

tation is only one of several possible ways of looking at Japanese religions, which may be fused in some areas and multilayered in others' (see Note 1, p. 166).

³²This stone is located between the hamlet and the beach and was long covered by grassland. When I arrived Shingû in 1988 the ground had been cleared and the stone was placed on a neat concrete basement. During my fieldwork in 1989 a shrine gate (*torii*) with the sign 'Hama-no-miya' (the 'beach shrine') was added. A group of believers had formed around this stone, which originally was the vessel (*shintai*) of seven deities of which one had 'fallen out'. Among the members of this group there are two women who belong to the new religion Konkôkyô, a carpenter who is well versed in esoteric Buddhism, the honorary chairman of the last Shinto festival which is held at the Isozaki-jinja once every 18 years, and his wife who is a member of Noriko's group of believers.

³³Hitomaru-hime was a young girl who in the 13th century travelled to Shingû in search for her exiled father. She caught ill and died, and she was enshrined some 4-500 years later.

³⁴There is a hall for Awashima where a mirror – which is a typical Shinto symbol – symbolises her presence. This building is located next to the eastern Jizô hall, and the same group of people take care of both. In the Tokugawa period it was the resident *yamabushi* who took care of Awashima and Jizô. It is common for believers to donate small votive paintings depicting the body parts of their illnesses both to Awashima and to the adjacent Jizô. The inside walls of these two buildings are covered by such paintings as well as by votive paintings donated in gratitude for recoveries. A new worshipping hall for this deity has been built within the temple compound of Kentokuji, where the deity is symbolised by a doll.

MUSIC INSTRUMENTS IN THE RITUAL CEREMONIES OF THE OB-UGRIANS

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The Voguls and Ostyaks, or, as they are called collectively, the Ob-Ugrians, live in the greatest distance from us, though in the sense of language affinity, they are our closest relatives.

The religion of the Ob-Ugrian people was based on animism, that is, on the belief in the existence of gods and spirits living all over the world. Beliefs connected with totemism were also developed among them. The especially great respect for the bear can serve as a good example for that. Members of the family group Por respected the bear as a totem ancestor, and showing their respect they

held feasts, through which folk plays and ritual songs passed on by oral tradition, being conserved in their most original form.

The cult of production is characteristic of their beliefs, that is the cult of water and forest spirits connected with fishing and hunting, for whom they made sacrifices before the hunting season or after a successful catch.¹

The Ob-Ugrians were also characterised by the cult of holy trees and by shamanism. We do not aim at the overall examination of the religious system of the Ob-Ugrians, but we will deal with those parts of it where, during the ceremonies, they used several kinds of folk music instruments.

The shamans played a very important and ramifying role in the ritual ceremonies of Ob-Ugrians, where they also used folk music instruments.

The main tasks of the shamans can be classified as follows:

1. Guarding the idol-houses; conducting the communal sacrificial ceremonies, that is singing the hymn of invocation of a God; killing and cutting up the sacrificial animal, feeding the spirits;
2. Curing sick people, finding out the causes of their illness and the will of the spirit causing it;
3. Prophecy and divination, and primarily the prediction of economic success.

Not every shaman was able to fulfil all demands at the same time – only the strongest and greatest ones succeeded, whereas in most cases one shaman performed only one duty. One very interesting fact has been left out of consideration by the researchers: the shaman performing all the three functions, achieves the demanded goal by three different magical means. Two of them are folk music instruments. The shaman of the first order (i.e. who conducted the ritual ceremonies and guarded the idol-houses) called out the spirits mainly by using his instrument called *sangultap* or *shangur*.² This instrument resembles a lyre and its Ostyak name can be translated as 'sounding wood'. This is an ancient stringed instrument, not known elsewhere among the Finno-Ugrians,³ was made of pine-wood and cut in the form of a boat. This was covered with a flat cover and the strings were stretched on it. It had usually 5-6 strings made of reindeer's tendon. Sometimes metal strings were used, but they were valued less than the others.⁴ The stretchers of strings were made of wood or bird bones. The strings were plucked with fingers of both hands, while holding the instrument on the knees. It had a soft sound and it was used solely during sacrificial ceremonies or other ritual occasions.⁵ A Vogul religious ceremony, written down by Reguly is a good example for that. It was held on May 3, 1844 in Upper Pelym. According to this, a horse was sacrificed to the God of Pelym, in order to get his help in healing the person offering the sacrifice. The domicile of the God was on the bank of the river Pelym in a birch grove. According the belief of the Voguls,

during the ceremony the God stands on a very thick branch of a birch-tree, which is almost thicker than the trunk. As an introductory ritual of the sacrificial ceremony the hymn of invocation of the God was played. Only after that could one start the sacrificing, during which 'they killed, cooked and ate the animal with all kinds of ceremonies...'.⁶

The descriptions and several scientists mention that according to the belief of the Ob-Ugrians the shaman's play on this instrument before the rituals was needed, because the normal human voice was not understood by the Gods or spirits. Therefore the shaman could communicate with them only by singing, through the text of a song, accompanied by the instrument. The latter could be only the drum or the *shangur*. Every spirit had a different melody and only the shaman knew which spirit by which melody could be lured. These songs accompanied on shangur are 'the hymns of invocation of the Gods.' An observation by József Pápay relates to the ritual character of this instrument. In 1898-1899, while collecting linguistic examples, Pápay went to a Vogul settlement and heard music played on an instrument. After long persuasion a young Vogul, the son-in-law of his host, played to him on this 5-stringed instrument. After finishing, he 'turned to the icon, (the holy picture) on the wall and crossed himself, begging the Russian God's pardon for doing such prohibited things.'⁷

Instruments like the *shangur*, *sangultap* and *naresh-yuh* could be used only during ritual ceremonies, and only by the shaman or the musicians, e.g. during bear feasts. But the musicians could only be men, never women. The shangur is a marvellous instrument, and has magic power even in the Ob-Ugrian folk-tales. In one of these tales, the *menkv*, the enemy of the people – a harmful spirit living in the forest and having super-power – grabs a *shangur*. The instrument has magic power and when he is playing it, every wish becomes true. Naturally, he uses it for foul purposes, and only Ekva-Pygris, the mythical person of Mir Shusne Hum, can get it back with a trick and through that destroy the vicious *menkv*.⁸

The main magic instrument of the second type of shamans – the healers – is the drum. The drum was also used here as an instrument to wake up the spirit or God, so that he could hear the shaman.⁹ Just as during the animal sacrifice while calling the spirit, the shaman did not wear special clothes, but only a peaked hat made of multi-coloured felt.

The drum in his hand was made of reindeer and elk skin, or sometimes of dog-skin. Some sources also mention calf-skin. The raw leather was stretched on a wheel with a diameter of 40-60 cm. It was sewn on the wheel and after drying it became taut. The shaman made his drum himself. The wheel was made of pine-wood, but not of any kind. Only the pine-tree which grew in the holy grove, near the residence of the tribe's spirit, could be used.¹⁰ Rattles, rings and

chains were attached to the wheel to make noise. There is a Y- or X-shaped piece of wood in the inner side of the drum, by which the shaman held the drum. Multicoloured ribbons were attached to the sides of the drum. The greater the number of ribbons, the higher the rank of the shaman. Such coloured ribbons could not be found only on the drums, but on the *shangur*, too. The drumsticks were also made of wood and were covered with the ear-skin of a reindeer, bear, calf or horse.¹¹ To the drumstick and the drums frequently rattles, rings, etc. were attached. While the shaman was dancing, rattles on the drum were jingling and when he beat the drum, it gave a beautifully strong, vibrating sound, especially if the drum had previously been held over the fire, so that the leather became more stretched. According to the beliefs of the Ob-Ugrians gods are pleased by these sounds, and they responded to the call of the shamans and came down to the earth to tell their will to the shamans.

If the drum snapped, they hung the leather on the tree in the place where the accident had happened.

Finally, the main task of the third type of shamans was to predict whether the fishing or hunting would be successful or not, where they had to go to insure the catch, etc. They predicted mainly with an axe, in other cases a knife or a holy box.

Examining the ritual ceremonies of the Ob-Ugrians in their entirety, researchers found out that the role of the shamans was not too significant. It can be explained only by the fact that the shaman's effect on the success of working processes is a later phenomenon.¹²

For example, the shamans had practically no role in bear feasts, the totemic character of which is beyond any doubt. The members of the family group Por, who regarded the bear as their animal ancestor, held clan feasts in their cultic centre at the village Vezhiakory on the bank of the river Ob, during a seven-year period followed by a seven-year break. These bear feasts lasted several nights and had complicated choreography.

The bear feast was held either in the house of the hunter who had killed the bear, or in a special dancing-house, earlier more frequently in the latter. The bear, that is the pulled-off skin of the bear was put on a bench in the holy corner of the house, its head between its fore-feet. The whole bear was decorated with rings and coins in due form.¹³ On the left side of the bear, in an illustrious place sat the musicians, on the right side the hunter.

The musicians played the *sangultap* or *shangur*, but quite frequently also an instrument similar to a harp and called a swan or crane, which gave the background music to the songs or dancing. Before analysing in detail the role of these folk music instruments in various events, we would like to describe this harp-like instrument. It has got its name from the swan-shaped, high vertical

form. It had 9-13 strings made of reindeer tendon, or later on of copper wire¹⁴. The instrument could be played men only and usually it was made by the player himself. They plucked the strings with both hands, laying the instrument on their knees. It was used primarily on the banks of the river Ob. As the *sangultap*, it was a ritual instrument, used besides bear feasts during sacrificial ceremonies as a substitution for a *shangur* or a drum. On the swan belonging to a shaman there were also pieces of cloth indicating his rank. Naturally, the instrument was also used at other special occasions. By the accompaniment of this instrument, the musician sang improvised songs about men's deeds, animals, birds, and fish.

On the bear feast, lasting several nights, dancing and rich meals alternated in a strictly fixed sequence. As we have already mentioned, songs and dances were accompanied by the *sangultap*, swan or crane. The initial ritual of bear feast consisted of singing magical chants and animal songs. The songs were performed by one or several men, women were not allowed to sing sacred songs. The songs were accompanied by *sangultap* or swan. Enchanting songs and invocations were sung in the open air to call the protector spirits of the tribe to the feast.¹⁵ Next came the animal songs, followed in each case by strictly fixed musical motifs. They were usually short songs about different animals, such as squirrel, rabbit, rook, cuckoo and crane. These songs had a magical role: they were to insure successful hunt or growth of young animals.¹⁶ On the bear feasts, the end of ritual songs was indicated by a highly respected old man, who was specially asked to ring a bell or hit a metal plate with a stick.¹⁷ Amidst the ritual songs were also dances, accompanied by strictly fixed background music on the above mentioned instruments. The subject of dances corresponds to that of the songs sung before. So, for example, if a song told about a bear, the dance also imitated bear.

The bear feast was closed with a common dancing and a rich meal, in which men, women and children together took part. After finishing the feast, they brought the instruments back to the little house where ritual things were kept, and from where it was very dangerous to take them out and play for one's own pleasure. This was possible only after special precautionary measures. We can find an example of it in Chernetsov's travel book about his expedition along the North Sosva River in 1936-37. A man had taken out the *sangultap* to play it at home. His wife asked him: did you get fed up with the marshes and the sun? That is: do you want to die? Then the man covered the instrument with a shawl, took it under his arm and brought it home.¹⁸ From this publication we can make two conclusions. First, by the thirties of the 20th century many old habits and beliefs had lost their power, because even a hundred years earlier it would have been unimaginable to take home any instrument or other sacred object for one's own pleasure, without rousing public anger and condemnation. But second, in a

weak form respect for these holy objects lived further, simply to take them was impossible. That seems to be the reason why the man breaking the rules covered the *sangultap* with a shawl, so that the instrument would never know who took it away from the dancing house and where he took it.

Except sacrificial ceremonies, shaman's rituals and bear feasts, the *sangultap* and swan were used in other special occasions, such as for playing background music to legends. There were special story-tellers among the Ob-Ugrians, who performed legends and other stories in voice and on *sangultap* and swan. These epic stories told about the past of the Ob-Ugrians, the cause of wars against neighbouring peoples, ancient customs, legendary deeds of the heroes. The folktales and legends could be performed only in the evenings and telling the stories sometimes lasted till dawn. The Voguls believed that telling tales and legends in day-time was prohibited, because the hair of the tale-teller could fall out, he could lose his memory etc.¹⁹

As we have already mentioned, *sangultap* and swan could be used only by men. the drum could be used by both men and women.

Finally I would like to say a few words about two other folk instruments that were played by women. Unfortunately we have no exact data when, on which occasions they played them. So we can only make conclusions by the method of exclusion.

In sacrificial ceremonies women were allowed to participate, so this occasion falls out; as far as we know, at shaman ceremonies these instruments were not used by a female shaman. In bear feasts, as we have seen, only men could take part. So only the women's feasts are left, which are connected first of all with the birth of children or wedding ceremonies, actually consisting of a rich meal. There are no other feasts left, only the ordinary weekdays which they perhaps tried to make more fine and cheerful with music and singing. One of these instruments is the *tumran* or *vargan* ('Jew's harp'), which is a little plate made of reindeer's or elk's shinbone. Lengthways a thin sheet is cut out from it, which is fixed to the other part of the instrument only with one side. A reindeer's tendon is here fixed to the sheet. While playing, the instrument is taken into the mouth, the tongue is pushed against the sheet and the sound is produced by frequent pulling of the tendon. It has a very special, deep sound. According to N. L. Gondatti it was used primarily by Vogul women.²⁰

The other women's instrument reminds one of the violin, but it has only two strings, and its cover plate is narrower and longer. It has a little bow stretched from horsehair.²¹ According to V. M. Chernetsov this instrument is not of Ob-Ugrian origin, but reminds one of ancient Iranian musical instruments.²² It was widespread among Ob-Ugrians and known for centuries.

Finally we would like to note that in spite of the outstanding research work

that Finno-Ugrian musicologists have done in the field of Ob-Ugrian folk music, there still remains a lot of research work even today. This refers especially to the Ob-Ugrian folk music instruments and to the details of their use. There are hardly any data about the instruments and their users, and about the method and time of their usage. Ethnographic descriptions naturally do not contain the differences and similarities of these instruments, or classify the melodies played on them. The completion of these tasks is only possible by the collaboration of ethnographers and musicologists. Hopefully, we will soon see the results.

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