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*Spectacle culturel : diversité du public à la Conférence internationale sur le chamanisme et au Tailgan sur l’île d’Olhon*

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# Performing “culture” : diverse audiences at the International Shaman’s Conference and *Tailgan* on Ol’khon Island

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- 1 At the beginning of August, 2012 approximately 200 people were clustered around the overlook outside the village of Khuzhir on Ol’khon Island. With the town behind them, they looked out over Shaman’s Rock, an outcropping that juts into the lake and is the temporal home of the spirit master of the lake. The deep blue expanse of Lake Baikal stretches behind it until the horizon meets the sky. Most of the people, however, were not looking at the landscape, but rather at the row of 13 decorated posts that stretched across the overlook and the shamans who were setting up small altars, one at the base of each post. They were here for the tenth annual International Shamanic Conference and *Tailgan* conducted by the Tengeri Shaman’s Association.<sup>1</sup> The name of the event, which combines “international” with a local Buryat term for a shamanic ceremony — *tailgan* — indicates a tension between the global and the local, the universal and the specific, that pervades the event, but an easy dichotomy of global/local does not begin to capture the multiplicity of audiences and performances at the ritual.
- 2 This article explores the presentation and performance of “culture” in this ritual and poses the methodological question of how survey data about the participants can help us to understand the ceremony. I will warn the reader that I offer no firm conclusions, but rather suggest that rituals with demographically divided audiences, such as those performed by Tengeri at Ol’khon Island, should be approached through the idea of “semiotic diversity” (Carreño 2014), which presumes multiple meanings for multiple audiences. Such an approach sees apparent contradictions in a ritual not as incoherence

but rather “the extraordinary congregation of the diverse people present [...] becomes in itself an index of the power that resides there” (Carreño 2014, p. S193).

- 3 Tengeri’s Annual International Shamanic Conference and *Tailgan* is held every year at the end of July or beginning of August, outside the village of Khuzhir on the island of Ol’khon. Ol’khon is the only island in Lake Baikal, and Khuzhir, while quite small, is the largest settlement on the island. During the Soviet period the island was home to a large fish processing plant, but in the post-Soviet period it has become part of a nature preserve. Tourism is the island’s main source of income, and Ol’khon is one of the most popular locations for visitors on Lake Baikal. As the deepest and largest body of fresh water in the world, and a UNESCO world heritage site, Lake Baikal is a considerable tourist destination, but its location, in the middle of Siberia, four time zones east of Moscow, limits the number of tourists. Most are from within Russia, but a small but steady stream of ecotourists from other areas of the world comes to Ol’khon Island every summer. Within the greater Baikal area, among members of all ethnic groups, Lake Baikal is seen not only as a desirable vacation spot, but also a sacred place, infused with a powerful healing energy.
- 4 The ritual is organized by two shaman’s organizations, MROSh Tengeri<sup>2</sup> from Ulan-Ude, and another shaman’s organization called Tengeri from the Aginskii Okrug in Chita oblast<sup>1</sup>. The two organizations are independent, but the directors of each studied with the same teacher in Mongolia, and so they often cooperate. It is explicitly an “invented tradition” in so far as it has only been held since 2002. In 2001, members of the Tengeri Shaman’s Association visited the island, and at this time the spirit master of Lake Baikal entered the body of one of the shamans and demanded 18 years of sacrifices to re-sanctify the island and rebalance the spiritual energies of Lake Baikal. Members of the Tengeri Shaman’s Association speak with reverence of this promise, and speak of this new ceremony as part of an attempt to restore and revive their traditional pre-Buddhist, pre-Soviet culture. Clients and patients, as well as shamans, speak about the powerful energy of Lake Baikal and how much they want to attend the event for months in advance. For them, it is the highlight of the summer ceremonial season.
- 5 For residents and those who work in the tourist industry of Ol’khon Island it is a potential source of revenue, but to my knowledge no local shaman from the island has ever participated. For the few hundred ethnic Russian and foreign tourists who attended, it was a “cultural event” advertised by their tourist resort and, as one survey respondent answered, “an opportunity to photograph shamans.” A few of those Russians and foreigners, however, call themselves pilgrims instead of tourists, and travel from the European parts of Russia and Western Europe merely to attend this event. These few pilgrims speak of being “drawn to Baikal” and of how this is a “once in a lifetime opportunity.”
- 6 The overwhelming presence of tourists is part of what leads a number of local Buryats, both on the island and in Ulan-Ude, where Tengeri is based, to dismiss the ritual as a tourist event, about which one friend of mine said “there is absolutely nothing traditional”, and which most Buryats would find ridiculous. For others, including the shamans, the presence of foreigners is a sign of the power and energy of this sacred site, which is able to draw people from around the world. The co-existence of these perceptions renders this ceremony something different than either a tourist ceremony, or conversely, a local ceremony that happens to draw tourists.

## The organizers and the broader context

- 7 The Local Religious Organization of Shamans Tengeri is an urban organization located in Ulan-Ude, Buryatia, with which I have conducted fieldwork in 2005 and 2012 (Quijada 2008, 2009, 2011). The organization has changed significantly in these years and has become a noticeable fixture in the religious landscape of Ulan-Ude. Officially founded in 2003, Tengeri has become the most active shaman's organization in the city, and since opening a ceremonial center in the suburb of Novaya Komushka, it is increasingly visible as well. Tengeri is not the first shaman's organization in the Republic of Buryatia. Böö Mürigel was founded by Nadia Stepanova in 1992 (Humphrey 2002, p. 211), predating Tengeri by at least a decade, and since then several others have appeared. In addition to building a new ritual center in Novaya Komushka, Tengeri has two affiliated offices in Chita and Irkutsk respectively. Along with opening new buildings, the number of initiations being conducted for new and current members every summer has increased exponentially. The organization has also established a calendar of regularly celebrated public rituals open to anyone. Most recently, two former members of Tengeri have left the organization and opened their own offices. All of these shamanic organizations should be considered part of a wider trend towards institutionalizing shamanic practices in Siberia (see for example Lindquist 2005 and Balzer 2005).
  
- 8 The Republic of Buryatia is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious republic, where, statistically at least, there tends to be a strong correlation between self-professed ethnic identity/nationality and religious identity. For example, Holland (2014, p. 171) documents that "roughly 83 % of respondents who indicated that Buryat is their nationality in turn responded that they are Buddhists" and 66 % of those identifying themselves as Russian also identified themselves as either Orthodox or generally Christian. However, both Holland's statistics and my own fieldwork imply that commonplace religious practices can diverge widely from the responses that people give on surveys to questions about religious identity. Individuals who identify strongly with one particular denomination may participate in many different religious rituals, and are often called upon to do so through kinship obligation (see Quijada 2009). Nevertheless, although shamanic practices have increased and gained much greater visibility in the past 10 years, as Holland's data shows, shamanism does not begin to rival Buddhism's position in the public sphere. For some urban Buryats, shamanism remains an ethnographic curiosity, while for many more it is what one might call a supplemental religious resource. For example, people who otherwise identify as Buddhists or even atheists, might attend their family's annual clan ritual (*tailgan*), or turn to a shaman for treatment in cases of intractable illness or misfortune. This kind of participation, however, does not require anything akin to identification as a member of a religion. For those who become involved with Tengeri, however, shamanism is increasingly the only religious practice they engage in.
  
- 9 While their stated mission is the "rebirth of religious shamanic traditions and customs of the Buryat people [and] the preservation and development of the cultural heritage of the republic" (Bolotova 2012, p. 2), much of Tengeri's day-to-day activities are devoted to promoting an institutional form for these practices. This includes building a center where rituals are held and clients can come for treatment, and establishing a calendar of regularly held rituals that are open to the public. The calendar of rituals is part of a

broader attempt to establish a defined cosmology, as each calendrical ritual is devoted to a particular deity. The *tailgan* at Ol'khon Island is one of these regularly scheduled rituals.

- 10 *Tailgan* is a general term for a ritual in which a group makes offerings to a deity. In rural settings a *tailgan* is most often a clan making offerings to their clan ancestors, or a village making offerings to the place spirit of a particular location, but the basic form of the ritual can be adapted to encompass any number of collectivities and deities. Due to this flexibility, it is difficult to write generally of the beings to whom offerings are made. Higher level spirit place masters, or deities such as Bukha Noion, the Bull ancestor figure of the Buryat people more broadly are generally referred to as gods (*Burkhan* in Buryat or *Bog* in Russian). Some of the shamans at Tengeri call these gods into their bodies during ceremonies, but they more commonly embody the spirits of their own ancestor shamans, who are called *ongon* (Buryat sing.).<sup>3</sup> In rural clan *tailgan*, the spirits being addressed are, in my experience, referred to as our ancestors (*nashi predki*, in Russian). In this article, I will follow the usage of the shamans at Tengeri, and use the term *ongon* for the other-than-human persons who the shamans at Tengeri call into their bodies when referring to the general practice, and deity in reference only to the specific beings for whom they use that term.
- 11 In the summer of 2012, Tengeri's summer ritual season included the following ceremonies : a spring *tailgan* to open the season, *tailgan* in honor of Bükhe Baatar, spirit master of the Selenga river and masculine energy (July 1), Lusad Khan, the god of water (July 7), the Darkhan (blacksmith) clan spirits (July 15), Khihaan Ulaan, one of the 99 Tengeri (July 21), Ol'khon Island (August 4) and a fall *tailgan* to close the season. Survey data on attendees was collected at five of these ceremonies (only the spring and fall *tailgan* were not included for logistical reasons). In addition to these ceremonies, which are open to the public, initiation ceremonies (called either *shanar* or *shandru* depending on whether the shaman is being initiated as a black or white shaman), clan *tailgan* ceremonies commissioned by clients, and other healing ceremonies are conducted throughout the summer, but these are by invitation only and are not advertised or open to the public. Demographic surveys were only collected at public ceremonies, and when the Ol'khon survey data is compared to 'smaller ceremonies' below, it is to these small-scale public *tailgan* ceremonies that I refer.
- 12 All the public ceremonies, except Ol'khon, were held in or around Ulan-Ude by members of the Tengeri organization. The dates and locations are listed on a large billboard at the entrance to Tengeri's ceremonial complex, marked on the organization's calendar and are occasionally advertised in hand-distributed flyers or radio listings. Most attendees, however, come through word of mouth. The leadership at Tengeri very self-consciously walks a fine line on the question of advertising. Many people I have spoken to in Ulan-Ude are very critical of advertising on the part of any religious organization, but especially shamans (see also Quijada 2009). While few people openly voice criticism of the organization, more than one person answered my question "so what do you think of Tengeri?" by obliquely noting that "well, traditionally shamans aren't supposed to advertise". Members of the organization, however, justify these notices through explicit comparison to other religious organizations, noting that Buddhist temples and Christian churches post notices of their services, which are open to anyone, so that people know when to come. The schedule of regularly scheduled ceremonies open to the public is one of the most noticeable forms of Tengeri's institutionalization of shamanism.

- 13 Nevertheless, as noted above, most attendees come through word of mouth, and at the smaller local ceremonies listed above, 63.91 % of the people interviewed reported having attended a Tengeri event before. Often, clients who come to Tengeri for treatment are advised to attend one of these rituals. Occasionally the process is reversed, and prospective clients attend a *tailgan* in the hope of learning more about the organization and meeting a shaman who can treat them. The attendees predominantly, but not exclusively identify themselves as Buryat. At the smaller, local public *tailgan* ceremonies 70.41 % of attendees identified themselves as Buryat, 25.44 % identified as Russian, with 1.18 % identifying themselves as both Russian and Buryat, while 2.96 % chose "other". Although predominantly Buryat, the attendees represent the multi-ethnic composition of Ulan-Ude, and it should be noted, that although only 1.18 % chose to check both "Buryat" and "Russian" boxes on the survey, anecdotal evidence from conversations during the events implies that many people, including several shamans, come from ethnically mixed backgrounds, but choose to identify as Buryat (or occasionally as Russian) exclusively, and at least two practicing shamans are ethnically Russian.
- 14 Although held at different locations, and in honor of different deities, the general form of public *tailgan* is similar. The shamans who will be conducting the ceremony each set up an altar table with offerings, and most of the audience sets up their own offerings of milk, cookies, candy or vodka. The ceremony begins with a *kamlanie* (Russian for shamanic ritual), drumming and chanting by the participating shamans, which calls their *ongon*, or deity, to the ceremony. The *kamlanie* is followed by offerings to the *ongon*, usually including the sacrifice of a sheep. After this, the shamans alternate "calling down their *ongon*". Sometimes clients are brought closer by assistants, so that they can ask questions. At ceremonies in 2005 this often resulted in a mad rush surrounding possessed shamans, whereas in 2012 these encounters were arranged beforehand. The trance portion of a ceremony can last several hours, and usually culminates in one shaman calling down the deity for whom the ceremony is being conducted, in order to determine if the offering has been accepted. After all the participating shamans have called down their *ongon*, blessings are said over the food brought by the audience, and the altars and offerings are dismantled and sometimes burned before the final closing *kamlanie*. The location, the participating shamans, and the offerings prepared will vary depending on the deity or spirits being honored.
- 15 The metapragmatic framing at these ceremonies is limited. Sometimes short opening speeches are held to introduce the shamans who will be participating. Sometimes the audience is instructed not to cross certain lines in the ritual space, sometimes the audience is separated by gender, and during blessings the audience is instructed to cover their heads and to face in the four cardinal directions, but these instructions often follow a breach in protocol rather than pre-empt inappropriate behavior. The lack of direction given to the audience is at times a source of anxiety, and several first time attendees have approached me, perhaps assuming that the anthropologist is the expert, to ask what is expected of them. I have also heard more than one audience member complain "well I wouldn't have done it if anyone had told me!" Participants often copy one another's behavior, and police each other, so the more often people attend Tengeri organized rituals the more comfortable they are and the more likely to casually instruct neighbors in proper behavior.
- 16 Speech during the ritual is predominantly directed towards, or originating from the *ongon*.<sup>4</sup> *Kamlanie* is sung to the *ongon*, blessings are said over food and directed towards

the cardinal directions, and the *ongon* themselves speak through the shaman's body during trance. Assistants will ask the *ongon* questions, and the answers are carefully recorded and their meaning is discussed afterwards. There is very little meta-pragmatic speech about what is happening during the ritual. While Buryat 'tradition' or 'culture' is constantly discussed by Tengeri members in their occasional newsletters (such as Bolotova 2012) and when they talk to me about their practices, it is rarely mentioned during the rituals themselves. Although there are two ethnic Russian shamans who regularly participate in ceremonies, and some of the clientele is Russian, the vast majority of both shamans and attendees are Buryat. Much of the ritual is conducted in the Buryat language. Since these rituals consist predominantly of Buryat people, in a Buryat place, speaking the Buryat language, the presumed "culture" that is being revived through their practices is implicitly Buryat.

- 17 However, as discussed more extensively elsewhere (Quijada 2008, 2009, 2011), Tengeri's claim that their rituals are manifestations of "Buryat" culture are not completely uncontested, in the sense that many people in Ulan-Ude and its environs question the "traditionality" of Tengeri's practices. Tengeri practices a form of transe in which the deity or ancestors fully enters the the shaman's body, something which is not all shamans in Buryatia do. Some independent local shamans have told me that this form of trance is a Mongolian practice, whereas others note that there was a great deal of regional variation in practices, and most shamans in the areas directly around Ulan-Ude, such as the Kabanskii Raion, did not practice this kind of full trance. Tengeri argues that this was a "traditional" practice, which was forgotten during Soviet times and which they therefore had to travel to Mongolia to revive, and most of their clients accept this explanation.
- 18 However, few, if any of the shamans at Tengeri come from unbroken lineages of practicing shamans and most are urban, educated Buryats who discovered their callings later in life. Even though they claim the "traditionality" of their practices, they themselves are "non-traditional" in the eyes of many of their potential clients. Instead, the legitimacy and authenticity of their practices is grounded in a biological, genetic argument. They argue that shamanism is a genetic capability prevalent in indigenous populations, like Buryats, and that if this capability is not properly identified and trained, it results in physical or mental illness. Western (and Soviet is Western in this context) cultures have lost the ability to recognize and use this capability, and so those Buryats who carry shamanic genes must revive traditional practices in order to live successful lives. This argument both legitimizes Tengeri's practices by grounding them in a biological argument, and at the same time opens up the practices to a universal audience. This gene, while more prevalent among indigenous people, they argue, does appear among Europeans. New Age interest in indigenous shamanism is thereby incorporated into local arguments of legitimacy. Therefore, when Bair Zhambalovich trains and initiates Russian or German shamans, he explains that their capability and the ancestors they embody are Russian or German respectively, and the method he teaches them for accessing these capabilities is Buryat (*po-buriatski*). Within this argument the content (the ancestor spirits) can be separated from the form (the ritual techniques). The form is marked as "Buryat" but the content is conceived of as a universal human capability.
- 19 Interestingly, Tengeri's arguments about "Buryat identity" can be seen as a manifestation of a broader global shift in identity politics, which the Comaroffs call "Ethnicity Inc." Under conditions of global neo-liberal capitalism, "cultural identity, in the here-and-now, represents itself ever more as two things at once : the object of choice

and self-construction, typically through the act of consumption, and the manifest product of biology, genetics, human essence" (Comaroff & Comaroff 2009, p. 1).

- 20 While I heard no mention of genetics during the ceremony on Ol'khon Island, this argument, which is often made by the organization's Director, Bair Zhambalovich Tsyrendorzhiev, and widely accepted among the group's members, is a necessary context for understanding how culture is invoked in the Ol'khon island ritual. On Ol'khon, where some of the shamans and most of the audience are not exclusively or even predominantly Buryat, "culture" becomes a more slippery concept.

## The Annual International Shamanic Conference and *Tailgan*

- 21 The ceremony at Ol'khon Island differed from the locally conducted, smaller public ceremonies in several ways. Traveling to Ol'khon Island from Ulan-Ude can take anywhere from 15 to 24 hours depending on how long you wait for the ferry. The cost and inconvenience of a multi-day trip prohibited some of the shamans and many of their clients who wanted to attend from doing so. In addition, in its guise as an "international conference," the Ol'khon event included shamans who are not affiliated with Tengeri. Along with the shaman's organization from the former Aginskii Buryat Autonomous Okrug, which has been collaborating with Tengeri to organize this ritual since it was first held, shamans from other areas of Russia and other countries are invited. In previous years, shamans from Inner Mongolia and California have participated. In 2012 there was a Mongolian shaman, an ethnic Russian shaman from Tuva, and a shaman from Germany who had been initiated through Tengeri, but who lived and worked in Germany.
- 22 As noted above, when I attended the third ceremony in 2005, the organizers explained that they began doing these *tailgan* because the Spirit Master of Ol'khon, Hotun Khan<sup>5</sup>, had entered one of the shamans while he was in trance, and had demanded 18 years of sacrifices to restore Ol'khon Island to its full spiritual status as an axis mundi, a point of connection between the spirit and human worlds. The shamans who were present promised Hotun Khan that they would sacrifice a sheep every year for 18 years, and have done so ever since. However, given the special nature of the location, they also envisioned this as a global "shamanic conference" where shamans from all around the world could come to exchange techniques and experience the sacred energy of Lake Baikal. Accounts of the first few *tailgan* and the one I attended in 2005 match this description. In 2005, the visiting Buryat shamans from Inner Mongolia stayed near the Tengeri members, and conducted their own ritual the day before, as part of the exchange experience. This kind of intimate cooperation and exchange was logistically much more complicated in 2012, because the scale of the event had increased dramatically.
- 23 In 2005 the audience was around 50 people, most of them friends and relatives of Tengeri members. There were a handful of tourists and a Korean television crew. In 2012, in contrast, we collected 310 surveys, and the total number of attendees was probably close to 400. In 2012, attendees at the smaller ceremonies around Ulan-Ude in 2012 ranged from 30 at the smallest to 60 people at the largest event, so Ol'khon is significantly larger. Most of the difference in attendance is due to tourists, and Tengeri has made explicit attempts to increase tourist attendance. In 2005, the night before the main ceremony we visited several resorts in order to invite tourists. Since then the organization has clearly



cooperated with various authorities and tour groups to promote it, and in 2012 there was a billboard advertising the event at the ferry dock on the way to Ol'khon.

Picture 1. Tourists photographing preparations (Olkhon Island, August 2012)



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- 24 As a rule, members of religious organizations in Russia are reluctant to speak about money. People belonging to one organization often tell rumors that other organizations receive money from the government or from private donors, but no one you speak to ever confirms that they receive any such donations, so my comments about income are speculative at best. Managers of campgrounds and resorts on the island, as well as the local administrators, consider the event to be one of many activities that tourists can participate in, such as taking a boat ride around the island or a trip to see *nerpa* (Russ.), the freshwater seal indigenous to Lake Baikal. It is less clear why tourist attendance would benefit the shaman's association financially. There is no fee to attend, and general donations are not solicited. In 2012 there was a booth set up where attendees could buy supplies for the ritual (milk, candy and cookies to be blessed) as well as buy key chains that had been blessed by shaman who was channeling a powerful deity, and some of the profits may have offset travel costs for the organizing shamans, but it is not a large source of income. Some of the clients who come to the ritual will ask for special prayers to be said during *kamlanie*, or to ask questions when a shaman calls down an *ongon* and these clients will leave monetary donations or gifts (primarily tea, cigarettes and vodka) on the shaman's altar. Rituals are good places for shamans to connect with new clients. Some shamans may hold smaller healing sessions immediately afterwards. As such, participating in any ceremony can be financially very lucrative for a shaman. However, shamanism, as practiced by Tengeri, is a donation-for-service system. Tourists who come to the ritual purely as tourists, not as neo-shamanic New Age pilgrims, or as prospective clients, are unlikely to know enough about the practices to spend any money on them, and as such are probably not a primary source of income. The value of their presence must be measured in a different coin.

## “Culture” at Ol’khon Island

- 25 The tenth Annual International Shamanic Conference and Tailgan on Ol’khon Island, in 2012, as noted above, opened with speeches and *kamlanie* at an overlook outside the village of Khuzhir, from which Shaman’s Rock is clearly visible. *Kamlanie* are the chants/prayers performed by each shaman to open the ceremony, calling the deities and *ongon* down to this plane of existence. The opening speeches were clearly directed towards the human audience, and they clearly articulated a tension between the local and the global. Bair Zhambalovich Tsyrendorzhiev, Tengeri’s Director, opened the ceremony by placing the location, Ol’khon Island, in relationship to both global spirituality and Buryat tradition :

Lake Baikal is a place that all the world considers to be a sacred place, a place like a temple [Russ. *khram*]. Ol’khon Island is a place to which people from all over the world come to pray, a place where great gods descend to earth, where the earth is united with the gods of the sky, here people come to ask for happiness and well-being [...] there is a Buryat tradition, namely, a tradition that tells of the thirteen sons of Tengeri who gathered around Lake Baikal, who came to a gathering at the blessed island of Ol’khon [...] to ask how to help people...<sup>6</sup>

- 26 He went on to praise the local administration of Khuzhir, for having erected the tethering posts, “striving to make this place sacred and beautiful” [*sviatym, krasivym*] by which this location “acquired the look of an ethnographic, cultural, religious place” “[*priobrela vid etnograficheskogo, kul’turnogo, religioznogo mesta*]. Placed in conjunction with the previous portion of his speech, where he cites “Buryat tradition” the implication that the place being rendered ‘ethnographic, cultural and religious’ is a Buryat place, but this is not explicit. Bair Zhambalovich’s speech was followed by a representative of the administration of Khuzhir, who welcomed the audience as “our guests” [*dorogie nashi gosti* ], evoking a host/guest relationship between the local administrator and the tourists. The administrator thanked a local tour company for funding the construction of the tethering posts, and “participating in the cultural life of the island,” “culture” this time being geographically, but not ethnically marked.

Picture 2. The opening kamlanie at the 10th Annual International Shamanic Conference and Tailgan (Olkhon Island, August 2012)



The row of tethering posts are what made this an “ethnographic, cultural and religious” location  
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- 27 After the administrator, the director of Tengeri’s Irkutsk affiliate offered a brief blessing for the participants in Russian. Her speech was followed by another brief speech by the director of the shaman’s organization from Aga. The shaman from Aga welcomed and blessed the participants in the Buryat language, which most of the audience would not have understood. While I was not able to ask her about why she spoke in Buryat, in the context of the ceremony it clearly served to mark the local nature of the event, reminding the tourists in the audience of their outsider status. This expression of the importance of the local was followed by the affirmation of the value of the global by two speakers who mentioned my presence and that of the shaman from Germany. I had been asked to speak the night before, but was given no instructions as to what to say. My presence as “our scientific partner from America”, as I was introduced, confirmed the value of the local to the global, irrespective of what I said. The next speaker, the participating shaman from Germany, offered similar confirmation, as she praised the way in which “shamanism was being kept alive here”.
- 28 The emphasis on the importance of this locality to the global, and the translation of a Buryat sacred site as a “temple” [*khram*] is not unique to Tengeri. Bernstein (2008) argues that this language is pervasive not only in local publications by shamans, but also in Ol’khon tourist brochures. Her 2006 film, *In Pursuit of the Siberian Shaman*, shows Russian campers spreading laundry on sacred sites, and documents how the local Ol’khon shaman Valentin Khagdaev describes shaman rock to tourists as a temple, comparable to Christian sacred sites in Canaan, Bethlehem and Jerusalem (*ibid.* 2008, p. 34). Bernstein argues that this act of translation should be understood as “staking out political ground for potential land right disputes” (*ibid.* 2008, p. 42). Instead of figuring in a land rights dispute, the site has now been marked as a sacred site for the consumption of tourists.

Unmarked sacred sites can be accidentally desecrated by uncomprehending tourists, but when the same sites are marked, they “acquire the look of an ethnographic, cultural and religious site.”

29 A battered sign at the location reads :

Cape Burkhan is a sacred and untouchable monument of nature, history and culture. Its phenomenon lies in deep respect for a religious sanctuary, for spirits and gods related to the master of Ol’khon. This universal place of prayer is a unique natural object, meriting the special protection of a nature preserve. Entry to the territory of the monument is strictly prohibited.<sup>7</sup>

30 Here again, “culture” is evoked without any qualifiers. Due to centuries of Russian expansion and imperial exile, the entire Baikal area has a long history of multi-ethnic co-existence, but rather than reference this, culture and history are both left unmarked. It must also be noted, that Ol’khon Island is part of a nature preserve in Irkutsk Oblast’, which, unlike the Republic of Buryatia, is not a national territory. Therefore, political concerns about whose traditions are eligible for state-funded preservation may pose constraints on how monuments are described. Lake Baikal itself is recognized as a Natural World Heritage Site by UNESCO, so perhaps the language of universal heritage has spread into cultural monuments around the lake as well. All these uses seem to play on the ambiguity of the term ‘culture’ which refers to specific cultures in the ethnographic sense, and what is sometimes termed “high culture”, such as art and music, which has a more universal value.

Picture 3. A shaman helps a client communicate with an *ongon*, an ancestor spirit possessing a shaman, during the *tailgan* (Olkhon Island, August 2012)



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31 In the metapragmatic framing around the ceremony, speeches at the beginning and signs at the location, “culture” is evoked as an unmarked category, so it may be presumed that the ritual is the “culture” on display. And in many ways the ritual can be read as such. After the opening speeches, everyone moved to a different location, where the ritual

ground is marked off by rope. The audience stands outside the rope, watching the shamans perform inside the ritual space, and the ritual follows the same pattern as the smaller *tailgan* conducted in and around Ulan-Ude for a predominantly Buryat audience, described above. *Kamlanie* in Buryat open and close the ceremony, sacrifices, including a sheep slaughtered during the ritual are offered to the spirit master of Ol'khon, and the participating shamans call down *ongon* and deities who speak Buryat to those who come to ask them questions. The shamans call down the *ongon* concurrently and repeatedly, and this portion of the ritual lasts several hours. At the end, the sacrifices and the trees that are set up at the location are burned. None of these elements are glossed or explained during the ritual. The colorful Buryat national costumes that the shamans wear mark a Buryat identity, but would not necessarily be identifiable as such to tourists. Nor is it clear that tourists would know the difference between the Mongolian, the Tuvan and the Buryat shamans, which to locals is evident in both their costumes and their style of chanting and trance.

Picture 4. The six directions blessing at the 10th Annual International Shamanic Conference and Tailgan (Olkhon Island, August 2012)



The ribbon that marks off the ritual space can be seen behind the shamans  
Roberto Quijada

- 32 Bernstein (2006, 2008) describes ceremonies conducted explicitly for tourists by local Ol'khon shaman Valentin Khagdaev, arguing that both tourist and shaman are aware that the ceremony is not a "real performance" or a "real ritual" but rather a presentation about Buryat shamanism that incorporates a few elements of ritual (Bernstein 2008, p. 40). Khagdaev emphatically insists that "for the tourists it's a hobby. An amusement. I should not do such rituals and I won't" (Bernstein 2008, p. 40). Instead, he aims to educate tourists about Buryat culture by translating local beliefs and practices into a form that is comprehensible to foreign tourists. He explains the small ritual elements that he includes by paralleling them to western forms, for example Shaman Rock is compared to a church,

Lake Baikal to Jerusalem. This metapragmatic glossing labels the rituals and places as specifically Buryat, but the presence of the metapragmatic frame marks the experience as “inauthentic”.

- 33 From this perspective, Tengeri’s ritual at Ol’khon island can be seen as a more effective tourist performance, because it does not provide any interpretive framework — the ritual is not explained, and can therefore be perceived by tourists or pilgrims as “more authentic” in its incomprehensibility. Unfortunately, our survey data did not include questions about the reception of the ritual, and so further research will have to be done to explore this question. However, the fact that local tour companies and hotels routinely promote the event implies that they believe tourists enjoy it.
- 34 However, tourists are not the only audience for the ritual. Buryats as well as Russians and foreigners come to Ol’khon specifically for this ritual. How the presence of tourists and non-local pilgrims at the event is interpreted by local Buryats also needs further investigation. However, interviews and previous experiences lead me to believe that for those who are otherwise skeptical about Tengeri and its activities, the presence of non-locals is seen as a sign of inauthenticity. For those who are members or clients of the organization, the presence of non-locals, like the speeches given at the event, offer proof that the ‘global’ appreciates this particular formation of the ‘local’. Further clues may be found in the demographic data collected at the ritual.

## Attendance demographics and questions of motive

- 35 As noted above, survey data was collected at five public *tailgan* ceremonies held by Tengeri in the summer of 2012. The survey was designed to evaluate Tengeri’s claims that their organization contributes to the revival of Buryat culture more generally. The surveys conducted as part of this research included basic demographic information, such as age, gender, marital status and self-reported ethnicity, as well as questions regarding the respondent’s relationship to Tengeri and shamanic practices more broadly. All surveys were conducted in Russian. Surveys were given to each adult at the ceremony and although no data was collected regarding rates of completion, they were close to perfect. A more extensive discussion of the results of statistical analysis for this data set is available in Stephen (2014) and in Quijada *et al.* (2015).
- 36 The location of different ceremonies was recorded so that attendees at different places could be compared. In addition to basic demographics, respondents were asked a series of yes/no questions regarding their current or previous association with behaviors associated with Buryat identity. The intent of this group of questions, however was not to reify the idea of what is to be appropriately defined as “traditional” in this cultural context; instead, the summation of these variables was only meant to ascertain one’s relationship to behavior patterns that are commonly seen to be markers of “tradition” among Buryats living in Buryatia — language use and ritual behavior, in so far as it relates to shamanism.<sup>8</sup>
- 37 Within this cluster, two questions were asked regarding Buryat language use, specifically whether or not the respondent spoke Buryat as a child and whether or not the respondent speaks Buryat currently. Next, five questions were asked regarding the respondent’s relationship to shamanic practice. The response to the question “did your family engage in shamanic practices when you were growing up?” was used to index

childhood shamanic practice. Similarly, the response to the question "do you attend clan *tailgan* for your family?" was used to index family shamanic practice. Those who reported that they were married were additionally asked whether they attended their spouse's clan *tailgan*.

- 38 Finally, two questions were used to address contemporary shamanic practice. Participants were asked whether or not they had attended other Tengeri ceremonies before as well as whether or not they had attended other ceremonies by another shaman or shamanic organization. Together, these two variables shed light onto whether the participant had a prior connection with Tengeri or whether attendance at one of Tengeri's ceremonies proves a novel experience. The remaining questions were open ended, asking how participants had learned about the ceremony and why they had come.
- 39 We collected over 300 surveys at Ol'khon Island, nearly twice as many as at all the other ceremonies combined. The vast difference in attendees was due to the presence of tourists. Unfortunately, the survey was designed for the smaller ceremonies and did not have a question identifying attendees as "tourists", specifically. Although it is not valid to assume that tourist status is based solely on ethnic identification, the demographic questions do offer a sense of comparison between the above-mentioned smaller local *tailgan* ceremonies conducted by Tengeri in Ulan-Ude and the large ceremony at Ol'khon Island. At Ol'khon Island 65.48 % of those surveyed identified as Russian (compared to 25.44 % at the smaller ceremonies), only 21.94 % as Buryat (compared to 70 % Buryat at the smaller ceremonies), and 11.61 % identified as "other", a group which included people from China, Belgium, Germany, France and other locations.
- 40 As noted, the surveys also included open-ended questions asking why people had come to the ceremony. Following Miles and Huberman (1994), this qualitative information was coded into quantitative variables through the generation of a provisional "start list" used by the authors to code the data separately: whether the individual attended the ceremony for spiritual/religious reasons (Spirituality); for reasons specific to the context of the ceremony (Ceremony Specific); for reasons relating to kinship (Kinship); and out of a general interest (Curiosity).<sup>9</sup> These categories were not mutually exclusive.
- 41 When combined with other demographic variables, the survey data allows us to categorize the attendees into four groups: 1. Russians and "other" who came out of curiosity, who, for shorthand, will be called 'tourists'; 2. Buryats who came out of curiosity; 3. People who came for spiritual reasons with pre-existing relationships to Tengeri (predominantly but not exclusively Buryat); and 4. People who came for spiritual reasons with no previous relationship to Tengeri. This last group is predominantly Russian, and I will tentatively call them New Age pilgrims.
- 42 Overall, 70 % of attendees at Ol'khon Island answered "curiosity" whereas only 8.28 % of the attendees at the smaller *tailgan* rituals held by Tengeri in Ulan-Ude listed curiosity as a reason for attending. Of those who identified as Russian the number was even higher, 80.68 % of Russians listed curiosity, but nearly 30 % (29.58 %) of Buryats attending the Ol'khon Island event also listed curiosity as their motivation. While one cannot equate "curiosity" with tourism, the two are related categories.
- 43 Curiosity, of course, is a very general term, and it is difficult to use survey data to draw conclusions about different types of curiosity. The vast majority of responses expressing "curiosity" consisted of extremely brief comments, such as "interesting" or "worth watching". Only a small fraction elaborated on what exactly they were curious about, but

among those, 26 responses use the word “culture” (*kul'tura*) while only 11 indicated they were curious about shamanism, and only four used the term “religion”. And of the 26 that mentioned “culture”, only three specified “Buryat culture” or “Buryat customs” while the rest used phrases such as “to learn about another culture” or “to learn about the local culture,” and one foreign tourist answered that they wanted to learn about Russian culture. Many of the ethnic Russians and other foreigners (Chinese, Belgian and French for example) specifically noted that they were part of a Baikal tour, that they learned about the ceremony from their campground or resort, or used the phrase “excursion” thereby confirming the decision to treat this group as tourists.

- 44 Likewise, we must be careful not to give too much weight to one answer alone. While nearly 30 % of Buryats at Ol'khon answered that they attended out of curiosity, a close look at their other answers indicates that their “curiosity” is of a very different kind than that of Russian tourists. In questions about previous experience with shamans, the majority of the Buryats who came out of curiosity answered that they had visited shamans as children, had attended clan *tailgan* and had been to other shamanic ceremonies, but not those of Tengeri. As a result, it is safe to conclude that many of them are already involved in shamanic practices and were curious about how this organization conducted rituals, rather than curious about shamanism or Buryat culture in general. As such, this group should be considered a separate audience, to which a small subset of Buryat respondees (approx. 15 individuals), who listed spiritual reasons for attending the ceremony but who had no previous experience with Tengeri should be added.
- 45 Likewise, the group that responded to the question about attendance for spiritual reasons should be subdivided as well. The most common answer that was coded as spiritual was “to pray” (*pomolit'sya*) but responses listing requests “to ask for health” or “for well-being” (*za blagopoluchie*) as well as more esoteric answers such as “for cognitive goals” (*v poznavatel'nykh tselyakh*) or “to purify oneself” (*ochistit'sya*) were also coded as spiritual reasons. The numbers within these groups are too small to yield statistical significance, but taken individually they paint an interesting picture of who travels to Ol'khon for the ceremony. Of 80 people who listed spiritual reasons for attending the ceremony at Ol'khon, more than half (48) had no previous ties to the Tengeri association. The other 32 reported previous attendance at Tengeri ceremonies. Both these groups had nearly twice as many women as men.
- 46 Overall, this group, those with previous experience with Tengeri, is predominantly, although not exclusively Buryat (27 out of 32 respondents), and otherwise similar statistically to those who attend smaller public *tailgan* ceremonies by Tengeri in Ulan-Ude. They are also probably slightly underrepresented in the overall sample at Ol'khon, since many of the people who participate in Tengeri ceremonies in Ulan-Ude helped during this ceremony. In addition, they may have already completed surveys at other ceremonies, and therefore avoided the survey takers at Ol'khon.
- 47 In addition to “spiritual reasons,” reasons for attending were also coded for kinship and ceremony-specific (in this instance, answers that referred either to the spirit master of Ol'khon or the energy of Lake Baikal). Given the nature of the Ol'khon ceremony, it is not surprising that there were fewer people who gave a ceremony-specific reason for attending at Ol'khon than there were for smaller ceremonies overall. However, it is noteworthy that this significance still held, even after those who reported “curiosity” were excluded from the sample. In fact, attendance for a ceremony-specific reason was low overall (15.5 % of the total sample), and only 26.5 % of those who reported a spiritual



reason for attendance included a specific reason related to the ceremony. So, for example, people were three times as likely to answer that they came "to pray" than they were to pray for something or to someone that was specific to the ceremony. This result seems to indicate that, at both Ol'khon and the smaller ceremonies, the majority of those who are engaging with Tengeri on a religious level are frequently not coming to Tengeri's *tailgan* for the specific deities or clan groups being honored. Attendance for kinship or spiritual reasons also did not significantly differ between Ol'khon and the smaller ceremonies.

- 48 However, the kinship code was constructed conservatively to include only those responses where one's relationship to family was explicitly noted, such as "to pray for the health of my child", "my husband is participating", or "to pray to my ancestors". Theoretically, many who come to a *tailgan* 'to pray' will pray to their ancestors, which can be seen as an unspoken kinship obligation. Therefore, it is important to note that attendance for reasons of kinship only, as defined here, occurs in equal probability at both Ol'khon and the smaller ceremonies. In contrast, the spiritual motivation variable was coded more expansively, encompassing any indication of prayer, meditative reflection or worship. This variable (spiritual motivation) was non-significant at the multivariate level, which indicates that there were similar subsets of clients at all ceremonies, including Ol'khon, who attended for religious reasons. The overall conclusion is that those people who come to Ol'khon because they already participate in Tengeri ceremonies are statistically very similar to those who participate in them at the small ceremonies in Ulan-Ude.
- 49 Interviews and conversations, as well as the low survey responses for 'ceremony-specific', indicate that most of the members of Tengeri who go to Ol'khon Island go in part because the location is special and because the long trip, when they can afford it, is akin to a vacation. Although the promise made to Hotun Khan is important to the organization's founders, for most of the initiate shamans and the clients, the opportunity to see Ol'khon Island, and the chance to visit with shamans who live far away, is more of a draw than the specific desire to make offerings to Hotun Khan. There is good reason for this, in that aside from Hotun Khan, the *ongon* and deities invoked during the ceremony are predominantly the same as those called down at other rituals. In conversations the presence of New Age pilgrims is often explicitly mentioned, and the fact that people do travel from far away to attend the event validates both the location and the event as special.
- 50 The final group consists of those who I am calling New Age pilgrims, those who give spiritual reasons for attending, but who have no previous ties to Tengeri. It should be noted that this label is a limited interpretation of the demographic data, and we did not ask specifically where people came from. However, when combined with interview data from the event, it is possible to identify this particular subset. 48 of the survey respondents who gave spiritual reasons for attending had no previous experience with Tengeri, and among these were 31 Russians, and a handful of people from other places, identifying as Yakut, Kazakh, and Italian. Several of those who spoke no Russian, including a woman from Italy, had found the event listed on the Internet and decided to attend. One Russian answered that he had traveled to the island with "his own shaman" (presumably the one from Tuva) and several answered the survey, saying that they had been told to come by shamans in other cities throughout Russia. If people hear about these events through shamans and New Age organizations in other places, then these

places will frame the meaning that people attribute to this experience. The way in which the ritual is framed, as "unmarked culture" or as a Buryat ritual form that has universal value, is most likely to resonate with members of this group, who come to the ceremony with their own presuppositions.

- 51 One of these people, with whom I spoke at length during the ritual, offered a story that was similar to the genetic argument made by Bair Zhambalovich. She spoke of having a pervasive feeling of not fitting in, of knowing things that she could not explain, and had worked in health care for a long time. Through reading New Age books and exploring the Internet she had come to suspect that she might have shamanic abilities, and she felt driven to learn more. When she saw a listing of this ritual (and she showed me the paper printout, which listed merely the date and location) she felt compelled to come, and the experience, she said, was quite worth the trip, although she struggled to find the words to express why. She is the only person to express such a view, and so this interpretation must be verified through further research, but when seen from this perspective, the unusual framing (or lack thereof) of the ceremony is uniquely compelling. Unlike a tourist performance, which clearly explains what is going on, and labels it as specifically "Buryat" (for example), this ceremony is unmarked, unexplained, and in many ways incomprehensible to New Age pilgrims, thereby enabling them to participate on their own terms. There is enough of the "local" for the ceremony to retain an authentic aura, but because it is a "local" form of something that is "globally" or "universally" valuable, they can find their own (potentially universal) meaning in this local form even though they are not local. Although such New Age pilgrims are only a small subset of those who attend the International Shamanic Conference and *Tailgan*, they represent a growing demographic trend and are the most likely to form long-term networks between shamans in Ulan-Ude and organizations and practitioners elsewhere.

## Conclusions

- 52 Read together, these demographic variables seem to suggest that the Ol'khon Island event has a much more bifurcated clientele than the smaller rituals. At Ol'khon, one will find a significantly larger number of individuals who have never been to Tengeri before as well as individuals approaching these ceremonies out of curiosity. However, the Ol'khon Island sample is also comprised of clients who are coming for spiritual or kinship reasons at relatively equal levels as the smaller ceremonies, when controlling for other factors. Thus, Ol'khon is a meaningful religious ceremony for some and an intriguing curio for others. But this division does not map neatly onto ethnic or geographic identities. Buryats are more likely than not to view the ceremony as religious and Russians are more likely to attend it out of curiosity, but interviews at the site indicate that those few Russians and foreigners who are coming for spiritual reasons are intensely motivated to do so. All in all, survey demographics allow us to distinguish four distinct audiences: Tengeri members and clients, local residents (predominantly but not exclusively Buryat) who are curious, tourists, and New Age pilgrims. The differences between these groups suggest that they have different interpretations of the ritual.
- 53 On the other hand, the allure of Ol'khon Island itself is the one, shared variable. Tourists, most obviously, came to see Ol'khon and Lake Baikal rather than the ceremony itself, and this ritual is only one of many "local" activities they will experience. For Buryats, both those affiliated with Tengeri, and those who are not, as well as for New Age pilgrims, the

lake is also a significant draw, and the sacred nature of the location is part of what enables an otherwise very specific ritual to be appealing to multiple groups.

- 54 Demographic inquiries can only take us so far, but the numbers do indicate that there are multiple audiences, who, given widely divergent reasons for attending, are most likely getting very different things out of the ceremony. The ceremony itself reflects this division, with a metapragmatic framing during the opening speeches as "globally valuable local culture". By leaving "local" and "culture" undefined and unmarked, local Buryats and other Tengeri members can experience it as part of their broader attempt to revive Buryat shamanic practices, while at the same time, enabling New Age pilgrims to find a universal appeal in a local Buryat form. The ritual balances a fine line between tourist event and ritual, so that by not defining what is going on, the organizers are able to appeal to multiple audiences.

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## NOTES

1. Fieldwork and survey data for this article was collected during a collaborative research grant generously funded by the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER), for which the primary author was the principal investigator. Statistical analysis of the survey data was conducted by Eric Stephen, and funded by a Wesleyan University Faculty-Student Internship. Results of this research are also presented in Quijada *et al.* (2015). All conclusions and any mistakes are the responsibility of the primary author.

2. MROSh stands for *Mestnoe Religioznoe Organizatsiya Shamanov Tengeri* [Local Religious Organization of Shamans Tengeri] which is the organization's legal registered name.

3. The shamans at MROSH Tengeri call the spirits of deities and ancestors into their bodies, and these beings then interact with the living during ceremonies. They do not practice the "soul travel" which is sometimes considered characteristic of Siberian shamanism. One could call the practice "trance possession," this term is not generally used for Siberian shamanism, and implies that the presence of the beings is an affliction, which is not the case here. The shamans at Tengeri generally use the Russian phrases "to go into trance" (*vxodit' v transe* - Russian) and "to call down the ancestors" (*vyzyvat' ongon* - Russian/Buryat). As noted below, whether the practice of embodying ancestors is "traditional" in Buryatia is contested locally. The rest of this article will use the term "to call down the ongon" to refer to their practices.

4. I draw here on Keane's discussion of speech roles in religious language (1997).

5. The names of spirit place masters are not standardized. The master of Lake Baikal is also referred to as Khotun Khan, or Khotun Noion (Noion is an honorific term like 'Lord'). The spelling difference is because in Russian the name is transliterated as Khotun, but in 2012 Tengeri members insisted on the Buryat spelling of the name, and Buryat, unlike Russian, has a letter "h" [Note of the editorial board : the Buryat letter "h" corresponds to the sound "s" in Mongolian,

but what is written Hotun in Buryat today is actually Qotun in the Mongolian script and Khoton in Cyrillic].

6. It must be noted that the transcriptions of the opening speeches are fragmented. The opening was recorded outdoors, in a crowd, and there was a considerable amount of wind and light rain, so portions of the recordings are inaudible. [...] marks the sections where the recording is inaudible. Transcription and translation are by the author.

7. МЫС ВУРХАН ЯВЛЯЕТСЯ СВЯЩЕННЫМ И НЕПРИКАСАЕМЫМ ПАМЯТНИКОМ ПРИРОДЫ ИСТОРИИ И КУЛЬТУРЫ. ЕГО ФЕНОМЕН ЗАКЛЮЧАЕТСЯ В ГЛУБОКОМ ПОЧИТАНИИ КУЛЬТОВОГО СВЯТИЛИЩА, ДУХОВ И БОЖЕСТВ, СВЯЗАННЫМ С ОБРАЗОМ ВЛАДЫКИ ОЛЬХОНА (...) ЭТО ВСЕОБЩЕЕ МОЛИТВЕННОЕ МЕСТО ЯВЛЯЕТСЯ УНИКАЛЬНЫМ ПРИРОДНЫМ ОБЪЕКТОМ ЗАСЛУЖИВАЮЩИМ ОСОБОЙ ОХРАНЫ С ЗАПОВЕДНЫМ РЕЖИМОМ. ВХОДИТЬ НА ТЕРРИТОРИЮ ПАМЯТНИКА СТРОГО ЗАПРЕЩАЕТСЯ.

8. As noted in the beginning, the vast majority of Buryats self-identify as Buddhist, and would associate attendance at Buddhist rituals to be a marker of Buryat identity. As these surveys were conducted at shamanic rituals, the questions focused on previous and current participation in shamanism.

9. For example, "to pray", "to worship my ancestors" or "for enlightenment purposes" would have been coded as spirituality; "to pray on behalf of my brother's health" would have been coded as both "spirituality" and "kinship"; whereas "my brother is a shaman and I gave him a ride" was only coded as "kinship". Responses that specifically noted "honoring the deity", or the purposes for which one might honor this deity, were coded as "ceremony specific". Responses such as "out of interest", "curiosity", "to see the ritual", as well as statements such as "part of my tour", would have been coded as "curiosity". Initially, the authors coded the list separately. After coding, we reviewed the 6.4 % of answers where our codes diverged and chose which codes to apply in each case. The high level of intercoder reliability (93.5 %), which measures the level of agreement between the two coders, indicates that the categories applied were fairly self-evident.

## ABSTRACTS

This article explores the presentation and performance of "culture" at the Annual International Shamanic Conference and Tailgan on Olkhon Island, Lake Baikal and poses the methodological question of how survey data about the participants can help us to understand the ceremony. Demographic survey data indicates that there are multiple audiences, who, given widely divergent reasons for attending, are most likely getting very different things out of the ceremony. The ceremony itself reflects this division, with a metapragmatic framing during the opening speeches as "globally valuable local culture". By leaving "local" and "culture" undefined and unmarked, local Buryats and other Tengeri members can experience it as part of their broader attempt to revive Buryat shamanic practices, while at the same time, enabling New Age pilgrims to find a universal appeal in a local Buryat form.

Cet article examine la session annuelle de la Conférence Chamannique Internationale et du Tailgan sur l'île d'Ol'hon, dans le lac Baïkal, sous l'angle de la prestation "culturelle" qu'elle présentait. Il en découle une question de méthode : les données relatives aux participants aident-elles à comprendre la cérémonie ? L'enquête démographique montre la grande diversité du public ; du fait de la variété des raisons d'assister et des attentes, les impressions retirées de cette session

sont très différentes. La cérémonie elle-même reflète cette diversité, que les discours d’ouverture ont pragmatiquement tenté d’encadrer en parlant de “culture locale à valeur globale”. Du fait que “local” et “culture” restent non définis, les Bouriates locaux et les membres de l’association Tengeri peuvent percevoir cette “culture locale” comme une contribution à la revitalisation des pratiques chamaniques bouriates, tout en permettant aux pèlerins New Age de trouver quelque chose d’universel sous une forme bouriate locale.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** Bouriatie, chamanisme, rituel, Olhon, Baïkal, le néo-chamanisme, démographie

**Keywords:** Buryatia, Shamanism, Ritual, Olkhon, Baikal, neo-shamanism, demographics

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