

# SCANDINAVIAN NEO-SHAMANISM

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE ACADEMIC STUDY OF RELIGION IN RECONSTRUCTING BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF TRADITION WITHIN POST-MODERN URBAN MILIEUS

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### INTRODUCTION

The title of this symposium: "Old and New Spiritual Movements and Communities in the Folk Religiosity of the 20th Century" (Szegeed, Hungary, April 6–9, 1998), provides several conceptual tools for operationalization within an attempt to describe the Scandinavian neo-shamanism of today. To start out, structuring "old" and "new" as strictly opposite factors, distinguishes one of the most interesting patterns in the neo-shamans' efforts to revive,<sup>1</sup> or more accurately, to create a new shamanism out of a forgotten past. One of the main questions, *de facto*, is: what is new and what is old in contemporary shamanism? How is "new" and "old" mixed and how do the neo-shamans arrive at their assumptions about the content of the "old", or let us say of the traditional, forms of shamanism?

In a book written by Swedish neo-shamans, one of the most influential Scandinavian neo-shamans points out that:

There is a renaissance in shamanism going on. Shamans from living traditions give their contribution. We must revive our national tradition. We can never revive the old shamanism as it once was, but we must learn from the shamans active today in cultures outside the western modernized countries. I hope that we will create a shamanism for our own culture, climate and geography. There will be problems since the living tradition is once and for all broken. (ERIKSSON 1988: 8–9) [my translation].

According to Mihály Hoppál it is possible to divide the different forms of present shamanisms into two main categories; firstly autochthonous shamanism and secondly neo-shamanism,<sup>2</sup> or as he sometimes puts it: urban shamanism. The first category, tradi-

<sup>1</sup> In my master's thesis (SVANBERG 1994) I used revitalization as a theoretical tool in my attempts to describe neo-shamanism, a perspective which I have gradually abandoned. Revitalization as a theoretical concept is problematic in several ways. In this case, I would like to stress that it is impossible to revitalize Scandinavian shamanism to "what it was", I would rather consider it to be a construction or even innovation since we do not have much knowledge about how *seið* (*seiðr*), the Scandinavian shamanism, was put into practice. Moreover, Scandinavian neo-shamanism is also a mixture of different shamanic ideas. It is perhaps more accurate to discuss revitalization among the Saamis, the North American Indians or among some Siberian groups. This last assumption I express with some hesitation.

<sup>2</sup> Previously (HOPPÁL 1992: 197), he has drawn attention to problems and peculiarities in the concept urban shamanism. According to Hoppál it might perhaps sometimes be more accurate to talk about "contemporary" or "postmodern" shamanism.

tional shamanism, is characterized by an inherited or culturally maintained tradition still existent today. In some parts of the world traditional shamanism is threatened by modernism, especially during the Soviet regime in the Siberian areas, where at least the concept shamanism is claimed to have its origin,<sup>3</sup> but where, to quote Hoppál, shamanism was “almost eliminated but escaped at the last minute” (HOPPÁL 1997: 1–2). I will mainly deal with the second category, urban shamanism or neo-shamanism, as I prefer to call the phenomenon. The often controversial (see JORALEM 1990: 105–118 on this discussion) role, in my opinion, played by researchers in the process of resurrecting and preserving “almost eliminated” forms of the so called traditional shamanism is another of my main interests in my study of shamanism. This aspect will, however, not be discussed here.

The title of this conference also contains another important concept, that of “Folk”, unfortunately often insufficiently defined and sometimes used in a misleading way. If we understand the term “Folk” as synonymous to ordinary people, in other words, to persons in general who put religion into practise in everyday life, and not only inside the clerically learned doctrine associated with churches, (BRINGÉUS 1994: 6), we suddenly find ourselves facing the background of neo-shamanism: the counter-culture of the late 60s and early 70s. I would like to stress that I do not claim that everyone born in the early 1940s—even if we looked at them as a heterogeneous cohort—entirely reject established forms of praxis and traditional values connected to Christianity and modern Western Christian culture. Nevertheless, it was in America, especially in California, within the groups of baby boomers and among the liberal, flower power generation, where the interest for alternative forms of spirituality, including neo-shamanism, began to grow. The situation in Scandinavia was influenced by that in America. Among neo-shamans as well as among other representatives of alternative life views, we often find an ambivalent attitude towards religion as a traditional institution. This is so, especially in cases where neo-shamans identify the established religion with power holding, hierarchical structures and as a factor closely related to modernity including the idea of man’s superiority to nature. Lately, however, the established churches have tried to change their images in order to meet the demands of contemporary human beings: the churches discuss green values, international consciousness, gender issues, to mention but a few. We still find the most influential neo-shamans and ideology formulators or ideologists outside the established churches or religions. In plain language, they do not engage in mainstream religiosity.

The most influential persons inside neo-shamanism both in Scandinavia and elsewhere are usually well educated. In this respect, they do neither fit in into the “folk” category, nor do they practice shamanism as an everyday religion. Although neo-

<sup>3</sup> Shaman derives from a Tungusian-Siberian word through Russian into Western academic language. According to some researchers, for example Vilmos Diószegi, the famous Hungarian researcher, the origin is *šaman*, meaning a person who knows, has knowledge. Previously there was a theory that the term could derive from *śramaṇa* (sanskrit) meaning an ascetic but this has been disproved (ELIADE 1974: 4, 495–496; HEINZE 1991: 8; SIKALA 1992: 1–2).

shamanic rituals usually take place only during weekends, neo-shamanic ideology, for example belief in the green values, still influences the everyday life of neo-shamans.

The movement concept is also one, which, in a way, could be useful when attempting to characterize neo-shamanism. Ronald L. Grimes defines neo-shamanism as “an individualistic set of images and practices taking shape in the margins of North American culture.” In his opinion it would be improper to define neo-shamanism as a sect, a movement, or an ecclesiastical institution (GRIMES 1995: 253). The dilemma with this type of characterization will be an object for further discussion elsewhere. The neo-shamans themselves define their organizational frames and their information channels as “a loosely structured network”.

The main purpose of this article is to trace the roots of neo-shamanism and to analyze the role played by the academic study of religion<sup>4</sup> as one source, among many others, taken into account in the construction of shamanism in contemporary Scandinavia. In relation to this field of interest it is necessary to point at, or relate to some corresponding trends in the social contexts of societies where phenomena like neo-shamanism occur.

For my purposes, I define Scandinavia as Sweden, Norway and Denmark in this article. I will mainly concentrate on Yggdrasil which, principally, is a Swedish network. Yggdrasil stands for the world tree in Scandinavian mythology. My focus on Yggdrasil has to do with the fact that my key informants are among those who started this network, in 1982. Earlier, in 1976 the same persons began to publish a magazine called Gimle.

There are of course neo-shamanic groups in Finland, too, belonging to the same stream as the urban shamanism represented, especially, in Sweden. The similarities are mainly due to the impact of Michael Harner and his core-shamanism which I will come back to later on. Since I do not have much empirical data on the Finnish groups and since they differ from the Scandinavian network —group—, in several respects,<sup>5</sup> I unfortunately have to leave them out in this context.<sup>6</sup>

## THE CALIFORNIAN BACKGROUND

As has been the case with so many other religious ideas expressed and established in the Western world during the late 60s and 70s, the first impulses with reference to neo-shamanism are to be found in the Californian melting pot. It is quite clear that the first

<sup>4</sup> *Religionswissenschaft* in German, *religionsvetenskap* in Swedish. The term in English more often is comparative religion, religious studies or history of religions.

<sup>5</sup> Differences in languages and different cultural heritages could be the two main reasons why neo-shamans in the Nordic countries have not established a common coordinated network. The Finnish neo-shamans seem to have their own contact channels directly to Michael Harner and his organization.

<sup>6</sup> Some seminar papers (Poutiainen Marja 1992 Uskontotieteen proseminaariesitelmä Turun yliopisto; Hänninen Kirsi 1997: Uushamanismi Turussa Turun yliopisto Kulttuurien tutkimuksen laitos Turku-ryhmän harjoitustyö) on Finnish neo-shamanic groups, which I have read characterize them as very much influenced by ideas and methods stemming from Michael Harner. It would not be surprising to find that during the past few years they might have gone through similar changes as the Scandinavian group. Generally speaking the tendency displays a development from romanticization of North American Indians, to Harner's core shamanism and into an idealization of a national heritage of their own.

interests in shamanism coincide with the time when Carlos Castaneda's books attained huge popularity. Carlos Castaneda's first book about his meetings with the sorcerer Don Juan Matus, a Yaqui Indian whom no one else has met, was published in 1968. In the beginning the readers were mostly students and intellectuals but the book *The Teachings of Don Juan. A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* and the following books were eagerly read also in the counter-culture and "hippie movement". It is worth noting that Castaneda never uses the word "shaman" when he describes Don Juan. He uses the term *brujo*, Spanish for medicine-man, sorcerer or black-magician. In an interview, Mikael Gejel, for many years editor-in-chief of *Gimle*, implies that his personal interest in this field began as he read the books written by Castaneda. This was probably true for many other neo-shamans. At the same time the nostalgic interest in Native American traditions began to grow also in Scandinavia. The nostalgic concerns for Native Americans expressed by the Flower Power generation in the US can partly be understood as a reaction against and a criticism of the governmental policy and earlier suppression of Native Americans.

However, it was Michael Harner, a former anthropologist, who made shamanic techniques popular among common people. He decided to mix knowledge derived from his field work experiences with descriptions of shamanisms from all over the world in order to express an inside perspective of shamanism. This "core" shamanism, a concept developed by Harner, consists of the elementary practical forms from within several classic shamanic cultures. This mixture of both practices and ideologies is adjusted to modern society, thus making shamanism available to urban people. According to Harner and other neo-shamans it should be possible for almost anyone to practise shamanism. (HARNER 1989: 14; HORWITZ 1993: 47–48)

## THE SCANDINAVIAN NETWORK

Harner's conglomerated, universalistic kind of shamanism was an attractive perspective also to the Swedish concentrated network called Yggdrasil. The name "Yggdrasil" reveals that already since its foundation the network has been connected to old Norse tradition. It was founded as a result of impulses from the New Age center, the bookshop Vattumannen (Aquarius; eng. transl.). However, during the first years of its existence, Yggdrasil paid more attention to the North American Indians and to a kind of romanticization of their traditions.

In 1994 I analysed the content of *Gimle*, the magazine of the neo-shamans (*Gimle* meaning the new heaven after Ragnarök, the end of the world in Scandinavian mythology). In the process I noted that it was possible to distinguish three different periods in the magazine's existence. *Gimle* has been published, irregularly, in 21 issues between the years 1976 and 1993. After 1993 four issues have been published. Obvious enough, in an analysis of this kind, mainly the views of the active writers, that is the ideas of the prominent figures of neo-shamanism are represented.

The first issues appearing in the mid and late 70s contained many articles about ecological matters. Still today, there is no clear stipulation in the circles around *Gimle* for a definition of the shamanic interest. I prefer to call the period covering the first four

issues “the introductory period”. In the following issues, 5–16, a clear conflict—and often a very inflamed debate—is displayed whether the neo-shamans in Scandinavia should try to rebuild their own traditions with assistance from North-American Indians, or rely on the Scandinavian traditions. Even though the neo-shamans are very open to foreign cultural influences, since, in their opinion, one can learn something from almost anything, they decided to build their activity on geographically nearby heritage.<sup>7</sup> Yggdrasil’s leading writers conceded that the old Norse tradition was the most important source. This second period is a formative period. The third period, referring to the issues 17–21 of *Gimle*, is characterized by stability. The Norse tradition is accepted among most of the contributing writers.

The connections to Saami (Lapp) religion are also evident, but the mythology within Scandinavian neo-shamanism is more oriented towards the old Norse, the pre-Christian religion and the seid tradition, than to Saami tradition. The authoritative source among neo-shamans on seid is a dissertation from 1935 by the Swedish researcher Dag Ström-bäck, the title of which is: *Sejd. textstudier i nordisk religionshistoria* (Seid. Studies in the texts of Nordic history of religion: Eng. transl.). The Scandinavian groups clearly have an interest in Saami mythology but their interest is focused on the similarity of shamanic methods rather than on mythology as such.

When I interviewed Mikael Gejel, one of the most influential persons in the Scandinavian network Yggdrasil, he stressed that it is mostly women, (approximately 70–80 per cent), who participate in neo-shamanic rituals. However, when it comes to writing in their magazine *Gimle* there is a clear male predominance (IF mgt 1995/144–149 R).

According to results from a questionnaire used in Sweden, the average age of people engaged in New Age phenomena is 42 years and more than 80 per cent of these interested persons are women. As mentioned above, they are usually highly educated, almost half of the population group had a university degree or had taken courses at university level (FRISK 1997: 33).

The neo-shamans, as well as the largest group of New Age adherents belong to the postwar generation in America called the “baby boomers”. Characteristically, these people are in a stage of life where they engage in constructing a personal form of spirituality, in the process collecting inspiration from a variety of sources, often very disparate.

## THE ACADEMIC CONNECTIONS

As I said already, neo-shamans use previous research on shamanism and they do this in several ways. First of all, descriptions of shamanic phenomena from all over the world are seen to legitimize the importance of the engagement. One notion often pointed out by

<sup>7</sup> One important reason why the Scandinavian neo-shamans distanced themselves from the romanticization of North-American Indian traditions was a conflict between Native Americans and popularizers (read commercializers) of the indigenous heritage. Some elders in the Indian tribes felt that they had been betrayed because their traditions had been exploited. This resulted in a black list, which included some persons who until then had held workshops in shamanism also in Sweden. (*Gimle* nr. 12–13) This open conflict did partly “accentuate” the decision of the neo-shamans to aim at a shamanism based on their own cultural heritage.

neo-shamans is that, since researchers have found evidence of shamanism in so many geographically different areas, shamanism “must work”. According to neo-shamans shamanism is unquestionably one of the oldest and most genuine forms of religious phenomena on earth.

One of the most vital sources stimulating the neo-shamans in their efforts to reconstruct shamanism in Western urban societies was and is the academic study of traditional shamanism. Here we immediately find a big difference between the two kinds of shamanisms. The difference is that neo-shamanism is a textually dependent phenomenon, it is not transmitted through oral tradition. Besides trying to reconstruct “the old shamanism as it was” by learning from shamans who are active today in cultures outside the western modernized countries, today’s shamans have to use “the book”. The most important work is Mircea Eliade’s *Shamanism. Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, first published in French 1951.<sup>8</sup> This large work, covering more than 600 pages, is available in almost every New Age book shop. I think the main reason for this great influence can be related to Eliade’s understanding of the holy as something divine, that manifests itself in the human sphere, in a “*sui generis* manner” in other words, it is thought that ‘the holy’ is not a psychologically or socially based phenomenon. But Armin W. Geertz has noted that:

“Finally, it is time that historians of religions depart from deeply ingrained prejudices against the social sciences. Sometimes historians of religions have had a greater distaste of sociology and ethnography than of theology! You will find it with European historians of religions like Ugo Bianchi and you will find it with American historians like Mircea Eliade. Like Eliade, I too am dissatisfied with producing empirical building blocks while others do the building. Eliade choose to solve the problem by making *sui generis* claims about religion in order to justify the autonomy of the discipline without recourse to a dialogue with, in Eliade’s words, such ‘reductionistic disciplines’ as ethnography, sociology, and psychology” (GEERTZ 1995: 35).

According to Eliade, the similarities between the religions, which are a major and often emphasized theme among neo-shamans, are based on an actual holy sphere, more or less independent of human and social conditions. In neo-shaman writings and practices one can see the attraction of the universalistic shamanism presented by Eliade in his collection of descriptions of different forms of shamanism. Oddrun Marie Hovde, a Norwegian author also clearly points out that Eliade describes traditional shamanism as a monolithic phenomenon, even though various versions of shamanism existed in many different areas isolated from each other. This idea of a comprehensive and common phenomenon is attractive to modern neo-shamans. (HOVDE 1997: 4) The search, or as I would call it, the nostalgic hunt for values of the past expressed in Eliade’s writings, is obvious and appeal to neo-shamans. The fascination for Eliade’s positive and sympathetic understanding of shamanism, and the interest in Eliade among neo-shamans are clearly illustrated by one special theme; namely Eliade’s perspective on the psychological state of shamans. According to Eliade, the gift of shamanizing involves the solution of a psychic crisis which occurs when the person is in the process of being called to be-

<sup>8</sup> Le chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l’extase by Librairie Payot, Paris.

come a shaman. This is interesting because Eliade stresses the positive effects of such a crisis. I understand this, partly, as a reaction against previous research. Typical for post-war scholars is their effort to avoid a pejorative tone in describing religious phenomena. One good example of this is the state of mind in which the shaman works. The perspective considering him has changed from seeing him as a tool of the devil, to the idea of him being possessed by malign spirits, the object of arctic hysteria, to seeing the behaviour as ecstasy (historians of religions) and trance (more used by behavioural scientists), to naming the state an ASC (Alternative or Alternate State of Consciousness) condition. The latest trend is to talk about SSC (Shamanic State of Consciousness, introduced by Michael Harner). In this development there is a strong tendency of showing the efforts to bridge the gap between the researcher and the studied object.

Åke Hulkrantz, an expert on North American Indians and their religions, now professor emeritus, from Stockholm University has inspired many of the founders of neo-shamanism in Sweden. His lectures gained a lot of attention. He himself—as well as his successor Louise Bäckman—are often mentioned as authorities inside the neo-shamanic circles. This shows the wish to legitimate shamanic activities by referring to academics and to academic studies of shamanism.

Jonathan Horwitz, a close friend and disciple of Michael Harner, founded a Scandinavian Center for Shamanic studies in Copenhagen. The Danish network established by Horwitz and Annette Høst has been studied by HOVDE (1994). As a central figure in the Danish network for neo-shamanism Horwitz practises and teaches the same methods as Michael Harner. In 1991 he also participated in the symposium on religious rites held in Åbo/Turku, Finland. There he emphasized the importance of participant observation and the emic perspective in order to “understand” what is going on in a shamanic ritual. He criticizes the academic distance and stresses the necessity of being “aware of the presence of power” (HORWITZ 1993: 42).

The close relation to the academic milieu is also evident elsewhere than in the Scandinavian countries. In the city of Turku/Åbo some students at the University of Turku have arranged a group focusing on shamanism as their special interest. (see footnote 6). A few years ago it was also popular among psychology students at Åbo Akademi University to participate in shamanic rituals. Even in Estonia, University of Tartu, there is a student group which tries to revive Finno-Ugric traditions and which practises shamanic rituals. They have a journal of their own, too, called “Hiis” (sacred wood). The Polish researcher Piotr Wiench notices the close connections between the environmental movements and the Neo-Pagan groups, as he calls them. He stresses the quest for national identity as one answer to the question of why these groups are now entering the scene in former Soviet dominated countries. (WIENCH 1997: 283–292) Shaping identity and the close connection to the revival of animistic religion in the Mari El Republic is a subject discussed by Svetlana Tchervonnaya in the same volume (book). (TCHERVONNAYA 1997: 369–377). In my studies of Yggdrasil and Gimle I, for my part, also noted that some of the groups appearing within this framework were very extreme. The old Scandinavian mythology is used in activities which often seem very nationalistic, even racist. The founders and principal figures of Yggdrasil clearly dissociate themselves from these groups.

In a rather humorous article in *Anthropology Today*, Roy Willis writes about how neo-shamanism entered the Edinburgh University by means of a course arranged by the Centre for Continuing Education. In Willis's opinion neo-shamanism provides an opportunity for people to create connections to their cultural roots, i. e. to conditions and values which existed before Christianity and the modern institutions. This need of connection and belongingness is accentuated in a world of rapid changes. Another reason for the widespread popularity of shamanism is the increasing interest in ecological studies. In this case neo-shamanism provides an idea that all forms of life are inter-connected and dependent of each other. A third reason why shamanism is so popular among students is that the praxis and methods used in neo-shamanism offer a way to engage in intensive experiences and to reach hidden knowledge. These methods, according to Willis, are highly resemblant to those of scientific research.<sup>9</sup> (WILLIS 1994: 16–18).

## CONCLUSIONS

### POSTMODERNITY AND NEO-SHAMANISM

The current discussion about the meaning of terms such as postmodernism and postmodernity is extensive and problematic and cannot be brought to an end in this article. Pertti J. Anttonen scrutinizes the relation between modernism and postmodernism in an article and here he makes a note of several important distinctions. He, says, for example: "Since 'postmodernism' is intrinsically a critique of the 'modern', the question of what is postmodern depends on what is counted as modern." (ANTTONEN 1993: 17–33) The critique and calling in question of various modern aspects of the society is one neo-shamanic characteristic. With this determination in mind I think *postmodernity* can illustrate what is important to neo-shamanism. At least, the concept of postmodernity can function as a tool to operationalize a study intended to illuminate the appearance of neo-shamanism in contemporary society. Neo-shamans in general and Michael Harner —as the most influential among them— in particular, mix elements from several traditions. The strivings result in a synthesis where at least something is new: i.e. neo-shamanism. The principle guiding this process of blending has to do with the need to create a meaningful life in present day conditions.

The word postmodernism generally refers to a form of contemporary culture, whereas the term postmodernity alludes to a specific historical period. Postmodernity is a style of thought which is suspicious of classical notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity, of the idea of universal progress or emancipation, of single frameworks, grand narratives or ultimate grounds of explanation (EAGLETON 1996: vii).

It would not be unfair to call the neo-shamans advocates of multicultural ideals. In saying so we have of course to bear in mind that the neo-shamanism studied is a product of large-scale industrial cultures. Despite the strong emphasis on pre-Christian religion and culture in Scandinavia there is a deeply embedded notion that non-Western cultures

<sup>9</sup> I am not sure if this last statement should be understood as a joke or not.



are supposed to be healthier, happier and more humane than the cultures in the West. This notion has also been called "Third Worldism" (BERGER 1992: 66). Non-Western societies are presumed to be ecological, closer to nature, more democratic and so on. From an observation point of view it is not far fetched to characterize the neo-shamans as multicultural oriented romanticists nostalgic for a long gone past.

In postmodernity, including its notion that we have lost "the Great Narratives" there still exist the religious, existential, spiritual needs of the individual. One common characteristic of post-modern society is the emphasis on individual choice in order to gratify essential human needs. Even Christianity has become a choice. There are many opinions about secularization and what the concept stands for. Peter Berger, on his part is convinced that "the modern age has indeed been the scene of massive secularization." In Berger's opinion, the counter-secularization has also grown to become an important source of power in the modern secularized world. In addition to traditional religions and their attraction we can also find non-traditional forms appearing, for example, in the counter culture —forms which to Berger— might not at first look religious at all (BERGER 1992: 29).

As a result of life in a multicultural society the possibility of mixing codes has arisen. The baby boomers use this method, which is sometimes illustrated as "picking from a store", in Swedish we say "smörgåsbord", to eclectically and creatively construct a personal spirituality. Some popular themes in the counter-culture of the late 60s and early 70s in America have continued within New Age. The intent of those who engage themselves in New Age ideas and practices is an effort to get acquainted with several forms of spirituality. Thus, in their view it is possible to construct a spirituality of one's own, by mixing a great variety of sources, one of which can be Native American spirituality. (ROOF, CARROL and ROOZEN 1995: 248–251). In the course of time a constructed Native Scandinavian spirituality has become a meaningful reality to the members of Yggdrasil. Neo-shamanism is similar to New Age in some other ways, too. For example, they have in common, the insight of the loss of culture, spirituality and myths essential to them in a creative way of life.

From an American perspective it has been pointed out —I quote: "A final characteristic of the post-war generation's spirituality is that it is generally anti-institutional and antihierarchical. This should not be surprising when one considers the countercultural emphases of the late 60s and early 70s when the majority of this generation came to maturity" (ROOF, CARROLL and ROOZEN 1995: 252).

Neo-shamanism can eventually be understood as one expression, among others, of popular Western-culture criticism directed against the reductionism and the dualism considered as typical of rationalist philosophy, science in a strict sense and "dogmatic Christianity". These are the main factors which neo-shamans claim to be responsible for the crisis in the post-modern world.

The forms of neo-shamanism occurring since the early 70s can be understood as a protest against the physical view of the world, but also as a reaction against science (natural sciences) and advanced technology. Paradoxically, the neo-shamans themselves use computers and are well represented on Internet. There are even neo-shamanic sub-categories as techno-shamanism and cyber-shamanism.

Let me conclude with some general assumptions which orient my views:

1) Research in neo-shamanism should try to analyze and interpret what this "movement" positively wishes to attain and establish, as well as what the "movement" is against.

2) Research should try to be attentive both to the inner perspective and to the comparative description of neo-shamanism.

3) In the process of research into such a complex phenomenon, many terms and concepts need to be analyzed and formulated in accordance with a broad perspective on human life. Concepts like counter-culture, baby boomers, secularization must be defined, at least in the sense that the individual researcher should try to be clear about his own concepts. Misconceptions must be resolved; onesided, predetermined arguments must remain open to discussion and to real communication among scholars.

4) Research demands an open attitude. However, it also demands formulated descriptions, methods and interpretations. Only this way can the discussion go on, and hopefully lead to deeper understanding.

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<sup>10</sup> Recently (February 6, 1998) a doctoral dissertation on neo-shamanism in contemporary Sweden was defended publicly. Unfortunately, I did not receive a copy of this publication before I had already finished this article. The title of the doctoral thesis is: *Shamanic Performances on the Urban Scene. Neo-Shamanism in Contemporary Sweden* by Galina Lindquist. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International. (Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology, 39. 1997).

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