was a weasel spirit and an opium addict who would diagnose patients while smoking opium at the same time (ibid. p. 30).

Li Wei-tsu has not provided additional details about these animal spirits, it remains unclear whether these creatures are real and how they exhibit their personalities (e.g., through conversation, possession, or apparition). During my own fieldwork, I encountered comparable stories. Beijing residents described the Four Animals as if they were humans, and they believe that each animal has a distinct personality that becomes more evident as they grow older. Some snakes are curious:

> There was once a golden snake living in our yard, and it did not hurt. It burrowed in the cracks of that old wall and liked to crane its neck to look about.[4]
>
> Some snakes are eager to help and do not act as outsiders:
>
> A big snake once came to my house and lived on a beam; sometimes we saw it on top of the bed, sometimes under the table. It helped to catch rats, and no one bothered it. It lived there for several years and then left on its own.[5]
>
> Some of the hedgehogs are funny:
>
> That hedgehog is reckless and likes to shout blusteringly.[6]
>
> Some hedgehogs love to play tricks on people:
>
> That hedgehog loves scaring people; sometimes it attaches a shoe by a string on its paw, when it walks, the shoe shuffles. It also coughs; after eating a bit of salt and coughs exactly like an old man. It's for scaring people.[7]
>
> Some hedgehogs have a particular love/hate relationship with someone.
>
> My grandfather told me a story about a hedgehog. When he was working in the cement factory, there was a man who never got drunk. However, he could not go to my grandpa's house to drink because every time he would get drunk there. This was truly strange. The man later said, "There must be something strange in your house". Therefore, he searched the house and found a hedgehog under the cupboard; the hedgehog was the size of a washbasin. It was the hedgehog that was causing the trouble! It did not like the man and did not like him drinking their family's wine, so it made him drunk each time.[8]
>
> Some weasels have become friends to people; they find each other interesting.
>
> When it's cold, they go up to our roof. We sleep underneath, and they sleep in the ceiling. They like playing inside and stomping around in the ceiling. It's fun for us to listen to.[9]

These animals are familiar to people; in their eyes, all these animals have emotions similar to those of humans: They feel love, dislike, and sorrow.

(2) Human communication with the Four Animal Spirits

Even when the ordinary animals do not appear in human form or possess a medium, they can communicate with humans, whether by argument or negotiation.

In 1943, the newspaper Morning Post reported that a group of weasels suddenly arrived at the home of Wang Gongfeng (王供奉), a famous actor at the Beijing Opera at the time. The weasels came and went freely without any fear. Wang's cat bit one of them that was small and then became insane and psychotic. Wang had to build a small shrine in his garden, making offerings and praying to the weasels for forgiveness. His cat then recovered the next day (Weasel Mess 1943). Mr. Qi also told me a similar personal experience. There was a family of weasels living in his yard, and they had always been friendly to them; but one day, the weasels suddenly went mad and started barking loudly. Mr. Qi shot them twice with a toy air gun. As the weasels barked back in protest, Qi said: "I told you, weasels, that you can live with me here, as I do not hate you. However, if you become noisy, I will drive you away." The weasels obeyed and never made any noise again. Mr. Qi believes that there is never any rat in his house because of the weasels, so sometimes he gives them a treat. Before giving them treats, he discussed it with the weasels: "The weasels were looking at me, and I was looking at them too. I said, Little Spirits, I will buy you two chicken necks for you to eat tonight. Then, I bought two and left them there, near their home, and the next morning they ate the whole chicken." Mr. Qi believes that the weasels understood him.[10]

The Four Animal Spirits were once abundant in the city of Beijing and remain numerous today. The interactions between these animals and humans vary, ranging from glances and chance encounters to more frequent and diverse forms of interaction, including cohabitation. In a world where humans and animals have long coexisted, the relation-

ship between them is highly personal, context-specific, and face-to-face. Humans can then learn about the personalities of animals and animals can communicate rationally and even argue with and protest against people. As a result, an animal's personality is highly socialized and dependent on its relationship with humans. The next section will describe three different types of relationships between humans and animals.

4. Types of Relationships between the Beijing's Inhabitants and the Four Animal Spirits

There are generally three types of relationships between humans and the Four Animal Spirits in Beijing. These relationships are not fundamentally different from interpersonal relationships in human societies, and this is precisely the point that Li Wei-tsu has emphasized repeatedly: "the principle is the same for humans and deities."

(1) Strangers

First, spirits and humans can be strangers to each other. Although humans and animals know each other, they may not be familiar with each other. In this case, they do not disturb each other.

The Four Animal Spirits have morality, emotion, and rationality, but they live in a world that is very different from that of humans. For Beijing's residents, that is a mysterious world, full of unknown situations and uncertainty. It is best to stay away from that world.

Li Wei-tsu explained, "Some villagers believe that it is better to make less contact with the spirits because the Four Animal Spirits are unstable. When they are well worshipped, they bring families peace and prosperity, but if they are worshipped in weak ways, or if the family they come in contact with is declining, the spirit will soon become hostile and destroy the family" (Li and Zhou [1941] 2011, p. 17). However, Guo Zeyun (郭则沄 1882–1946), a literato and official who lived in Beijing for over 40 years and had a vast network of friends, proposed a different explanation. In his Continued Notes on the Cavern Spirits (洞灵续志), written in the early 20th century, he noted that humans and animal spirits should be kept at a distance. The reason was not the unstable temperament of the animals but the fact that both worlds were ignorant of each other. When we do not know each other's social rules and etiquette, it is best to avoid offending anyone by keeping at a respectful distance (Guo 2010b, p. 278). This attitude is held by most residents in Beijing today in the face of the Four Animal Spirits.

> When this thing (spirit) is found in your home, none of you are supposed to offend it or plague it. If you disrespect it, it will bring you disaster. You have to respect it, but there is no need to make offerings; you simply let it live there (in your home), do not bother it. It's fine that no one interferes with anyone. I have chickens at home, and a weasel spirit live there, but it does not eat my chickens. You do not want to offend it; you just ignore it and let it breed and live here, that is all![11]

> You walk down the alley at night, and you see a weasel that runs by. Its two eyes are super shiny and very strange. Do not pay it any attention, just walk your way, but do not push it away. If you ignore it, all will be fine. However, if you blast it, then it will be washed up, you will be chased everywhere you go. In this case, the weasel will strangle people.[12]

(2) Mutually Beneficial Relationship

The second type of relationship is a "mutually beneficial relationship". When humans and the Four Animal Spirits are already familiar with each other and no longer strangers, they can then get along as neighbours or friends, and the relationship is reciprocal. In Li Wei-tsu's ethnography, many villagers built shrines in their home to worship spirits, believing that the animal spirits would bring wealth. More commonly, humans offer their own foods to the spirits, by placing the foods in corners frequented by the animals. In this case, there are no special rules about which type of food should be offered.

> My family's business is in the Dongsi Batiao Hutong; it is the Deyuanyong (德元永) Pharmacy. When we lived there, there were three rooms facing north in the front and a small backyard, which actually served as a storage room and a back kitchen. It was in this back kitchen that my father liked to make offerings, sometimes snacks, sometimes family food. He wrote a tablet, stating that the offerings were for the Four Animal Spirits. Even during the great famine of 1959–1961, we kept on making offerings to them.[13]

> In our family room, by the firewood stack, some spirits live there. We offer them everything, baked biscuits, beans, whatever we eat at home, and we serve them in a small white porcelain plate.[14]

Humans share food with animals, but they always use the word "offering" (供). This word suggests that serving the Four Animal Spirits is the same as worshiping gods: it is similar to going to a temple to offer incense or going to a cemetery to offer wine and food to the ancestors. Providing food can never be described as "feeding" or "giving in charity". One can feed domestic animals or pets and give food as a charitable act to the orphaned spirits and wild ghosts in some rituals, but one can never use these two concepts when offering the animal spirits food; it is meant to respect and to worship. In return, animal spirits are expected to be quiet and to create no trouble, or as Li Wei-tsu put it, they are expected to bring wealth to humans or help them solve certain problems. One of my interviewees recounted the long friendship between his family and a weasel:

> The weasel is magic; it can tell you all about your family over many generations. Why? It has lived with your family for many years, and it has heard everything about your family, even what has happened in your neighbourhood and in the village. It remembers everything. If you are in trouble, try to ask your weasel for help; it will tell you everything once it has possessed a medium. Is not it magic? (Ibid.)

In this mutually beneficial relationship, the rights and obligations of both parties are clear, so humans and animals can live together in peace.

Both Li Wei-tsu and I noticed people making offerings to spirits quite frequently, even more often than they worshipped gods or ancestors. Is this because the animal spirits have a greater impact on people's lives, or they are more sacred? In my opinion, the answer lies elsewhere. Ms. Zhao, the daughter of a general in the late Qing Dynasty who lived near the Old Summer Palace (圆明园) all her life, recalled that her family worshiped the Four Animal Spirits in the same way they worshipped their ancestors. Zhao's explanation for this behaviour was that "the Beijingers were well educated, sophisticated with politeness", so her family was polite to the Four Animal Spirits. However, when their chickens were stolen, her family stood in the yard and abused the "yellow spirit" (weasel), as the spirit who was the thieve deserved no respect at all (Ding 2016, p. 223). Ji Yun also spoke about a similar case in the 18th century. He once recorded a story about a conflict between a human and a fox, where even the gods could not calm the fox's anger. However, the conflict was finally resolved when the human offered a banquet. Ji Yun concluded that interpersonal etiquette was very important and could not be ignored. In our relationships with neighbouring spirits, we should frequently exchange gifts and courtesies to avoid conflicts (Ji 2018, p. 322). Therefore, it is better to consider these offerings as gifts rather than as sacrifices. It is certainly worth exploring the meaning of the gifts exchanged between humans and animals from the perspective of Mauss (1980, pp. 145–279) and his disciples, but this topic is kept for another paper.

(3) Fictive Kinship Relationship

In the third type of relationship, humans and animals act as if they are part of the same kin group, and this relationship is most typical between the mediums and the spirits that possess them. A college girl once told me her family history with a fox spirit. Her grandmother had been a medium for this fox since her youth, and she had had a difficult life. After her grandmother's death, the fox spirit possessed her mother, which made the

family believe that the grandmother was still home. Until her mother's death, the fox spirit, who was like an "alter ego" of her grandmother, appeared several times in front of this girl. Finally, the girl decided to send the tablet representing the fox spirit to a temple, severed her ties with the family and left her hometown.[15] A similar case was mentioned in Li Wei-tsu's ethnography. A family living in Pingjiao village (northwest of Beijing city) was known for being relatives of the Four Animal Spirits. One of the wives of the two brothers in this family was a reincarnation of a snake and another a reincarnation of a fox. Moreover, a spirit lived in Huang's house, whose name was *Sixi* (四喜); it was the snake's wife's nephew (Li and Zhou [1941] 2011, p. 15). In my fieldwork, I found that the most common fictive kinship between humans and animals is that a medium referring to a spirit as his or her "master father" (师父). Ms. Zhao, who has become famous in Beijing in recent years and whose followers are all over the capital, claims to have been a disciple of the Second Spirit Lord (a snake spirit) since she was a young girl and that she has never separated from it. However, being the relative of an animal spirit is dangerous because one will be marginalised and expelled from the community, and therefore lose one's vitality as human beings. This was the case for Ms. Zhao, who was often possessed by her master father in the early years, and later became so consumed that she recently deliberately kept at a distance from him. Kinship is also represented in various forms, such as marriages between a human and a spirit, as discussed in Kang Xiaofei's book about the cult of the fox.

Of the above three types of relationships, I have mostly encountered the first one in my fieldwork. Today, Beijing's residents have become accustomed to maintaining relationships with spirits as if these spirits were strangers. However, Li Wei-tsu's ethnography and people's memories from the 1940s have shown that the second type of relationship is the most dominant. Ji Yun indicated that if a human family is peaceful and loving, the fox might accept to become its neighbour; then, humans and foxes can live together as friends, which represents the ideal model of human-spirit relations (Ji 2018, p. 277). This change in the relationship may stem from the anti-superstition movement but also, and more likely, from changes in urban lifestyles. When old courtyards were destroyed and most urban dwellers moved into buildings, the ties among the residents became increasingly weaker, and animals, as neighbours, were of course also alienated. The third type of relationship has always been considered inappropriate. Turning a stranger into a friend is fine; however, accepting a stranger into the family is more difficult to do. This idea reminds us of the teaching of a great Confucianist, Ying Shao (应劭, 153–196), who said that one could treat his stepmother as a mother but should never give her the title of "mother". People are benevolent when they help strangers they happened to meet, but the Confucian ethics consider that it would be a heresy to consider a stranger as a relative (Ying 1981, pp. 138–39). In my fieldwork as well as that of Li Wei-tsu, respondents all agreed that it is dangerous for people to get too close to animal spirits and that it is quite reasonable to consider that this "danger" comes from a subversion of the kinship order, as Douglas (1966) suggested in her work entitled "Purity and Danger".

In summary, the Four Animal Spirits, like humans, are inhabitants of the city and share living spaces with humans. People are not only familiar with the specific animals around them, but also believe that these animals have their own moral principles and rational laws, which differ from but are not too far removed from those of humans. As a result, these animals can develop various types of relationships with humans. They may begin as strangers but eventually establish mutually beneficial relationships, and in some cases, become fictive kin, often corresponding with mediums. While potentially advantageous, the last type of relationship can also be socially ambiguous and risky for humans. Fictive kinship disrupts the order of actual kinships, making family ethics ambiguous, and has, therefore, always been criticized by Confucian intellectuals. We can see that the same Confucian ethical principles regarding human kinship have been applied to the human–animal relationship.

5. The Social Network of the Four Animal Spirits

The Four Animal Spirits are not domesticated animals; they live independently in the city. They have their own world and their own society, maintaining a parallel relationship with the human world. As told in the famous Chinese story "A dream under the southern koch tree" (南柯一梦), Chunyu fen (淳于棼), the hero of the story, went to the land of ants, where all rituals and institutions were exactly the same as in human society. When he woke up, the anthill under the acacia tree was still visible, proving that his dream was not unreal but that ordinary people were unaware of the world of ants.

(1) Family

Each animal spirit has its own dwelling. The young ones who have not yet adopted a human shape cannot move freely, and people all know where they dwell, for example under a tree or inside a section of a wall. The spirits who already have magic powers also have a dwelling, which acts as their calling card. For example, the Crippled Old Lord mentioned above lived under the Western Tower of the Old Summer Palace (Li and Zhou [1941] 2011, p. 24); the spirit who possessed Medium Gong lived on Santai Hill (三台山), near the royal garden on the southern outskirts of Beijing, while his medium lived on the southeast side of the city (Medium's shrine 1924). The Old Lady White, a famous hedgehog spirit, lived near the royal garden in the southern suburbs with her medium (Attack on heresy 1932).

In addition to having a fixed dwelling, the Four Animal Spirits also have stable family relationships. Someone told Li Wei-tsu that the spirits' family was the same as human families and that they all had their respective parents and children. In one of the stories in the Yong'an Notes (庸庵笔记), a collection of anecdotes of the late 19th century, it is told that a certain Beijing resident accidentally killed a male weasel. The next day, the mate of the weasel came to take revenge and fought until she died. The love in the couple was moving (Xue 1999, p. 135). In my fieldwork, I found that some Beijingers were most happy to tell me stories about a large family of weasels and that they mutually enjoyed the company.

> Weasels from house to house, I've seen it. They move one by one, or one on top of the other, with the big one carrying the little ones in the mouth, walking in a line. I've seen it in our yard; they are not afraid of people.[16]

The Casual Records of Night Talk (夜谭随录 *Ye Tan Sui Lu*), a collection of folktales compiled by a Beijing resident during the late 18th to the early 19th century, recorded a well-known story about a family of weasels. The story recounts that a low-ranking official in Beijing was drinking at home and threw goats' bones on the ground. A moment later, he saw a dozen or so of small men and women, 6 to 7 inches tall, come out to pick up the bones and put them in a basket. When the official hit them with a fire chopper, they all turned into weasels and fled into a hole in the wall. Only one of them was struck and stayed on the ground, grunting (He 1988, pp. 33–36). The newspapers in the early 20th century often contained such "social news" depicting how weasels moved around. In 1889, there was news in the Dianshizhai Pictorial (点石斋画报) about weasels moving in packs to an inn and bringing wealth to the innkeepers. The picture used to illustrate the news showed a pack of weasels running across the roof (Weasels' move 1889). More news detailed the scene of weasels' move: one afternoon, someone named An, who lived in the north of the inner city, saw more than one hundred weasels coming out of a small hole on a rockery erected in their courtyard. When the weasels reached a pillar, the large one, which was leading the pack, climbed up, while the smaller ones below it held its tail in their teeth so they could be pulled up by the big one. The process went back and forth several times before the largest weasel exhausted (Weasels move in packs 1934).

(2) Bureaucracy and Hierarchy

Over 800 years, Beijing was the centre of the Chinese bureaucracy. Similar to humans, fox spirits in the city have also been controlled by their own bureaucracy. According to var-

ious notes and diary documents from the late 19th century, the bureaucratic organisation of these foxes at that time was quite similar to the urban administrative system.

All the foxes living in the forbidden city were under the command of the spirit that lived in Duan Gate (端门); that spirit was known as the "First Lord of Fox". Before the end of the Qing Dynasty, the guards of the palace believed that they had a bond with the foxes, as they all served the royal family. The First Lord of Fox, who was the head of the fox population living in the forbidden city, was akin to the Chief of the Internal Affairs Department (内务府总管). It had two younger brothers, the Second Lord of Fox, who lived in Baoding (保定), and the Third Lord of Fox, who lived in Tianjin, both of whom had received royal honours, as if the Bannermen (旗人) of the Internal Affairs Department had been sent out to various banner camps (Guo 2010b, p. 288).

The leader of the outer city foxes was called the "Fourth Lord of Fox", and it lived in the Xuanwu Gate (宣武门) tower and oversaw the southern city, where the literati gathered. That fox was willing to befriend the literati. According to those who had seen it, it was an old man with a white beard and dressed as a Taoist priest. Zhuang Yunkuan (庄蕴宽, 1866–1932), a famous official and educator, was a native of Jiangsu. When he lived in the southern city, the Fourth Lord Fox paid him a visit but missed him. After ten days or so, the fox wrote to him, saying that he hoped they could become friends and that he would not refuse if that were the case. However, in the end, Mr. Zhuang and the fox only corresponded and never met (Guo 2010a, p. 77).

The inner city, on the northern side of Beijing, on the other side of the outer (southern) city, surrounds but does not include the Forbidden City; it had its own fox governor, about whom there have been two accounts. A collection of tales, Notes in the Youtai Spiritual House (右台仙馆笔记), written around 1880, suggested that the fox who was the chief of the inner city lived in the Dongbian Gate tower (东便门城楼), relied on a medium to communicate with humans, and was afraid of human bureaucrats (Yu 2004, p. 85). In contrast, Guo Zeyun suggested that the foxes living in the inner city were all under the control of the Zhengyang Gate (正阳门) celestial fox. Unlike the fox living in the Dongbian Gate, this fox spirit did not need a medium. It had the status of a fourth-ranking human bureaucrat and got along with human officials on an equal footing (Guo 2010a, pp. 38–39). It seems that the former was a civic leader for foxes, while the latter was an official governor. In addition to ruling over the inner city, both could also rule over the outer city and the suburbs, but neither one could cross the boundary to rule within the Forbidden City.

Thus, the fox bureaucracy in Beijing not only had a hierarchy but its authority was bounded. In addition to managing the foxes in their respective areas, these spirits were also attentive to the local customs held by humans and tended to act in a way that was compatible with those customs.

The family represents the foundational social institution for all animals, but only animals with a high level of cultivation could become bureaucrats. Certainly, these fox officials could influence the fate of humans using their magic, but their primary duty was not to respond to humans; instead, they were supposed to govern their own kind, and this role was the essential difference between themselves and gods.

For humans to understand the bureaucratic and hierarchical order of the animal world, there must be an acute awareness that animals, even small and weak, are part of their own social networks and are protected, regulated and supervised by their own elders and governors, who may be far more competent than humans. Therefore, when facing an ordinary animal, humans must consider the entire spiritual world and the intertwined social relations in which the animal live and should not treat it arbitrarily. This consideration is similar to situations in traditional Chinese medicine: the doctor does not address an individual who is sick but cares for the whole community in which the patient lives (Pan 2015). It is in this sense that we can say that knowledge of the Four Animals Spirits differs from religion, in that the concern is not how to worship the gods but rather how to treat specific animals.

(3) Social change and individual choice

Because animals are independent, have self-will, and are capable of making their own judgements and choices, their behaviour is based on the way they judge a situation, rather than on the instruction given to them by some supreme deity or ultimate ideal. Consequently, the Four Animal Spirits described by Beijing residents are often pragmatists: they stay in the city when they live and have friendship with humans, or they might leave to search for a better environment; the reasons they leave of return are always based on their own rational choices.

During my fieldwork, I kept asking people whether, after the founding of the People's Republic of China and especially during the Cultural Revolution, the Four Animal Spirits remained in Beijing. People often told me that for a long time, not only did the spirits but also the ordinary animals had disappeared due to massive urban development, environmental transformation programs, sanitation campaigns, and the increasing number of people in the city. The city was no longer suitable for animals, and they all left voluntarily. Over the past decade, however, the demolition of the old Beijing has slowed down significantly, and the inner city has become older. Rather than an influx of population, the old city has seen the beginning of an exodus. This situation, coupled with an increase in the area devoted to open land and the animal protection movement in civil society, has led to a gradual increase in animal populations and the return of animal spirits. At first glance, this explanation is the same as what scholars call a "revival of popular religion", but its internal logic is very different. Scholars believe that only human beings have subjectivity and agency; when the external political environment changes, people choose to "suppress" or "revive" their religion accordingly. In the residents' interpretation, animals are the true dynamic subjects, who are keenly aware of change, not only change in the external environment such as buildings, plants, food, and living spaces, but also in the attitudes and intentions of humans; moreover, they are always ready to adapt their behaviours to these changes. Whether they leave or return, it is always the result of their proactive choices. A woman born in Beijing in the 1920s told me:

> At that time, who (the spirits) dared to show their face? Once the liberation came, even the great spirit lord of mediums had been lost and had disappeared. They knew that after the liberation, the army and the government did not believe in these deities or ghosts. There was even a campaign against the four pests; therefore, they left before it. These spirits all went to the western mountain (of Beijing) and to the countryside, and they stayed hidden. So today, they are still active in the countryside, where there are still more of them. Nowadays, some people have started to believe in them again, so they are slowly coming back.[17]

In this interpretation, animals do not belong to "nature": "nature" is not created by a supernatural creator, nor is "nature" a background for or object used in human activity. Animals are not metaphors or symbols of some social order; they are subjects of that order.

In this sense, the nexus of intentionalities between the Four Animal Spirits and humans is very different from the relationship between humans and animals in shamanism described by Roberte Hamayon in her book *La chasse* à *l'âme.* In the book, animals are considered messengers from the heavens, who convey the will of and are ordered by their creator god. The behaviour and intentions of animals constitute a window through which people can guess and understand the will of the gods (Hamayon 1990). In contrast, the relationship between Beijing citizens and the Four Animal Spirits is highly specific and social, and the animals act as independent individuals who understand the network they are in and can even intentionally construct the network. When confronted with such animals, people do not understand them as some kind of natural or supernatural beings that are external to human society but rather as members of a larger society: a holistic urban society.

6. Conclusions and Discussion: The Animal World in the Chinese Tradition

As a conclusion, this article explores the Four Animal Spirits, an animal cult that has been prevalent in Beijing from the 19th century to the present day. While scholars have traditionally viewed this cult as a form of shamanism, this article argues that it is more

about the knowledge and practice of living with animals than a belief in the gods. The Four Animal Spirits are more similar to humans than to gods, as they can acquire magical powers or even become immortals through self-cultivation, which parallels the structure of human life in which humans can achieve higher social status and even become saints or gods through constant study, work, and self-improvement. Through recent fieldwork, this article discusses the revival of the animal cult in the last decade and how it is perceived by Beijing citizens. It suggests that this revival is not about the suppression or revival of religious beliefs, but rather the return of animals to the everyday lives of Beijing residents, thus resurrecting people's "zoology" of animal spirits.

Undoubtedly, the idea of the Four Animal Spirits is first and foremost rooted in local knowledge and the everyday experience of residents, which are shaped by the circumstances of the local community. The structure of foxes' bureaucracy, for example, is something that someone familiar with the history of Beijing during the Qing Dynasty would be able to appreciate. However, we also see that the knowledge about the Four Animal Spirits resembles many of the ideas about animals in ancient Chinese classics. In other words, this knowledge is not only local and embodied but also backed by a long and vast tradition. In this tradition, animal spirits are not considered as elements of a "religion" or a "belief" but rather as a widely shared "zoology" that has a long history.

Based on the texts of the Warring States and Han Dynasty (476 BCE–CE 220) and earlier texts to study the concept of animals in ancient China, Roel Sterckx found a general contingency and continuum between the human realm and the animal world. "As signifying living creatures surrounding the human observer, the animal kingdom provided models for authority in human society and functioned as a catalytic medium for the conception of human morality" (Sterckx 2002, p. 240). Similar ideas have emerged out of Beijing's urban society since the 19th century, mainly in the sense that humans and animals are all in the process of change; moreover, animals are not objects in a passive position but rational subjects with multiple connections to humans. Roel Sterckx also found that there were three kinds of classification in early China: lexicographic classification, ritual classification, and correlative classification (Sterckx 2005). However, the Four Animal Spirits have existed in a completely different system of animal classification, in which the categories of animals are determined by how distant they are from human societies, in line with the animal ethics proposed by animal advocates Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011). These issues can only be elaborated upon in future articles.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: I agree to share the research data in this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

1 The French anthropologist Philippe Descola divided human culture into four ontologies: animism, totemism, naturalism and analogism. See (Descola 2005).

2 Mr. Liu (a farmer born in the 1940s). 2013. Interview by the author. personal communication. Dasungezhuang village in Shunyi district, Beijing, October.

3 Ms. Wang (a housewife born in 1925). 2005. interview by the author. personal communication. Qianchuan Hutong in Xicheng district, Beijing, September.

4 Mr. Yang (born in Beijing in 1942). 2014. Interview by the author. Personal communication. Anletang Hutong in Dongcheng district, Beijing, December.

5 Mr. E (born in a Beijing Bannermen's family in1940). 2014. Interview by the author. Personal communication. Xisibei Batiao Hutong in Xicheng district, Beijing, February.

6 Mr. Song (born in Beijing in 1940). 2006. Interview by the author. Personal communication. Xuanwumen West Street, Xicheng district, Beijing, October.

7 Mr. Wang (born in Beijing in 1960). 2005. Interview by the author. Personal communication. Maxian Hutong in Dongcheng district, Beijing, September.

[8] Ms. Liu (born in Beijing in 1976). 2013. Interview by the author. Personal communication. Beijing Normal University, October.
[9] See Note 4.
[10] Mr. Qi (born in Beijing in the late 1940s). 2007. Interview by the author. Personal communication. Picai Hutong in Xicheng district, Beijing, November.
[11] Mr. Huang (born in a Beijing Bannermen's family in1946). 2006. Interview by the author. personal communication. Qian Laolai Hutong in Xicheng district, Beijing, September.
[12] Mr. Wang (born in Beijing in 1951). 2014. Interview by the author. Personal communication. Gongjian Hutong in Xicheng district, Beijing, July.
[13] Mr. Liu (born in Beijing in the 1950s). 2020. Interview by the author. Personal communication via Wechat APP, January.
[14] See Note 2.
[15] Ms. Xu (Born in the 1990s). 2017. Interview by the author. Personal communication. Beijing Normal University, October.
[16] An anonymous woman (born in Beijing in the 1930s). 2007. Interview by the author. Personal communication. Chongshanli Hutong in Xicheng district, Beijing, October.
[17] See Note 3.

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Deities System and Ritual Practice: A Case Study of the Daur Shamanic *Oboo* Ritual

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Abstract: The restoration and reconstruction of Daur shamanism is classical and representative of the revival of shamanism in contemporary China. The case study of the Daur shamanic *oboo* ritual in this paper discusses the connotation and classification of *oboo*. Through a brief description of the main process of the ceremony, the shaman spirits, and the main contents of the divine songs, this paper analyzes the characteristics and functions of the contemporary Daur shaman sacrificing *oboo* ceremony. The contemporary Daur shamanic *oboo* ritual also puts forward the concept of "*mokun kurə*" (*mokun* circle), which restores the function of the traditional clan organization of *mokun*, enhances the cohesion of the *mokun* family, and inspires a sense of responsibility and motivation in the *mokun* members.

Keywords: Daur shamanism; *ɔbɔ:* (*oboo*) ritual; meanings and classifications of *oboo*; *ɔbɔ: əʤin* (oboo spirit); *xal* (clan)-*mokun* (branches of clan); *mokun kurə* (*mokun* circle 莫昆圈)

Citation: Sa, Minna. 2023. Deities System and Ritual Practice: A Case Study of the Daur Shamanic *Oboo* Ritual. *Religions* 14: 661. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14050661

Academic Editors: Thomas Michael and Feng Qu

Received: 15 April 2023
Revised: 1 May 2023
Accepted: 3 May 2023
Published: 16 May 2023

1. Introduction

Many ethnic groups in China believe in shamanism, which has a long tradition and covers a wide range of geographical areas and presents in multiple formats. The Daur are one of them. Most of the Daur people live in the Hulun Buir of Inner Mongolia, Qiqihar of Heilongjiang Province, and Tacheng of Xinjiang. The basic unit of Daur society is the equal clan, *xal—mokun* (哈勒—莫昆)[1] (Manduertu 1999, p. 298), and there were about 20 unique Daur clan surnames[2] (Neimenggu Zizhiqu Bianjizu 1985, p. 188), each of which indicated a specific *xal—mokun*.

The Daur people traditionally practice shamanism. Its original form is mainly reflected in the presence of shaman spirits and the dependence of shaman inheritance on blood clans. However, in the late 1940s, traditional folk religions, including shamanism, were regarded as "feudalistic superstitions". Since the 1940s, the inheritance of the Daur shaman had been interrupted for about 50 years, and it did not recover until the beginning of the 1990s. In the late 1990s, the shamanistic tradition began to recover (Sa 2019a, p. 2 of 19).

Daur shamanism, comparatively well-preserved throughout centuries, has always been a hot topic for scholars in China and abroad. There were Japanese scholars such as Ikejiri Noboru and Ōmachi TokuzŌ as early as in the 1930s and 1940s, and British anthropologist Ethel John Lindgren, who investigated and recorded the Daur people and their shamanism. Ikejiri wrote a special account of *oboo*[3] in the appendix of *Dawoerzu* (*The Daur*) (Ikejiri 1982, pp. 58–59). Ōmachi studied *oboo* sacrifice of the Daur from the perspective of common spirits and common sacrifices of "clan" (Ōmachi 1995, pp. 60–63). Lindgren studied the Daur and its neighboring ethnic groups from the perspective of Shaman regalia (Lindgren 1935, vol. 17, pp. 365–78).

Caroline Humphrey and Urgunge Onon's book *Shamans and Elders: Experience, Knowledge and Power among the Daur Mongols* has attracted more academic attention since it was published in 1996 (Humphrey and Onon 1996). Since 1998, when shaman Siqingua held

an initiation ritual, Daur shamanism began to revive and became a research hotspot again. Peter Knecht, who had conducted a long-term survey on the rituals of the shaman Siqingua and her disciples for nearly 20 years, wrote "Dawoer Saman Zhi Guanjian" (*Glimpses at a Daur Shaman*) (Knecht 2013, pp. 237–47). "*A Revitalized Daur Shamanic Ritual from Northeast China*" by Kara, Dávid Somfai, Mihály Hoppál was composed after the authors' study on Siqingua's ceremony (Kara and Hoppál 2009, pp. 141–69).

Meanwhile, a group of scholars in China have paid close attention to and studied the revival and ritual reconstruction of contemporary Daur Shamanism. Scholars such as Meng Huiying, Guo Shuyun, and Seyin have investigated contemporary Daur shamanism. Relevant research results include Sa Minna, Wu Fengling, and Meng Huiying et al. *Observations and Reflections on the Orminan Culture—A Case Study of the Wo Jufen's Ritual* (Sa et al. 2011), Ding Shiqing and Saiyintana's *Dawoerzu Saman Wenhua Yicun Diaocha* (*Survey of the Shamanic Culture of the Daur*) (Ding 2011), Meng Shengbin's *Dawoerzu Samanjiao Yanjiu* (*Studies on Daur Shamanism*) (Meng 2019), etc.

In recent years, the ritual and practice of Daur shamanism have continued to draw academic attention. Qu Feng studied the spirit belief and landscape construction of Daur shamanism from the perspective of Ontology (Qu 2021). Aurore Dumont studied ecological environments and ethnic habitats from the perspective of ecological anthropology (Dumont 2021). However, only several scholars made in-depth studies on the details of the ritual itself and the connotation of the spirit system.

My father is Solon Ewenki and my mother is Daur. I was born in Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner and speak both the Chinese and the Dauric languages, which is a distinct advantage in field research. With a good knowledge of Daur language, I was able to have a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the specific connotation of each ritual when I participated in the observation of various rituals of the Shaman and her disciples and carried out detailed descriptions of shaman rituals and translation and annotation of the content of divine songs. I have been observing and interviewing the Daur shamans and their rituals from 2009 and studying the rituals of Daur shamanism, the lyric texts of the shamanic invocation songs, polytheism, animism and their beliefs. By 2022, I had participated in more than 50 rituals of shaman Siqingua and shaman Wo Jufen and her other disciples, including offering sacrifices to ancestors, initiation rituals, *ɔbɔ:* rituals, *lʊs* rituals, and *ɔmina:n* (ominaan) rituals.

Among the different categories of Daur shamanic ceremonies, the *oboo* worship ceremony has a large number of participants and a wide range of influences which can best reflect the belief concept and worship activities of natural spirits in Daur shamanism. Moreover, the revival of shamanism in the contemporary Daur society is largely related to the restoration and reconstruction of *xal-mokun*, the traditional clan organization of Daur. Among the functions of *mokun*, whether in the past or nowadays, the *oboo* worship is as important as the ancestor sacrifice ritual, which is the public sacrifice activity of *mokun*.

The tradition of offering sacrifices to *oboo* comes from ancient shamanistic beliefs. According to the Daur Social History Survey, which began in the 1950s, and the data compilation published in the 1980s, Daur *oboo* worship is very common and has a long history. Originally, when people lived in a community with *mokun* as the basic unit, they set up *oboo* to offer sacrifices annually and killed bulls, sheep, or pigs for sacrifice. Later, when people from different *mokuns* lived together within the same region, villages became the units of *oboo* worship, and members of *mokuns* jointly held sacrifice rituals (Neimenggu Zizhiqu Bianjizu 1985, p. 256). In addition to Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, Daur people in Qiqihar and Ewenki autonomous Banner also had the habit of offering sacrifices to *oboo*. It is said that a shaman is not the main conductor of the ritual; they only sing and dance to pray for good luck when offering sacrifices to *oboo* in Qiqihar (Wu 1999, p. 296). Lamas were invited to chant sutras. There were no such traditional activities as horse races or wrestling in an *oboo* worship ceremony, and all men except woman are expected to participate the rituals. The *oboo* is built in *mokun* cemetery in Ewenki autonomous Banner (Manduertu 1999, p. 296). Although the specific sacrificial customs are varied, the pur-

pose of sacrifice is generally the same, that is, to pray for good weather, good crops, and prosperous livestock (Neimenggu Zizhiqu Bianjizu 1985, p. 256).

2. The Image, Meaning, and Classifications of *Oboo*

2.1. Image of Oboo

Japanese scholar Ikejiri Noboru said in the appendix of *The Daur* that people get the impression of *oboo* when they set foot in Mongolia. On the top of mountains, on high slopes, on small mounds, on the banks of rivers, on the banks of lakes, as long as there are targets, there are cairns piled up by stones, which are called *oboo*. *Oboo*'s form is not fixed or exactly the same. It is usually about 5 to 6 feet tall and about 1.5 feet in diameter. They are usually made of stones[4] (Ikejiri 1982, pp. 58–59). This is the general image of *oboo*.

2.2. Meaning of Oboo

Why did the Daur people sacrifice to *oboo*? One of the most renowned reasons recorded in the literature is to ask for rain (Ikejiri 1982, pp. 58–59). The second is to pray for good weather, harvests, and prosperous livestock (Neimenggu Zizhiqu Bianjizu 1985, p. 256). However, why do people think that worshipping *oboo* will result in being blessed and fulfilled? It comes from their traditional shamanistic beliefs.

Since ancient times, the Daur people have believed in shamanism and animism. In addition to the God of Heaven (*təŋgər*, 天神), the spirits of ancestors (*xuʤur barkən*, 祖先神) and the Niangniang goddess (*njaŋnjaŋ barkən*, 娘娘神), the mountain spirits (*auləi barkən*, 敖雷巴日肯), and the waters (rivers) spirits (*lus*, 罗斯, Morin-Dawaa *lusuŋ* 罗松) (Sa 2014, pp. 64–68). The natural spirits they worshipped could be roughly divided into two categories: the spirits of mountains and the spirits of water (namely the spirits of rivers). The spirits of mountains are called *auləi barkən*, including the animal spirits living in the forests, mountains, cliffs, hills, etc.[5] The spirits of waters (rivers) are collectively known as the *lus*, the animal spirits around the river, lake, sea, and spring, and so on[6] (Sa 2021, pp. 3–4). The spirits living inside the house are symbolized by portraits and idols, while *oboo*s are built for the spirits in the wild. These animal spirits could all be the master of *oboo*, which are called *ɔbɔ: əʤin* (master of *oboo*, 敖包额金). There are many different kinds of animals, and these animal spirits could all become *ɔbɔ: əʤin*. Therefore, Shaman Siqingua said that *oboo* came from different sources (Ding 2011, p. 240).

2.3. Classifications of Oboo

According to the different sacrificial subjects and organizers, the *oboo* sacrificial ceremonies mainly include folk sacrificial ceremonies and official sacrificial ceremonies. The *oboo* subject to folk sacrifice can be divided into two categories: *xal—mokun ɔbɔ:* (哈勒-莫昆敖包, namely clan *oboo*) and local *oboo* (地方敖包). Among them, *xal—mokun ɔbɔ:* includes clan *oboo* and *mokun oboo*, with *mokun oboo* being the majority. Local *oboo* evolved from *xal—mokun ɔbɔ:* (Sa 2021, p. 182).

According to the corresponding natural deities worshipped by the Daur people, *oboo* can be divided into two categories: mountain spirit series *oboo* (山系神灵敖包) and water spirit series *oboo* (水系神灵敖包, dragon spirit *oboo*, river spirit *oboo*). In the general sense, the daily *oboo* refers to the mountain spirit *oboo*, and the water spirit *oboo* or river spirit *oboo* are called *lusuŋ ɔbɔ:* (罗松敖包) (Sa 2019a, pp. 3–4 of 19).

Both the mountain spirit *oboo* and the water (river) spirit *oboo* are originally *xal—mokun ɔbɔ:*. After the continuous differentiation of the traditional clan organization *xal—mokun*, the single clan *oboo* gradually evolved into the local *oboo* (regional *oboo*) owned by different clans. The above two categories of *oboo* are folk sacrifice *oboo*.

2.3.1. Mountain Spirit *Oboo*

The mountain-system spirit *oboo* is divided into *xal—mokun ɔbɔ:* and local (regional) *oboo*. The most common example of the former is the mountain spirit *oboo*. In the past, each

clan built their own *oboo* and offered sacrifices periodically. The local *oboo* evolved from clan *oboo*. The local *oboo* is usually named after the place name.

2.3.2. Water Spirit *ɔbɔ:*

The water-system spirit *oboo*, collectively known as dragon spirit *oboo* (*lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ:*), can be divided into local (region) *oboo* and *xal—mokun ɔbɔ:*. According to the difference of water sources, the water-system spirit *oboo* is divided into *lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ:* (dragon spirit *oboo*) and spring water *oboo*.

Lʊsʊŋ (罗松, Morin-Dawaa) is the *lʊs* (罗斯, Hailar and Nantun), which is the general name of the dragon spirit and the spirit of water (river). In the past, *xal—mokun* of the Daur ethnic group had a tradition of building *lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ:* by the riverside.

Bʊlar (布拉日) means spring water, and *bʊlar ɔbɔ:* (布拉日敖包) means spring water *oboo*, which is built at the foot of the mountains or hills where the spring comes out. The spring *oboo* is mainly based on local *oboo*. (Please see some photos in Appendix A.)

2.3.3. Shaman's Tomb *Oboo- ʃandəŋ ɔbɔ:*

ʃandəŋ ɔbɔ: (山登敖包) is a special type of *oboo*. The *ʃandəŋ* (山登) is the deceased shaman's tomb. A *ʃandəŋ ɔbɔ:* is an *oboo* built on the hill around ten to dozens of meters north of the *ʃandəŋ*. Shaman Siqingua said that "Each *ʃandəŋ* must have an *oboo*". This is a request to the earth god (土地神) for a precious land to open a path to the future for the next generation of shaman, which has profound meaning (Sa 2021, pp. 3–4). While the Daur people in Hailar call the tomb of a shaman *ʃandəŋ*, Daurs in Morin-Dawaa call the shaman's tomb *jad'ən ɔbɔ:* (雅德恩敖包). The difference is that the *jad'ən ɔbɔ:* is a two-in-one form of the *ʃandəŋ* and the *ʃandəŋ ɔbɔ:*, which are not built separately.

It needs to be explained that since a *ʃandəŋ ɔbɔ:* is the deceased shaman's tomb, its sacrifice rituals are usually conducted by shamans from his/her family and the descendants of the family. Other types of *oboo*, whether mountain system spirits *oboo* or water(river) system spirits *oboo*, *xal—mokun ɔbɔ:*, or local (region) *oboo*, are worshiped by *xal—mokun* members or village groups.

2.4. The Tradition of Official Oboo Sacrifice

Since the Qing Dynasty, in addition to the *ɔbɔ:* sacrifice rituals held in the folk society, there are also official *oboo* sacrifice ceremonies. According to the resources collected by the above-mentioned investigation group, a map, drawn before the Aigun Treaty (瑷珲条约) was signed, which showed the *Buteha* Eight Banner soldiers' patrolling route to the Outer Khingan Mountain area (外兴安岭地区). It was marked with many *oboo*s. These *oboo*s were mainly subject to official sacrifices (Neimenggu Zizhiqu Bianjizu 1985, p. 256). In the system of public sacrifices, the official sacrifices shall be shared by the chief officials and the deputy. The chief official's *oboo* is called *Yamen Oboo* (衙门敖包), which is on the top of the hill about five miles north of Yiwoqi Houtun. The deputy's *oboo* is called *Qi Oboo* (旗敖包), which is on the east hill of Nierji Tun (尼尔基屯, namely *Nierji* town 尼尔基镇). Its sacrificial system still uses cattle, pigs, sheep, and other livestock, and sacrifices are offered in spring and autumn twice every year. The official in charge led all the officers and soldiers to burn incense and read the prayer. The content refers to heaven and earth, mountains and rivers, and gods and goddesses, and the words of prayers are the same as the folk sacrifice. The *bagʧi* (巴格其, healer and priest) usually did not join the ceremony. The autumn sacrifices were to thank the blessing of deities' good weather, good crops, safety of people and animals, and still to pray for mercy, exempt from all disasters as the main sacrificial words. Following that, the meat for sacrifice was distributed within the department. The sacrificial method of *Qi Oboo* was the same as that of *Yamen Oboo*. There were games for the festival, such as shooting, horse racing, wrestling, or dancing (Dawoer Ziliaoji 1998, p. 222).

There are no records to tell when the Official sacrifices of *Yamen Oboo* ceased, but the *Qi Oboo*'s official sacrificial activities have continued. This *Qi Oboo* is just the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*

built by *mərdəŋ xal nir'iʧen* (莫日登哈勒尼日耶浅). Although it was built by *nir'iʧen*, the other six *mokun* people of the "*dulu mərdəŋ*"[7] also come to worship. After the Qing government set up the Eight Banners Yamen of Buteha, the deputy steward led officers and soldiers to worship *nir'i ɔbɔ:* every year and formed the tradition of the official offerings to *Qi Oboo*. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, on 15 August 1958, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner was established. Since then, every year on 15 August, all departments and units of the Autonomous Banner government and local people gathered to celebrate the founding Day and held commemorative activities on the east hill of *Nierji* Town, beginning with the worship of the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*.

In 2001, to build the Nierji Reservoir (尼尔基水库), it was necessary to level the east hill of *Nierji* Town.[8] *Nir'i ɔbɔ:* must be removed. The Autonomous Banner government decided to consolidate primary *Qi Oboo* and *Yamen Oboo* to build the *Buteha Eight Banners and Yamen Oboo* (布特哈八旗衙门斡包). *Mərdəŋ xal* needs to build a new *nir'i ɔbɔ:*. From then on, the original two-in-one function of the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* was separated, and the function belonging to *Qi Oboo* was incorporated into *Yamen Oboo*, continuing the tradition of official offering *oboo*. It is scheduled to offer sacrifices to *Buteha Eight Banners and Yamen Oboo* in the morning of *Wobao Festival* (斡包节, mainly *oboo* festival) on June 28 every year. The functions belonging to *xal—mokun ɔbɔ:* were returned to *mərdəŋ xal*. The new *nir'i ɔbɔ:* located in the mountainous region southwest of *the Daur Minzu Garden* (达斡尔民族园) led by those of other Daur people with different surnames, in total input and effort, including such as *uərə xal*, *gu:bəl xal*, and *aula xal*. Therefore, this new *nir'i ɔbɔ:* is no longer the original *oboo* of single *mərdəŋ xal*. However, it is still believed to be controlled and periodically sacrificed to by the members of the *mərdəŋ xal*.

3. The Overview of the Main Performances of the Ceremony of the *Nir'i ɔbɔ:*

3.1. The Cause of a nir'i ɔbɔ: Ceremony

In 2014, in order to win the contest for the title of "the Hometown of Shaman Culture in China" (中国萨满文化之乡), the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner decided to invite shaman Siqingua (斯琴掛) and shaman Wo Jufen (沃菊芬) to hold a Daur shaman ritual for the judging experts. Because of the dual attributes and special status of the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* in Morin-Dawaa, the two shamans decided to perform the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual. Although the ceremony was officially initiated, it was not an official ceremony or a common folk ceremony, but a traditional ritual of offering sacrifice to *oboo* performed by Daur shaman. Its most prominent feature and most important ritual is that the chief shamans invoke their deities and proclaim the oracles.

On 29th June, the ceremony started. Those who participated in the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual were the staff of the tourism department of the government, the family members and disciples of the chief shamans, the seven *mokun* members of *mərdəŋ xal*. As for the people involved in the restoration and reconstruction of the new *nir'i ɔbɔ:*, there are as many as the *mokun* family members as described in the *uərə xal*, *gu:bəl xal*, and *aula xal*, as well as other people, as described in the *xal-mokun* and other local peoples. The offerings and sacrifices were jointly funded by the government department, *mərdəŋ xal*, the chief shamans, and their disciples.

3.2. Preparation of the nir'i ɔbɔ: Ritual

A few days before the *oboo* ritual, preparations had begun. The shaman Siqingua led her family members and disciples from Nantun to Morin-Dawaa. The shamans' assistants, family members, and helpers bought ritual supplies, including assorted *Hada* (哈达), seven colors of silk fabric cut into about two-fingers-wide color strips, colorful square flags, thread incense, special incense "*sang*" (桑), one red bull, two black pigs, three white sheep and other sacrifices, assorted pastries, a variety of fruits, milk, liquor, red wine, and other offerings.

3.2.1. Pre-Prayer Ceremony

On June 28, the night before the ceremony of *oboo*, the pre-prayer ceremony *da:rkabe* (达日卡贝) was held at Wo Jufen's home. The seven *mokun* members of *mərdəŋ xal* knelt down, worshiping the ancient spirits of the shaman Siqingua and shaman Wo Jufen. Wearing Daur costumes and shaman headdresses, the two shamans beat drums and sang prayers, alerting the *xal-mokun* and animal signs (属相) of the worshipers to the ancient spirits and *oboo* spirits, so that when the worshipers performed the ritual the next day, the shaman *ʊŋgʊr* (*ongons*) could talk to them.

3.2.2. Offering and Sacrificing

On the morning of 29 June, shaman Siqingua and shaman Wo Jufen led the group to the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* located northwest of Nierji Town and began a busy schedule of preparations. On the altar in front of the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*, shamans and helpers put the offerings such as fruit, cakes, cooked eggs, and milk, and lit the incense and butter lamp. From the top of the center post of the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*, a string of colored square flags was drawn in all directions. The men of the shaman's household represent the shaman. The men of *mərdəŋ xal* ascended to the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* and bound the various colors of *Hada* across the central pillar of the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*. On the west side of the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*, about 70 cm high, thick plum-wood shelves which were lined with willow branches were used to display the head, limbs, arterial blood, and major internal organs of the sacrificed red bull. Shamans and the *xal-mokun* families' members attending the ceremony tied ribbons of colorful silk to new willow branches, while men replaced them with bundles of old willow branches in the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*'s central column. A special blend of spices "*Sang*" incense was lit in the four corners of the *ɔbɔ:* to clean the ceremonial site. Shaman Siqingua and Wo Jufen and other disciples spread milk around the *oboo*, worshiping the gods of heaven and local gods, simultaneously calling their own spirits. A few dozen meters west of *oboo*, the helpers set up four big iron pots to slaughter pigs, bull, and sheep, then they cooked the meat, which were taken out when the appearance of the flesh had been slightly cooked and discolored.

At the same time, some disciples and aides put fruits, cakes and pastries, liquor, red wine, eggs, and other offerings, and lit the incense and butter lamps for the local god (*gaʤir əʤilŋ*)[9] and *mərdəŋ xal lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ:*[10]. The offerings of the local gods were placed in the forest not far from the southeast of the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*. The offerings for the *lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ:* (dragon spirit *oboo*) were taken by the shaman's family members by car to be placed in front of *lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ:* sitting on the cliff of Nenjiang River in the Daur Minzu Garden.

3.3. The Main Rites and the Spirits Be Invoked

3.3.1. Offering Sacrifices and Praying, the Chief Shamans Invoked Their Spirits

When the offerings were all laid out, the steaming pigs, beef, and mutton were sent to the altar, shaman Siqingua began to wear the shaman costume *sama:ʃək* (萨玛仕克), and the copper mask *abagaladaj* (阿巴嘎拉岱) sang the divine song "Inviting the Spirits of Shaman Costume to Help" (请神衣佑助歌). Shaman Wo Jufen wore the shaman costume *sama:ʃək* and shaman hat. After dressed, standing side by side facing the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*, the two shamans started to sing and beat the drum together. The general meaning of the prayer song was to tell out who had come with the spirits of various *xal-mokun* peoples, and what offerings and sacrifices had been made to the *oboo* spirits, etc.

3.3.2. Shaman Siqingua Possessed by the Shaman Spirit

Shaman Siqingua's *ʊŋgʊr nir'itʃen da:ʧi ɔbɔ: sairdiə əʤin* (尼日耶浅·达其敖包·赛日跌额金) came and summoned ten groups of people to talk to them. The *xal-mokun* and their animal signs of the summoned people are as follows:[11]

(1) The *aʊla xal la:litʃen* (敖拉哈勒拉里浅) child, born in the Year of Chicken, wanted to offer the wine (white wine).

Around the time, that shaman *ʊŋgʊr* expressed his joy because of having houses and seats, told the people to pay attention to their body, and then recounted his soil and water damage and the *lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ:* polluted.

(2) The *aʊla xal dʊ:ənʧen æli* (敖拉哈勒多恩浅爱里) boy born in the Year of Tiger.

(3) The *mərdəŋ xal* (莫日登哈勒) some boy.

The shaman *ʊŋgʊr* introduced himself as *nir'iʧen da:ʧi ɔbɔ: sairdiə əʤin*,[12] and talked about where he came from and what he experienced.

(4) The *mərdəŋ xal* (莫日登哈勒) boy born in the Year of Tiger, to sacrifice tea.

(5) The *mərdəŋ xal ʃibotʃī æli* (莫日登哈勒西博奇爱里) boy, born in the Year of Dog, wanted him to offer tea, blessed him, and gave him *kʊtʊr bʊjin* (阔托日· 博音).[13]

(6) The *mərdəŋ xal ʃəʊrutʊrsutʃen* (莫日登哈勒寿儒托日苏浅) children from the Year of Chicken and Dog.

(7) The *mərdəŋ xal ʃibotʃītʃen* (莫日登哈勒西博奇浅) boy born in the Year of Monkey, the *mərdəŋ xal* (莫日登哈勒) man born in the Year of Dragon, to offer the flagon of wine (wine).

(8) The (*mərdəŋ xal*) *ʃibotʃī æli* (西博奇爱里) boy, born in the Year of Monkey, and the girl born in the Year of Horse.

(9) The *du:lar xal* (杜拉日哈勒) girl born in the Year of Dog.[14]

(10) The leader born in the Year of Monkey to offer tea.[15]

Shaman Siqingua's *ʊŋgʊr* left the scene.

3.3.3. Shaman Wo Jufen Possessed by the Shaman Spirit

Shaman Wo Jufen's *ʊŋgʊr lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ: əʤin mərdəŋ tajti* (罗松敖包额金· 莫日登太提) came, introduced herself, said that the members of "*dʊlʊ mərdəŋ*" (多罗· 莫日登)[16] (Sa 2019a, p. 11 of 19) all came, she expressed the joy of seeing their descendants, and talked to 19 groups of people. The *xal-mokun* and their animal signs of the summoned people are as follows:[17]

(11) The *ʃəʊrutʊrsutʃen* (寿儒托日苏浅) great-grandson, born in the Year of Pig, wanted him to offer white wine (wine).

(12) The *nir'iʧen* (尼日耶浅) great-grandson born in the Year of Sheep.

(13) The *ʃibotʃītʃen* (西博奇浅) great-grandson, born in the Year of Dog, to the colored wine (wine). *mərdəŋ xal ʃibotʃītʃen* (莫日登哈勒· 西博奇浅) great-grandsons, born in the Year of Dog, Dragon, Tiger, Pig, Monkey, to offer the colored wine, blessed them with white water *tærmit* (泰日米特).[18]

(14) The *ʃi'ə mərdəŋʧen* (西额莫日登浅) great-grandson born in the Year of Tiger to offer white milk; the grandson born in the Year of Horse to offer white milk, and blessed them with spring water *tærmit* for *ʃi'ə mərdəŋʧen* (西额莫日登浅), and the children of *mərdəŋ xal* (莫日登哈勒).

(15) The *urkun mərdəŋʧen* (乌其肯莫日登浅) great-grandsons born in the Year of Tiger, Pig, and Cow.

(16) The *xʊitʊr mərdəŋʧen* (会托日莫日登浅) great-grandson, born in the Year of Monkey to offer white milk, and blessed him with white milk *tærmit*.

(17) The *urkun mərdəŋʧen* (乌日昆莫日登浅) great-grandson born in the Year of Pig, asked him to offer white milk.

(18) The *ʃəʊrutʊrsutʃen* (寿儒托日苏浅) great-grandsons born in the Year of Chicken, Pig, Monkey, Dragon, Pig, Rabbit, Snake, Sheep, grandson and great-grandchildren to offer colored wine, then blessed them with white milk *tærmit*.

(19) The *mərdəŋ xal* (莫日登哈勒) great-grandson born in the Year of Dog.

(20) The *mərdəŋ xal* (莫日登哈勒) great-granddaughter born in the Year of Chicken, *nir'iʧen* (尼日耶浅) great-granddaughter born in the Year of Monkey to offer the white milk, *ʃibotʃītʃen* (西博奇浅) great-grandson born in the Year of Dog. The shaman's *ʊŋgʊr* admonished and taught them.[19]

(21) The *bo:roŋʧen* (博荣浅)[20] great-grandson, who was born in the Year of Pig, to offer white wine, and blessed them with white milk *tærmit* for him and his children.

(22) The *avla xal la:litʃen* (敖拉哈勒拉里浅) children, to offer colored wine, and blessed them with spring water *tærmit*.

(23) The *gʊ:bəl xal mannatʃen* (郭博勒哈勒满那浅) great-grandson born in the Year of Dog, asked him to offer white milk, and blessed him and his children with white milk *tærmit*.

(24) The official who initiated the ceremony.

(25) I asked for white milk from *ənən xal* (鄂嫩哈勒), and those who came with her, I called them and blessed them with white milk *tærmit*.

(26) The scholars, experts, journalists, the granddaughter born in the Year of Monkey, was asked to offer colored wine, and blessed them with white wine *tærmit*.

(27) The *likən xal* (李肯哈勒)[21] daughters and sons, born in the Year of Rabbit and Tiger to offer white milk.

(28) The Ewenki *barʃ* from afar, the great-granddaughters come from *deŋteketʃen* (登特科浅) born in the Year of Monkey and Tiger, and blessed them with white milk *tærmit*.[22]

(29) Some Daur people from afar pray for peace (*amʊl tajbən*, 阿姆勒· 泰本).

Shaman Wo Jufen's *ʊŋgʊr* left the scene.

3.3.4. Circling the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* and Praying for Good Luck

Shaman Siqingua, wearing the shaman costume *sama:ʃək* and shaman hat, beat the drum and sang blessing songs to the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*. Her assistants and disciples stood behind her. She sang a few prayers and then called out three times *xʊre-xʊre* (霍日耶！霍日耶！)[23]. Those people standing behind her called *xʊre-xʊre* three times. While shouting, people held food such as snacks, milk, and fruit in their hands and drew with their hands in clockwise circles. Meanwhile, shaman Wo Jufen, dressed in a shaman costume *sama:ʃək* and shaman hat, led the people attending the ceremony to go around the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* three times in a clockwise direction to pray for good luck. Accompanied by her son, shaman Wo Jufen beat the drum as she walked, hit the drum a few times, and shouted *xʊre-xʊre* (霍日耶！霍日耶！) three times. Those people following her also called out *xʊre-xʊre* three times, and occasionally sprinkled milk, liquor, and red wine on *oboo*.

3.3.5. Shamans Sending Back the Spirits

Shaman Siqingua and shaman Wo Jufen stood side by side facing the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*. They leaned forward and half squatted to face the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* and shook the drums three times to show their respect. Following that, they stood up straight and gently beat drums, silently reciting prayers to send back their *ʊŋgʊr*. When the two shamans took off their *sama:ʃək* (shaman costumes) and hats, putting on their traditional daily dresses, it marked the end of the ceremony of offering sacrifices to the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*.

3.3.6. Bowing Down and Biding Farewell to the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*

The two shamans, their disciples, the *mərdəŋ xal-mokun* members, and other people of different clans who attended the ceremony all kowtowed three times at the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* before leaving. The others circled the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* three times and then left.

4. A Brief Analysis of the *nir 'i ɔbɔ:* Ritual

The contemporary Daur *oboo* worship ceremony restores an important procedure in the traditional *oboo* sacrifice ritual, in which the shaman invokes the spirits to announce the oracle to the people, which reveals the true meaning of *oboo* spirit as the spirits of mountains and waters(rivers) and shows the original characteristics of traditional shamanism. It continues the traditional functions of praying for rain and fertility and adapts to the development of the times to expand and extend the function of offering sacrifices to *oboo*.

Compared with the ordinary folk sacrificial *oboo* and the official sacrificial *oboo* ceremony, the biggest difference and characteristic of the *oboo* ritual presided over by Daur shaman (*jad'ən*) is that the shaman's *ʊŋgʊr*, the *oboo* spirits (*ɔbɔ: ədʒin*), invoked and looked for people to speak, as proclaimed by the oracles. During the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual in 2014, the two

main chief shamans evoked their spirits one after another and summoned seven *mokuns* of *mərdəŋ xal* and other *xal-mokun* members to talk. They called on 29 groups of people with different clan to admonish, counsel, and instruct. These contents are very rich, involving all aspects of people's production and life[24]. Limited by the length of this paper, I will only select several representative shaman divine songs to briefly analyze the characteristics and functions of the contemporary Daur shaman's *oboo* ritual.

4.1. The Characteristics of the Ceremony of the nir 'i ɔbɔ:

4.1.1. The Meaning of *Oboo* Indicates That *Oboo* Is the Residence and Symbol of Natural Spirits

In Daur shamanism, *oboo* has the same symbolic significance as the "*barkən*" (God or spirit) portraits and idols in the home, which are the spirits in the home, and *ɔbɔ:* is the dwelling place built by the *xal-mokun* family (which later developed into a village, a local place) for a specific wild animal spirit, the spirit of mountain or water (river). The *oboo* represents various mountain or water(river) spirits "*ɔbɔ: ədʒin*", namely *oboo* spirits, becoming the common patron saint of *xal-mokun* family. As the shaman Siqingua's *ʊŋgʊr* "*da:ʧi ɔbɔ: sairdiə ədʒin*" said during the *nir 'i ɔbɔ:* ritual in 2014, "children of *mərdəŋ xal*, I had stood in the middle of the seven brothers' *mokun*, you gave me a house to live in". This "livable house" refers to the restoration of the new *nir 'i ɔbɔ:*.

The natural spirits worshipped by Daur people can be divided into at-home and in-the-wild worship. The natural spirits worshipped at home generally are big mountain spirit and small mountain spirit.[25] In addition to mountain spirit (*aʊləi barkən*), shaman (*jad'ən*) and bone-setter (*barʃ*) also worship the snake spirit (*nuʤir barkən*). The natural spirits at home are usually enshrined in the family units. The natural spirits worshipped in the wild mainly fall into two categories: mountain spirits and water (rivers) spirits. Generally, animal spirits outnumbered the others, and among them large animal spirits are the majority. To the natural spirits in the wild, for whom *xal-mokun* built *oboo* and made regular sacrifices and offerings, they had a nature and significance of public sacrifice comparable to the *mokun* family.

4.1.2. The *nir'i ɔbɔ:* Has Its Particularity and Typicality That the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* Ritual Is a Comprehensive Platform for Offering Sacrifices to Natural Spirits and Ancestral Spirits

The *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual in 2014 is a comprehensive platform for the sacrifice of the ancient mountain spirit *oboo*, the water spirit *oboo*, the ancestral spirit of *mokun* of *mərdəŋ xal*, and the gods of the place where the new *nir'i ɔbɔ:* is located. It is a specific and typical representative among the ethnic minorities in northern China. This is decided by the particularity of the "*nir'i ɔbɔ:*" and "*lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ:*" of *mərdəŋ xal*.

First, the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual is the sacrifice of *mərdəŋ xal nir'iʧen's* original ancient mountain *oboo* spirit. Although it was moved from the original site and reconstructed, its *oboo* spirit is still the original "*ɔbɔ: ədʒin*" (*oboo* spirit). Therefore, shaman Siqingua's *ʊŋgʊr* showed up (came in) and introduced himself as "*nir'iʧen da:ʧi ɔbɔ: sairdiə ədʒin*, namely "The old master of the original *oboo*". Moreover, although it was first built by *nir'iʧen*, the other six branches of *dʊlʊ mərdəŋ* also worship and offer there. As such, it is the mountain god *oboo* of the whole *mərdəŋ xal*.

Secondly, before the ceremony of the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*, there was also an offering for the *lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ:* (dragon spirit *oboo*) of *mərdəŋ xal.* Because of the distance between the two *oboo*, the chief shamans and the clan members attending the ceremony could not appear in front of the two *oboo* at the same time. However, when setting up the site for the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ceremony, the members of the chief shaman's family and *mərdəŋ xal-mokun's* drove to *lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ:* to place various offerings of fruits, pastries, and red wine before lighting incense and butter lamps. Therefore, in the process of the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual, the spirit of water *oboo* "*lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ: ədʒin*" came in front of the mountain spirit *oboo*, the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*, and proclaimed the oracles.

Thirdly, the sample for the sacrifice of the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* is also a tribute to the ancestral spirit of *mərdəŋ xal*. The master of the *lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ: ədʒin* is precisely *Mərdəŋ tajti* (莫日登太提).

Mərdəŋ tajti, meaning the grandmother of *mərdəŋ xal*, is also known as *mərdəŋ ətəu* (莫日登额头乌), respectfully called Old Lady of *mərdəŋ xal* (Neimenggu Zizhiqu Bianjizu 1985, p. 256). Her legendary stories are well-known among the Daur people. From what she said to seven *mokun* members of "*dʊlʊ mərdəŋ*" in the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual, it could be seen that she, as the ancestral spirit, came to educate, instruct, and advise her descendants.

After the arrival of the shaman Wo Jufen's *ʊŋgʊr*, she beat a drum and introduced herself:

> *Generation after generation, I came down from the Amur. I came along the Naven River and the Normin River. I rolled seven springs along the river. Today, on a good day like this, I have come, I have seen my children and grandchildren, I am happy! I am "lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ: əʤin mərdəŋ tajti". I'm glad to see all my grandchildren and great-grandchildren here (3.3.3-11).* (Sa 2021, pp. 202–4)

The shaman Wo Jufen's *ʊŋgʊr* first spoke to an old man born in the Year of Pig. She spoke many words. She explained why she, as an ancestral spirit, had become "*lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ: əʤin*" (master of dragon spirit *oboo*):

> *When I walked around the "dʊlʊ mərdəŋ", people called me the crazy old lady. I always ran to the "nir'i xad"(nir'i cliff) and cried," lʊsʊŋ əʤin "(Nenjiang River spirit) said to me to give me power. When I tell people, they said I was a fool, and I was crazy. I was running in the wild of the "dʊlʊ mərdəŋ". I was running around inside "ʤa:məj ilə'a" (Zhamei flower). Then, people said I was a fool and threw me into the water. So, I sat my body on the top of lʊsʊŋ (dragon spirit, river spirit). I have "xar ʧiaŋ əʤin" (black and white snake spirit), I have "xar nuʤir əʤin" (black snake spirit). I let the spring water roll. My power is good! (3.3.3-11).* (Sa 2021, pp. 202–4)

After her arrival, she described her experiences and talked to *mokun* members. Although she was the master of "*lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ:*", she taught and advised the descendants mostly as the ancestral spirit.

Ōmachi said "Today, there are very few examples of such sacrifices to ancestral spirits in lineage (血统) or UMNO (巫统) in this (*oboo*) ritual of sacrifices" (Ōmachi 1995, pp. 62–63). He had not yet seen such vivid examples. At the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual, *mərdəŋ tajti* explained her experience after her arrival, showing that she had the dual identity of the spirit of water (*lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ: əʤin*) and the predecessor of *mokun*. She was the grandmother of *mərdəŋ xal*, the ancestor in the sense of blood, she was a wise woman and a prophet, and she was also a shaman, the witch master. Therefore, the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual means both blood and Umno's tribute to the ancestral spirit. Of course, this situation is very special; even in the Daur, other northern minority shamanism god (spirit) belief systems and worship activities are extremely rare. However, it is also very representative, indicating that the Daur take the ancestor spirits as the core belief object and the blood relationship as the bond to inherit the typical characteristics of shamanism.

Fourthly, according to traditional Daur shamanistic beliefs and customs, offering sacrifices to *oboo* requires offering sacrifices to the local gods at the same time. Therefore, the ceremony of offering sacrifices to the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* was also held to worship the local god "*gaʤir əʤin*" of the place where the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* was located at the same time. Worshippers must display offerings for the local god in the woods a few meters southeast of the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*. Additionally, when the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* was relocated and rebuilt, in addition to *mərdəŋ xal*, several other *xal-mokun* families who lived there, such as *uərə xal*, *aʊla xal*, and *gʊ:bəl xal*, also made contributions. This shows that the Daur people who live here also worship the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*.

4.2. The Functions of the Ceremony of the nir 'i ɔbɔ:

The function of traditional sacrifices *oboo* is very clear, which is to pray for rain. "In the past, Daur people used to pray to *oboo* for rain. When praying for rain, sacrificial cattle and sheep are brought to *oboo* and slaughtered as offerings. The chief priest reads the offerings, and then everyone kowtows together. After the prayers, a meal is served with

the offerings" (Noboru Ikejiri 1982, pp. 58–59). It was further explained that the purpose of the offering *oboo* was to pray for good weather, a good harvest of grain and prosperous livestock (Neimenggu Zizhiqu Bianjizu 1985, p. 256). *Oboo* worship increases the fertility function. However, this still falls under the category of rain-seeking function.

According to field investigations in recent years, both the official offering *oboo* and the folk offering *oboo* are becoming more prosperous. Good weather, peace and prosperity of the country, grain harvest, livestock prosperity, and so on, are the likely purposes of praying. Judging from the content of shaman divine songs in the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual in 2014, the function of offering sacrifices to *oboo* by Daur shamans has been expanded and extended. After the sacrificial ceremony, the chief shaman Wo Jufen said that anything can pray for *oboo*. Therefore, the functions of contemporary Daur shaman sacrifices *oboo* are diversified. Among them, it is very important to firstly increase the blessing and praying for the health and safety of the *mokun* family members, and secondly to promote the recovery and reconstruction of the traditional blood clan organization. In addition, there is lively all-around education, guidance, and exhortation from the clan members.

4.2.1. Bless and Pray for the *xal-mokun* Members in Peculiar Ways

An important function of the contemporary Daur shaman sacrificial *oboo* ceremony is to bless and pray for the *xal-mokun* family members in some special ways.

In the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual 2014, there are three symbolic blessings and praying ceremonies, namely gathering good fortune (*kʊtʊr bʊjin* 阔托日· 博音), a special form of blessing (*tærmit* 泰日米特), and converging prosperity (*xʊre xʊre* 霍日耶- 霍日耶). These are all Daur shaman's peculiar methods of blessing people. These methods were shown in this sacrificial *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ceremony.

Shaman Siqingua's *ʊŋgʊr* told a disciple born in the Year of Dog of *mərdəŋ xal ʃibotʃītʃen's* that she wanted to gather good fortune for him. She held three cups of milk in her mouth one by one, with the help of an assistant, and flung them one by one into the front of the disciple's Daur traditional costume. The shaman talked and sang with her eyes closed in the spirit possession state. The assistant helped to put the milk cups in the shaman's mouth for her to grip by her teeth. The blessed one took the front of his robe with his two hands and drew the three cups one by one into his arms, close to the front of his robe, which symbolized receiving fortune and wealth. This is Shaman Siqingua's usual way of blessing people in the presence of spirits (3.3.2.-5) (Sa 2021, p. 200).

Shaman Wo Jufen's *ʊŋgʊr* blesses in a different way from Siqingua's. She blesses people with spring water, milk, or liquor *tærmit* when *ʊŋgʊr* comes. In the state of divine possession in the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual in 2014, she blessed the grandsons and great-grandchildren born in the Year of Dog, Dragon, Tiger, Pig, Monkey of *mərdəŋ xal ʃibotʃītʃen*, and blessed the children of *ʃi'ə mərdəŋtʃen* and other members of *mərdəŋ xal*, and the children of *aʊla xal la:litʃen* with white spring water *tærmit* (3.3.3.-13\14\22). She blessed the great-grandson born in the Year of Monkey of *xʊitʊr mərdəŋtʃen*, the great-grandsons born in the Year of Chicken, Pig, Monkey, Dragon, Pig, Rabbit, Snake, Sheep of *ʃəʊrutʊrsutʃen*, and blessed the great-grandson born in the Year of Pig of *bo:roŋtʃen* and his children, and also for the great-grandson born in the Year of Dog of *gʊ:bəl xal mannatʃen* and his children, for the *ənən xal* people, for the Ewenki *barʃ* from afar, for the great-granddaughters born in the Year of Monkey, Tiger coming from *deŋteketʃen* with white milk *tærmit* (3.3.3.-16, 18, 21, 23, 25, 28). She blessed the experts, scholars, and journalists from the outside, as well as the grandchild born in the Year of Monkey with white liquor *tærmit* (3.3.3-26) (Sa 2021, pp. 201–18).

Shamans also use "*tærmit*" (泰日米特) in their daily blessing and healing for people. The *tærmit* can not only pray and bless in this way, but also drink *tærmit* milk, *tærmit* tea, and so on. Shaman Siqingua's *ʊŋgʊr* told the boy of *mərdəŋ xal* born in the Year of Tiger to ask for some "*tærmit* tea" (*tærmit ʧe*) from the *xʊʤʊr jad'ən* (mokun shaman) of *uərə xal* to drink (3.3.2.-4).

The *tærmit* liquor can also be used to "repair roads" (修路). Shaman Wo Jufen's *ʊŋgʊr* said to the great-grandson born in the Year of Tiger of *ʃi'ə mərdəŋtʃen*, in order to "repair

roads", she will make *tærmit* with wine for him. She said "Aren't you being crushed by someone else's mouth and tongue (means wagging of tongues)? So, you should often sprinkle milk, drink. Then, your road will be better and better" (3.3.3.-14).

The ceremony of "*xʊre -xʊre*" (Converge, converge means converging prosperity) prays for good fortune and blessing. After the spiritual possession was over, beating drums and singing prayers, shaman Siqingua led the clans people to call *xʊre -xʊre* and circle to draw circles three times, as they held up products, pastries, milk, and other foods. At the same time, shaman Wo Jufen led the people to go around the *nir'i ɔbɔ:.* She beat the drum as she walked. As she walked a few steps, she called out three times *xʊre-xʊre*, and the people following her shouted three times *xʊre-xʊre.* Going around *oboo* is the inevitable ceremony of offering sacrifices to *oboo*. Whether it is an official offering to *oboo* or a folk offering to *oboo*, people will go around *oboo* three circles to pray for good luck after the chief priest sings the prayer. However, a shaman presides over the sacrifice to *oboo* and leads people to turn around *oboo*, which is unique, special, and important in the folk offering to *oboo*.

4.2.2. Restore and Re-Establish the Traditional Clan Organization "*xal-mokun*"

Another major function of the contemporary Daur shaman sacrificial *oboo* ceremony is the restoration and reconstruction of the *xal-mokun*, the traditional social clan organization, which is mainly embodied in the introduction and emphasis of the concept of "*mokun kurə*" (Mokun Circle)[26] (Sa 2019b, pp. 385–89).

In 2014, during the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual, a shaman *ʊŋgʊr* repeatedly referred to the concept of "*mokun kurə*", advocating that *mokun* elders and shamans and other leaders should restrain *mokun*, help the Daur group, and contribute to the nation. The development and emphasis of the concept of "*mokun kurə*" serves as a rallying call for unity and progress among the *mokun* members to strengthen family cohesion. It is also related to the genealogical activities of *xal-mokun*. In recent years, the *xal-mokun* generally built and offered sacrifices to *oboo*, and then held genealogical conferences to continue the genealogy. For example, the *ənən xal ɔbɔ:* was restored and rebuilt in 2015, offered sacrifices to *oboo* for three consecutive years in 2016 and 2017, and held a genealogical conference in 2016 to repair the family tree (修缮家谱). The *uərə xal* was sacrificed to the clan *lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ:* in 2017 and then continued genealogy. The *aʊla xal duəjin mokun* also sacrificed to *oboo* in 2018 and continued to repair the genealogy. Most of these activities of the *xal-mokun* to offer sacrifices to *oboo* and to continue the genealogy were conducted after the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual in 2014, which can be seen as being influenced by the gradual expansion of water-wave-like circles(the expanding influence of the water ripple theory of the circle) (Fei 1999, pp. 24–36). All these increase *mokun* members' sense of identity and belonging to *mokun*.

The sacrificial *oboo* ceremony is often synchronized with the *xal-mokun*, repairing the family tree. Different from the purpose and appeal of sacrificial *oboo* in the past, the function expands and extends. The function of Daur shaman's *oboo* ritual has changed from single to multiple, which reflects the characteristics of contemporary Daur shamanism. These activities of offering sacrifices to the clan family and continuing the genealogy play a role in gathering the hearts of *mokun* members and stimulate their sense of responsibility and ambition.

4.2.3. Comprehensively Educate *mokun* Members

In the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual in 2014, the two shaman's *ʊŋgʊr* were invoked. They placed high hopes on the elders, dignities, and those bearing the mission of the ancestral spirit of *xal-mokun*, and gave advice and instruction to the members of *xal-mokun* family and other clans' people, mainly concerning the following aspects:

1. The elders should educate the descendants to inherit the Daur culture. It is necessary to educate young people to study hard and develop their skills to promote the prosperity and national progress of *xal-mokun*. 2. The shamans and other priests and healers do not forget the sacred mission, that is, to control their spirits, not for money, but to restrain *mokun*, to help the ethnic group. 3. Worship ancestral spirits, and worship *oboo*. 4.

Don't eat wild animals and cherish everything in nature. 5. Pay attention to health, pay attention to travel safety, go out to choose the direction of the day. 6. Pay attention to the tongue, avoid disputes. 7. Young people should learn more from their elders, and don't take the wrong roads. 8. Call on the people to "Restrain *Mokun*, Help the Ethnic Group and Contribute to the Country". Help should be given equally to different *mokun* and different ethnic groups.

5. Conclusions

Contemporary Daur shaman sacrificial *oboo* ceremonies continue the traditional shamanism polytheistic worship concept and the original characteristics of shaman deities. In 2014, during the ceremony of offering sacrifices to the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*, the chief shamans came successively to talk to the members of *xal-mokun*. The identity of the shaman spirits and the content of the divine songs reveal the true meaning of *oboo*, that is, *oboo* is the residence and symbol of the natural spirits. Due to the particularity and representativeness of the shaman's *ʊŋgʊr* "*nir'itʃen da:tʃi ɔbɔ: sairdiə ədʒin*" and "*lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ: ədʒin mərdəŋ tajti*", the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual is not only to worship natural spirits, but also a comprehensive platform to offer sacrifices to ancestral spirits and local gods.

The contemporary Daur shaman sacrificial *oboo* ceremonies not only continue the traditional functions of praying for rain and fertility, but also expand and extend the functions of *oboo* ritual, making it diversified. Shaman deities prayed for and blessed the family members of *xal-mokun* (clan) in Daur shaman's unique ways during the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual in 2014. The concept of "*mokun kurə*" (mokun circle) is also proposed to restore and re-establish the functions of the *xal-mokun*, the traditional consanguinity clan organization. In addition, all *mokun* members, mainly *mərdəŋ xal*, are educated in an all-round way, and the slogan "Restrain Mokun, Help the Ethnic Group and Contribute to the Country" is put forward. The *mokun* elders, shaman groups, and *mokun* members are called on to inherit traditional shaman culture, strengthen self-discipline, study cultural knowledge, be proactive and treat each other as equals, etc. These practices and words, to a certain extent, play the role of uniting the family members of the clan.

Over the past decade, shaman Siqingua and shaman Wo Jufen have presided over the restoration and reconstruction of many of the *xal-mokun oboo* and local *oboo* of the Daur ethnic group. These restorations and reconstructions (constructions) and *oboo* ceremonies have exerted an extensive and far-reaching influence on the Daur people in Hulunbuir area of Inner Mongolia, especially in Morin-Dawaa Daur autonomous Banner and Ewenki Autonomous Banner. After the ceremony of the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* in 2014, the construction (reconstruction) of the clan *oboo* and the genealogy of the family began in *xal-mokun*. Local people believe that the construction of *xal-mokun oboo* and the restoration of local *oboo* will bless the *xal-mokun* members and the local people. The construction and sacrifice of *oboo* is even associated with the progress of their children in school and work by some *mokun* families. They believe that building and sacrificing their own *xal-mokun oboo* can also bring prosperity and progress to *mokun* members (Sa 2019b, pp. 388–89). Therefore, the ritual of offering sacrifice to *oboo* restores and strengthens the clan's consciousness of the Daur people to a certain extent, arouses the sense of honor and belonging to the *mokun* family, stimulates the sense of responsibility and ambition of the clan, and can have a positively significant impact on enabling the unity and progress of the *mokun* family.

In short, in the process of inheriting and innovating shamanism in contemporary China, Daur shamanism is classical, symbolic, and representative. The Daur shaman sacrificial *oboo* ceremony has special significance and value in the reconstruction and innovation development of contemporary shamanism in China.

Funding: This research was funded by The National Social Science Fund of China, grant number 21BZJ057.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Appendix A. Field Research Picture

Figure A1. *Nir'i ɔbɔ:* and the sacrifices (On 29 June 2014, *Nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, *Nierji* Town 尼尔基镇). Photo: Minna Sa 2014.

Figure A2. Shaman Siqingua (right) and Shaman Wo Jufen (left), facing the *Nir'i ɔbɔ:*, beat drums together, sang prayers, and invoked their spirits (On 29 June 2014, *Nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, *Nierji* Town). Photo: Minna Sa 2014.

Figure A3. Shaman Siqingua's *ʊŋgʊr, nir'itʃen da:tʃi ɔbɔ: sairdiə ədʒin* was coming (On 29 June 2014, *Nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, *Nierji* Town). Photo: Minna Sa 2014.

Figure A4. Shaman Wo Jufen's *ʊŋgʊr lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ: ədʒin mərdəŋ tajti* was coming (On 29 June 2014, *Nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, *Nierji* Town). Photo: Minna Sa 2014.

Figure A5. Shaman Wo Jufen's *ʊŋgʊr* blessed people with milk *tærmit* (On 29 June 2014, *Nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, *Nierji* Town). Photo: Minna Sa 2014.

Figure A6. Shaman Siqingua, Shaman Wo Jufen, and other disciple beat drums together, sang prayers, and worshiped the heaven gods and deities in all directions (On 3 June 2017, *Mərdəŋ ɔbɔ:* ritual, the Ewenki Autonomous Banner, *Nantun* 南屯). Photo: Minna Sa, 2017.

Figure A7. Shaman Wo Jufen's *ʊŋgʊr* was invoked (On 3 June 2017, *Mərdəŋ ɔbɔ:* ritual, the Ewenki Autonomous Banner, *Nantun*). Photo: Minna Sa, 2017.

Figure A8. People circled the *mərdəŋ ɔbɔ:* (莫日登敖包) to pray for good fortune (On 3 June 2017, *Mərdəŋ ɔbɔ:* ritual, the Ewenki Autonomous Banner, *Nantun*). Photo: Minna Sa, 2017.

Figure A9. *Uərə xal lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ:* (沃热哈勒· 罗松敖包, On 16 June 2018, *uərə xal lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ:* ritual, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, *Nierji* Town). Photo: Minna Sa, 2018.

Figure A10. *Da:'rl ɔbɔ:*[27] (达日勒敖包, On 10 August 2019, *da: 'rl ɔbɔ:* ritual, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, *Dengteke* Town). Photo: Minna Sa, 2019.

Figure A11. *Aerla bʊlar ɔbɔ:* (阿尔拉· 布拉日敖包, On 12 August 2019, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, *Aerla* Town 阿尔拉镇). Photo: Minna Sa, 2019.

Figure A12. *Mərdəŋ tajti lʊsʊŋ ɔbɔ:* (莫日登太提· 罗松敖包, On 8 August 2022, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, *Nierji* Town). Photo: Minna Sa, 2022.

Notes

1 *xal—mokun* (哈勒—莫昆) is the equal clan of basic unit of Daur society. A *xal* (哈勒) is a clan, and *mokun* (莫昆) means branches of *xal*. The *xal—mokun system is* based on blood ties, and members share a common patriarchal ancestor, common living areas, common economic life, and social and cultural activities.

2 In the 1950s, the Daur Social and Historical Investigation Group (*Dawoerzu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* 达斡尔族社会历史调查) conducted investigations in the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner and Qiqihar. There were about 20 unique surnames in these two areas' Daur people—*aʊla* (敖拉), *ənən* (鄂嫩), *mərdəŋ* (莫日登), *gʊ:bəl* (郭博勒), *uərə* (沃热), etc.

3 In order to offer a better reading experience, the Dauric terms are rendered according to the pronunciation of the original words and expressed mostly in international phonetic alphabets in this article. However, *oboo* and *ɔbɔ:* are used here to indicate the holy cairns that are worshipped by the locals. Both terms share the same meaning; *oboo* is used in the general narrative of the text while *ɔbɔ:* is applied when following other Dauric words to form a semantic combination.

4 Ikejiri Noboru, *The Daur*, translated Aodenggua (奥登挂), 1982. *ɔbɔ:* (oboo)was translated into *ebo* (" 鄂博").

5 The spirits of mountains are called *auləi barkən* (敖雷巴日肯), including the animal spirits living in the forests, mountains, cliffs, hills, like fox spirit (*ʃi'ə auləi*, 西额敖雷), weasel spirit (*utʃikən auləi*, 乌其肯敖雷), black bear spirit(*ətərkən uŋgur*, 额特日肯翁果日), wolf spirit(*guskə uŋgur*, 古斯克翁果日), etc.

6 The spirits of waters(rivers) are collectively known as the *lus*, the animal spirits around the river, lake, sea and spring- such as the dragon spirit in the sky, as well as the snake spirit, fish spirit, turtle spirit and mink spirit in the water and so on.Shaman Siqingua said, *lus* (罗斯) is a Mongolian word, *luʤir barkən* (鲁吉日· 巴日肯, Morin-Dawaa *nuʤir barkən* 奴吉日· 巴日肯) is an Arabic form of the Daur. To facilitate the narration and understanding of the text, "*lus*" is usually translated directly into Chinese as *longshen* (龙神), the dragon spirit.

7 *dulu mərdəŋ* (多罗· 莫日登), means "seven *mərdəŋ*", namely seven *mokuns* of *mərdəŋ xal* (莫日登哈勒).

8 The east hill of *Nierji* Town (尼尔基镇) was called *laoshantou* (老山头) in Chinese, and *nir'i xad* (*nir'i* hill, 尼尔基山崖) in Daur language.

9 *gaʤir əʤilŋ* (嘎吉日· 额吉楞), In Daur, *gaʤir əʤilŋ* is an alteration of *gaʤir əʤin* (嘎吉日· 额金), which express the same meaning, that is, the local god.

10 *mərdəŋ xal lusuŋ ɔbɔ:* (莫日登哈勒罗松敖包), namely "*mərdəŋ tajti lusuŋ ɔbɔ:*" (莫日登太提· 罗松敖包), was restored and rebuilt by *mərdəŋ xal* in 2007.

11 For the complete text content of divine songs, please see Minna Sa 2021, pp. 197–201. When shaman Siqingua's *uŋgur* wants to talk to someone after coming, she usually calls them girl or boy from some animal sign and certain *xal-mokun*.

12 *nir'itʃen da:ʧi ɔbɔ: sairdiə əʤin* (尼日耶浅· 达其敖包· 赛日跌额金), namely the *nir'itʃen's* original *oboo*'s old master, means the *nir'itʃen's* original *oboo* mountain spirit.

13 *kutur bujin* (阔托日· 博音), means source of wealth and happiness.

14 *du:lar xal* (杜拉日哈勒), one of the surnames of the Ewenki.

15 A government official who initiated the *oboo* ceremony.

16 *dulu mərdəŋ* (多罗· 莫日登), means "seven *mərdəŋ*", namely seven parts of *mərdəŋ xal ʧuŋulo mokun* (莫日登哈勒崇斡罗莫昆), including *ʃaurutursutʃen* (寿儒托日苏浅), *ʃibotʃitʃen* (西博奇浅), *ʃi'ə mərdəŋtʃen* (西额· 莫日登浅), *utʃikən mərdəŋtʃen* (乌其肯· 莫日登浅), *xuitur mərdəŋtʃen* (会托日· 莫日登浅), *urkun mərdəŋtʃen* (乌日昆· 莫日登浅), *nir'itʃen* (尼日耶浅). Seven parts belongs to *mərdəŋ xal ʧuŋulo mokun*, express different branches in the "*ʧen*" (浅), later known as the seven *mokun*, step by step "*ʧen*" (浅) indicates that the *mokun*.

17 For the complete text content of divine songs, please see Minna Sa 2021, pp. 201–18. When shaman Wo Jufen's *uŋgur* wants to talk to someone after coming, she usually calls them grandson, great-grandson or granddaughter, great-granddaughter from some animal sign and certain *xal-mokun*.

18 *tærmit* (泰日米特), is originally a kind of grass seed, which is called Qianli Xiang (千里香) by local people. This grass has a special fragrance, which shaman use for healing, "repair road" and blessing. Shaman drink milk, water or wine to spray on the face of the person they are called upon to pray and bless while in the presence of shaman spirit. In daily life and the shaman treatment, in addition to milk, water and wine, shaman also made *tærmit* tea (*tærmit ʧe*, 泰日米特茶), its method is the shaman put the tea mouth to pray, it is said that the *tærmit* tea can protect people's health and safety. *Tærmit* wine (泰日米特酒), which gives divine power, is only used for sprinkling but not for drinking while *tærmit* milk and tea are usually used for drinking.

19 These three people are in the different branches of *mərdəŋ xal*, who act separately as bone-setter (*barʃ*, 巴日西), healer and priest (*bagʧi*, 巴格其), bone-setter, and healer and priest (*barʃ & bagʧi*, 巴日西兼巴格其). Later, the great-granddaughter born in the Year of Chicken performed the initiation ritual to become shaman, *jad'ən* (雅德恩).

20 *bo:roŋʧen* (博荣浅), namely *uərə xal bo:roŋʧen* (沃热哈勒博荣浅).

21 *likən xal* (李肯哈勒), the Mongolian surname of the shaman Siqingua's husband.

22 *deŋteketʃen* (登特科浅), namely *aula xal deŋteketʃen* (敖拉哈勒登特科浅). These three people are all bone-setter (*barʃ*, 巴日西) at that time, and later performed initiation rituals to become shaman, *jad'ən* (雅德恩).

23 *xure-xure* (霍日耶！霍日耶！), the meaning of convergence. Convergence is a way of blessing, as described in the text.

24 For the complete text content of divine songs, please see Minna Sa 2021, pp. 197–218.

25 The big mountain spirit is *ʃi'ə auləi* (西额敖雷), namely fox spirit; the small mountain spirit is *utʃikən auləi* (乌其肯敖雷), namely, weasel spirit.

26 *mokun kurə* (莫昆· 库热), *xal-mokun* is the clan organization in the traditional society of Daur. "*mokun*" is the branches of *xal*, "*kurə*" means circle. "*mokun kurə*", translated literally as the "*mokun* circle", is often used in rituals to indicate the extent and boundaries of the *mokun* family, or to refer to all *mokun* members.

[27] *Da:'rl ɔbɔ:*, 达日勒敖包, namely Lightning Strike Stone *Oboo* (雷击石敖包), belongs to *aʊla xal duəjin mokun* (敖拉哈勒多音莫昆).

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Shamanic Healing or Scientific Treatment?—Transformation of Khorchin Mongolian Bone-Setting in China

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Abstract: This paper, taking the medical practice of Khorchin Mongolian bone-setting as an example, examines the conflict and connection between religious healing and modern (or Western) medicine as well as the transformation of shamanisms in the discourse of nation-state building in China, and argues that the relationship between shamanic healing and modern medicine is not a binary opposition. Khorchin Mongolian bone-setting is the product of the interaction between alternative medicine and syncretistic local knowledge.

Keywords: bone-setting; shamanic healing; intangible culture; scientific medicine; traditional medicine

1. Introduction

In today's Hohhot, the capital city of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China, people, who break or dislocate their bones, usually visit hospitals for treatment. However, sometimes, some would recommend going to a private clinic, saying that the bonesetter there is a shaman, who has possession of an "ongon" (spirit) with strong healing power. At present, almost all bonesetters of that kind in Hohhot are Khorchin Mongols from eastern Inner Mongolia. Khorchin Mongolian bone-setting is seen either as a part of shamanic healing practices (Narangoa and Altanjula 2006; Wurenqiqige 2006; Altanjula 2006) or originated from shamanism (Seyin 2014; Caijilahu 2017). This paper mainly discusses the medical practice and transformation of Khorchin Mongolian bone-setting in the context of Chinese state ideology.

Shamanism has been successively "discovered", imagined and constructed by Western colonial authorities (Taussig 1987; Hutton 2001), explorers (Znamenski 2003), and scholars (Eliade 1964; Lewis 1971) during the last two centuries. In the strict sense, the term "shamanism" was only applied for denoting the technique of ecstasy among indigenous Siberians and Central Asians for achieving various spiritual powers (Eliade 1964, p. 4), but was later also used to describe in a more general sense religious practices among Arctic peoples, American Indians, Australian Aborigines, and even some African groups. Since the Manchu-Tungus word "šaman" was introduced to Europe, shamanism was treated as a "unitary and homogenous" religious practice of those "primitive peoples". Therefore, one should stop referring to "shamanism", and instead use the plural form "shamanisms", or use terms like 'shamanary' or 'shamanizing' (Bumochir 2014). In other words, as some postmodern anthropologists have argued, "shamanism" does not "exist" but is a Western Orientalist (Said 1977) concept for purposes of constructing the civilized West versus primitive "others" (Bumochir 2014; Humphrey and Onon 1996, p. 4).

Scholars debate whether the origin of the term "shaman" has a Buddhist vestige or indigenous origin. S. M. Shirokogoroff, G. J. Ramsfedt and Michel Strickmann, based on ethnological, linguistic and historical sources, argue that the Manchu-Tungus word "šaman" was to be derived from Chinese šamen, itself a transcription of the Pāli term samana corresponding to the Sanskrit term Çramana, a technical term for the designation of a Buddhist monk or ascetic (Shirokogoroff 1923; Ramstedt 1947; Strickmann 1996, p. 425). Especially S. M. Shirokogoroff points out the formula—"shamanism stimulated by Buddhism"

Citation: Meng, Gencang. 2023. Shamanic Healing or Scientific Treatment?—Transformation of Khorchin Mongolian Bone-Setting in China. *Religions* 14: 910. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14070910

Academic Editors: Thomas Michael, Feng Qu and Klaus Baumann

Received: 12 April 2023
Revised: 2 June 2023
Accepted: 10 July 2023
Published: 14 July 2023

in his *Psychomental Complex of the Tungus* (Shirokogoroff 1935). However, Berthold Laufer, as early as 1917, questioned the Indian etymology of "shaman" by noting that "tungusian saman, šaman, xaman, etc., Mongol šaman, Turkish kam and xam, are close and inseparable allies grown and nourished on the soil of northern Asia,—live witnesses for the great antiquity of the shamanistic form of religion" (Laufer 1917). Dorzhi Banzarov, a famous Buryat Orientalist and linguist, believes that the term "shaman" originated from the Manchu-Tungus word "šaman", which has the literal meaning of "one who knows". The Manchu verb "šamaranbi" and the Mongolian verb "samarakh" both mean to ladle up a liquid and let it drop back, which is consistent with a shaman's practice to achieve various powers through trance or ecstatic experience (Banzarov 2013, p. 66). The root of the word "šaman" is "šam", which is synonymous with the Mongolian word "sam", meaning to stir up a liquid and make it diluted (Buyanbatu 1985, pp. 1–2). Moreover, the Jurchin word "shanman" (珊蛮), denoting a Jurchen witch doctor who has abilities and power similar to a deity, is recorded in the Chinese chronicle *The Compiled History of the Northern League of the Three Dynasties* from the Southern Song Dynasty as early as the twelfth century CE (Liu 1995). Therefore, most Chinese scholars believe that the word "shaman" originates from the Jurchen language, and has been inherited by the Manchu-Tungus ethnic groups (Guo 2015). I concur with Mircea Eliade's emphasis on the fact that "southern influences have, indeed, modified and enriched Tungus shamanism—but the latter is not a creation of Buddhism." (Eliade 1964, p. 498)

Under the influence of the Western concept of shamanism, ethnic Mongol scholars in China have continuously been forging a concept of "national shamanism" by reconstructing "primitive" shamanism into a "civilized" religion. In Inner Mongolia "böge" (male shaman) and "idughan" (female shaman) play the role of shamans. Bumochir (Bumochir 2014) argues that the word "böge" (shaman), and its extended terms "böge mörgul" (shamanism) and "böge-yin šashin" (shamanic religion) are recent introductions and generally used to construct the institutionalized "shamanism". Since the 1980s, after the implementation of China's Reform and Opening-up policy, Inner Mongolian scholars have been using the words "böge mörgul" (which literally means "shaman praying") and "böge-yin šashin" (shamanic religion) as synonyms for the term "shamanism" (Buyanbatu 1985; Khürelsha et al. 2018), trying to construct a national shamanism of "Mongol böge-yin šashin" (Mongolian shamanism), and argue that "shamanism is the 'bentu zongjiao' (本土宗教 native religion) or 'yuanshi zongjiao' (原始宗教 original religion or primitive religion) of the Mongols.[1]

The major discussion among Inner Mongolian scholars on shamanism focuses on the concept of it as having ritual and spiritual healing functions and techniques of possession and ecstasy and aims at constructing a "civilized" religion, by arguing that shamanism is a cognitive science (Bai 2008; Seyin 2000; Caijilahu 2019; Wurenqiqige 2008). As for shamanic healing in Inner Mongolia, previous studies mainly focus on its psychiatric healing practices, that is the stimulation of patients' mental states through rituals, on legitimizing shamanism as cognitive science (Caijilahu 2017; Wurenqiqige 2008), and even attempted to illustrate that shamanic healing belongs to the category of psychiatry (Seyin 2014). However, little attention has been paid to its physiotherapeutic healing method of bone-setting.

Regarding the revival of Khorchin shamanic bone-setting, Li Narangoa and Li Altanjula (Narangoa and Altanjula 2006) analyzed the experience of bonesetters in the socioeconomic context of Inner Mongolia today and attributed the success of their practices to the transformation from shamanic healing to scientific medicine. In addition, Saijirahu Buyanchogla (Saijirahu 2020) argues that the revitalization of shamanism is due to the suffering of both individuals and the community from cultural tensions, tradition losses, and identity crises in modern Inner Mongolia. The effectiveness of these healing practices or rituals is why they have survived in Inner Mongolia as the world has been modernized. However, there is still a huge research niche regarding the healing practice and transformation of Khorchin Mongolian bone-setting in the context of Chinese state ideology.

Taking the medical practice of Khorchin Mongolian bone-setting as an example, this paper examines the conflict and connection between religious healing and modern (or Western) medicine as well as the transformation of shamanism in the discourse of nation-state building in China, and argues that the relationship between shamanic healing and modern medicine is not a binary opposition. Khorchin Mongolian bone-setting is the product of the interaction between alternative medicine and syncretistic local knowledge.

2. Bone-Setting: Shamanic Healing or Intangible Culture?

Bone-setting was a major treatment method for bone-related injuries in many cultures before the advent of modern chiropractors, osteopaths, and physical therapists. Bonesetters are practitioners who draw on traditional skills and practical experience instead of formal medical training (Narangoa and Altanjula 2006). Traditionally, the practice of Mongolian "bariyachi" (i.e., bone setters, literal meaning: "one who holds") is a distinct form of traditional healing by means of massage, using no equipment but just the ten fingers, in order to treat broken bones, sprained and dislocated joints, pulled muscles as well as mild concussion (or "brain shaking") (Atwood 2004, p. 35). "Bariyachi" are legitimatized not by a license or a diploma but by "having ancestors" or "possessing the feeling or bio-energy" and their "healing power" is linked to a spiritual power, identified as a "bariyachi" ancestor and believed to follow through the fingers (Atwood 2004, p. 35; Hruschaka 1998). In other words, the healing knowledge of a "bariyachi" comes from an ancestral spirit (ongon), and "bariyachi" are chosen healers following the family tradition, without any medical training. However, unlike shamans who focus on psychiatric healing practices, bonesetters mainly treat physical illnesses, without entering a trance when performing rituals.

Mongolian bone-setting is believed to predate the influence of Indo-Tibetan medicine. According to the Mongolian medical historian Jigemude, bone-setting was practiced by the ancient Mongols before the 13th century (Jigemude 1997). One view is that the history of Mongolian bone-setting is connected with Inner Asian nomadic culture. Inner Asian nomadic people, including Mongols, often suffer from bone injuries in their daily nomadic life, thus initiating bone-setting experiences (Wangqinzhabu 2005, p. 2). According to the Biography of Suwu in *The Book of Han*, after Suwu was cut, the Xiongnu (Hunnu) doctor quickly dug a hole and filled it with hot ash, and put him on it and massaged his back to heal his wounds (Ban 1962, p. 2461). In addition, Daniel J. Hruschka citing C.K. Dev, notes that "the authors of the early Chinese Nei-jing which described the practice of baria zasal (bone-setting) were actually Mongolian, and Yondon Gombo's medical encyclopedia (the Four Tantras) mentions the Mongolian technique of setting bones" (Hruschaka 1998). Another view is that the history of bone setting can be traced back to the healing of war wounds in the 13th century. Bone injuries and war wounds during successive years of cavalry campaigns directly contributed to the development of Mongolian bone-setting (Jigemude 1997, p. 33). According to *The History of Yuan*, in 1262 AD, a Mongolian general had an arrow wound, and doctors had to dissect two prisoners to detect the exact position of shoulder blades and successfully pull out the arrows (Song and Wang 1976, p. 3873). The third view is that, Mongolian bone-setting "has always been regarded as an indigenous skill, practiced especially by the shamans, who are heirs to the oldest religious traditions of the Mongols" (Narangoa and Altanjula 2006). However, there is insufficient historical evidence so far to prove the indigenous origins of Mongol bone-setting. Of course, the origin of bone-setting is a very important topic, but when we try to investigate the origin of bone-setting by using historical literature, it may be easy to ignore its transformation under the context of contemporary Inner Mongolian social culture and China's state ideology.

In ancient Mongolian society, there was no separation between shamans and doctors. The traditional Mongolian bone-setting practice was once mastered by shamans. Therefore, the shamans who treated bone injuries were also called "yasu bariyachi böge" ("bonesetter shaman"), and their healing power was often passed down from generation to generation in the way of the family inheritance. Khorchin bone-setting is seen as part of shamanic healing practices, which is attributed to the shamanic bone-setting traditions of the region.

In today's Inner Mongolia, the best bone-setters are direct descendants or disciples of the legendary powerful "idughan" (female shaman) Naran Abai (1790–1875). She was a famous Khorchin shaman bonesetter in the period of the Qing Dynasty and was believed to be the disciple of the descendants of Chinggis Khan's master shaman Kukochu (also known as Teb Tenggeri). She inherited Mongolian shamanic skills, organically combined them with bone-setting techniques, and became the founder of the Khorchin Bao clan's bone-setting (包氏正骨). It is said that Naran Abai, as having been a shaman, performed a spirit worshiping ritual every time before treating patients. She put the "ongod" (sprits) on a wooden box filled with millets and sang the song to the inviting spirit and then, after possessing the spirit, began to treat patients (Bao 2015, pp. 75–79). Since Naran Abai, Khorchin bone-setting healing practices have been passed down to the fifth generation present. As a hereditary shaman lineage, Naran Abai's descendants were all recognized as respected powerful shamans until the third generation, and their healing power was passed on to the next generations in traditional ways through special shamanic rituals on the day of the ancestral sacrifice on 2 December of the lunar calendar (Bao 2015, p. 86).

However, since Bao Jinshan (1939–), by the fourth generation of Bao, bone-setting began to deliberately hide the influence of shamanism or even completely reject the Khorchin bone-setting being a shamanic healing practice, which might be related to his adaptation to the Chinese state ideology towards shamanism. Shamanism and its derivative bone-setting practice have encountered a process from being prohibited to being allowed in China. The Chinese state ideology against "superstition" is a product of constructing the modern nation-state, since "superstition" is regarded as a "legacy" of the "feudal society", a symbol of "backwardness". Therefore, anti-superstition is associated with the establishment of a new modern political system, promoting the "backward" culture to a "progressive" society. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party, following the Marxist view of religion, had actively carried out a socialist transformation of religious people, and party members were forbidden to be religious. Especially since the 1960s, China has regarded religion as a "feudal superstition" and "opiate of the people", used by the exploiting classes to oppress the working masses. Therefore, shamanism, like other religions, was a "stumbling block" in the process of modern nation-state building. Shamanism was regarded as the "ignorant" imagination of blind "superstitious" spiritual belief, and shamans were regarded as "devils of the cow and spirit of the snake" (牛鬼蛇神)[2] (Altanjula 2006). In this socio-political context, shamanism and bone-setting practices were banned. With the implementation of China's Reform and Opening-up policy in the 1980s, the revitalization of Shamanism in China is understood as a cultural rebound after religions were suppressed for a long time during the "Cultural Revolution" and other political campaigns (Seyin 2015). Different from the shamanic practice of spiritual healing hidden in rural areas, the practice of bone-setting gradually moved from the countryside to the cities, with a growing trend of revival. However, the inheritance of supernatural powers via dreams or special shamanic rituals has not been "politically correct".

At present, in Inner Mongolia, bone-setting is practiced in three different settings: home-based practice, private clinics, and state-owned medical institutions. They provide different healing services to patients. Home-based practice is an unofficial form of medical practice without obtaining a national medical certificate. Home-based bonesetters are often shamans, who have high prestige among local patients since they believe that "true bonesetters must have spirits". Most of the patients are local Mongolian farmers and herdsmen, and most of their problems are bone injuries caused by falling off from horseback or other farming accidents, or mental illness of unknown causes. These shaman bonesetters offer patients a mix of bone-setting and "dom" (folk remedies) and even psychiatric healing and fortune-telling. Often hidden in rural areas, they successfully escaped the state's ideological censorship of shamanism as "ghost dance" (跳大神) and "feudal superstition". This is fully reflected in the treatment practice of Goa, a shaman bonesetter in Khorqin Left Middle Banner, Inner Mongolia. She is a female shaman who had suffered from a

shamanic illness. Later, she learned bone-setting via dreams, followed the instructions of her "ongod" (spirits) to heal, and became a bonesetter shaman. She had no medical education in bone-setting and was not qualified to take the national exam for professional physicians. But she is skilled in bone-setting, believes in her own supernatural healing powers, and has high prestige among local patients.

Private clinics are privately owned bone-setting hospitals, set up by bonesetters in cities and towns. They emerged after China's Reform and Opening Up period had started when the state allowed private medical practice. Especially since China's huge urbanization process started in the 1990s, some of the famous home-based shaman healers moved from rural areas to cities to provide treatment services for patients of different ethnic groups accommodating market demand. To be licensed as a private clinic, these bonesetters must first obtain qualification certificates for physicians, but then "straddle the line between professional and traditional practitioners" (Kleinman 1980, pp. 63–65), identifying themselves both as doctors and shamans. In the cities, their patients' ethnicities and backgrounds have also become much more diverse, from solely rural Mongolians to urban Mongolians, Han, Hui, and representatives of many other ethnic groups. The causes of patients' diseases in cities are also very different, with most patients suffering from various bone injuries caused by car accidents, sports games, and cervical syndromes caused by long-term office work. Moreover, the importance of the patients rate the bonesetters' identity versus their treatment methods depends on their ethnicities. Generally, Mongolian patients emphasize shamanic healing power, while patients of Han and other ethnic groups highly rate effective bone-setting skills. This can be seen in the words written by patients on the silk banners given by them to Buren, a Khorichin shaman bone-setter, who runs a private clinic in Hohhot. The Mongolian words embody the supernatural healing power of the Mongolian shaman, while the Chinese characters often highlight his effective bone-setting healing art (医术) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The silk banners were given by patients to Buren. The Mongolian text reads "by the power of eternal heaven, the miracle of the Mongolian shaman", while the Chinese text reads "excellent healing art, noble medical ethic". Photograph taken by Author at Buren's bone-setting hospital. Hohhot, 15 February 2022.

As a shaman bonesetter, Buren has learned bone-setting for many years from Renchinzhongnai, an apprentice of Naran Abai's grandson Bao Mashi. He stressed that "if a bonesetter is not a shaman and does not have 'ongon', that person cannot really 'hold' (set) bones." In front of Mongolian patients, he usually highlights his identity as a shaman bonesetter, claiming to have a powerful "ongon" of the black dragon. Meanwhile, in regard to patients from other ethnic groups, he often emphasizes his identity as a traditional Mongolian doctor who has effective bone-setting skills.

Different from the above two forms, almost all bonesetters in state-owned medical institutions, especially in public hospitals, which do not allow religious medical activities, deliberately hide or even reject the influence of shamanism on bone-setting healing practices, but instead identify bone-setting as a traditional Mongolian medical practice. As

a result, the representatives of the first two forms of bonesetters identify themselves as shamans, while the latter regard themselves only as doctors. Therefore, in order to be "politically correct", Bao Jinshan, the founder of the Mongolian Bone-setting Hospital in the Khorchin Left Rear Banner, no longer identifies himself as a shaman bonesetter.

Today, both shamanic and none-religious bone-setting practitioners emphasize the idea of "balance" during the treating processes, which is the combination of "xing" (形 literally means form) and "shen" (神 spirit), and "yi" (意 thought) and "qi" (气 vital energy). It is known that the unique character of Mongolian bone-setting practice is that bonesetters blow distilled alcohol onto the injured part of the patient's body with their mouth, and then use both their hands for a manipulation massage, to achieve the effect of "stabilizing bones and refreshing flesh" (骨静肉动). Blowing alcohol makes a unique sound, which reduces the patient's "subjective" pain and anxiety, and at the same time stimulates the "objectively" existing skin to promote blood circulation, and muscle relaxation, and balancing the patient's "mental" and "physical" effects. Sometimes, depending on the injury, the bonesetter uses a small movable splint to prevent the re-displacement of the fracture, which keeps the fracture "static", but ensures the "mobility" of the injured limb. During the recuperation period, patients are required to be in a state of balancing "static and dynamic," to promote the self-healing ability and eventually "return" the bone injury to a healthy state of its original "nature". Therefore, the idea of balancing between "spirit" and "body", "static" and "dynamic", "internal healing" and "external manipulation" is the key to bone-setting healing practices (Bao 2015, pp. 110–11). This healing concept is fundamentally different from surgical therapy in modern medicine.

In China, since the implementation of the Reform and Opening-Up policy, the state ideology toward shamanism has changed dramatically from regarding it as a "feudal superstition" to viewing it as a folklorized culture, that needs to be protected and developed as part of the Chinese national culture (中华文化). Article 36 of the Revised Constitution of China on religion clearly states that "Citizens of the People's Republic of China shall enjoy the freedom of religious belief" and "the state shall protect normal religious activities."[3] Chinese President Xi Jinping has issued an important directive on the protection of intangible cultural heritage, stressing that "we will do a solid job in systematically protecting intangible cultural heritage and promote Chinese culture to the world"[4]. Therefore, the protection and development of intangible cultural heritage have become a linking bridge between folklorized religious culture and policies for the protection of the national culture. As a result, shamanism has turned from "feudal superstition" to the essence of traditional folk culture and became a national intangible cultural heritage. Various "folk" cultures and arts originating from shamanism have been included in China's national Intangible Cultural Heritage list, such as: in 2006, the Mongolian Andai dance, as a traditional folk dance, was included in the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list; the Ewenki shaman dance and the Manchu shaman mythology were included in that list in 2011. However, in Chinese state ideology, shamanism is not regarded as a religion, but as a folk belief, and related customs and arts are all categorized as traditional folk customs. According to China's National Religious Affairs Administration, there are five recognized religions in China: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Christianity.[5] Shamanism-related practices are classified as folk cultures and arts, not religious activities. For this reason, China's official Chinese Folk Literature and Art Association established the Chinese Shamanic Cultural Inheritance Base in 2005, aiming at the protection and promotion of excellent folk cultures and arts.[6]

Works following Chinese state ideology stress that bone-setting practices are part of a traditional Chinese medical culture rather than a shamanic healing art. In 2011, Khorchin Mongolian bone-setting, as a traditional (Mongolian) medicine, was listed in the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list. The official description reads as follows.

> The Khorchin Left Wing Rear Banner of Inner Mongolia has a long history and profound culture. Bone-setting, as a Mongolian medical therapy, is representative of the rich cultural heritage of the banner. The Mongolian people are horse-

> riding people, and often encounter bone injuries caused by falling off the horses. Mongolian bone-setting therapy came into being to heal bone-related injuries. Mongolian bone-setting therapy is an important symbol of Mongolian medical achievements, which is filled with the scientific spirit and cultural creativity of the Mongolian people.[7]

Bone-setting is regarded as a scientific medical practice with Mongolian characteristics created due to the long-term nomadic lifestyle, which required specialization in treating bone-related injuries caused by falling off the horses. According to Article 2 of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Traditional Chinese Medicine, "Traditional Chinese medicine" refers to "the medicine of all ethnic groups in China, including the medicine of Han and ethnic minorities, and is a medical system that reflects the Chinese nation's understanding of life, health, and diseases, and has a long history and tradition, unique theories, and therapies".[8] Mongolian traditional medicine is an inseparable part of traditional Chinese medicine, which is recognized by the state. Bone-setting is listed as Mongolian traditional medicine, which is an important representative of Chinese medical cultural heritage. Notably, the statement includes nothing about the close relationship between Khorchin Mongolian bone-setting and shamanism. In the state's ideological discourse, shamanism, and cultural features, arts, and medicines, which derived from it, were seen as forms of witchcraft, rather than scientific rational practices. Therefore, Khorchin bone-setting is legitimized as Mongolian traditional medicine with a scientific basis.

In conclusion, Khorchin bone-setting is closely related to shamanism, which has experienced a trend from being prohibited to being allowed and even being revived in China. At present, the bonesetters have gradually moved from the countryside to the towns and bone-setting practices have changed dramatically. There are different forms of healing practices meeting the demands of the market and the expectations of patients of different ethnicities. At the same time, under state regulation, shamanism has been folklorized and has become an intangible cultural heritage of the Chinese Nation as a way of "reproducing" folk culture. Shamanism has been revitalized in a new form, and shamanic cultural features, including bone-setting, became representative of what is called the ethnonational culture and the indispensable culture of the Chinese nation.

3. Bone-Setting: Scientific Medicine or Traditional Medicine?

In addition to the above-mentioned policies on shamanism, the scientific medical-orientated nation-state building in China has been shaping the development of Khorchin bone-setting. At present, Inner Mongolia has a plural medical system based on syncretistic knowledge. Specifically, patients can freely choose modern medicine or traditional medicine, which is recognized by the state as scientific medicine according to their ethnicities and illness. In China, modern medicine usually refers to Western medicine, which is based on the theory of allopathy to direct antagonistic treatment of symptoms. Traditional medicine often refers to traditional Chinese medicine, which includes Mongolian medicine and other ethnic medicines. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries in China, modern medicine was regarded as the world's mainstream medicine of rational science. In order to build a healthy Chinese nation, irrational religious-oriented traditional medicines had to be rejected, because science was seen as a rational system of knowledge, whereas religion was considered as supernatural superstition. Thus these two medicines were regarded as being incompatible, and their relationship was a binary relationship of mutual opposition. Therefore, Mongolian Buddhist lama doctors and shamanic bonesetters were considered primitive quacks. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Communist Party of China fostered modern medicine. However, since the end of the 1950s, modern medicine has been regarded as a Western bourgeois medical system according to China's state ideology, but was not completely rejected. Since the 1960s, "people's medicine" has been introduced, combining traditional Chinese and Western medicine, but most rural doctors still did not receive modern medical education, and their treatment practice was often based on just traditional medical knowledge (Narangoa and Altanjula 2006).

Despite the described socio-political background, the bone-setting practice kept playing an important role, especially in the rural areas of Inner Mongolia.

Recently, China's nation-state construction has been paying more attention to traditional medicine, trying to prove that traditional Chinese medicine is as scientific as Western medicine, and even emphasizing that the "holistic regulation" (整体调节) of traditional Chinese medicine is superior to the "partial allopathy" (部分对抗) treatment of Western medicine. In Chinese medical discourse, modern medicine is an allopathic medicine based on science and technology, aimed at diagnosing "partial" diseases and applying different chemically synthesized drugs to different diseases. Traditional Chinese medicine, on the contrary, is a medicine based on natural philosophy, using natural (herbal) medicine and focusing on a patient's overall condition to treat the diseases (Bao 2015, p. 107). In this context, the spiritual treatment of shamanism was not recognized by the state, while bone-setting has become an accepted practice. Due to its good therapeutic effect and no visible "superstition" in religious rituals, it was called scientific.

Nowadays, with the nationalization of traditional Chinese medicine, Mongolian bone-setting therapy has been constantly constructed as a scientific medicine, and even considered a precious cultural heritage of the Mongolian nationality (蒙古民族). In China today, "the revival of folk religion reflects the process of transforming the culture of the 'past' into a mode of communication that can express current social problems"(Seyin 2015). Local scholars in Inner Mongolia regard shamanism as the native religion of the Mongolian nationality, and consider it as the "national religion" before the spread of Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia in the 16th century. In the 16th century, the Mongols converted to Tibetan Buddhism for the second time, which resulted in the combination of the Mongolian aristocracy and the Buddhist clergy. Since then, shamanism has suffered from the persecution of Tibetan Buddhism, and only the Khorchin shamans in eastern Inner Mongolia have survived and they gave shelter to many shamans who fled to the region (Khürelsha et al. 2018, p. 8). Therefore, Khorchin shamanism is considered to be the "legacy" of the native religion of the Mongolian people. Khorchin Mongolian bone-setting, which derived from shamanism, is regarded as a valuable national and religious cultural heritage, as Bao Jinshan, a famous Khorchin bonesetter and "master of Chinese medicine" (国医大师), notes "it is not from Tibet, nor Western Europe, but a unique therapy invented and developed by the Mongolian people" (Bao 2015, p. 69).

Moreover, Mongolian bone-setting is endowed with comprehensive scientific medicine superior to Western osteopaths. It is known that Mongolian bonesetters do not operate any surgery, instead practice manual joint manipulation, sometimes using a small movable splint and herbal medicine. Compared with Western osteopaths, it has the advantages of not damaging the patients' vital "qi", less pain during healing, and recovery in a short time (Bao 2015, p. 108). Today, Khorchin Mongolian bone-setting is combined with various kinds of medical knowledge, is constantly breaking traditional healing methods, adapting to the rapidly changing market economy, and is coexisting with other medical systems in Inner Mongolian society. The most important features of these combinations are the following.

First, the identity of bonesetters has changed from shamans to professional doctors, who are engaged in scientific medical practice. At present, under the impact of modern medical knowledge, most of the Khorchin bonesetters, whether shaman or layman, have received higher education and have a certain degree of knowledge in Western anatomy. For example, Buren, a shaman who runs a private clinic, graduated from Inner Mongolia University for Nationalities with a bachelor's degree in Mongolian medicine. He obtained the Chinese National Doctor's License in 2006 and was honored as a "model doctor" (模范医生) of Inner Mongolia in 2019. In addition, his business license and the permit for medical institutional practice are prominently displayed at his clinic. Therefore, Buren, a mysterious shaman bonesetter, successfully constructed Khorchin bone-setting as a scientific medicine with various certificates issued by the state, highlighting his identity as a doctor who engages in scientific medical practice rather than a shaman who engages

in shamanic healing art. Meanwhile, the tradition of shaman bonesetters changed significantly. The traditional bonesetters who legitimatized not by a diploma, but by "having ancestors", have changed into professional doctors who highlighted various certificates focusing on scientific medical practices approved by the state.

Secondly, Khorchin bone-setting practices changed from "using no equipment but their ten fingers" for joint manipulation to comprehensive scientific medicine using diverse medical technologies. Under the influence of Western medicine, traditional Chinese medicine, and Tibetan medicine, Khorchin bone-setting practices have undergone great changes. According to Bao Jinshan, bonesetters should first make "three diagnoses" (三诊), namely look (望), ask (问), intimate(切), and then complement the "three diagnoses" with X-rays, in order to make an accurate diagnosis of the bone injury (Bao 2015, pp. 126–28). At present, the influence of modern medical technology can be seen everywhere in both private and public hospitals. For example, bonesetters use X-ray or Computed Tomography (CT) to make a more accurate diagnosis, apply disinfection methods to prevent inflammation of injured parts of the bone, and intravenous injection to promote recovery. Moreover, Khorchin bonesetters' blowing of distilled alcohol and manipulation massage is influenced by combining "yin" (阴) and "yang" (阳) energies in the traditional concept of Chinese Qigong. Bao Jinshan believes that the bone injury of the patients is "hot" (热) and hence falls under the category of "yang", while the blown-out alcohol is "cold" (凉) and hence belongs to the category of "yin", which quickly reduces the swelling and provides the energy for healing the patients (Bao 2015, p. 146). In addition, based on the theory of Tibetan medicine, he also improved the ancestral secret herbal prescriptions—"shurt-urel" (literal meaning "coral pill") and "nomin-urel" ("sutra pill"). These two herbal medicines are widely used in bone-setting treatments, and, as clinically verified, the therapeutic effect of these two drugs is considered significantly better than that of other prescriptions.[9] Khorchin Mongolian bone-setting has gradually turned from a shamanic healing practice to a comprehensive scientific medicine based on syncretistic knowledge of several different medical systems.

Thirdly, Khorchin bonesetters explain bone-setting therapy within the frameworks of traditional Chinese medicine and modern medicine, arguing that it is therefore no longer mysterious shamanic healing, but scientific medicine. Based on the oral transmission of ancestors, Bao Jinshan sorted out traditional Khorchin bone-setting skills and created the Mongolian bone-setting medical theory and treatment standard, which was written into *the Chinese Medical Encyclopedia* and *The Unified Compilation of Mongolian Medicine Textbooks for Higher Education*. His most recent monograph, *Mongolian Medicine Bone-setting*, published in 2015, systematically explains Mongolian bone-setting therapy in terms of modern osteology. Furthermore, he broke the ancestral tradition of family male line succession and undertook the teaching and training tasks for master's students, doctoral students, and post-doctoral program of Mongolian bone-setting in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. The inheritance of traditional shamanic bone-setting culture has been transformed into an education system based on the modern medical concept.

Thus, today Khorchin Mongolian bone-setting is no longer seen as a mysterious shamanic healing practice, but a scientific medical method recognized by the state. However, the essence of the medical practice of bonesetters is still based on the shamanic traditional idea of "balancing", which is the combination of "xing" and "shen", and "yi" and "qi", even if combined with a syncretistic knowledge of several different medical systems. In other words, Khorchin bone-setting recognized as a scientific medicine still retain shamanic healing concepts. This shows that religious healing art and scientific medicine are not binary opposites, but complementary concepts.

Meanwhile, Khorchin shamanic bone-setting is defined as traditional Mongolian medicine, although bonesetters are traditionally not educated in the Indo-Tibetan-derived tradition of Mongolian medicine or biomedicine (Saijirahu 2020). In today's Inner Mongolia, bonesetters are recognized as Mongolian traditional medical practitioners rather than shamanic healers. This is closely related to China's medical policy. The Constitution of China stipulates that "the state develops medical and health services, and supports modern medicine and traditional Chinese medicine."[10] The Law on Traditional Chinese Medicine stresses that "the state should vigorously develop traditional Chinese medicine, put equal emphasis on traditional Chinese medicine and Western medicine, and make full use of traditional Chinese medicine in medical and health undertakings."[11] The traditional medicine here refers to Chinese medicine, but includes also Tibetan medicine, Mongolian medicine, Uygur medicine, Dai medicine, and other traditional medicines of China's ethnic minorities. The State Ethnic Affairs Commission of China established the Chinese Association of Ethnic Medicine in 2007, "to actively explore, organize and promote ethnic medicine, and make full use of its role in protecting the health of the people of all ethnic groups."[12] The association has set up a Mongolian Medicine Committee under the auspices of the Inner Mongolia University for Nationalities in Khorchin District, aiming to inherit and protect the culture of traditional Mongolian medicine and promote the innovation and development of the Mongolian medicine industry. According to the Tongliao (a prefecture of Khorchin region) Mongolian Medicine Bone-setting Protection Regulations, issued in 2020, bone-setting is defined as traditional Mongolian medicine, which "refers to the treatment with ethnic characteristics of various fractures, joint dislocation, soft tissue injury and a series of other diseases, passed down from generation to generation and regarded as part of Mongolian cultural heritage."[13] The regulations completely ignore the relationship between bone-setting and shamanism. As mentioned above, in the official discourse, shamanism and its derived medical skills are regarded as a kind of witchcraft practice, without any scientific basis, and bone-setting is classified as traditional Mongolian medicine. In this context of the national medical policy, almost all bonesetters in public hospitals deliberately hide the influence of shamanism, calling themselves traditional Mongolian physicians.

Although Khorchin bone-setting is seen as a shamanic healing practice, it has been deeply influenced by Tibetan medicine in the course of its development and gradually emerged as a treatment therapy integrating Tibetan medicine and shamanic healing. When Buddhism was introduced to Mongolian regions again in the 17th century, shamanism was marginalized and called "burugu üzel" (wrong view). Shamanism is known as "khar shashin" (black religion), which corresponds to "shar shashin" the common name for Buddhism in Mongolian regions. The struggle between shamanism and Buddhism was also very fierce in the Khorchin area. It is noted that the collective burning of 300 Khorchin shamans took place in 1800 (Khürelsha et al. 2018, p. 49). Later, the shamans who compromised with Buddhism were known as "tsagaan zügiin böge" (white shamans). They borrowed Buddhist beliefs and practices to consolidate and increase their influence in the Mongolian regions. Since then, the rituals, deities, spiritual possession, and healing arts of Khorchin shamanism have been influenced by Buddhism and Tibetan medicine. Therefore, the home-based shaman bonesetter Goa and the private clinic shaman bonesetter Buren also claim themselves as traditional Mongolian medical practitioners, and see the Tibetan Medical Buddha (Sanskrit: Bhaişajya guru) as their patron saint (Figure 2).

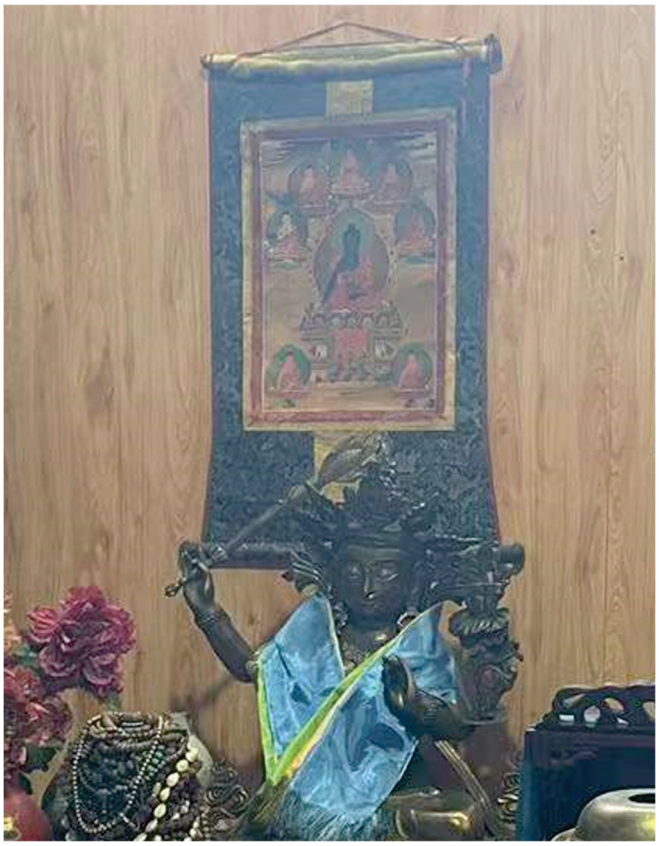

Figure 2. The Tibetan Medicine Buddha. Photograph taken by Author at Buren's bone-setting hospital. Hohhot, 15 February 2022.

Thus, today's Khorchin bone-setting has changed from shamanic healing to Mongolian traditional medicine, deeply influenced by Tibetan medical theories. Traditional Tibetan medicine, also known as Sowa-Rigpa medicine, is a complex system of medical knowledge and practices. *The Four Tantras* (rgyu-bzhi རྒྱུད་བཞི), written between the 8th and 12th centuries, is the foundational literary work of Tibetan medicine. Tibetan medicine is derived in large part from Indian Ayurvedic practices. According to Traditional Tibetan medical theories, the human body's physiological systems are considered as consisting of the three principles of humors—Wind (gas), bile, and mucus. Meanwhile, the physical human body is understood as composing of five elements—fire, wind, water, earth, and space (Yutuo Ningmayundungongbu 1983). To have good health, one needs to maintain a balance between the humors and elements. These fundamental theories fully reflect the influence of Ayurveda, which includes the three Doshas (vata, pitta, kapha) and the five elements (earth, water, fire, air, and ether) from which the human body is composed (Liao 2002). After the Tibetan *Four Tantras* spread in Mongolian regions, it became the main literary source of the theoretical system of traditional Mongolian medicine. Bone-setters believe that the theoretical basis of bone-setting is the tripartite theory, that is, "khii" (wind), "shar" (bile) and "batgan" (mucus), which are the three body humors that make up the physiological system and are constantly supplemented by the five elements—water, fire, earth, wood, and space (空间) and maintain the overall balance of the human body (Bao 2015, p. 122). This is the explanation of bone-setting within the framework of the Indo-Tibetan-derived Mongolian traditional medical theory, highlighting it as traditional medicine instead of the mysterious shamanic healing. Therefore, it is natural for bonesetters to say that bone-setting is a traditional Mongolian medicine recognized by the state. In conclusion, Khorchin bone-setting is a traditional Mongolian medical practice, based on Mongolian and Tibetan medical theory, to manipulate bones back to their proper position, that is, a treatment pertaining to a "return to nature" (回归自然).

4. Conclusions

This paper, taking the medical practice of Khorchin Mongolian bone-setting as an example, examined the conflict and connection between religious healing and modern (or Western) medicine as well as the transformation of shamanisms in the discourse of nation-state building in China, and argues that the relationship between shamanic healing and modern medicine is not a binary opposition. Khorchin Mongolian bone-setting is the product of the interaction between alternative medicine and syncretistic local knowledge.

Khorchin bone-setting practices have had different variations in different historical periods and different social cultures and bonesetters chose different identities, reflecting the changes in society, culture, economy, and politics. First, the theoretical concept of treatment has changed. Khorchin bone-setting practices changed from "using no equipment but their ten fingers" to adopting comprehensive scientific medicines using diverse medical technologies. Secondly, the concept of inheritance has changed. Originally, the shamans who treated bone injuries were called "yasu bariyachi böge" (bonesetter shaman), and their healing power was often passed down from generation to generation in the family. Today, the inheritance of traditional shamanic bone-setting culture has been transformed into an education system based on the modern medical concept. Finally, the patients and the identity of the bonesetters have changed. Different from the shamanic practice of spiritual healing hidden in the rural areas, the practice of bone-setting gradually moved from the countryside to the cities, providing treatment services for patients of different ethnic groups and accommodating market demand. Bonesetters identify themselves as doctors and shamans based on the patient's expectations.

In short, Khorchin bone-setting practices have been transforming from a strong shamanic healing practice into a unique comprehensive medical system, integrating religion, culture, and science. In the context of the scientific medical-oriented nation-state building in China, Khorchin bonesetters straddle the line between religious healers and scientific doctors. Shaman bonesetters still believe in "ongod" (spirits) and a strong healing power inherited from their ancestors. At the same time, they rely on scientific medicine to rationalize the practice of bone-setting with a scientific basis. Therefore, Khorchin bone-setting has the religious character of shamanism and the scientific nature of medical therapy. Religious healing and scientific medicine are not binary opposites in this sense, but the interaction between alternative medicine and syncretistic local knowledge.

Funding: This research was funded by The National Social Science Fund of China, grant number 22XMZ002.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Acknowledgments: I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Stefan Krist and Li Narangoa. I could not have finished this article without their constructive comments, insightful suggestions, and proof-reading. Special thanks are given to Qu Feng at the Arctic Studies Center, Liaocheng University, and Nasan Bayar and Terunbayar at Inner Mongolia University for their encouragement. I am also grateful for the constructive comments provided by the academic editor and the reviewers, and Huang Bo at Tsing Hua University for his excellent proofreading. My field survey was made possible with support from Shaman bonesetter Buren.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

1 According to Qu (2021), primitivism is a mis-understanding of shamanism.

2 牛鬼蛇神 literally means that the devil with the head of a cow and the body of a snake, that refers to demons and ghosts in general.

3 The Constitution of China, 中华人民共和国宪法 https://www.gqb.gov.cn/node2/node3/node5/node9/userobject7ai1273.html (accessed on 2 February 2023).

4 Xi Jinping's directive on the protection of intangible cultural heritage, 习近平对非物质文化遗产保护工作作出重要指示 https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-12/12/content_5731508.htm (accessed on 2 February 2023).

[5] In China, Catholicism and Christianity are considered different religions. 宗教活动场所基本信息 https://www.sara.gov.cn/gjzjswj/zjjcxxcxxt/zjhdcsjbxx/index.shtml (accessed on 18 February 2023).

[6] In 2021, the association abolished the base for an unknown reason. Decision on Revocation of "China Shamanic Cultural Inheritance Base". 关于撤销"中国萨满文化传承基地"的决定 http://www.cflas.com.cn/mx/GS/407e3d0d7cdd4348ae601a8d15e3860c.html (accessed on 6 March 2023).

[7] Khorchin Mongolian bone-setting, as a traditional (Mongolian) medicine, was listed in the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list. 蒙医药（蒙医正骨疗法）—中国非物质文化遗产网·中国非物质文化遗产数字博物馆 https://www.ihchina.cn/project_details/14878/ (accessed on 12 March 2023).

[8] The Law of the People's Republic of China on Traditional Chinese Medicine, 中华人民共和国中医药法 http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/c12435/201612/b0deb577ba9d46268dcc8d38ae40ae0c.shtml (accessed on 20 March 2023).

[9] A special report on Bao's bone-setting practices, 非遗不"遗": 让蒙医整骨术永续传承http://epaper.tongliaowang.com/paper/pc/content/202208/08/content_8062.html (accessed on 24 March 2023).

[10] Medical and health development and the Constitution of China, 医疗卫生事业发展与我国宪法 http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/c30834/202001/56715688324343d09219175b802c88a0.shtml (accessed on 30 March 2023).

[11] See Note 9.

[12] The Chinese Association of Ethnic Medicine, 中国民族医药协会 https://www.neac.gov.cn/seac/mwjs/mzyy/jj.shtml (accessed on 10 April 2023).

[13] The Tongliao Mongolian Medicine bone-setting Protection Regulations, 通辽市蒙医正骨保护条例 https://flk.npc.gov.cn/detail2.html?ZmY4MDgxODE3YjYzYjkzNTAxN2I3MTE0ZDRjZDA3YmE (accessed on 10 April 2023).

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Ritual and Space: The Therapeutic Function of the Recitations of the Hexi Baojuan

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Abstract: In the region where the Precious Scrolls of Hexi (*Hexi Baojuan*) are recited, people often use the Precious Scrolls (*Baojuan*) as a tool to pray for peace and happiness, to prevent plagues and calamities, and to heal ailments. By creating a sacred healing field, the rituals of Hexi Baojuan materialize, symbolize, and sanctify the space to expel disasters and cure illnesses. Through the mechanism of imagination and symbolism, its functions of averting disasters and curing diseases become apparent.

Keywords: *Hexi Baojuan*; rituals of recitations; sacred space; therapeutic function

1. Introduction

Wang Guowei, a scholar in the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China, proposed that "every generation has its own literature" (Wang 1996, p. 1); the same also applies to regions. Different regions produce different types of literary styles. Even foreign literary styles, when influenced by local people, become local specialties, as is the case with the Precious Scrolls (*Baojuan* 宝卷). The Baojuan is a type of script of recitations that spreads religious ideas, nurtured by "transformation texts" (*bianwen* 变文) and scriptures (*jingwen* 经文). It primarily consists of verse and prose, among which the Baojuan used for various rituals is known as the Baojuan of rituals (*yi-shi-lei baojuan* 仪式类宝卷). According to studies, the rituals described in the Precious Scrolls of Hexi (*Hexi Baojuan* 河西宝卷) were not truly indigenous. Namely, they came with the influx of immigrants, folk sects, and refugees in the Ming and Qing Dynasties (Che 1999, p. 40). However, those people heavily adapted their Baojuan to align with the local customs, language, habits, folk beliefs, and cultural patterns, resulting in the emergence of Hexi Baojuan.

For a long time, there has been a great misconception in the understanding and research of Hexi Baojuan. According to the published collections of the Hexi Baojuan, the Baojuan of storytelling (*gu-shi-lei baojuan* 故事类宝卷) appears to be in the majority, but in fact, there is also another tradition of the Baojuan of rituals. Recently, there has been research (e.g., National Social Science Foundation Project "Hexi Baojuan from the Perspective of Folk Religion", hosted by Cui Yunsheng, 2015) on the Hexi Baojuan of rituals from the perspective of folk religion. This paper focuses on the ritual function in the Hexi Baojuan. It should be mentioned that although some of the Baojuan cited are Taoist scriptures, the local Baojuan masters considered them Baojuan, as they recited these scriptures during their rituals. In the eyes of ordinary people, it really does not matter what the contents of the Baojuan recited are; rather, the construction of the sacred space of the ritual and the integrity of the ritual links matter. Here, we have adopted the view of the local Baojuan masters and included some of the Taoist scriptures that they used in our discussion of Baojuan. This can also be illustrated by the overlap of the identities of the local Baojuan master and the local Taoist priest; both recite the Baojuan of storytelling and utilize the Baojuan of rituals. The focus of this paper is to discuss the therapeutic function of the rituals of recitations and, in particular, to analyze the mechanism of this function, namely how the ritual functions. It is a theoretical study rather than a survey report of ritual practice (Sun 2016; Berezkin 2018, 2021).[1]

Citation: Zhao, Shichang. 2023. Ritual and Space: The Therapeutic Function of the Recitations of the Hexi Baojuan. *Religions* 14: 1025. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14081025

Academic Editor: Xiaohuan Zhao

Received: 3 March 2023
Revised: 7 August 2023
Accepted: 7 August 2023
Published: 10 August 2023

To discuss the related rituals and content of the Hexi Baojuan, it is essential to have a degree of understanding of the local history, geography, customs, cultural features, and even the natural climate of the region.

2. Recitations of the Hexi Baojuan

2.1. Regions with Recitations of the Hexi Baojuan

The use of the Baojuan is not limited to the Hexi region. Baojuan are produced and circulated in most parts of China. The classification of Baojuan is generally based on their content or the regions where they circulate. Based on content, Baojuan can be divided into a ritual type and a storytelling type. For the classification by region, they can generally be divided into Northern Baojuan (*beifang baojuan* 北方宝卷) and Southern Baojuan (*nanfang baojuan* 南方宝卷) or directly named according to the name of the region or county, such as Jingjiang Baojuan 靖江宝卷, Jiexiu Baojuan 介休宝卷, Henan Baojuan 河南宝卷, Hebei Baojuan 河北宝卷, Qinghai Baojuan 青海宝卷, Hezhou Baojuan 河州宝卷, etc. In the case of Hexi Baojuan, it is somewhat complicated as the title "Hexi" actually encompasses several separate areas along the so-called Hexi Corridor (*hexi zoulang* 河西走廊).

There are several reasons why the Hexi Baojuan is unique. Firstly, the "Hexi region" has become an independent geographical concept. Although regions such as Wuwei 武威, Zhangye 张掖, Jiuquan 酒泉, and Jinchang 金昌—which are included in the Hexi region—have their different regional cultures, they generally have similar historical, geographical, and cultural attributes. Secondly, the cultural affinity among those regions results in consistency in the Baojuan found there. They have some similarities in the narrative style, and the circulated Baojuan texts are mostly the same. By comparing several collections of Hexi Baojuan, it is evident that there are many repetitions in the content (Y. Zhu 2015, pp. 65–79+166).[2] While the tradition of reciting Baojuan as a religious ritual is diminishing in various regions, the Hexi Baojuan has managed to preserve its distinct cultural ecosystem and maintain a unique living space.[3]

According to Li Yan (Yan Li 2022, pp. 171–233),[4] the Hexi Baojuan include Jiuquan Baojuan 酒泉宝卷, Zhangye Baojuan 张掖宝卷, Jinchang Baojuan 金昌宝卷, and Wuwei Baojuan 武威宝卷, in a broad sense. The Hexi Corridor is located to the west of the Yellow River in China, running from northwest to southeast. It is mainly a narrow plain shaped like a corridor, which is how it obtained its name. The Hexi Corridor was a necessary route on the ancient Silk Road (*si-chou-zhi-lu* 丝绸之路). It ranges from the Wushaoling Mountains 乌鞘岭 in the east to the Yumen Pass (*yu-men-guan* 玉门关) in the west, between the southern mountains (the Qilian Mountains 祁连山 and the Altun Mountains 阿尔金山) and the northern mountains (the Mazong Mountains 马鬃山, the Heli Mountains 合黎山, and the Longshou Mountains 龙首山). In the north, people can pass through the Juyan Lake Basin (*ju-yan-hai* 居延海) and enter Mobei 漠北 along the Steppe Route of the Silk Road (*caoyuan si-chou-zhi-lu* 草原丝绸之路). It is about 900 km long and from several kilometers to nearly 100 km wide. The whole Hexi Corridor is governed by Gansu Province 甘肃省, Haidong City 海东市 and Xining City 西宁市 of Qinghai Province 青海省, and Ejin Banner 额济纳旗 of Inner Mongolia 内蒙古自治区. As most of the area belongs to Gansu Province, it is also called the Gansu Corridor (*gansu zoulang* 甘肃走廊).

Historically, the Hexi Corridor was first occupied by Dayuezhi 大月氏 and Xiongnu 匈奴. Since the exploration of Hexi by Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty (*han-wu-di* 汉武帝), it has become an important passage connecting the Central Plains (*zhongyuan* 中原) with Xinjiang 新疆 in the western regions. It was a part of the eastern end of the ancient Silk Road and also an important international channel for the political, economic, and cultural exchanges between the Han region and the Western world in ancient China. For most of its history, the Hexi Corridor was the northwestern end of China's unified dynasties, and the Han 汉朝, Tang 唐朝, Yuan 元朝, Ming 明朝, and Qing 清朝 dynasties all controlled the Hexi Corridor. The climate in the Hexi region is a temperate desert climate, dry and rainless (mainly because it is far away from the sea). However, in summer, the snow water

from the Qilian Mountains can be utilized for oasis irrigation and planting, and this way of production and life continues to this day.

Regionally, Hexi mainly includes Lanzhou City 兰州市 of Gansu Province (known as Jincheng County 金城郡), Xining City of Qinghai Province, Ejin Banner of Inner Mongolia, and the "Four Counties of Hexi" (*he-xi-si-jun* 河西四郡): Wuwei (known as Liangzhou 凉州), Zhangye (known as Ganzhou 甘州), Jiuquan (known as Suzhou 肃州), and Dunhuang (known as Shazhou 沙州).[5] As early as the Western Han Dynasty 西汉朝, Emperor Wu established four counties there, namely Wuwei County 武威郡, Zhangye County 张掖郡, Jiuquan County 酒泉郡, and Dunhuang County 敦煌郡. In the Western Han Dynasty, Xihai County 西海郡 in Qinghai was established, and in the Eastern Han Dynasty 东汉朝, Xihai County 西海郡 in the Juyan Lake Basin was established. At present, the Hexi region is mainly inhabited by Han, Mongolian, Yugur, Tibetan, and other ethnic groups.[6] Located in the core area of the Silk Road, the Hexi region has always been the economic and trade center of Northwest China, as well as a transportation and cultural center.

2.2. Rituals of the Recitations of the Hexi Baojuan

In a sense, "ritual" is a universal cultural phenomenon and an important field of anthropological research. As it carries fertile social and cultural connotations, studying cultural cognition from the analysis of ritual is an effective approach to anthropological research. The anthropological study of ritual can be traced back to Durkheim, in the early 20th century, who regarded ritual as a means to maintain and extend society and enhance the cohesion of its members. He also explored the characteristics of ritual participants from a psychological perspective to distinguish them from their emotions in daily situations (Durkheim 2008, p. 517). In our field investigation of the healing ritual of the Hexi Baojuan, we paid great attention to the changes in and mutual influence of the participants themselves, especially the comparison between the states of the patient before and after entering the ritual space. The sanctity of the rituals of the Hexi Baojuan can be studied from the ritual's source of origin, the use of religious musical instruments (symbols), and the therapeutic effects. Viewed from the origin, "telling scriptures" (*jiangjing* 讲经) for lay people in the Tang Dynasty and ashram activities (*daochang* 道场) performed by monks for their followers in the Song Dynasty 宋朝 to some extent directly gave rise to the recitations of Baojuan. In the beginning, Buddhist sutras were spread orally among people, but in the process of spreading, because it was difficult for people to directly understand the teachings, preachers could only use vivid stories and popular languages (the vernacular) to preach. Therefore, in the early period, "transformation texts" and sutra preaching were also passed down orally, and the dictation was later written down for preservation. Still later, ordinary people made private copies and dictated them, leading to the gradual emergence of the Baojuan and the rituals. To disseminate the Baojuan, Baojuan compilers often promised readers a good vision for the future and regarded the Baojuan as a magic key for the accumulation of virtuous deeds, thereby sanctifying the act of the recitations of the Baojuan. This conclusion can be drawn from the full participation of deities in the ritual process.

In an interview, Dai Jisheng 代继生,[7] an inheritor of the Hexi Baojuan, shared that during the healing ritual, he initiates the process by lighting incense (*shangxiang* 上香), presenting a petition (*huabiao* 化表), and reciting incantations (*nian zhouyu* 念咒语). The incantations are the god-invoking incantations (*qingshen zhou* 请神咒), and the main content is to explain what this ritual is for and which god needs to be invoked to give the master of the ritual a divine talisman (*fulu* 符箓) to cure the disease of the patient. Secondly, the master draws the talisman and utters specific brush pen incantations (*chibi zhou* 勅笔咒), namely the incantations of a specific brush pen, specific paper, and specific ink. After the talisman is drawn, the god is guided to the proper position, and the corresponding divine package (*shenling bao* 神灵包) is written, which generally states that someone who lives in a certain place will thank the god and pray to him/her for healing and blessing. He has specially prepared this stamped (Taoist seal) document package, which contains money for the gods

and the talisman, and he asks the god to take them. Thirdly, offerings such as fruits and flowers are placed on the altar table, with the written divine package in the middle, and then recitations of the Baojuan (scriptures) start. According to different causes of the disease, different Baojuan are recited, usually including the Precious Scrolls of Rescues (*Jiujie Baojuan* 救劫宝卷), the Scripture to Eliminate Pestilence and Demons (*Quwen Saomo Jing* 祛瘟扫魔经), the Precious Scrolls of Blood Pond (*Xuehu Baojuan* 血湖宝卷), the Scripture of the Deity of Transportation (*Jiuzhi Shihua Shi'er Yayun Jing* 九值十化十二押运经), and the Scripture of the Earth God (*Dangfang Fude Zhengshen Tudi Jing* 当方福德正神土地经), etc. Sometimes, incantations are uttered before reciting these Baojuan, such as the Incantation for Pacifying the Earth God (*an tu-di-shen zhou* 安土地神咒), the Incantation for the Offering of Incense (*zhuxiang zhou* 祝香咒), the Incantation for Purifying the Mouth (*jingkou zhou* 净口咒), the Incantation for Purifying the Heart (*jingxin zhou* 净心咒), the Incantation for Purifying the Body (*jingshen zhou* 净身咒), the Incantation of the Golden Light (*jingguang zhou* 金光咒), and the Incantation with Mysterious Connotations for Recitations (*kaijing xuanyun zhou* 开经玄蕴咒). Finally, when a recitation of the Baojuan is over, the person concerned kneels and kowtows, burns the petition letter, and bids farewell to the god. Normally, the master of the ritual is forbidden from eating beef or dog meat, and women who are menstruating are also not allowed to participate.

It can be seen that the ritual of recitations is complicated and there are numerous taboos. Moreover, water (for cleaning hands), portraits (pictures of the god), fragrance (incense), sacrifices (offerings), music (the music of religious musical instruments and Qupai 曲牌 and tunes for recitations of Baojuan), incantations, and a talisman are used at the same time for treatment. The key to the ritual is to repeatedly manipulate the same form that is endowed with certain meanings, and the metaphorical text of the ritual is read repeatedly in this process. Through repetition, the symbolic forms have the chance to be internalized and encoded into the subconscious through the senses, ultimately becoming ritual symbols (Xiaoming Zhao 2011, p. 24).

2.2.1. Supernatural Beliefs in the Healing Ritual

Zhang Xun 张珣, in the study of the Taoist Sacrificial Ceremony (*jijie yishi* 祭解仪式), once asked why among local folks, there are many who still claim that ghosts disturb people and make them sick. It was thought that people would turn into ghosts after death, living in the netherworld isolated from humans; so, how could ghosts easily cross the boundary to disturb humans? For this problem, Poo Mu-chou's 蒲慕州 study of ghost culture can provide some enlightenment. He believes that the causes of the concept of ghosts, the origin, the nature, the relationship between ghosts and human beings, and the distinction between ghosts and gods vary from culture to culture. Once the imaginary world of ghosts is created, it becomes a cultural and social experience with real power, which can concretely influence people's behaviors and thoughts (X. Zhang 2008, p. 397). It can be said that the world of ghosts and gods is a kind of cultural existence from a symbolic perspective.

From a philosophical perspective, the existence of the world of ghosts and gods as an entity is not limited to the fictional world; in-depth research assumes the full acknowledgment of the existence. In the healing ritual of the Hexi Baojuan, the Baojuan master first invokes gods and admits that it is difficult to achieve therapeutic effects by relying on his/her own strength, because the cause of the disease is likely to be the haunting of some evil spirits.[8] The imagination of ghosts is actually the patient's fear of the unknown or the inner unease after doing something wrong. Invoking gods and offering sacrifices can exorcise evil spirits, namely symbolically dispel inner fear or unease. When ghosts inflict disasters, the human–god/ghost boundary is crossed, and the liminal state comes into being. The liminal state is typically characterized by the existence of ambiguity, impurity, filth, immaturity, or danger (Zhou 2015, p. 6). As beings from another realm, ghosts should not live with people; otherwise, they have to be driven away or even subdued (Yongping Li 2020, pp. 227–51), and the way of driving away or subduing demons is to pray for help from higher-level gods and Buddhas. It is worth noting that in the process of

the recitations of the Hexi Baojuan, in addition to the common Taoist and Buddhist deities, such as the Great White Planet (*taibai jinxing* 太白金星), Lv Dongbin 吕洞宾, Han Xiangzi 韩湘子, Arhats (*luohan* 罗汉), the Victorious Fighting Buddha (*dou-zhan-sheng-fo* 斗战胜佛), etc., there are also a considerable number of local deities, such as the Immortal Maiden Equal to Heaven (*pingtian xiangu* 平天仙姑), the local Earth God (*tudi shen* 土地神), etc. This is the result of localization in the spread of the Baojuan.

2.2.2. Incantations in the Ritual

There are myriad incantations in the healing ritual, and they are kept secret. According to the Baojuan master, the incantations are given by gods, and if they are revealed, they are no longer effective, and the gods exact punishment. As we know, incantations are part of magic arts (*fashu* 法术), and the original meaning of incantations is for blessing or praying. It is to use a mysterious language to control some power and make ordinary things have the function of magic arts. Reciting incantations is a spiritual revelation that can ward off diseases and bad luck and turn bad luck into good. In other words, reciting scriptures and incantations not only meets the physical and mental needs of individuals but also serves an important cultural function (Zhuang 1991, p. 129).

From the perspective of both faith and healing, the incantations used in the ritual can increase the patient's confidence and improve the healing power of the Baojuan master. In the healing ritual of the Baojuan, incantations are used many times, and the power of words is also repeatedly emphasized, which reflects the concept of a divine source in the language of ancient people. When ceremonies become lost at the court, it is necessary to search for them in the folk population.[9] The folk customs, beliefs, and cultural ecology of the people in the border area retain more information about ancient rites and customs. The incantations used by the Baojuan master to treat the patient also have musical, emotional, and imaginal characteristics. In fact, they are a kind of poetry that combines the language intervention of psychological counselling with the emotional guidance of music therapy. The healing ritual of the Hexi Baojuan is essentially a kind of magic art, and primitive magic arts require a language to initiate, explain, or command the desired outcome. When performing the ritual, the incantations make people feel the mystery and the compulsiveness of the command; meanwhile, the melody and the vividly changing rhythm of the incantations bring the patient a rich experience of life and a sense of liberation.

2.2.3. Baojuan Texts in the Rituals

In the ritual, the master uses different Baojuan for healing according to different causes. Most commonly, in the event of a plague, the Scripture to Eliminate Pestilence and Demons (*Quwen Saomo Jing* 祛瘟扫魔经) is recited; in the event of a nasty disease, the Scripture to Dispel Disasters by the Xiayuan Water God (*Xiayuan Shuiguan Jie'e Jing* 下元水官解厄经) is recited.[10] We believe that the Baojuan play more of a symbolic role in the ritual. According to the Baojuan masters, a scripture in the house can keep the family safe. Since people worship texts and scriptures and believe that scriptures are equivalent to deities, with the functions of salvation and healing, they feel at ease when they see the Baojuan in the ritual, thus enhancing their confidence. At the beginning of Baojuan texts, there are usually suggestive phrases like "reading a Baojuan will make you refreshed" (*zhanjuan shenqing qishuang* 展卷神清气爽), while at the end of Baojuan texts, there is usually a boast of the function of the recitations of the Baojuan, which constitutes a strong hint to the patient that their diseases can be cured through the ritual. The basic approach is to enter the sacred space created by the Baojuan to empathize and realize the purpose of compensating their spiritual debts through the people or things described in the Baojuan. Everyone who completes the ritual feels a profound change in themselves. This sense of rebirth is what the ritual is meant to achieve (Some 2000, p. 25).

To summarize, the ritual of the recitations of the Hexi Baojuan can achieve healing effects by invoking gods and driving away evil spirits with the help of divine power. The Baojuan master sometimes uses incantations directly to command the evil spirit to leave.

The therapeutic power comes, on the one hand, from the sacred space of ritual, and on the other hand, from other sacred symbols, such as the Baojuan texts, offerings, portraits, music, fragrances, talismans, and incantations.

3. Sacred Space for the Recitations of the Hexi Baojuan

Like the Precious Raft (*baofa* 宝筏) preached in Baojuan, sacred space has an effect of protecting and delivering people through troubles. The most important thing in the ritual of the recitations of the Hexi Baojuan is the construction of a sacred healing space. Only in this space can the patient relax, can the master of the ritual obtain divine help, and can the participants gain the power of collective inspiration.[11] Ultimately, it is through the creation of this sacred space that the desired therapeutic effects can be achieved. The construction of sacred space requires the master to perform a great deal of preparatory work and construct it in strict accordance with the requirements of the ritual procedure. The process is similar to the practices for building the altar (*shentan* 神坛) before Taoist priests conduct religious rites, preparing paper models (*zhihuo* 纸货) and establishing the Fengdu City 酆都城 before Taoist priests conduct Dajiao 打醮 (a Taoist ritual) (S. Zhao 2021a, p. 125), and the practices of torch sending, torch dancing, and Dafengtan Gathering (*qiju da-feng-tan* 齐聚大丰滩) before wizards dance the Playing Tartars (*tiao wan-lao-da-zi wu* 跳玩老鞑子舞) (Zhao and Luo 2020, p. 266). Then, what exactly is sacred space, and how does the Baojuan master construct sacred space?

3.1. What Is Scared Space?

The ritual field, as a healing space, has two levels of meaning. The first one is the meaning of container. The ritual space can serve as a container to accommodate the participants and help the person concerned (the patient) recover. The concept of the "container" is often likened to a mother's womb or to a cave with restorative power that has the function of creation or regeneration. The container possesses a "divine" attribute. The second is a composite space in which a variety of symbol systems are crossing over, such as text symbols (the Baojuan and talisman), sound symbols (the reciting sound of the Baojuan master and the Buddha-worshiping (*hefo* 和佛) sound of the Baojuan listener), musical symbols (the healing music produced from holding and playing religious musical instruments, as well as the music of the Qupais and tunes used by the master), metaphor symbols of motions (the ritual display and fixed hand gestures of the master and the body movements and echoing of the listener), archetypal image symbols (portraits, lights, candles, incense, yellow paper, and joss paper), etc. The transformation between these different symbol systems on its own also activates the party (the patient) to restore his/her sick body to health.

In this space, the conversion of the symbol systems is realized through the different representations of the bodies of participants (the doctor and patient), such as the symbols for standing, lying down, sitting, and deity possession. Meanwhile, it also includes the position change of participants in the ritual space, e.g., the participant being outside the ritual space, the participant being inside the ritual space but outside the symbol, and the participant being inside both the ritual space and the symbol. The ritual space serves as a bridge between heaven and earth. Here, heaven and earth or the upper world and underworld refer to their archetype images. Heaven can be collective wisdom and the existing spirit, and Earth can be the prototype of the Great Mother Goddess and the source of security (Xiaoming Zhao 2011, p. 34). The patient completes the healing process in this sacred space by projecting his or her emotions into the ritual space and the Baojuan text space through the ritualistic work of the body, to accept the warmth and order adjustment of the space, and to realize spiritual redemption and perfection.

3.2. Construction of the Sacred Space for the Rituals of the Hexi Baojuan

The construction of the sacred space is crucial for the effectiveness of the rituals. For the party, it may not matter what kind of Baojuan is recited, and the Baojuan only act as a placebo. What really matters is the various symbols used in the healing space and the

symbolic meaning of the whole space to the party. The construction of the sacred space sometimes takes longer time and more energy than the ritual itself; the key to the success of the ritual is whether the preparatory work is complete. Following are the key elements of constructing the sacred space.

3.2.1. Symbols in the Sacred Space

Before the ritual of reciting the Hexi Baojuan, the steps that the master has to take, including lighting lamps (*diandeng* 点灯), offering incense (*shangxiang* 上香), hanging portraits (*gua-hua-xiang* 挂画像), drawing magic signs (*huafu* 画符), invoking deities (*qingshen* 请神), and burning joss paper (*shaoqian* 烧钱), are all to construct a sacred healing space, and these objects also become symbols, with important prompting meaning to the party (the patient). When the symbols are presented to people, they have an intuitive experience with such types of symbols in a phenomenological sense. The key to symbolic therapy is the communication of people's emotions and symbol forms in the ritual space, and the process of this communication is essentially the mechanism of the "interaction ritual chains" (Collins 2005, pp. 102–40)[12] or the construction of linguistic meaning modes. The difference from other types of art therapy is that symbolic therapy is performed in a sacred space (including the physical space) rather than in the human brain.

In a more concrete sense, the lamps lit in the ritual space are candles or oil lamps. Even though electric lamps are now available, the use of oil lamps still holds symbolic significance. The lamplight serves three functions. Firstly, to the visual sense of people, a lamplight is a kind of guide on the journey. Its function is equivalent to that of the leading light (*yinlu deng* 引路灯) in the funeral ritual,[13] which guides the spirit to find the way out and exit and then to safely pass through the liminal stage and transition zone. Secondly, lamplight gives out brightness and heat. For the whole ritual space, it also has the effect of heating. Being in the space, the participant feels warm and relaxed. This is also where the healing effects start. Thirdly, in folk sacrificial ceremonies and religious activities, lighting lamps is usually a necessary step. According to the master of rituals, lighting lamps also have the function of communicating with deities. Among the gods of folk religions, there is Dipankara Buddha (*randeng gufo* 燃灯古佛). In Baojuan rituals, there is a kind of Eliminating Malefic Planets with Lamp Lighting (*rangxing dengke* 穰星灯科), where the malefic planet is replaced with a lamp. The rituals for warding off calamities and prolonging life through setting up lamps are quite common in ancient Chinese novels (Luo 1973, p. 861).[14]

After offering incense in the ritual, the smoke from the incense connects this realm and other realms (like heterotopia), serving as an intermediary between the visible and the invisible. The diffusivity of the smoke can link the metaphysical world (invisible) and the physical world (visible), and the aroma can attract ritual objects (e.g., deities and ghosts). Moreover, the aroma can unite and unify the party in the ritual, and the cross-border characteristics of scent can lead the party into another world (the sacred world). Due to the characteristics of diffusion and continuity, the aroma causes unclassifiability and fuzziness to the sense of smell, which makes it the best intermediary in consciousness that temporarily disables all classifications (such as life and death) to re-enter the next stage (i.e., from the mundane to the sacred). Therefore, incense has two levels of characteristics: material and spiritual and especially the characteristics of linking the two worlds. From a scientific point of view, incense stimulates the olfactory area of the brain, leading to the temporary interruption of the logical thinking system, making people think that they are entering another world (namely crossing the boundary and entering the other world). In this world, the rationality and logic of the real world are temporarily stripped away, and individuals enter a realm of phenomenological experience. Incense smoke permeates the ritual space, and its aroma is inhaled by the people and also permeates the inner space of their bodies. The whole world is purified by the aroma; so, incense smoke also has a spatial quality, which is not a physical space that already exists but a space enriched by the aroma (Zhong 2019, p. 4).

The characteristics of incense smoke or aroma, as well as the calming effect of its physical components, determine its important position in folk rituals—incense is used in almost all rituals of sacrifice, prayer, and rituals for averting disasters and healing. Sometimes it is used more than once. In the reciting ritual, incense (smoke) is the transcendence of the visible/invisible worlds of the universe. It has the power to evoke fantasies and divine feelings, which give people the sense of real experience, even though such fantasies themselves are not real. The haze of smoke slowly opens the curtain between the underworld and this world, similar to the widely-known practice that the Native Americans use tobacco to attract the attention of deities. Of course, in many cultures, scented weeds, wood, and resins can all serve as intermediaries for connections and conversations with the supernatural. Incense, therefore, can link and combine incompatible elements, candles and food and, more obviously, the worshipers of physical beings and the dematerialized spirits, whose corresponding spirits and divinities will ingest the fragrance of life. It is often said that incense is the provision for the deities, and ashes–in this case, the ashes are the leftover of the burned incense–are seen as an element that is conducive to recovery and regeneration (Blake 2011, pp. 76–93).

The portrait of the god or the founding master (*zushi* 祖师) hung in the ritual or the picture of the god inserted in the front matter of Baojuan is a serious reminder to the participants that the invoked god is watching all the time, so that the participants can stay focused and at the same time feel the presence of the god, thus enhancing their confidence in the healing rituals. For the Baojuan master, reciting in front of the portrait also has a connotation of talking about the picture.[15] Namely, the portrait plays a role equivalent to a teleprompter for the master.

In general, the various symbols in the ritual (such as the flickering candlelight, curling smoke, vague images, burning flames, and food for the gods) all have different modes of meanings, which jointly construct the sacred healing space. In these rituals, widely used materials are often endowed with tangible characteristics, which can be transformed into binary symbolic structures (odd/even numbers, rough/delicate, hard/soft, bright/dark, whole/part, quiet/noisy, etc.) (Blake 2011, pp. 76–93). This is why folk rituals seem so simple that everyone could perform them, but they are actually incredibly complicated. Many ritual performers, let alone ordinary people, have no idea what these symbols mean, but it does not stop them from performing the rituals.

3.2.2. Motion Metaphors in the Sacred Space

Behind every motion of the body, there is a corresponding mood or emotion associated with it. In English, the word "emotion" itself contains a morpheme "motion". A movement, a pose, and a posture of walking all form part of a system of bodily symbols. It can be said that the body posture reveals the close relation between the quality and nature of body movement and the available space to the body. From the flow, direction, and the form of body movement, one can see how an individual views his body posture (Xiaoming Zhao 2011, p. 76). Symbols are also physical memories, while motion metaphors can be regarded as a form of nonverbal communication. Body language is often ineffable, but it can be visualized by people, and the expected answer and result can also be obtained through the metaphorical way of body movements.

Participants in the reciting rituals (the doctor and patient) perform body movements in the ritual space and gain a deeper understanding of the ritual through the extension and experience of body movements. As one researcher has pointed out, extraordinary actions such as magic figures or incantations and handprints, combined with a world of gods and Buddhas, create a source of power. Such rituals can stimulate the imagination and potential of the patient, so they can gain a source of confidence and strength in the fight against ghosts (C. Li 2005, p. 72). Of course, the body movements as performed in the ritual of the Hexi Baojuan are not strong, not as obvious as magic dances or ritual dances, but their subtleties are also strongly metaphorical, such as the motions of worshipping and pacifying gods of the master and the motions of worshipping Buddha of the participant. Moreover,

the body sense and emotion in the ritual space are also a topic well worth discussing, but due to space, they cannot be fully discussed here (Boddy 1994; Itzhak 2018; Tooker 2019; Wilson 1967).

4. Healing Principle of the Rituals of the Hexi Baojuan

It has always been difficult to study the mechanism of any therapeutic action, especially folk therapy (S. Zhao 2021b, pp. 134–40). Despite some dissertation work and research on the principles of literature therapy (*wenxue zhiliao* 文学治疗), the viewpoint and perspective have been mostly from the Western tradition (Tang 2013, pp. 6–13). Most studies in medical anthropology and public health affirm the social–psychological effects of indigenous healing methods in the treatment process. In particular, indigenous healing methods provide etiological explanations and relieve the psychological pressure of the patients and their families. Many scholars have also pointed out that indigenous healing methods not only have significant effects on the psychological and social levels but also have good therapeutic effects in the treatment of diseases.

However, it is disappointing that although the therapeutic effects of indigenous healing methods are acknowledged, they are often labelled as "superstitions", a hindrance to medical treatment, only psychological effects, utilitarianism, and money-accumulating, etc.; so, the medical resources provided by indigenous healing methods have not been taken seriously for a long time (Y. Zhang 1996, p. 4). We surely must strictly distinguish the fundamental difference between indigenous healing methods and the quack techniques of scamming for money. On the one hand, we should not give up an undertaking on account of a small obstacle and deny the effect of indigenous healing methods because of some deceptive techniques such as hand-touch healing. On the other hand, we should also be vigilant to avoid being brainwashed by evil skills and crooked ways under the banner of religious medicine and folk medicine.

According to Qiu Huiying 丘慧莹, the period from the late Qing Dynasty to the early Republic China was the heyday of the development of the Baojuan. In Jiangsu Province 江苏省 and Zhejiang Province 浙江省, people would invite Baojuan preachers to recite whether they were getting married, conducting funerals, celebrating birthdays, praying to have babies, getting sick, suffering disasters, having a full moon celebration for children, celebrating the completion of a new house and other festivals, or holding other folk activities (Qiu 2017a, p. 97). The connotation of preaching the Baojuan to suppress evil spirits and cure diseases is nothing more than to entice people with benefits, suppress evil spirits with power, provide professional ability, and persuade people to do good deeds and cultivate themselves according to religious doctrines. These prescriptions are faith-based. With the means of preaching rituals and through the power of words, people perceive and respond, which is a kind of psychic healing at the spiritual level (Qiu 2017b, p. 287). It should be pointed out that, according to Qiu, the therapeutic effect of the Baojuan relies more on the text and content, rather than the power of preaching ritual and space.

4.1. Restoration of Order and the Power of Interpretation

From the perspective of etiology, according to the surveys and interviews of the masters, the causes of diseases can be put into three groups. First, one cause is the problems arising in the relationships between people. People, especially relatives, need to assume the agreed responsibilities and obligations and play appropriate roles in the kinship network to maintain a harmonious relationship. When a conflict occurs, the harmonious relationship between people is disrupted, and diseases come. This is the opposite of the so-called saying that "harmony at home brings prosperity" (*jia-he -wan-shi-xing* 家和万事兴). A second cause is the problems arising in the relationship between humans and nature. When a natural disaster occurs, or when people are at odds with nature, epidemic diseases such as plagues and influenza often break out. A third cause is the problems arising in the relationship between humans and the supernatural. In particular, the problems in the relationship between humans and ghosts/gods are the common etiological explana-

tion used by Baojuan masters. These three explanations are derived from the concept of the functioning and constitution of the cosmic order in traditional Chinese thoughts. In the integrated and balanced system of cosmic problems, disasters (including diseases) occur when people are unable or unwilling to play their roles in the functioning of the system, or when the functioning of the system itself goes wrong. The healing method is primarily to maintain harmony among the functioning components of the system, restore order to the universe, and avoid confrontation or compromising the functioning of the system (Y. Zhang 1996, p 38).

Sacrificial activity and ritual started to emerge at the dawn of the formation of human settlements. The main purpose of these activities was to hope that Heaven or gods could maintain the stability of the universe and make the world favorable to avoid natural disaster (N. Zhu 2012, p. 191). From a sociological perspective, ritual therapy deals specifically with disorders and abnormal events and provides socially practical maintenance through treatment. Every culture has its design for avoiding or reversing the ravages of diseases to reduce unnecessary anxiety and prepare for emergencies (Y. Zhang 1996, p. 64). Meanwhile, to create meaning in life, humans keep building up sequences of events and experiences to develop consistent views of themselves and the world around them (White and Epston 1990, p. 10).

Order and meaning are produced in the process of interpreting the Baojuan ritual. Through the Baojuan ritual, the damaged order is restored. Through the master's interpretation, the patient understands his or her problems, regains a sense of the meaning of life, and this is where the therapeutic effects come from. Baojuan rituals often combine with the folk Taoist talisman, religious musical instruments, and skills to exorcise evil spirits (namely the intruders to the stable order and balanced world), to realize the social-cultural therapy in the symbolic sense (Li and Wang 2020, 6th ed.).

4.2. Functions of Vision and Creation of Imagery

As the saying goes, "seeing is believing" (*yan-jian-wei-shi* 眼见为实), and the various cultural systems of human beings have strong belief and faith in evidence that can be seen. This is reflected in many adjectives in our language that attach the attribute of being capable of understanding to human beings and to appropriate ideas (White and Epston 1990, pp. 33–34). Through the visual sense, our mental states, including emotion and reasoning, are being constantly stimulated. Visual art had been an invaluable asset to humankind long before history was recorded, and people are constantly trying to visualize their world. When people are confronted with images, they are often awakened to address their unresolved issues and to fix them in symbolic ways (Gladding 2016, pp. 91–122). Whether it is a portrait hanging in the reciting ritual, an illustration in the Baojuan, or a talisman created by the Baojuan master, it is a strong visual stimulation for the patient. This stimulation awakens the patient's self-perception and makes him or her believe that there are gods involved in the ritual, where the master is the servant of the gods, and his or her illness can be cured.

In addition, imagery is also used in many different ways in rituals. According to the study of Samuel T. Gladding, Freud was the first to pay close attention to imagery and its meaning in the contemporary treatment of mental health disorders, particularly the role of dreams. Freud emphasized the explicit and implicit meanings of dreams and described them as the royal road to the unconscious (Gladding 2016, pp. 71–90). Based on interviews with participants in the rituals, the patients said frankly that entering the healing ritual was like entering dreams. After entering the sacred healing field, they remembered nothing and only felt things like the symbols and images provided in the ritual space. Obviously, the mechanism of action is similar to modern art therapy.

4.3. Placebo Effect

A placebo is an inactive substance known as a dummy pill that is given to the patient, which is often shown to be as effective as the active agents. In trials, placebos were used

instead of aspirin or morphine to reduce pain, and in more than a third of cases, they were as effective as the pain reliever (Dorling 1995, p. 62). Baojuan healing rituals not only use substances such as incense ash or paper ash that are commonly used in folk healing but also use the prescriptions attached to the end of Baojuan.[16] It is not known how effective such prescriptions are; but, after the ritualistic blessing and taking some magic medicine in the prescription, there is no doubt a placebo effect.

More broadly speaking, the recitations of the Baojuan can allow individuals to empathize with and express their symptoms or personal worries. According to our field study, we found that most symptoms or worries came from internal anxiety rather than some diseases or pains. Through the ritualized performance and work of the body, the patient projects his or her feelings into the sacred ritual space and the Baojuan text and realizes spiritual self-redemption and perfection. This is the real reason why Baojuan play a role as a placebo.

4.4. Safely Passing through the Liminal State

The term "liminality", derived from the Latin "limen", refers to the state of intermittency or ambiguity. It is originally a psychological term, used to refer to the minimum amount of external stimulus that causes an organism to feel. Later, the term was applied in the field of anthropology to establish the so-called theory of liminality. The theory proposes to call a special zone that exists between two structures or two stages a liminal stage. The French anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep pointed out in his *Les rites de passage* that important rituals in the course of human life are composed of three stages, namely separation, transition, and combination, and the liminal stage is equivalent to the transition stage (Van Gennep 2011, pp. 1–18). Victor Turner renamed Van Gennep's three phases of life rites as the preliminal, liminal and postliminal phases and focused his research on the core of the ritual process, liminality, which is the transitional phase. According to Turner, liminality is not a "state", but it is at the junction of the structure, a transition between two stable "states" (Turner 2017, pp. 94–130).

In the Hexi Corridor, an important use of the ritual of the Baojuan is the funeral ceremonies. Baojuan masters (or folk Taoist priests) are often invited by people to recite scriptures, such as the Scripture of the Lingbao Blood Pond (*Lingbao Xuehu Ke* 灵宝血湖科), the Precious Scroll of Invoking Shangqing God (*Shangqing Qing Zhongshen Juan* 上清请众神卷), the Dragon King Praise (*Longwang Zan* 龙王赞), and the Scripture of the Ten Kings (*Shiwang Jing* 十王经), to help people pass through the liminal stage. In funeral ceremonies, the transition stage between life and death of the dead has a typical attribute of liminality and is full of danger and power. Due to the influence of traditional culture and the shaping of local knowledge by people, funeral ceremonies not only have the characteristics that local cultures/customs vary over even small geographical distances, but they also share some common features.

In people's minds, when the dead pass away, they become ghosts that should enter the underworld as soon as possible, rather than lingering in the human world. The dead no longer belong to the human world. They have become what people call unclean things that need to be released, separated, expelled, and purified, using tools such as scriptures (or Baojuan), rooster's blood, and fire. Namely, when a person passes away, he or she becomes an outlier and can no longer live with the living; the purpose of cleaning the environment of the deceased is to prevent them from returning to the human world. Most outliers or anomalies, because they violate or escape the bottom line of social cognition and cultural classification, are regarded as the existence of ambiguity, impurity, filth, immaturity, or danger (Zhou 2015, p. 6). And then, through the cognition and classification by local knowledge, people can distinguish between order and disorder, internal and external, and clean and unclean. Ambiguous boundaries, abnormal situations, etc., are all considered unclean, dangerous, and filthy (Douglas 2001, pp. 123–24). In the context of funeral ceremonies, concerns such as the presence of a living corpse, an evil man, or an

evil ghost reflect the imaginative fears and explanations that extend beyond one's familiar understanding of the self.

When faced with dangers, the response of people is to invite monks, folk Taoist priests, or other religious figures to release the spirits and at the same time to invite masters (sometimes acted by folk Taoist priests concurrently) to recite Baojuan. When a reciting ritual is held, crowds of people tend to watch and burn paper to worship. The folk Taoist priest holds religious musical instruments in his hand and recites and dances, which is highly lively. Its nature is similar to the sacrificial ritual of social fire Niuduye (*shehuo niu-du-ye* 社火牛犊爷) in the Lantern Festival (*yuanxiao jie* 元宵节), in which all people, men and women, young and old, can participate. Hidden behind the lively scene are the ritual activities of subduing demons, which have evolved into a lively and noisy social aesthetic psychology that permeates various kinds of cultural texts (Yongping Li 2018, p. 116). Namely, through the reciting ritual, on the one hand, it releases the spirit of the dead; on the other hand, it also has an implied meaning of subduing demons and driving away ghosts, highlighting the function of averting disasters and healing. On the one hand, a series of cleaning practices are conducted to release the spirit of the dead, ward off evil spirits, and avert disasters; on the other hand, reciting rituals is used to soothe people and treat their anxiety so that they can pass through the liminal stage safely.

From a functionalist perspective, funeral anxiety is a prominent liminal anxiety, and the transition ritual tries to make the dead, an uncertain and fuzzy liminal subject and anxious object, acquire logical meaning and transformation form (S. Li 2015, p. 122). For the deceased, on the one hand, they are the subjects of the liminal stage, and on the other hand, they are the anxious objects of the deceased's children and neighbors. Through the cleaning ritual and the ritual of reciting, the uncertain factors of the transition zone become logical and routinized, so the function of averting disasters and healing are maximized. In this process, the folk Taoist priest first guides the dead to realize that they have passed away and become ghosts who cannot live with the living. Then, through the rituals of crossing the Naihe Bridge (*nai-he-qiao* 奈何桥) and the Blood Pool (*xuehu* 血湖), the folk Taoist priest escorts the spirit of the dead smoothly into the underworld. Finally, through the step of crying to paper (*kuzhi* 哭纸), the folk Taoist priest confirms that the spirit of the dead has left this world and then completely eliminates the fear and concern of the living.

5. Postscript

This paper focuses on the therapeutic function of the Hexi Baojuan. Similar to reciting major epics and early literary forms in various cultures, the recitations of the Hexi Baojuan often serve the purpose of averting disasters and healing diseases. Compared with the healing ritual of reciting King Gesar (*ge-sa-er-wang* 格萨尔王), which frequently lasted for several days, the ritual of reciting the Hexi Baojuan, although sometimes lasting for two or three days, is mostly conducted within a few hours. Due to the sacred status and important function of Baojuan in the Hexi Corridor, the ritual of reciting the Hexi Baojuan has become a cultural tradition and a standard reciting format. No step of the ritual can be omitted, and the conduct of a ritual needs to be presided over and guided by the master. In many cases, it does not matter much which Baojuan is recited; more important is the ritual procedure and the construction of the sacred space, which are the focus of this paper.

The author's main focus has been on understanding the mechanism of the healing ritual of reciting the Baojuan. Whether it is a series of preparatory activities before the ritual or the construction of the space, the purpose is to give a full display of the therapeutic role of ritual. The combination of symbols in the sacred space and the performance of the master work not only to rebuild the cosmic order but also to provide a reasonable explanation of the cause of diseases. Once the patient has gained the confidence, good results can come with some help of medicine. In the eyes of most people, rituals are sacred. In the author's view, rituals actually have a placebo effect, also known as a dummy pill effect. The ultimate effect of the reciting rituals prescribed in the Hexi Baojuan is to make the patient safely pass through the so-called liminality, a stage of a rite of passage, most

evident in funeral ceremonies. Finally, in terms of the relationship between the rituals of healing in the Hexi Baojuan and the shamanism in many archaic cultures, they both share similarities in dealing with spiritual healing. However, they differ in specific and concrete forms, such as whether there is spirit possession involved.

Funding: 2024 Henan Province University Humanities and Social Sciences Research General Project "the Cultural Connotation of the Tatar Dance Ethnic Community in the Han Tibetan Ethnic Cross Zone of Gansu Province": 2024-ZDJH-467; the Major Program of the National Social Science Foundation of China "Collation and Research of Overseas Chinese Baojuan": 17ZDA266; the Major Program of the National Social Science Foundation of China "the History of Chinese Popular Religious Thought": 18ZDA232.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Academic Committee of the School of Liberal Arts of Henan Normal University (28 April 2023).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study. Written informed consent has been obtained from the patients to publish this paper.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

1 Daniel L. Overmyer was a pioneer in the field of Baojuan research. His *Precious Volumes: An Introduction to Chinese Sectarian Scriptures from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* is the representative work of the study by Western scholars on the relationship between Chinese Baojuan and folk religion. Several articles by Russian Sinologist Rostislav Berezkin focus on the Baojuan texts used in the preaching rituals in Jiangnan region 江南地区 and the study of ritual practices, rather than the study of the mechanism of the ritual functions, as are Sun Xiaosu's articles.

2 Related research results that have not yet been published, the *Summary of Hexi Baojuan* (*hexi baojuan shuyao* 河西宝卷述要), which was co-authored by Guo Yulie 郭郁烈 and Zhang Xiping 张曦萍, studying the same Baojuan or different versions of the same Baojuan, have provided detailed statistics on the existing collections of the Hexi Baojuan, mainly on the version information, form, compilations of published and nonpublished versions, and the current state of public and private collections. According to the available information and the author's statistics, there exist about 200 kinds of Hexi Baojuan (including copies and carving copies), excluding different versions of the same Baojuan (little change in the content).

3 The so-called "ecocultural circle" refers to the ecological humanistic sphere formed naturally among living things in a specific time and space. According to the local climate, landform, culture, and other factors, different ecocultural circles are often formed. Different local climates, landforms, and cultures often lead to the creation of different ecocultural circles.

4 In this Appendix, Li Yan described the detailed geographical distribution, preservation, and interviews of the inheritors of the Hexi Baojuan. Other relevant research findings: (Huang 2020; and Wu 2010, on the overall ecology of Hexi Baojuan; Xufeng Zhao 2014, on the distribution of Baojuan in Wuwei region 武威地区; He 2003, on the distribution of Baojuan, especially Yongchang Baojuan, in Jinchang region 金昌地区).

5 There are also Guazhou 瓜州 and Shanzhou 鄯州, which are not included in the Four Counties of Hexi but belong to the Hexi region.

6 The history, geography, climate, ethnic distribution, and other information of the Hexi Corridor are mainly seen in the Pan (2010).

7 Dai Jisheng 代继生 is a local master who recites scrolls and is also a folk Taoist. Between 2018 and 2020, the author conducted multiple interviews and onsite observations on Dai's rituals related to the scrolls.

8 Depending on the condition and living environment, the Baojuan master will tell the patient what kind of evil spirits caused the disease.

9 This sentence comes from the *collection of Yiwenzhi in Hanshu* (*hanshu yi-wen-zhi* 汉书·艺文志), and it is Confucius' 孔子 words.

10 The Scripture to Dispel Disasters by the Xiayuan Water God (*Xiayuan Shuiguan Jie'e Jing* 下元水官解厄经) is collected by Dai's family in Zhangye, Hexi region.

11 Agitation refers to the state of shock caused by the excitation of things or shock and turbulence. Here, the term of collective agitation used refers to the wisdom and kinetic energy of healing triggered by the collective power, so as to achieve the purpose of healing.

12 The term of "interaction ritual chains" was proposed by Collins, an American sociologist, to connect the macro and micro concepts. It refers to the development of different interactive rituals through constant contact and their combination in complex forms. Collins believes that people have common emotional impulses based on common psychology and concerns. When people use the same symbols to express their common concerns and emotions, interaction rituals are generated. Different levels of

encounters form different interaction rituals, and with the extension of time, they combine in complex forms and then form an interaction ritual chain. Its continuation depends on the strengthening of emotional energy and reward of the two sides. He also believes that the whole society can be seen as a long interaction ritual chain through which the macro social structure is established (Randall Collins 2005).

13 The leading light that appears in the funeral ceremony in some areas (such as Linze of Zhangye 张掖临泽, Yadang of Hezheng 和政牙塘, Gangu of Tianshui in Gansu 甘肃天水甘谷, and Sangyuan of Juxian in Shandong 山东莒县桑园) is also known as the ever-burning lamp. The purpose of the lamp is equivalent to the stars in the sky, mainly for showing the way. Among them, the most representative one is the Seven Stars Leading the Way (*qi-xing-yin-lu* 七星引路), in which copper coins are placed in the shape of the Big Dipper (*bei-dou-qi-xing* 北斗七星), meaning the dead will go to the underworld. The Big Dipper is composed of the seven stars of Tianshu 天枢, Tianxuan 天璇, Tianji 天玑, Tianquan 天权, Yuheng 玉衡, Kaiyang 开阳, and Yaoguang 瑶光. In ancient China, the seven stars were thought to be linked together and imagined as a dipper for scooping wine. In Taoism the Big Dipper is called the Qiyuan Jie'e Xingjun 七元解厄星君, who live in the seven palaces of the Big Dipper, namely, Tanlang Xingjun in Tianshu Palace 天枢宫贪狼星君, Jumen Xingjun in Tianxuan Palace 天璇宫巨门星君, Lucun Xingjun in Tianji Palace 天玑宫禄存星君, Wenqu Xingjun in Tianquan Palace 天权宫文曲星君, Lianzhen Xingjun in Yuheng Palace 玉衡宫廉贞星君, Wuqu Xingjun in Kaiyang Palace 开阳宫武曲星君, and Pojun Xingjun in Yaoguang Palace 瑶光宫破军星君.

14 A typical example is the one in Chapter 103 "*In Shangfang Valley Sima Yi Gets Trapped, at Wuzhang Plains Zhuge Liang Expels Evil Stars*" 上方谷司马受困 五丈原诸葛禳星 of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*sanguo yanyi* 三国演义). When Zhuge Liang 诸葛亮 scanned the sky at night, he found his life might end at any moment. Then, he wanted to use the magic of expelling evil stars to extend his life, "I am in the habit of praying, but I don't know the will of God. However, prepare me forty-nine guards and let each have a black flag. Dress them in black and place them outside my tent. Then I will pray for the Big Dipper in my tent. If my master-lamp remain alight for seven days, then is my life to be prolonged for twelve years. If the lamp goes out, then I am to die." His specific practices were as follows. Zhuge Liang prepared incense and offerings in his tent. On the floor of the tent, he arranged seven lamps, and, outside these, forty-nine smaller lamps. In the midst he placed the lamp of his own fate. All day he labored at his military plans, and at night he paced the magic steps—the steps of seven stars of Ursa Major and Ursa Minor. Zhuge Liang was loosening his hair, his hand holding a sword, his heels stepping on Ursa Major and Ursa Minor to hold the leadership star.

15 Part of the Baojuan appears in the form with images on the upper half of the page and text on the lower half, which is very close to the style of talking about the picture, e.g., the collection of the *Complete Portrait of the Tang Monk's Journey to the West* (*quanxiang tangseng chushen xi-you-ji zhuan* 全像唐僧出身西游记传), also known as the *Newly Carved Complete Biography of the Triratna's Birth* (*xinke sanbao chushen quanzhuan* 新刻三宝出身全传), in the Asian–African Library of the University of London.

16 Such as the *Pangong Mianzai Jiunan Baojuan* 潘公免灾救难宝卷. At the end of this Baojuan, there are references to planchette writing, such as the *Dongyue Dadi Tongsheng Baoxun* 东岳大帝同生宝训, the *Wenchang Dijun Xingshi Jibi* 文昌帝君醒世乩笔, the *Guanyin Dashi Quanshan Chaojie Wen* 观音大士劝善超劫文, the *Wenchang Dijun Chuixun Guangquan Jibi* 文昌帝君垂训广劝乩笔, and several prescriptions.

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4052 Basel
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ISBN 978-3-7258-4010-6