

# The Drum in Shamanism

## Some Reflections

BY AKE HULTKRANTZ

### Introduction

In her excellent work on the ritual technique of the Siberian shaman Anna Leena Siikala writes, "The drum may be claimed to be the central symbol of shamanism, and without it a shaman is not a shaman" (Siikala 1978, 45) Siikala refers here first and foremost to Siberian and Central Asian shamanism, the classic fields of shamanism, and, with some few exceptions which we shall discuss below, her statement is applicable here Similarly, Lauri Honko declares that "from Altai to Lapland the drum is the liturgical handbook of shamanism" (Honko 1964, 169) It is more difficult, however, to accept Mircea Eliade's sweeping assessment that generally "the drum has a role of the first importance in shamanic ceremonies," and that "it is indispensable in conducting the shamanic séance" (Eliade 1964, 168) In his attitude to shamanism Eliade is a universalist, not a regionalist, and his view is therefore surprising More strongly expressed, it is simply not valid <sup>1</sup>

Eliade's opinion may be contrasted with that of Georg Nioradze, who does not consider the drum to have been an inalienable part of shamanic equipment, a view supported by Hans Findeisen (Nioradze 1925, 83; Findeisen 1957, 149) It is a strange fact that these opinions were held by two scholars who both limited their shamanic research primarily to the North Eurasian area where, as stated, the drum almost always functions at shamanistic séances

According to my own convictions, founded on circumpolar theoretical studies and practical experience in the fields of American Indian and Saami religion, shamanism is a complex of beliefs and rites closely connected with a very ancient hunting culture My conviction is shared

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<sup>1</sup> In an earlier article I have criticized Eliade for his position with regard to certain aspects of shamanism, such as his restriction of shamanizing to the soul excursions of the shaman (Hultkrantz 1983) Eliade is also vague in certain pronouncements Sometimes he attributes drums to the Eskimo, sometimes he denies they have any Eliade 1964, 176, 289 Such inadvertences must not however conceal the fact that Eliade was the foremost shaman scholar of modern times

today by many of my colleagues? It is thus obvious that shamanism has not been restricted to northern Eurasia and the American Arctic, although it was here that it received its most remarkable forms. This concept of a more universal shamanism is consonant with my definition of the shaman. This definition tries to underline the basic features of Siberian shamanism, which indeed also occur among shamans far outside the Siberian and Arctic boundaries. The shaman is in my opinion a social functionary who, with the aid of guardian or helping spirits, attains a state of ecstasy in order to create connections with the supernatural world on behalf of his tribesmen (Hultkrantz 1973, 34)

It is thus my contention that the problem of whether the drum is an integrative part of shamanism should be examined against a general, and not a regional background. In the following short account I shall present some aspects of this problem.

It is here, important, to distinguish Arctic shamanism from other forms of shamanism. Arctic shamanism has a stronger profile than other varieties of shamanism, partly because of its intensity, accentuated to a certain extent by the harsh climate and environment (exaggerated by some scholars, cf. Ohlmarks 1939), but also explained by the remarkable position of the shaman in an otherwise unstratified social structure. This Arctic shamanism was developed, for instance, among the Saami, the Samoyed, the Yukaghir, Chukchee, Koryak and Eskimo. Arctic shamanism is connected with circumpolar culture, a concept which has been elaborated by archaeologists, ethnologists and historians of religion. It is obvious that this culture has been a continuous whole, not only with regard to historical content, but also for its ecological integration of culture and religion (Gjessing 1944; Hultkrantz 1965; Graburn & Strong 1973). In Southern Siberia, Central Asia, Tibet, Mongolia and the Far East shamanism has been remodelled under the pressure of influences from the higher civilizations and religious institutions south of these areas. Hierarchies of shamans, ecstatic possession, rich symbolic garments and much paraphernalia characterize this form of shamanism, which in many respects seems to have developed from Arctic shamanism.<sup>3</sup>

In Arctic shamanism, and partly in the derived shamanic forms in

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<sup>2</sup> Hultkrantz 1973, 1978; cf. Gilberg 1984; Hoppál 1985, 134 ff., Johansen 1987, 7 f.

<sup>3</sup> See also below. Basically, Arctic shamanism is a left over of palaeolithic shamanism specially formed according to the historical, social and ecological conditions of the Arctic area.

Southern Siberia, the drum is the shaman's foremost instrument. The instrument used is a membrane drum in the form of a tambourine, oval among the Saami, Yakut and Tungus, round among the Ostyak and Altaian peoples, small and round among the Chukchee and Eskimo. Its function is related to the shamanic trance and the shaman's experiences during the trance. It is thus primarily an instrument of excitation. We need not here consider the neuro-physiological effects of drumming, clearly described and analysed by scholars such as Walter (Walter & Walter 1949), Sargant (Sargant 1959) and Neher (Neher 1962). The latter feels able to state that the shamanic behaviour at drumming ceremonies is the result of rhythmic beats affecting the central nerve system. Neher is, however, a controversial scholar, whose theory has been criticized for not taking cultural factors into account (Ellingson 1987, 501 ff). Nevertheless, in the light of the musical and suggestive functions of the drum, discussed for example by Curt Sachs (Sachs 1929) and Heidi Nixdorff (Nixdorff 1971), it is natural for the drum to have served primarily as an instrument of exaltation for the shaman, a means of provoking trance, in addition to tobacco, mushrooms and other narcotic herbs. It has, however, been far more common than any of these.

### Thoughts on the Saami Drum

Saami drums are interesting because they exist in great numbers in our museums, and because, together with the Altaic drums, they exhibit such a rich array of illustrations. This abundance of drums and figures contrasts, however, with the sparseness of information on Saami shamanism. Most sources on living shamanism date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and are generally badly understood reports written by missionaries; there is, as Louise Bäckman has pointed out, not one eye witness account of a real séance (Bäckman 1986; Bäckman & Hultkrantz 1978, 80). Furthermore, detailed studies of Saami shamanism are late (Arbman 1968, 615-631, Bäckman & Hultkrantz 1978; Bäckman 1986).

The drums, on the other hand, have — as we know — been thoroughly studied. It is characteristic that when Friis (Friis 1871) wishes to describe Saami shamanism, he writes seven pages on the *noaide* (shaman), seven pages on the *angakokk* in Greenland, and no less than thirty-five pages on the Saami drum. Genuine research on the drum

began earlier than research on the shaman, with contributions by Hallström, Reuterskiöld and Wiklund since 1910 (Hultkrantz 1955, 85 ff.). The modern standard work is of course Ernst Manker's monumental *Die lappische Zaubertrommel*, the first volume of which deals with the construction and use of the drum (Manker 1938), whilst the second volume discusses the pictures on the drum-skins and their meaning (Manker 1950)

It is possible that this concentration on the drum has caused Scandinavian scholars to overrate its importance in Saami shamanism. We might compare here the descriptions of this shamanism with Eliade's account of Eskimo shamanism, where the drum is simply overlooked.

There is no doubt, however, that the drum has been an important part of Saami shamanism. Its foremost role, of course, was to serve as an instrument of ecstatic excitation. Secondly, it functioned as an instrument of divination. The drumming activated a pointer which made movements on the membrane and finally arrived at a certain figure, the symbolism of which resolved the drummer's question. We know that the oldest reproduced drums contain very few pictures connected with ecstasy, as it appears, whereas later drums have an abundance of drawings referring to what may seem to be peripheral subjects from the point of view of an ecstatic. It has generally been assumed that these differences mirror a process of evolution from the drum as a means of achieving ecstasy to the drum as a means of divination, or rather of both entrancement and divination. It has even been suggested that this process could have been synchronized with the socio-economic transformation of the Saami hunting society to a reindeer-breeding society (Bäckman 1986, 258). Be that as it may, if we may trust certain informants from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the drum — as an instrument of divination — was handled not only by shamans but also by family heads (Bäckman and Hultkrantz 1978, 49 ff.). Perhaps the difference between the two groups was not as great as has been supposed. We know that not only the *noarde*, but also other men and women could possess guardian spirits (Hultkrantz 1987). This circumstance alludes to the possibility that these people could have been inspired when handling the drum for divination. In any case, the drum has had a central role not only in Saami shamanism but also in other ritual connections where the shaman was not necessarily part of the context.

As mentioned previously, it is precisely because of their rich array of illustrations that the Saami drums have attracted attention. Both art historians and students of religion have dedicated much attention to

the figures depicted Many scholars have regarded the drum figures as an overview of the Saami aboriginal pantheon (cf Reuterskiöld 1912, 10 f., 74 ff) Martin P Nilsson, however, claimed that the drum was "not a mythological repetitorium but the repetitor of practical life" (Nilsson 1916, 309) Recently, two scholars have given interpretation a new direction, Juha Pentikäinen with suggesting that the figures of a Saami drum kept in Rome "were a kind of cognitive map for the trip of the shaman's ego soul between the three levels of the universe" (Pentikäinen 1987a, 139; Pentikäinen 1987b, 27) And Bo Sommarström argues that the Saami drum should be understood as a star chart including such astral phenomena as the twelve star constellation of the Zodiac and the Milky Way This factor, together with the arrangement of the motifs in quadrants, has convinced the author that the Saami drums, unlike the Siberian drums, were modelled on the pattern of Western stellar maps (Sommarström 1985, 149) Like Pentikäinen, Sommarström makes a holistic interpretation of the figures on the drum panel, conceiving them as symbols of the inner world met by the shaman in his ecstasy (Sommarström 1987, 245 ff) The idea of a Western influence in Saami religion has not otherwise been popular in recent research; and Øystein Johansen repudiates the old hypothesis of a Scandinavian impact on Saami religion in a new critical survey of an old problem (Johansen 1982)

The ethnographer and musicologist Ernst Emsheimer has called attention to some probable ideological correspondences in the use of the Saami and Siberian drums There are thus several circumstances which seem to indicate that the Saami, like the Siberian tribes, interpreted the drum as a bow directed against dangerous powers This idea has been stimulated by conceptions of hunting magic (cf below) Furthermore, there is reason to assume that the drum has been understood as part of the world tree — in other words, made from a tree representing the world tree (Emsheimer 1964, 28–49, 59 f) Our information from Saami sources is naturally too imperfect to allow any convincing demonstration

The same author has shown that there is an interesting conformity in the construction of the drum and the organization of the picture gallery among Saami and Siberians He points out that drums of the "angle frame type" (see Vorren & Manker 1962, 122) resemble the Abakan Tatar shamanic drums in the shaping of the handles He also finds that the division into horizontal zones is similar in both cases, with heaven, earth and underworld (Emsheimer 1964, 68–75) On this evidence, Emsheimer builds up the hypothesis that there has been an

influence from the Altai region on the angle frame drum of the Kemi Saami who, in turn influenced the "bowl" drum of the northern Saami (the latter has the same pictorial composition). Personally, I would think that hypotheses of a common origin or of similar tendencies in development would be more convincing explanations

The Saami, as most scholars think, probably arrived in the Fenno-scandic area from the east, and it is reasonable to postulate a continuous shamanic drum complex from Lappland to Siberia in ancient times. Most Saami frame drums do indeed have handles resembling those found in south-western Siberia, as pointed out by Emsheimer (Emsheimer 1973) <sup>4</sup> In many respects the membrane pictures are very similar to each other. The course of development has nevertheless caused the Saami picture galleries to deviate from Siberian forms; the role of divination for this development has already been mentioned, and local historical circumstances have been another distinguishing factor.

### Some Aspects of Siberian Drums

Siberia is the great area for shamanic drums, and there is a rich literature on the form and usage of these drums. Our attention will focus primarily, however, on the symbolism of the drums. There are some valuable accounts of this symbolism, for instance, by Eliade (Eliade 1964, 168 ff), Potapov (Potapov 1968), Jankovics (Jankovics 1984) and Basilov (Basilov 1986). In this connection, only a summary of certain representative traits of this symbolism will be presented here.

Many Siberian drums are decorated with figures like those on the Saami drums, but certainly not all of them. It is not so uncommon for drums to lack pictures (Harva 1938, 527, 534) <sup>5</sup> Altaic drums are particularly rich in pictures. They portray stars, trees — in most cases images of the world-tree —, animals, spirits of disease, and human figures, sometimes equipped with wings; we often recognize the likeness of a shaman with his drum. Frequently the painted drum-skin represents what seems to be a "mythic world map" (Paulson

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<sup>4</sup> Emsheimer divides the Siberian drums according to types of handles (Emsheimer 1973, 1658), whereas some Soviet scholars reject this principle of classification. Basilov 1986, 37.

<sup>5</sup> Among some tribes, such as the Altaic Tuba, the shaman washed away the picture gallery for each shamanizing and replaced it with a new one adapted to the new situation. Potapov 1968, 222 f.

1965, 96), the "universe" (Jankovics 1984, 150). The parallel to the new interpretation of Saami drums is obvious. The Arctic Siberians represent heaven, a wide open sky, with the Polar star as a fixed point, whereas the Altaic tribes farther south are more interested in the zodiac (Jankovics 1984, 159 f.) The Tungus design the middle of the surface as a circle, and make four half circles at the periphery to signify the four corners of the world, united with the centre by lines (cf. Sommarström 1987, 217, and Jankovics 1984, 164, 171, 172). It is my impression that the Altaic tribes are more inclined to look at single motifs than the whole. Potapov renders a Khaka shaman's description of the figures on his drum (Potapov 1968, 227 ff), pointing out various motifs, all connected with shamanism. A drawing of the Orion constellation enabled the shaman to find his way in the upper world. The cuckoo maintained contact between the shaman and the earth when he was in the heavenly sphere. A raven was his assistant on his long journey, and fetched the soul of the sick person. The birch tree helped the shaman to find out the origin of the illness. There were also pictures of the shaman himself and of seven girls through whom he could communicate with his audience while he was in trance during shamanizing etc.

Although some drums could be richly decorated in this way, there are no traces of any divination procedure connected with these figures, as is the case with the Saami. Divination occurs among the Samoyed and Tungus, however, through a drum stick being thrown up into the air; from its position when it falls, the shaman draws conclusions about whether the oracle's answer is yes or no (Harva 1938, 539; Dolgikh 1978, 346). As Crawley once emphasized, the oracular function of the shamanic drum "is always secondary to the musical or 'suggestive' use of the instrument" (Crawley 1928, 94). In Siberia, certainly, the drum is clearly intended to be a shamanic instrument of excitation.

Among the Southern Altaï the wooden handle of the drum is carved in the shape of a man, with the facial features well defined. Some drums have two faces, one at each end of the handle. Sometimes the same figure is painted on the front skin of the drum, and covering the whole space there (Potapov 1968, 223 ff). This figure has generally been considered to be "the master of the drum" (Harva 1938, 528 ff, Potapov 1968, 223 ff.). He is supposed to be the first shaman, or a shamanic ancestor, and functions as the shaman's guardian spirit.

Another idea is that the drum, as such, is a personal being. We often find that the drum symbolizes the shaman's guardian spirit, represented as an animal, for instance a deer (Dolgikh 1978, 345).

Basilov thinks that this was the original significance of the drum (Basilov 1986, 38). According to this view, it is the hide of the protective spirit that forms the membrane of the drum, and this seems to be supported by ethnographic facts<sup>6</sup> By means of particular rites, the drum is granted "life", that is, the guardian spirit takes possession of it The most common animal guardian is the reindeer in the north, the deer further south, and the horse among the Yakut and Buryat Occasionally, the soul of the shaman is identified with the guardian spirit, a common phenomenon in shamanism He is even identified with his drum

According to Basilov, the old identity of the shaman and the guardian spirit of his drum was dissolved when the drum was transformed into a horse for riding to the other world (Basilov 1986, 46 f) It is certainly very natural that, with the introduction of nomadism, the reindeer and the horse could become the animals used by shamans for riding into the sky However, the idea that a shaman could make such a journey on a bird, or as a bird, is no doubt archaic, as comparative data from American shamanism can inform us There are several examples of such aerial flights from Siberia: shamans who travel through the seven heavens on the backs of birds

The close connection between the guardian spirits and the drum is also expressed in the idea that the drum is a vessel in which the shaman may collect his guardian spirits Some drums have fictive entrances for spirits

It is a widespread notion among Siberian tribes that the drum is made from a "shamanic tree", which symbolizes the world pole or world tree Each shaman has his own shamanic tree with which his own life is associated (Paulson 1964, 126 f), and each such tree is a replica of the world tree Each shamanic tree is pointed out to the future shaman in his inaugural dreams The Yakut, for instance, consecrate the tree with animal sacrifices and pour blood and vodka on it All of this shows that the close association of the drum with the tree also includes the shaman

It was previously mentioned that, according to Emsheimer's claim, the Saami drum could be understood as an apotropaic instrument, a bow with magic arrows Comparisons were made with similar ideas among Siberian peoples, and here we find not only the idea of the drum being a bow, but that the word for drum is occasionally that

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<sup>6</sup> We are reminded here that the Yakut shaman addresses the drum as his horse and the drum-stick as his whip

for bow. On this basis, Potapov launched the theory in 1934 that the bow had been the original instrument of the shaman, being later supplanted by the drum. Even in later times, some metal pendants on the shamanic drum remind us of arrows (cf Emsheimer 1964, 28 ff; Basilov 1986, 38). Potapov's thesis has been called into question by certain Russian scholars, including Basilov (Basilov 1986, 38).

Emsheimer has however related Potapov's theory to Zelenin's evolutionist theory of shamanic etiology (Zelenin 1936; Zelenin 1952). As we know, Zelenin thinks that the diagnosis of disease as the result of intrusion (originally intrusion by an animal, later by an animal spirit) preceded chronologically the diagnosis of soul loss caused by a spirit or wizard. Emsheimer finds that the conception of the drum as a bow belongs to the first of these diagnoses. It is thus a relatively ancient idea, retained in later times as a relic (Emsheimer 1964, 32 f). Now Zelenin's relative chronology of disease etiologies was strongly supported in wide circles; even an historically inclined scholar like Robert Lowie defended the temporal precedence of the intrusion diagnosis. Careful investigations by Ivar Paulson and myself, however, demonstrate that this hypothesis is not valid as far as Northern Eurasia and North America are concerned. The two diagnoses are contemporaneous and refer to two different types of disease, diseases of the body and the mind, respectively. This is the case, although regionally a certain tendency towards a uniform patterning of one of the two diagnoses may have occurred (Paulson 1958; Hultkrantz 1953, 289, 448 ff; Hultkrantz 1962-63; Hultkrantz 1984). We should not presuppose any development from one diagnosis to the other, and Zelenin's theory cannot therefore support Potapov's theory of the evolution of drum interpretation.

### **The Weakening of Drum Shamanism outside the Eurasian Area**

The Eskimo have a developed shamanism, but the drum is not as strongly emphasized in this form of shamanism, nor is it circumscribed by numerous rules and supernatural ideas like the Saami or Siberian drum. Potapov's bold reconstruction of the history of the Siberian shamanic drum has its counterpart in Erik Holtved's reconstruction of the history of the Eskimo drum. According to Holtved, drum shamanism among the Eskimo has superseded an older technique of divination (oracular answers from lifting weights etc.). The drum

is nevertheless named after this old technique (Holtved 1967, 26 f) Holtved's argument seems less probable, however, since the common term for both phenomena, *qila*, may simply indicate the reference to magic

There are some signs of the lesser importance attached to the Eskimo drum. Firstly, few drums are painted, and only among the Chugach Eskimo of Southern Alaska are all drums painted. Secondly, all shamanic drums are also used for entertainment. Thirdly, among the Chugach shamans, rattles have partly taken over the role of drums (for a survey, see Haase 1987, 165-170). The rattle is, as we shall see, the general shamanic instrument in large parts of America.

In the great variety of shamanic forms which exist south of the Arctic Subarctic zone, the drum, with a few exceptions, does not have such a prominent role. In particular, mention must be made here of Southern Siberia and Central Asia, where northern shamanism and southern influences from the high culture fused together. These latter influences are responsible for the high elaboration of ceremonialism in shamanism (even among such northern people as the Tungus), as well as for the conversion of former shamanic areas to Buddhism (Lamaism) and Islam. Representatives of the old Vienna school were jumping to hasty conclusions when they located the homeland of shamanism in southern agricultural regions. In conformity with this theory, Wilhelm Schmidt, relying on A. Gahs, claimed that the Tibetan double drum had served as a model for the shamanic drums of Northern and Central Asia and finally reached the American continent (see the discussion in Eliade 1964, 176, 502 note 23, with references). This reconstruction is too speculative, and the perspectives must be broadened to embrace a general palaeolithic background, as in the following account.

The position of the drum in other areas south of the Arctic obviously depends upon the position of shamanism. We know that where horticulture and agriculture supplanted old hunting cultures shamanism gradually retreated, living on for a short while among the mounted pastoral nomads, but finally succumbing here, too. Priests and cult servants replaced shamans who, for some time, may have been reduced to fortune tellers and folk healers. Shamanic soul journeys become less common as diagnoses of soul loss fell into oblivion. The drum that paved the way for the trance was no longer necessary.

As an example of this deterioration of the shamanic drum we may consider the case of the American Indian.

### The American Shamanic Drums

We have seen how in North America the Eskimo certainly maintain Arctic traditions regarding the shamanic use of the drum, although in a weakened form. As we go further south, the frame drum becomes more uncommon, and there are fewer sources attesting to its shamanic use.

The following survey is based on information provided by Helen Roberts (Roberts, 1936), Clark Wissler (Wissler 1938), Joseph Howard (Howard 1967) and others. These three authors present their material within culture area configurations, thus enhancing our possibilities of comparing drums of different areas. The information on the shamanic use of the drum is, however, most uneven.

The tambourine drum is used by Canadian tribes of the Subarctic area, from the Yukon and Mackenzie Athapascan tribes to the Algonkians (the Naskapi and Montagnais) in Labrador. Among the latter it is part of the hunting ritual: just as among the Saami, a small object is placed on the drum head. The spectators watch it move around as the drum is beaten, indicating in what direction game may be found (Tanner 1944). Here is one of the many enigmatic parallels which may be found between the Saami and north-eastern American Indians (cf. especially the similarities in the guardian spirit complex, Hultkrantz 1987).

On the Northwest Coast medicine men handle frame drums covered by deer hide. "Rattles are put inside and out to impart special powers" (Howard 1967, 41). Wooden rattles are also used, as elsewhere in North America. Frame drums are also found both on the Plateau and the Plains. Small drums are used by doctors, for instance among the Omaha, who stretch a skin over a small hoop.

In the areas under discussion there is a certain connection between the shaman (or medicine man — the boundaries between the two functionaries are vague) and the frame drums. Occasionally there are even echoes of Siberian drum ideology. In his visionary experience the young Coast Salish Indian at Puget Sound listens to the sound of drumming out in the woods. He follows the sound and comes to a "trembling" cedar from which he receives his guardian spirit song and his healing power. Later in life he returns to the same cedar and forms from a pair of curved branches so-called "power boards" which possess the power to influence human beings (Jilek 1982, 138 f). At the initiation dance each dancer brings a pole or staff which is placed in a hollow cedar representing the world tree (Jilek 1982, 137 f). In

other words, we have here a "shamanic tree" identical to the world tree — as found in Siberia

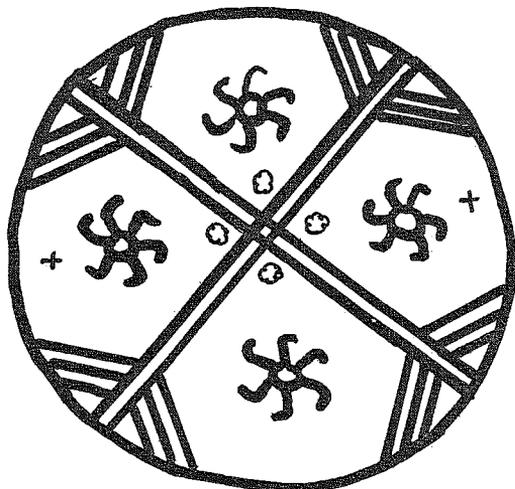
It was pointed out that drums may have rattles inside, and the boundary-line between rattle and drum is not clear in North America; musicologists even talk about "rattle drums" The more common shamanic instrument in the United States is the rattle The Eastern Indians, for instance, use rattles made of turtle shell, horn, or bark cylinders The prevalence of the kettle drum and the water drum in the Southwest seems to have precluded a traditional association between the medicine man and the drum

If rattles predominate in North America, wind instruments are the common musical instruments in South America There are few single-headed frame drums As Lawrence Sullivan succinctly states, "In South America, the shaman's drum does not have wide use" (Sullivan 1988, 831 note 185) It would seem that over wide areas of South America excitation through drumming has been replaced by the use of intoxicating herbs; nowhere on earth have drugs and psychoactive, narcotic herbs been used as much as among the aboriginal inhabitants of this continent

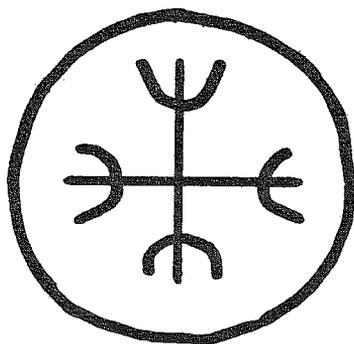
On the south western coast of South America, however, we find to our great surprise an almost Arctic shamanism with an almost traditional shamanic drum The Araucanians of southern Chile, or the Mapuche, are responsible for this sensation In his classic book on shamanism, Eliade deals with Araucanian shamanism as if it were typical of South America (Eliade 1964, 323-336) It is not, however, and represents a striking exception

This is not the place to describe Mapuche shamanism in all its detail Let us merely state that the shaman — or shamaness, for today the functionary is usually a woman — practises ventriloquism, transvestitism and sleight of hand tricks She demonstrates her skills at a ceremonial initiation act which, among other things, has the purpose of establishing a symbiosis between the novice and the sacred trees The central part of the initiation involves the *machi*, or shamaness, climbing a tree which has been stripped of bark and notched to facilitate ascent This is the world tree, and it has seven levels Standing on the highest level the *machi* prays to the high god, and sinks into a trance Mapuche shamanism has been described and analysed by several authors (Métraux 1942; Titiev 1951, Faron in Steward & Faron 1959, 281 ff., Grebe 1973, 24 ff, Böning 1978, 838 ff, Brech 1985; Schindler 1988)

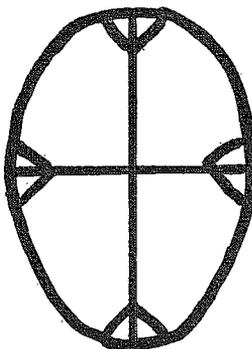
Our main interest concerns the Mapuche drum Strictly speaking,



A



B



C

- A Mapuche drum from Schundler 1988, 64
- B Mapuche drum drawing, Schundler 1988, 71
- C Dolgan drum drawing, Jankovics 1984, 171 (after Ivanov)

this is a kind of kettle drum, but it is handled and represented as a Siberian drum. The drum, *kultrum*, has the skin of a dog or a horse stretched over its wooden frame. It is held in one hand and beaten with a drum-stick. The drum-skin has curved or straight lines at the periphery, signifying trees. Four lines forming a cross divide the drumhead into four quadrants representing the four parts of the world. The square at the centre of the drum symbolizes the middle of the world.

As we see, the resemblance to the Siberian drum is obvious. The Mapuche drum could well pass for a Tungusian, Manchu or Dolgan drum (Potapov 1968, 228; Emsheimer 1973, 1659; Jankovics 1984, figures 1, 5: 1-5; Sommarström 1987, 217). Métraux points out that both the appearance of the drum and its use is almost Siberian (Métraux 1949, 589). Regarding the shamanic background, Faron states "These shamanistic practices, though typical of Siberia, are known elsewhere in America only in the Arctic. Why any of these, let alone the whole complex, should occur in South America only among the Araucanians is inexplicable" (Steward & Faron 1959, 281). The problems involved can only be discussed tentatively here and certainly deserve more detailed study. Métraux has provided some guidelines: with regard to Mapuche shamanism, he believes that it is not a relic from an ancient time when this people and the Siberian peoples shared the same culture, but rather reflects a convergence between Mapuche and Siberian shamanism during the last four hundred years (Métraux 1967). On the other hand, the Mapuche drum "is one of several traits linking the Araucanians to North America which seem to have followed the Pacific Coast long before the development of the high cultures of Peru" (Métraux 1949, 594). The latter hypothesis is plausible. But why could not the total complex of shamanism be explained in the same way?

We may refer here to the findings of Erland Nordenskiöld, who was able to establish the probability of an archaic hunting culture in northern North America and southern South America, the culture brought by the first immigrants (Nordenskiöld 1931). This old culture shows affinities with the circumpolar Arctic culture where "classic" shamanism belongs (cf. Hultkrantz 1981).

### Conclusion

This short summary of the role of the shamanic drum in different ages and cultures is of course only a preliminary sketch, and can as such hardly be used for drawing conclusions regarding the ideological history of this drum. My intention has been to provide an overall — or almost overall — survey, since areas such as South East Asia and Oceania have not been considered. By comparing Arctic and American forms of shamanism, we have been able to conjecture the main characteristics of the story of the shamanic drum. We may reach a probable hypothesis, but no more.

It has become evident that the palaeo-Indian hunting culture preserved among such ethnic groups as the eastern Algonkians in North America and the Araucanians in South America constituted a continuation of the palaeolithic hunting culture that was once diffused over the whole of northern Eurasia and has survived until modern times among the circumpolar peoples. The Araucanian drum, and the whole Araucanian shamanic complex, is basically a part of this North Asian shamanism. How should we then interpret this fact? As implied above, I believe the best hypothesis would be to presume that we are dealing with a heritage from the ancient immigration period. The cultural conservatism of the Araucanians, and their isolation in the Chilean archipelago — they were not conquered and placed on reservations until a century ago (Steward & Faron 1959, 273 ff) — have contributed to the preservation of their ancient religion, including shamanism.

Evidence of such widespread diffusion makes it obvious that we cannot be satisfied with the dates for the age of the shamanic drum rashly proposed in the past — 500 B C, or the Bronze Age, etc. Furthermore, we seem to face the fact that the drum was part of the original heritage of shamanism.

If this supposition is correct, the problem of the age of the shamanic drum becomes the problem of the age of shamanism. I have tried to answer this question in another article (Hultkrantz 1989). Shamanism apparently forms part of the oldest culture of man, the hunting culture, but with certain restrictions. In its typical forms it does not occur in middle and southern Africa, among negritic peoples and the Australian aborigines. Ter Ellingson points out correctly that there are no drums in the "religious music" of such peoples as the Pygmies and Bushmen of Africa, the Veddas in Sri Lanka and the Australian aborigines (Ellingson 1987, 494). However, this does not mean — as

he presumes — that the drum originated in “later cultural systems of sedentary agriculture and urban civilization” (Ellingson 1987, 494) In view of the material that he himself amassed, moreover, his views are surprising

The ideas hitherto expressed regarding the age of the shamanic drum are indeed many and bewildering Even discussion of the age of the drum in Siberia, a relatively well-researched field, is confusing Hans Findeisen says that the widely diffused drum is “selbstverständlich” much younger than the shaman’s dress, whereas Bo Lönnqvist — with great justification, in my opinion — concludes that it is the other way round (Findeisen 1957, 148; Lönnqvist 1987, 152, 155, 156)

The evidence we have tells us that the drum is an ancient shamanic symbol in hunting culture In later shamanism outside the Arctic area it has gradually lost its significance

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