Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Nepali Shamanism

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ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO
THE STUDY OF NEPALI SHAMANISM

by

Christopher J. Busick

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Christopher J. Busick
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Nepal provides fertile ground for the study of a wide range of religious phenomena. The process of Sanskritization has transformed the majority of Nepal's ethnic groups into at least nominal Hindus, while the inhabitants of Nepal's northern borders have been deeply influenced by Buddhism from Tibet. These two great Asiatic religions meet and overlap in the foothills of the Himalayas in mid-Nepal. Despite the enormous influence of these two religions in Nepal, they have not entirely replaced all other religious beliefs and practices. One example is shamanism which is practiced by both Hindu and Buddhist cultural groups. While in some cases integrated into Hindu or Buddhist practices, shamanism usually exists independently of a systematised religion.

After dealing with the definitional problem of shamanism, in the paper, the major approaches which have been utilized in the study of shamanism will be reviewed. Shamanism in Nepal will then be discussed in light of these approaches. Finally, some suggestions for further research in shamanism in Nepal, and elsewhere, will be offered.

Anthropological literature is filled with accounts of alleged contacts between the spiritual or supernatural world and the realm of humans. The great diversity of the world's cultures shows different ways in which it is believed such contact can be established in order to manipulate the realm of the supernatural. Shaman is one of the terms that has been employed to denote a person who is believed to be able to communicate
with the supernatural world; other terms include sorcerer, priest, wizard, medicine man, and spirit medium. Unfortunately, the terms have not been used consistently by different scholars to denote the same complex of attributes, functions, and means of spiritual contact (Reinhard 1976b:12); what one might call a shaman, another might call a spirit medium, sorcerer, or priest.

The question of what attributes and features distinguish the shaman from other magico-religious practitioners continues to be a point of disagreement among scholars in the field. The comprehensive work by the historian of religion, Eliade (1964), helps to identify the salient features of shamanism on the one hand, but creates definitional problems on the other. For Eliade, the shaman is above all an ecstatic and a medical practitioner (1964:4), an individual whose soul journeys to the abode of the spirits to obtain information and then returns to use this spiritual knowledge in the service of his community and its members (1964:5). Eliade (1964) deals with the phenomenon of shamanism throughout the world, describing the similarities of initiation, symbolism, costume, shamanic powers, and rituals cross-culturally and thereby helps to differentiate shamanism from all other magico-religious practices. The narrowness of Eliade's definition of the term shamanism, however, is far from helpful.

Eliade's definition of shaman is largely a result of his historical approach to the subject. He posits that the original religious belief of North Asiatic groups, the Tungus in particular, from whose language we derive the term "shaman", centered around the belief in a celestial Supreme Being (Eliade 1964:504). To communicate directly with this
Being, it was necessary to ascend into the sky and to have one's soul journey to the seat of the deity. Eliade supports this contention by calling attention to the widespread use of feathers on shamans costumes (1964:156) and the practice of climbing ladders (1964:487), ropes (1964:484), etc., as symbolic means of heavenly ascent during shamanic initiations and seances. As ancestor cults and other divine figures slowly replaced the concept of the Supreme Being, the nature of the shaman's ecstatic experience changed; the shaman then became possessed by these lesser entities (Eliade 1964:506). Eliade excludes this latter method of shamanic supernatural communication, i.e., possession by spirits, from his definition of the "free" or "classical" shaman as a hybridization of the original practice (1964:500). The true shaman is an ecstatic who "...specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld..." to make contact with spiritual beings (Eliade 1964:5).

A strict acceptance of Eliade's definition would unnecessarily confine the shamanic complex to a very few examples, excluding virtually all Nepali magico-religious specialists as well as others in Asia and other parts of the world. Even the Tungus shaman, as described by the primary ethnographer, Shirokogoroff, is not considered to be representative of a true form of shamanism by Eliade (1964:500). According to the Tungus themselves, however, the term shaman "...refers to persons of both sexes who have mastered spirits, who at their will can introduce these spirits in themselves using power over the spirits in their own interests" (Shirokogoroff 1935:269). There is no mention of the soul journey in this definition.
Most Nepali shamans achieve contact with the supernatural through possession and not soul journey. One possible explanation for this fact is the concept of transmigration of the soul, a central doctrine in Hinduism and Buddhism, the two dominant religions of Nepal. Jones (1967:333) has suggested that the shamans of those groups who have accepted either of the "Great Traditions" become possessed rather than undertake a soul journey. The Hindu-Buddhist idea of transmigration of the soul obviates the necessity for the shaman to lead the way for spirits or souls of the dead in their journey to the next world (Jones 1967:342). To be of any practical use in the study of extant shamanism, a definition of the term must incorporate the idea of possession of the supernatural by the shaman as well as the concept of the shaman's soul journeying to contact the spiritual world.

There are additional elements in Eliade's definition of shamanism that need reworking, i.e., the ideas centering around the terms "ecstasy" and "trance". Ecstasy is an ambiguous term which implies "rapturous delight" or "an overpowering emotion" in the minds of many (Reinhard 1976b:16). Although many shamans may be highly emotional when in contact with the supernatural, "rapturous delight" would describe very few, if any, of these states (Reinhard 1976b:16). The term "trance" is less ambiguous but presents problems in describing the states of consciousness of at least some Nepali shamans. It implies dissociation which does not accurately describe the state of the Bhujel shaman who is in contact with his spirits (Hitchcock 1976:168). The shamans of the Tamangs of Nepal are required to recite ritual texts in conjunction with their seances; these texts do not indicate ecstatic or trance states on the part of the shaman but rather the use of special energies (noitup or
margvel) to transcend the purely verbal meaning of the text (Hofer 1974a:179).

A definition of both Nepali shamans and shamans in general must allow for spirit possession as well as soul journey, avoid ambiguous and narrow terminology (ecstasy and/or trance), as well as distinguish between a shaman proper and a spirit medium. A definition proposed by Reinhard (1976b:16) meets all but one of these criteria:

A shaman is a person who at his will can enter into a non-ordinary psychic state (in which he either has his soul undertake a journey to the spirit world or he becomes possessed by a spirit) in order to make contact with the spirit world on behalf of members of his community.

While rectifying the problems inherent in Eliade's definition, this one unfortunately does not clearly distinguish between the shaman and spirit medium (Nepali jhakri and dami, respectively), as the latter also becomes possessed by the supernatural.

Although the services rendered by a jhakri and a dami are often the same, the differences between the two are evident from a number of different perspectives. In both cases, the individual may contact the supernatural to divine the future, discover the causes of illness, and remove or appease a malevolent spirit (Winkler 1976:250-54). The jhakri, however, goes through a process first of becoming sick, then being cured by a jhakri receiving instruction and tutelage in mastering the supernatural, serving as an apprentice to a master jhakri, and finally, being initiated as a jhakri himself (Eliade 1964; Winkler 1976:260-61). The dami, on the other hand, is not required to pass through any of these steps (Winkler 1976:259-61). While the jhakri calls spirits to him, usually with a drum, the dami uses no such paraphernalia (Eliade 1964:168;
A further distinction between the two specialists concerns institutional affiliation. The shaman or jhakri functions independently and often in addition to other religious practitioners in the society (Eliade 1964:7), but the dami is always attached to a particular temple or shrine of a specific deity (Winkler 1976:260; Gaborieau 1976:225). Further distinctions between the two could be made (Winkler 1976:259-61), but the most important one centers around the type of possession involved.

The jhakri mediates and controls the possessing spirits while the dami does not. The latter might best be described as an oracle of a god (Gaborieau 1976:222). Because of the existence of a state of rapport between himself and the god, he is chosen as the vessel or vehicle for possession (Winkler 1976:259); the deity speaks to the community through the dami in a language that is immediately recognizable as that of the god (Winkler 1976:254). The shaman, however, spends time, often years, in learning how to control and master the supernatural, as indicated by the Tungusic definition referring to those who have "...mastered spirits ... and can use their power over the spirits in their own interests..." (Shirokogoroff 1935:269). Modifying Reinhard's definition (1976b:16) slightly to distinguish between shaman and spirit medium, a workable definition of a shaman would be as follows: A shaman is a person who at his will can enter an altered state of consciousness (which is interpreted as his soul's journey to the spirit world or his becoming possessed by a spirit from the spirit world) in order to control and manipulate the spirit world on behalf of members of his community.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Various researchers have taken different approaches in studying shamanism. The most popular approach by far is descriptive studies of the phenomenon as it occurs in specific societies. These studies generally deal with recruitment, initiation, costume, and paraphernalia, seances, roles of the shaman in the particular culture under investigation, etc. Other authors, while they may focus upon a particular culture, go beyond ethnographic descriptions of the subject and deal with specific aspects of shamanism in an attempt to explain the phenomenon. The three basic approaches are: (1) the psychological; (2) the sociological; and (3) the cultural.

Psychological Approach

More has probably been written about the psychological aspect of shamanism than any other. These studies can be divided into those that characterize a shaman's behavior as (a) pathological and those that see the shaman as (b) normal, gifted, or better adjusted psychologically than other members of the same culture.

Pathological interpretation

The institutionalized shamanic role is the focus of study for most scholars who interpret shamanism in terms of the psychological
pathology of shamans and potential shamans. In this view, the recruitment of a psychologically disturbed individual to the shamanic role is seen as a means of curing him as well as providing him with a socially useful place in society. Wallace (1966:150) characterizes the future shaman's illness as a severe identity crisis which is, at least partially, resolved by assuming the new identity of shaman. Through an apprenticeship to a master shaman, the neophyte learns the arts of shamanizing which serve to sustain his new identity (Wallace 1966:151). Encouragement and support from the community are vital if he is to retain his new identity and avoid slipping into a state of withdrawal, apathy, and/or uncontrollable behavior (Wallace 1966:151).

The most important aspect of the institutionalized shamanic role, however, is that it provides the disturbed individual with a socially sanctioned means of expressing and playing out his hysterical fantasies. The society interprets these fantasies, even encourages them, as evidence of the shaman's contact with the supernatural realm which is made on their behalf. The shaman "...has a well defined and unambiguous relationship to the rest of society, which in all probability allows him to function without the degree of impairment that might follow if there were no such niche into which he could fit" (Murphy 1964:76). In this interpretation, then, the institution of shamanism serves the function of providing a niche for psychologically aberrant individuals who would, without this socially sanctioned role available to them, be perhaps severely incapacitated members of their society.

There is a wide range of opinion among anthropologists who advocate a pathological interpretation, concerning the nature and severity of
shamanic psychological disorders. Hysteria, first proposed to explain shamanic behavior in the harsh environment of the Arctic (Czaplicka 1914), has since been employed to characterize shamans in other regions (Nadel 1965; Boyer 1962, 1964; Boyer et al., 1964). Others characterize the shaman as having neurotic disorders (Fabrega and Silver 1970; Radin 1957), "...a man neurotically susceptible to all inward stirrings, physical and mental" (Radin 1957:107). Devereux (1969) concludes that the shaman is either psychotic or a severe neurotic who differs from non-shaman neurotics/psychotics. The shaman's idiosyncratic conflicts are partially repatterned as a result of a dream or vision, while the non-shaman neurotic/psychotic individual's conflicts do not become repatterned, but remain rooted in his idiosyncratic unconscious (Devereux 1969:121). Devereux maintains that the shaman has not been cured of his mental disease, but is simply in remission: "He is...in social remission only with reference to a particular social setting: his own tribe. He is not adaptable and, above all, not readaptable" (Devereux 1969:130). Hence, since "the cultural essence of normality is not adjustment, but the capacity for constant readjustment" (Devereux 1969:130), the shaman is characterized here as pathological. In his work on the origins of religion, La Barre diagnoses a number of historical prophets and shamans from various cultures as suffering from a variety of psychopathic disorders; "...as individuals, prophets and shamans run the full gamut from self-convinced and sincere psychotics to epileptics and suggestible hysterics, and from calculating psychopaths...to plodding naifs only following the cultural ropes" (La Barre 1970:319).
Shamans from disparate parts of the world have been diagnosed as being afflicted with a specific type of psychosis, schizophrenia. For example, a masklike countenance, flat emotional reactions, high development of fantasy life, disregard for the opinions of others, plus data from Rorschach tests, are diagnostic traits of schizophrenics which were exhibited by five Guatemalan shamans (Gillin 1948:396). Nadel has made similar comments about the Nuba shamans in the Sudan (1946). Wallace remarks that the general process of becoming a shaman is quite similar throughout the world: "...a phase of schizoid identity dissolution is followed by a phase of paranoidal identity restitution, the new identity being that of the shaman..." (1966:150).

Silverman (1967) has elaborated upon this process, identifying a specific ordering of five psychological events that both schizophrenics and shamans undergo. The initial stage is one with feelings of fear, impotence, failure, and guilt. The individual then becomes preoccupied and seeks isolation from others. This self-initiated sensory deprivation leads to fixation on his own mental, hallucinatory images which become indistinguishable from external reality. The fourth stage is an intensification of the preceding with powerful subconscious forces becoming his conscious reality. The final stage is one of cognitive reorganization in which both the shaman and schizophrenic sees himself in new ways: good, superpowerful, and capable of great feats. Although the various researchers studying a number of different societies have characterized shamans as pathological, they do not all agree on the type or severity of the illness. The diagnoses range from hysteria through neuroses to psychopathology.
Gifted interpretation

A number of anthropologists dispute the diagnosis that shamans are psychologically abnormal. Some of their findings indicate quite the opposite, that shamans are often gifted individuals. In response to Silverman's comparison between schizophrenics and shamans (Silverman 1967), Handelman argues that in most cases not enough is known about shamans' early lives, inner thoughts, or psychological makeup (Handelman 1968:353) to diagnose them as schizophrenics. Making psychological assessments of personality on the basis of overt public behavior alone is unwise; there is

...the possibility that the shaman may consciously conform with social expectations in behavior patterns while operating in terms of a different set of philosophical premises in healing sessions, much of the content of these being known only to the shaman himself (Handelman 1968:354).

The life of the Washo shaman, Henry Rupert, contradicts Devereux's claim (1969:130) that shamans are not adaptable and hence not normal. Rupert developed his healing capacities, incorporating beliefs alien to his own culture, while undergoing acculturation to the white man's society. "He shows a continuous development with innovations, the fruits of which included a philosophical statement about the supernatural and natural worlds and a sophisticated approach to transcultural curing" (Handelman 1967:462).

Results of Rorschach tests administered to shamans substantiate the claim that they are often very creative persons. Rorschach tests on Apache shamans demonstrated that shamans are not individuals who have disguised serious psychological illnesses but are healthier than their social comembers (Boyer et. al. 1964:179). Shamans appear to have
developed a fairly high capacity, in Freudian terms, of using regression in the service of the ego, thereby becoming creative individuals (Boyer 1968:308). Commenting upon Boyer's Rorschach experiments (Boyer 1962), Nordland noted that the ability of primary-process thinking, of making unconventional combinations is an important aspect of creativity (1967:184). "It is highly interesting that this ability is the most characteristic personality trait of shamans" (Nordland 1967:184).

In conclusion, the debate over the mental health of shamans cannot be settled with the evidence now available. The institution of shamanism may provide a social niche in which psychologically disturbed individuals can become functional members of society. The evidence indicates, however, that not all shamans in every society are abnormal. Normality and abnormality are largely culturally determined; an individual judged "normal" in one society might be diagnosed quite the opposite in another. Furthermore, some shamans in any one society might be psychologically normal while other shamans in the same society might possess psychological disorders; psychological abnormality may be a prerequisite for becoming a shaman in a particular society while, in another, potential shamans exhibiting abnormal behavior might be denied access to the profession. At least one attempt has been made to account for the unusual behavior of some shamans without reverting to the normality-abnormality controversy. This study suggests that shamans may be highly sensitized individuals, their unusual behavior patterns due to a particular neurophysiological make-up that has been identified in individuals who exhibit arousal states (Lex 1974). Further research in this and other areas may eventually clarify the conflicting evidence concerning
the mental health of shamans. In any case, the psychological approach to the study of shamanism is essentially reductionist. While the argument provides some interesting insights about some shamans, it attempts to account for a complex sociocultural phenomenon through a psychological analysis of the behavior of certain individuals without considering important social and cultural elements of the shamanic complex.

Sociological Approach

The sociological approach to the study of shamanism is primarily a functional analysis of the phenomenon. From this perspective, the focus is on the shaman and the shamanic ritual in terms of the functions they perform for the society as a whole. Generally, the functionalists see rituals, and other cultural elements, as contributing to the survival of the society by promoting social integration and community solidarity (Wallace 1966:169; J. Turner 1974:22; Holmes 1971:42). In addition to these functions, the repetitive performance of the shamanic ritual over time serves to inculcate, validate, and maintain the values and belief system of the society. The functionalists see these processes as an "explanation" of shamanism in much the way that Harris (1966:51), for instance, sees an explanation for the sacred cow of India in "positive-functioned" processes of the ecological system of which it is a part, rather than in the Hindu doctrine of \textit{ahimsa}, or principle of the unity of life.
Specialized functions

In addition to the general functions performed by the shaman as ritual specialist, noted above, he often performs a number of other specific functions. In some societies, shamans play a part in their political structures. The shaman in the Nyima tribes in the Sudan, for instance, performs a politically integrative function (Nadel 1946:31). The social system is based on unilineal descent and rigidly divided along lineage lines. However, "shamanism introduces into the lineage framework a different alignment. The spirit priest is the center of a new, more fluid grouping, which extends as far as does his reputation" (Nadel 1946:31). Mudd (1972) suggests a similar function for Zinacantan shamans. She proposes that shamans, rather than officials of the Mayan cargo cults, were essential elements in integrating pre-Columbian Mayan hamlets with ceremonial centers (Mudd 1972:15). The shamans of the Akawaio Indians of British Guiana, where there is no formal political system, function as military tactitians, lawyers, and judges (Lewis 1971:158).

Providing community integration and a feeling of well-being is a specific function of the Tungus shaman of Siberia. The Tungus believe that evil spirits, often sent by the shaman of another clan, will attack unless a fence is erected by their shaman around the community to protect it (Lewis 1971:156). The power of the fence to ward off these evil spirits, however, is invested in the shaman. The death of the shaman, therefore, is followed by near panic as the Tungus are left unprotected from potential attack by evil spirits (Reinhold Loffler, personal
communication). It is only after a new shaman has been chosen and the fence once again imbued with his power that a sense of well-being returns to the members of the community.

Another explicit function of the shaman in some societies is that of sustaining and reinforcing public morality. I. M. Lewis (1971) posits two specific forms of shamanism. One of these he labels "central possession" which is used to uphold power and authority and has the function of sustaining and reinforcing public morality (Lewis 1971:34). This type of shamanism often takes the form of ancestor worship where the shaman becomes possessed by ancestor spirits which sit in judgement upon the conduct of society. Possessed by the ancestor spirits, the shaman exhibits a conservative bias, expressing the consensus of public feelings on moral issues (Lewis 1971:147). The Eskimo shaman performs this identical function when his soul travels to the bottom of the sea to discover why the goddess Takanakapsaluk has created inclement weather or withheld animals from the Eskimos' hunt. Quite often, the goddess has been angered by various members of the community breaching certain taboos (Rasmussen 1965:390). To appease her, and thus insure the return of the animals and/or good weather, the shaman extracts a confession from everyone who has committed a sin (Rasmussen 1965:390). By publically confessing to transgressions, the Eskimos are, in effect, reinforcing the established moral values of their society.

An important function performed by the shamans in many traditional societies is that of divination. Individuals faced with making a choice among seemingly equal alternatives can turn to a shaman who will ask the spirits to make the decision. The individual is partially freed from the
responsibility of controlling and directing his own life, which "...not only gives aid in difficult decisions but also alleviates anxiety about such choices" (Mischel and Mischel 1958:257). This becomes particularly important in societies with a rigid social structure where simple decision making is fraught with danger from internal and external social controls (Greenbaum 1973:59). The same process is applicable to group decisions. By consulting the shaman, and thus the supernatural, no individual can be held responsible for the decision if it should prove to be a bad one (Wallace 1966:173). Furthermore, the sanction of the supernatural functions to inspire "...the persons who must execute the decision with sufficient confidence to permit them to mobilize their full skills and energies, unimpeded by anxiety, fear or doubts about having made the best choice among the alternatives available" (Wallace 1966:173).

Divination is one of the most important functions performed by shamans in hunting societies where the decision of where to go to find game can be a life or death matter (Lommel 1967:76-84). The best chance for succeeding, year after year, in locating game probably lies in some method of randomization (Wallace 1966:172). This is assured when the shaman uses a mechanical device to arrive at a decision about the location of game for each hunt.

Divining the cause of an illness is one aspect of the shaman's primary social role, that of a healer. Before he can prescribe the appropriate treatment for an affliction, the shaman must determine the nature of the ailment. Cross-cultural research has identified six primitive theories of disease: natural causes, magic, object intrusion, soul loss, spirit intrusion, and breach of taboo (Wallace 1966:116).
While some cultures, such as the Eskimos of St. Lawrence Island (Murphy 1964:61), and the Ainu of Sakhalin (Ohnuki-Tierney 1973:23) may recognize many of the causes for illness mentioned above, most cultures attribute illness to only one or two of the six causes (La Barre 1964:38; Fuchs 1964:132; Boyer 1964:413; Schmidt 1964:150; Gelfand 1964:171). By allegedly contacting the supernatural, the shaman is believed to discover the particular cause of an illness which he then attempts to cure by the culturally prescribed method for that particular affliction. The shaman's divination of the cause of an illness functions to relieve his patient of some anxiety by providing an explanation for his discomfort where none had existed previously.

Although some shamans may treat physical maladies much like a Western doctor, the shaman's cure usually functions to relieve tension and anxiety in his patient. In many societies, specialization exists and herbalists, singers, mediums, and other religious practitioners may participate with the shaman in effecting cures for afflicted individuals (Kiev 1964:9). Some shamans are themselves competent herbalists and will prescribe drugs (Boyer 1964:413; Murphy 1964:72); others perform surgical operations such as amputations, trephining, and lancing (Murphy 1964:72). Still other shamans may leave any kind of physical ailment entirely to other specialists (Nadel 1946:26). Whether or not there is any psychological relationship between the diagnosed illness and the shaman's attempted cure, the believing patient is relieved that something has been done on his behalf. Where the diagnosis indicates object intrusion, for instance, the supposed removal and display of that object provides the patient with objective proof that a cure has been effected.
(Murphy 1964:81). If dead or evil spirits are the cause of illness, the shaman may prescribe some type of sacrifice to placate the spirits; this procedure has been shown to be instrumental in reducing anxiety (Kiev 1964:28).

An integral part of many shamanic cures is the requirement that the patient confess all of his sins. This functions to relieve guilt feelings and provides an emotional catharsis (La Barre 1964:38-9). In parts of India, illness is often attributed to the intrusion of a ghost which must be drawn out of the patient by beating him (Hoch 1974:674). Because the ghost is the supposed cause of the affliction, the patient cannot be held responsible for his illness or accompanying misbehavior. A closer examination of the situation, however, indicates that the patient is held at least partially responsible.

Though apparently it is the ghost who is aimed at, it is of course the patient who has to take the beating, and it appears that, through his replies to the healer's questioning, he has it in his hand to protract the torture up to the point when he feels he has become even by expiating his guilt (Hoch 1974:674).

Since the primary function performed by the shaman's healing techniques is psychological in nature - reduction of tension and anxiety as well as an emotional catharsis - he has been compared to Western mental health practitioners. Personality characteristics of mental health workers and shamans are surprisingly similar (Beck 1967:306-8). Studies show that psychotherapists have an intense need to help people, experience late sexual maturity, are more hysterical than normal, extremely feminine, and are generally quasi-neurotic. Just as the shaman finds an institutionalized role in society where his behavior is acceptable, the psychotherapist "...is able to bind his anxiety by participating in the
therapeutic work" (Beck 1967:309). The training of both groups of professionals is also quite similar. The neophyte shaman learns from a master shaman how to control his trance state as well as how to manipulate his ritual paraphernalia and the pantheon of spirits; the psychotherapist learns how to enter into deep relationships with patients and studies the theoretical foundations and practical applications of his chosen field (Beck 1967:312). The intense psychological crisis many future shamans experience is paralleled by the therapy which the psychotherapist undergoes as part of his training; most psychotherapists agree that this personal experience is of great value in their later work (Beck 1967:312). Both categories of practitioners are recognized in their respective cultures as possessing knowledge beyond that of the ordinary, the psychotherapist because of his training, the shaman by virtue of his training and ability to enter into a non-ordinary state of consciousness. Both then stand outside, in a sense, from their respective societies and are held in awe for their "...secret knowledge about life and death, about health and illness, and some special power to mediate between the ordinary world of men and realms that lie beyond" (Hoch 1974:672).

Further similarities are evident when the therapeutic goals and techniques of psychotherapists and shamans are analyzed. The goals of psychotherapy may be stated as follows: (1) relief of mental tension and its consequences; (2) removal of functional disabilities; (3) more efficient use of mental potentialities; (4) independence; (5) improved adaptation to circumstances; (6) insight, if this helps prevent relapse; (7) increased capacity for responsibility; (8) hopeful and positive
attitudes toward problems; and (9) creation of a reserve to meet future stresses (Murphy 1964:79). The shaman's goals fall far short of those of his secular counterpart. The shaman's primary objectives are the removal of the symptoms of illness and relief from tension, anxiety, and their consequences; goals such as improved adaptation to circumstances, creation of positive attitudes, and increased capacity for responsibility may be conscious aims of a few exceptional shamans but are usually only side effects of tension release (Murphy 1964:79). The three general principal therapeutic techniques utilized by the shaman - suggestion, suppression, and reassurance - form essential elements in the psychotherapist's techniques as well (Beck 1967:322). More specific techniques are also shared by the two categories of healers. In attempting to effect symptom relief, the shaman, like the psychotherapist, attempts to recall repressed material from his patient.

Of the psychotherapeutic techniques for facilitating recall of charged repressed material - free association, hypnogogic states, regression, dream interpretation, experience of primary process - shaman apparently only fail to employ free association (Beck 1967:322).

Finally, the "magical" journeys undertaken by the shaman may be essentially the same techniques used by the psychotherapist but expressed in a different metaphor (Beck 1967:324). The psychotherapist must have experienced the primary process, the unconscious, to be effective; he must be able to cross back and forth between psychic states, between the conscious and unconscious, in order to understand his patients, whose problems often lie deeply buried in their unconscious.
Shamanism as strategy

The single most comprehensive analysis of shamanism from a sociological viewpoint is that of I. M. Lewis. An initial examination of spirit possession and women (Lewis 1966) was later expanded to include spirit possession of both sexes as well as shamanism (Lewis 1971). Lewis distinguishes between two forms of possession and shamanism, which he labels peripheral and central. Central possession was discussed earlier in this paper. It is peripheral possession, however, that Lewis emphasizes as the more important in terms of explaining spirit possession and shamanism.

Peripheral possession and shamanism stem from inequities inherent in the social structure of many societies. Lewis defines it as an "oblique aggressive strategy" of weak and low status individuals who attempt to manipulate their social superiors for their own gain (Lewis 1971:32). Although this strategy is employed by both sexes, Lewis concentrates on showing how women, in societies where access to power and authority is denied them, become possessed and join together in possession cults headed by a shamaness. "What we find over and over again in a wide range of different cultures and places is the special endowment of mystical power given to the weak;" this supernatural power is used to manipulate and extract special favors from men or higher status individuals (Lewis 1971:116).

Lewis' explanation of spirit possession and shamanism based on competition between the sexes raises some problems of interpretation. In response to Lewis' earlier article (Lewis 1967) that dealt exclusively
with women, Wilson argues that competition between members of the same sex is more closely correlated with spirit possession and shamanism than competition between the sexes (Wilson 1967:366). The fundamental problem with Lewis' analysis is his interpretation of women and deprivation. He assumes that the exclusion of women from power and male status positions is perceived as unfair, something to be rectified by the women. However, it is widely accepted that each sex learns its social role from members of the same sex beginning in early childhood, accepts this role and place in the social system, and knows no other means of social organization or division of labor with its attendant rewards and status positions.

In other words, women in male dominated societies have an ethnographer's view of their society, internalise it, get disturbed by it and protest by succumbing to spirits. The jumps from society to psychology to action are prodigious, and one is also led to wonder why it is that not all women succumb to possession, for presumably all women, not some women, are 'peripheral' (Wilson 1967:372).

Status, power, and rewards are traditionally differently defined for each sex and there is a distinct grouping of them accepted by each. Competition for these social rewards, therefore, should take place between members of the same sex.

Wilson argues that competition between members of the same sex and status ambiguity provides an explanation for spirit possession and shamanism. When a man takes a new wife in a polygynous society, for example, the first wife's position is threatened, but not by her husband, rather by the new wife. This is a situation under which women may become possessed by spirits and demand things from the husband. "The luxurious and feminine goods demanded are publicly indicative of the
woman's success as a woman and wife in face of a challenge personified in the new wife" (Wilson 1967:370). It is the possession, and subsequent gifts, which removes the ambiguity of the first wife's status or transfers status to her (Wilson 1967:374). The process is essentially the same for shamans. Those who wish to become "professional" shamans must become possessed, learn to master the possession, and then proceed through a public initiation into the role of shaman. This rite of passage is a formal recognition that the shaman can henceforth actively perform his duties of divining, curing, etc. within his newly accepted and verified status (Wilson 1967:374). Wilson's argument, then, also offers a sociological explanation of spirit possession and shamanism which, like Lewis', is based on status positions within the social structure.

Another related "strategy" for improving one's social position is by the accumulation of wealth. It has been suggested that the shamanic role provides an access to economic gain and thus an explanation for why individuals become shamans. Wilson (1967:375) notes that the profession of shamanism usually leads to economic rewards and may be one of the few avenues to wealth open to women. The shamans of the Nuba tribes in the Sudan are frequently asked to prevent barrenness at marriages and receive a cow as a fee; consequently, shamans are usually among the wealthiest men in the community (Nadel 1946:28). The economic status of shamans, however, appears to differ from culture to culture. Quite often, the shaman's fee is minimal or in the form of perishable food that must be consumed quickly which precludes its being invested for further gain (Vogt 1969:475).
The sociological approach to the study of shamanism limits its interpretation to an analysis of the social system within which the shaman operates. While the assumption of the shamanic role may be seen as a conscious ploy or strategy by low-status individuals to better their social position, the principal sociological analysis is based on the functions performed by the shaman. As a ritual leader, the shaman functions generally to promote social integration and solidarity. He also may perform more specific functions such as upholding public morality, relieving tension and anxiety, and promoting socio-political integration. While not denying the importance of the insights contributed by the sociological analysis, it is limited in that it deals with only the social aspects of the shamanic complex, ignoring the important religious and cultural features.

**Cultural Approach**

The cultural approach to the study of shamanism consists of a symbolic analysis of the myth, ritual, initiation, costume, and other elements which constitute the shamanic complex. Although several types of symbolic analyses, such as Turner's analysis of Ndembu ritual (1975; 1974; 1969) or a structural analysis of shamanism (Jonaitis 1978) might be employed, Geertz's (1966) approach to the study of religion is the one which will be followed here by applying his definition of religion to shamanism. Geertz (1966:4) defines religion as

(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.
Before turning to an analysis of shamanism per se, a brief explanation of Geertz's definition of religion is in order. A symbol may be defined as "...any object, act, event, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception - the conception is the symbol's 'meaning'" (Geertz 1966:4). The conception for which religious symbols serve as a vehicle is the model of the universe and man's relation to it. Cultural models, however, have a dual aspect: they not only serve as models of reality; "they give meaning, i.e. objective conceptual form, to social and psychological reality both by shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves" (Geertz 1966:8).

The second part of our definition can be more readily understood following an explanation of the third part, "formulating conceptions of a general order of existence." It is in the religious sphere that man attempts to account for the disturbing presence of chaos, suffering, and evil. Man seems to be unable to tolerate the existence of the stranger features of his experience without somehow reconciling them with his more ordinary experience (Geertz 1966:15). Faced with chaos, suffering, and evil, man is left with the suspicion that the world and man's place in it is absurd, that there is no order or justice to it. The religious response to this feeling of absurdity is "...the formulation, by means of symbols, of an image of such a genuine order of the world which will account for, and even celebrate, the perceived ambiguities, puzzles, and paradoxes in human experience" (Geertz 1966:23).

Man's image of the world is often expressed in myths. In addition to accounting for the absurdity of life, myths may describe the nature and creation of the world and man, the supernatural beings that inhabit
the world, man's relation to these beings, and often man's "fall from
grace" or separation from participation in the supernatural realm. In
any case, it is this formulation of the order of the world which focuses
and shapes man's outlook on life and the world; i.e., the formulation
establishes a particular set of moods and motivations in men, the second
part of the definition. Again, these moods and motivations are not only
a consequence of the formulated model of the world but also serve as a
model by which man attempts to live (Geertz 1966:9).

The fourth part of the definition "...clothing those conceptions
with such an aura of factuality..." deals with belief and the conse­
cration of belief in ritual. Given the paradoxes and absurdities of the
world, why does man believe in the model of reality which incorporates
these puzzles? The answer lies in the religious perspective which is
"...everywhere the same: he who would know must first believe" (Geertz
1966:26). A religious belief is justified by referring to authority
which in turn is accepted because it is larger than and transcends the
self (Geertz 1966:25).

It is in the performance of ritual that man affirms and experiences
his religious belief. Manipulating sacred, symbolic objects and perform­
ing symbolic acts in a ritual, man is convinced that his religious con­
ceptions are truthful and that religious directives are effective.

It is in some sort of ceremonial form...that the moods and mo­
tivations which sacred symbols induce in men and the general
conceptions of the order of existence which they formulate for
men meet and reinforce one another. In a ritual, the world as
lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a
single set of symbolic forms, turn out to be the same world,
...producing an idiosyncratic transformation in one's sense of
reality (Geertz 1966:29).
It is in these ritual performances that people believe their religion to be encapsulated and manifest; these performances are seen as enactments, materializations, realizations of the religion itself wherein men attain their faith as they depict it (Geertz 1966:29).

Perhaps the best description of a ritual in which these processes come together in a specific ritual performance is found in Bali (Belo 1960). Belo describes the confrontations between Rangda, a hideous witch, and Barong, a dragon who attempts to defeat her, in a number of village performances in Bali. While the individuals who don the masks of Rangda and Barong are the principal dancers in the performance, there are numerous other roles so that a great many people participate. When the gods are summoned from their abode in the mountains to enter individuals, demons also come and possess others (Belo 1960:2). Rangda and Barong, then, each have a retinue of followers who are in trance during the ritual. When it appears that Rangda is about to defeat Barong, a number of entranced men with krisses begin to attack Rangda; with the aid of her magic cloth, however, Rangda renders them unconscious and retreats to the death temple where she too collapses (Geertz 1966:33). Barong awakens the fallen men, who, still entranced and enraged that Rangda has gone, stab themselves with the sheathed krisses. At this point, pandemonium usually strikes, other people stabbing themselves until all fall into a coma and are eventually awakened by holy water administered by a priest (Geertz 1966:33). The performance ends in a draw, neither Rangda nor Barong defeating the other.

The confrontation between Rangda and Barong is more than a symbolic enactment of the Balinese view of the nature of the universe. In this
case, the mythic symbolism of Rangda and Barong is relatively unimportant: Rangda represents Durga of Hindu mythology for some, Queen Mahendradatta from Javanese mythology for others; while Barong's derivation is even more diverse and obscure (Geertz 1966:33-4). It is clear, however, that Rangda is not only frightening but exhibits fear herself during the performance; she is fear itself (Geertz 1966:34). For his part, Barong not only induces laughter with his clumsiness and antics, but incarnates the Balinese version of the comic spirit which, along with fear, is the dominant motive in the life of the Balinese (Geertz 1966:35). In the continual struggle against fear, Rangda and Barong are not representations of anything, but are presences, genuine realities; in trance, the villagers become part of the realm in which the presences of Rangda and Barong exist (Geertz 1966:34). This Balinese ritual is thus both a conception of the forces that govern life as well as a first-hand experience which proves the reality of that conception.

The last part of the definition, "...that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic," refers to the influence of the religious conceptions as they reflect back to color the individual's conception of the world of bare facts. It is in this way that religion shapes the social order (Geertz 1966:36). Once a ritual has ended, man returns to the common-sense world but he is changed by the experience of the ritual as is the common-sense world. This latter world is now seen as but a part of a wider reality which corrects and completes the common-sense world (Geertz 1966:38). The change in man and his perception of the world, however, is not everywhere the same as each religious tradition induces its own set of conceptions about the cosmic order and man's place in it.
The shamanic seance provides the same type of validation of religious belief for the community the shaman serves as the Rangda-Barong performance does for the Balinese. While the majority of Balinese become entranced and experience their belief, it is usually only the shaman who falls into a trance during his seance. The direct religious experience most of the Balinese attain is not available to the shaman's followers; their religious experience comes second-hand through the shaman. But, his descriptions of his spiritual journey, conversations with gods, demons, or spirits, or the tricks he may utilize to indicate the presence of spiritual beings, are evidence to his followers of the existence of the mythical or supernatural realm and the forces that inhabit it. Despite the cultural differences inherent in the description of the supernatural realm, the beings that populate it, or the manner in which the shaman communicates with that realm or its beings, the shaman's ability to do so testifies to its reality and existence for all the shamanic cultures.

The ability of human beings to contact the supernatural realm, which the shaman accomplishes, is often spelled out in the mythology of shamanic cultures. Quite often, this contact was at one time fairly easy, accessible to all men according to some myths. Eventually, this contact was interrupted by some kind of human transgression and the two realms became permanently separate (Eliade 1964:133). An ancient Tibetan myth relates how the first king and his six descendants descended from heaven to earth by a rope, returning when their task was completed; the seventh king, Gri-gum, fell victim to an attack of black magic and cut the rope which precluded his return to heaven and the descent of gods.
to earth (Hoffmann 1961:20). In other mythical traditions the means of contact between heaven and earth may take the form of a ladder, bridge, tree, or road, but the symbolism and function are the same (Eliade 1964:121). Once the easy contact depicted in the mythology has been severed, only privileged beings, shamans, retain the power to travel to heaven or communicate directly with the gods (Eliade 1964:265).

The conception that the shaman is able to contact the supernatural is symbolized first in his initiation and then in his ritual paraphernalia and costume. Generally the shaman's initiation consists of two parts: first, learning about the various deities, spirits, and beings, their nature and forces and, second, experiencing a symbolic death (Eliade 1964:13). In trance, in a dream, or during sickness, the future shaman visualizes his death at the hands of mythical or supernatural beings. The Yakut initiate, for instance, watches as his body is dismembered and the flesh scraped from the bones (Eliade 1964:36), while the Samoyed watches his body being cut to pieces and then boiled (Eliade 1964:40). Initiatory death symbolizes a return to the primordial past, to the mythical time before creation (Eliade 1958:89) and an ascent to heaven, since it is only through death that man can reach heaven (Eliade 1964:480). It is the shaman, however, who can return from death, die repeatedly and continually return to life (Eliade 1958:95). The Beaver Indians of British Columbia, for instance, believe that only the shaman knows the meaning of human life and death since he alone has experienced death; his sharing of this knowledge forms the basis of Beaver ceremonial life (Ridington and Ridington 1970:61).
The shaman's ability to contact the supernatural realm is also de-
picted in his public initiation. Here, the shaman must climb the "world
tree," a symbol that is widespread throughout Siberia and central Asia
(Eliade 1958:94) but also appears in South America (Eliade 1964:123),
North America (Eliade 1964:125), and Oceania (Eliade 1964:126). The
"world tree" symbolizes the axis mundi, the break in space which pro-
vides access to heaven and the underworld (Eliade 1958:94; Ridington
and Ridington 1970:58). The Buriat believe the "world tree" is a birch
and require the future shaman to climb it during his public initiation;
the tree is called "...the guardian of the door," for it opens the door
of Heaven to the shaman" (Eliade 1958:93).

The shaman's drum and costume are symbolic objects which also point
to the conception of contact with the spiritual world. The drum used by
the shaman is supposed to be made from a branch of the "world tree" and
thus, by playing it, the shaman is projected to that tree and can ascend
into heaven or call the spirits to him (Eliade 1964:168-69). The act of
drumming often symbolizes the ability of the shaman to fly through the
air to the realm of the gods as the Tibetan Bon-pos believed (Nebesky-
Wojhowisky 1956:542). The shaman's costume constitutes a symbolic micro-
cosm in itself and reveals the system of shamanism as clearly as the
study of the shamanic myth and ritual (Eliade 1964:145). The costume
may represent a reindeer or bear but it is usually found in the form of
a bird which again symbolizes the shaman's ability to fly (Eliade 1964:
156). Passed on from one shaman to the next, the costume is imbued with
the spirits of the clan (Eliade 1964:157). Like the masks of Rangda and
Barong, the donning of the costume projects the shaman into the sacred
realm of the supernatural.
Man's religious attempt to formulate a genuine order of the world which will account for evil and suffering is often less than completely successful. Rather than admit that there are flaws in the religious conception and that it is imperfect, man seeks a means of attributing these paradoxical elements to other factors. In shamanic cultures, it is often the shaman who must bear the responsibility for these inconsistencies; he becomes, in effect, a kind of scapegoat for these elements which do not quite mesh with the image of an ordered world.

This idea that the shaman deals with the "flawed" aspects of the religious conception is clearly seen in the Nyima shaman of the Sudan and the shaman of the Ainu of southern Sakhalin. In addition to shamans, the Nyima also have priests, shirra, who serve the Supreme Deity, the creator of the moral and universal order (Nadel 1946:34). God created the evil spirits which cause suffering, grief, etc. as he did everything else, but the spirits do not conform with the moral order and are perceived as being outside of the moral and physical law of the universe (Nadel 1946:34). Nyima mythology clearly states that some spirits are evil, but misfortune is blamed on the shaman who contacted the spirits rather than on the spirits themselves in an effort to avoid the conclusion that there is a flaw in the conception of the universal order (Nadel 1946:34). In the Nyima culture, "...shamanism absorbs all that is unpredictable and morally indeterminate. It saves the conception of an ordered universe from self-contradiction" (Nadel 1946:34).

The elements in the culture of the Ainu of southern Sakhalin that do not fit into specific categories are termed marginal. Shamans and shamanic seances are both conceived of as marginal. Ainu shamanism
deals with providing an explanation of human disease by attributing sickness to evil spirits and demons (Ohnuki-Tierney 1976:181). Spirits and demons are marginal because they are formless beings, ambiguous in that they do not fit into a specific category (Ohnuki-Tierney 1976:189). The shamanic ritual itself is viewed as marginal because it differs in a number of respects from all other Ainu rituals: it takes place at night and indoors, women can be present or perform as shamans, and the communication is two-way; the spiritual world responds to the questions from the human realm (Ohnuki-Tierney 1976:184). Having to deal with these aspects of the belief system that are somehow incongruous to the whole, the shaman is himself often perceived as a marginal or potentially sinister figure.

Within the conceptual framework or model of the universe predicated by his culture, the shaman makes that model a reality by ritually manipulating the supernatural forces which are perceived as the cause of evil and suffering. The Kelantanese of Malaysia perceive the cosmos and the person as a microcosm of the universe, as the balai or model palace (Kessler 1977:321). In this metaphor of the state, the shaman, or bomoh, functions as an intermediary between disease-causing spiritual forces and the individual in the supernatural realm in the same way political bureaucrats mediate between the sultan and his subjects in the political realm (Kessler 1977:322). The Peruvian curandero's ritual table or mesa, filled with ritual objects symbolizing the good and evil forces of the universe is a "...veritable microcosmos duplicating the forces at work in the universe" (Sharon 1967:372). In the Peruvian view, the good and evil forces are not seen as irreconcilable; it is
their interaction which creates and maintains life (Sharon 1976:373). By successfully balancing these opposing forces within the individual, the curandero is believed able to cure his patients (Sharon 1976:373). As punishment for moral transgressions, Takanakapsaluk, goddess of fate for the Eskimo, brings sickness, steals human souls, hides animals at the bottom of the sea, or sends storms that prevent hunting (Rasmussen 1965:388). In order that his people may survive, the shaman must make a dangerous ritual journey to the bottom of the sea to placate the goddess and determine the cause for her anger (Rasmussen 1965:388). The fact that the shaman is believed to be able to contact the supernatural testifies to its existence and the reality of the culture's world view; the shaman converts the intangible supernatural world into one which becomes tangible for his community by hearing the conversations he has with its beings or listening to him describe it during his soul journey.

The preceding cultural or symbolic analysis of the shamanic complex has touched upon all of the points contained in Geertz's definition of religion. Religion is (1) "a set of symbols, which acts to..." The shamanic conception or model of the universe is one in which supernatural forces impinge upon man and his world. The symbolic elements associated with the shaman in his initiatory sickness, public initiation, costume, and ritual paraphernalia serve as a vehicle for the conception that the shaman is able to contact the supernatural forces and control them to some degree.

In its aspect as a model of reality, the shamanic conception provides an explanation for those occurrences which are not immediately apparent by attributing them to the supernatural. In its aspect as a
model for reality, the shamanic conception cautions man to behave in such a way so as not to anger the supernatural beings, thereby avoiding their wrath. (2) "...establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by..." Always aware that an attack by some supernatural creature is possible, man in a shamanic culture is fearful and thus motivated to act in the culturally prescribed way. (3) "...formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and..." The shamanic myth not only accounts for the origin of suffering and misfortune by positing the existence of evil spirits but tells how the "first shaman" was created to deal with these supernatural creatures. Evil and misfortune are sufferable not only because they are predicated in the myths but also because man has been given a means of dealing with them in the person of the shaman. (4) "...clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that..." During the ritual or seance, the shaman travels to and/or talks with the supernatural beings. For the believing members of his audience, these conversations and/or travels are a validation that the supernatural beings exist and therefore a proof that the conception of the cosmos is an accurate one. (5) "...the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" Having witnessed a successful shamanic cure or having been provided with a satisfactory supernatural explanation to a puzzling question, the members of a shamanic society return to the common-sense world convinced that the supernatural is not relegated only to the world of myths and legends but is a part of the human world. Convinced of this belief, the society is ever wary of supernatural attacks, hopeful that the shaman can deal with these attacks when they materialize, and motivated to do whatever is necessary to appease and placate the potentially harmful supernatural beings.
CHAPTER III

NEPALI SHAMANISM

Description of Nepali Shamanism

The shamanism of Nepal reflects the diverse number of ethnic or tribal groups inhabiting the southern slopes of the Himalayan range. The shamanic complex - calling to the profession, initiation, nature of the supernatural beings, possession and/or trance, and the services performed by the shaman - differs, often radically, from one tribe to another. The process of Sanskriticization from India to the south and the influence of Buddhism from Tibet in the north have influenced the shamanic complex of many of Nepal's cultural entities. Despite the influence of Hinduism and Buddhism, however, the shaman remains an important religious practitioner in many of Nepal's societies.

The Nepali shamans, the jhakris, share numerous characteristics with shamans from other areas. Although Nepali jhakris do not conform to all of the characteristics of the classical shamanic complex as described by Eliade (1964), many elements of classical shamanism are implicit, if not explicit, in Nepal's shamanic traditions. Most of the tribes, for instance, have myths which describe the creation of the first shaman (Hofer 1974a:173; Macdonald 1976:319; Sagant 1976:79; R. Jones 1976:32; and Hitchcock 1976:181); others, like the Raji, have no myths but legends tell of exceptionally powerful shamans of earlier times (Reinhard 1976a:268). As with classical shamans, most jhakris of Nepal experience an

Although the themes and symbols of shamanic ascent and descent to the supernatural worlds are present in the traditions of most Nepali groups, the nature and conditions of the contact between the shamans and the supernatural differs widely. Only the Limbus (R. Jones 1976:36) and some Nepali groups living in India and Sikkim (Macdonald 1976:324) believe that the shaman's soul undertakes an ecstatic journey to the supernatural realms. Most Nepali shamans contact the supernatural through possession, but neither the Sherpa (Paul 1976:145), Gurung (Messereschmidt 1976:201), nor Thulung Rai shamans (Allen 1976:134) become possessed. Even the latter two groups, however, contain the vestiges of shamanic flight as seen in the recitation of supernatural journeys, use of the drum, and symbolism pointing to flight (Messereschmidt 1976:213; Allen 1974:7). Similar ritual paraphernalia or symbolic elements - cosmic tree, ladder or pole of ascent, the drum or dhynagro, bird costume, and headdress of feathers - are associated with the shamanism of most other
Nepali groups (Hitchcock 1976:174-75; R. Jones 1976:34-6; Fournier 1976:108; Sagant 1976:88-90; Hofer 1974a:170-71). These features of the shamanic complex suggest that soul journey was at one time an important aspect of most, if not all, of Nepali shamanism.

As elsewhere, the shamans of Nepal serve their community by attempting to deal with the supernatural forces which are believed to cause illness and misfortune. Throughout Nepal, misfortune is attributed to malevolent spirits or angry deities (R. Jones 1976:7). Given the rigorous life of Nepalis and the woeful lack of adequate medical facilities, it is not surprising that the shaman is called upon most often to cure diseases. While the shamans of the different Nepali groups perform a variety of seances for different purposes, they all perform as healers.

In some Nepali groups, divination to determine the cause of an ailment is performed prior to and separately from the actual curing seance. The Chantel jhakri performs a separate seance for his client to determine the cause of his difficulties which is usually an angry deity that demands a small offering (Michl 1976:159). The divinatory or diagnostic phase of the Sherpa shaman's seance is the most important and the only part that is done in trance; offerings to appease the unhappy deities can be made by any lay person (Paul 1976:146). The shaman invites the god to the latter's dwelling place, offers him food, and then questions him concerning his anger and what he requires to withdraw the sickness that the shaman's client is afflicted with (Paul 1976:144). The Raji employ a number of different means to divine which supernatural being is believed responsible for an illness. Feeling of the pulse and "reading" rice grains is one of the simpler methods (Reinhard 1976a:273). If this fails,
or if the illness is particularly serious, the shaman or *gurau* will become possessed by a deity; divination by possession is thought to be the most efficacious (Reinhard 1976a:273). The deity enters the *gurau* through the head or right hand, explains the cause of the illness and what should be done to rectify the situation, but rarely explains why the illness was caused in the first place (Reinhard 1976a:274).

A fairly common cause of illness in Nepal is believed to be caused by witches which the shaman is called upon to exorcise. The Raji, for instance, believe that witches get their victim to eat something upon which they have cast a spell; upon entering the stomach, the object is supposedly transformed into a snake, turtle, or frog which causes the pain (Reinhard 1976a:281). To rid his client of the witch's work, the *gurau* whisks away the evil from the patient onto objects of offering with seven sticks from a broom (Reinhard 1976a:277). The offerings which now contain the witch's evil are taken to a crossroads and buried (Reinhard 1976a:279). The Sunuwar (Fournier 1976:115) and Rai (Allen 1976:134) employ a similar means of trapping and disposing of witches at a crossroad in the jungle. Limbus believe that witches can kill people, capture and remove their souls, or inject a disease-causing object into the body (R. Jones 1976:45). Through ritual, the Limbu *yeba* shaman can recover souls and render the work of the witches harmless, but they cannot "kill" the witches (R. Jones 1976:45). The belief in witches and the evil they can cause is so strong among the Bhujel that a special rite for protection against them is done at almost every seance in addition to the principal reason for the seance (Hitchcock 1976:180). The Bhujel belief in witches stems in part from the myth which relates how the first shaman,
Rama, killed eight of nine witch sisters; the jhakri sings this myth which legitimizes his power over witches (Hitchcock 1976:181). As with the Raji, Sunuwar, and Rai, the Bhujel jhakri transfers the evil caused by a witch into an object which is buried at a crossroads; in addition, seven V-shaped marks are made between the buried offerings and the client's house to protect it from any further incursions from witches (Hitchcock 1976:188).

Another potential source of evil with which the shaman must deal is that of the souls of those who died an unnatural death. The Limbu believe that several evil spirits, sogha, sugut, and susik, appear as a result of a stillbirth, a woman dying during childbirth, or an accidental death (R. Jones 1976:42). The manba shaman goes into trance, seeks out the evil spirit, and then places it in a whole which is set on fire (R. Jones 1976:42). The Chantel also believe that the souls of those who died a violent death return to plague others (Michl 1976:160). The shaman will contact various deities until the soul is located and lured into a bottle of milk half buried at a crossroads; when the soul enters the milk the bottle is smashed which "kills" the soul (Michl 1976:161). The Bhujel believe that the soul of a dead infant will return to haunt its house and family and must therefore be killed (Hitchcock 1976:189). An elaborate ritual is performed where the jhakri beckons the child's soul and describes in song the landmarks the soul passes enroute to his parents' house. The soul is lured into a gourd, and as with other tribes' rituals, the gourd is smashed and then buried (Hitchcock 1976:191).

The shamans of at least two ethnic groups in Nepal function as psychopomps. The Rai believe that souls of the dead go to beddu pabdu,
"the place of the grandfathers and fathers" (Allen 1974:7). Although not in a trance, the jhakri in feathered headdress describes the route the soul takes on its journey to beddu pabdu which is said to be in heaven (Allen 1974:7). The pai, or Gurung ritual for transporting the soul to lanas, abode of the gods, is the most important religious ritual of the Gurung (Messereschmidt 1976:208). Both types of Gurung shaman, the pajyu and the khepre, are involved. At death, the soul is believed to be captured by demons of the underworld; the first part of the pai is called mosi teb where the pajyu attempts to drive off the demon that has captured the soul (Messereschmidt 1976:207). Once the soul is present and the demon driven off, the khepre talks to the soul, instructing him on how to proceed to lanas (Messereschmidt 1976:210). The last portion of the rite consists of smashing the pla, or effigy of the dead person, to insure that he never returns from lanas in the form of a malevolent spirit (Messereschmidt 1976:210).

In addition to the shamanic functions mentioned above, Nepali shamans perform a number of other services. There are five different kinds of Limbu shaman who specialize in certain rites, but all of them can and do function as priests, performing at weddings, funerals, wakes, harvest rites, and periodic rituals for the welfare of households (R. Jones 1976:31). An important example of a household rite is the nahangma which is supposed to bestow warlike qualities upon the head of the household (Sagant 1976:80). The phedangma shaman journeys to the sky with his client's soul which acquires the warlike qualities from a god (Sagant 1976:80). In addition to other services, the Gurung khepre often acts as an astrologer (Messereschmidt 1976:211). The most typical Bhujel
Jhakri rite is for one who is sick, but the jhakri also attempts to rid the high pastures of raksas, an evil spirit that kills humans and livestock (Hitchcock 1976:177). Sunuwar shamans perform at all major public rites, seasonal rites, domestic rites of birth, death, and name-granting, propitiatory rites such as selection of a dwelling site, as well as curative rites for humans and livestock (Fournier 1976:111).

Psychological Explanation of Nepali Shamanism

The shamanism of Nepal will now be analyzed in terms of the three approaches - psychological, sociological, and cultural. The pattern of illness or temporary madness of the future shaman which is the basis of the psychological approach occurs to some degree in Nepal. For the Limbu, for instance, it is only after a prolonged illness that the call to become a shaman is recognized (Sagant 1976:74). Illness is usually precipitated by a traumatic event in the life of the young person. The Limbu shaman, Muktuba, became sick for three months after helping to carry his father's sister to her burial (Sagant 1976:61). Another Limbu shaman, Dhan Rup, was called to the forest at age 17 by the ban jhakri, the mythological shaman-spirit of the forest; missing for over a week, he was eventually found unconscious in the forest (Sagant 1976:69). Still another way in which Limbus are called to the profession is through uncontrollable possession by a deity (R. Jones 1976:47).

For the Limbu, it is only through violence that one can become a potential shaman or muke:

...their power is linked to violence as a sign of their vocation. This violence is manifested in uncontrollable trances, serious illness, sudden possessions, brutal behavior in the case of
impurity, and loss of consciousness. Multiple and repeated sufferings are the mark of a privileged choice by the spirits (Sagant 1976:66).

Initiatory sickness as a sign of the shamanic profession in other Nepali groups is similar to that of the Limbu. Gobind Prasad, a Rasaili jhakri, fell ill at the age of 13 and experienced a number of dreams (or hallucinations) during his three months of illness which included meeting Mahadeo, the mythical first shaman (Macdonald 1976:312-13). Uncontrollable trembling of the body is interpreted by the Tamang (Hofer 1974a:169), Chantel (Michl 1976:156), and Bhujel (Hitchcock 1976:169) as possession by a deity and a calling to become a shaman. Future Sherpa shamans also become possessed by a deity which results in uncontrollable madness for a period of from two weeks to two years (Paul 1976:145). Sickness with accompanying dreams and visions, possession by a deity, and encounters with deities or spirits in the jungle or forest are the three basic types of initiatory illness found in Nepali shamans.

The psychological approach to the study of shamanism has not been utilized in Nepal. Other than the descriptions of the nature of initiatory illness discussed above, there is no mention of shamans being either psychologically sick or aberrant, or gifted in the research done in Nepal. The only direct comment concerning Nepali shamans and psychopathology is made by Reinhard (1976a:291), and he states that Haji shamans do not exhibit any severe psychological problems. Sickness which is interpreted as a calling to the profession becomes initiatory sickness only after the fact. In other words, illness or possession which is later interpreted as a calling to the profession is initially assumed to be like any other sickness and is so treated by the shamans (Sagant 1976:75). It is only
after traditional diagnostic and curing rites have failed to heal the afflicted person that the illness may be interpreted as a calling to become a shaman. Thus two sick individuals with similar symptoms might receive two different diagnoses; one individual's illness might be due to spirit intrusion while another's is interpreted as a calling to the shamanic role. Neither or both of these individuals may have psychological problems, but it cannot be said that because one individual's symptoms are diagnosed as a calling that he is psychologically aberrant and the other is not. It is the diagnosis of the shaman and the community, thus a cultural interpretation, which determines whether or not an individual has received a calling. Therefore, while some type of initiatory sickness is characteristic of Nepali shamanism, that sickness in no way proves that Nepali shamans are psychologically abnormal. Further research specifically oriented toward determining the psychological characteristics of Nepali shamans is needed before any definite conclusions can be drawn concerning the validity of the psychological approach as it applies to the Nepali situation.

Sociological Approach to Nepali Shamanism

General functions

The jhakri is one among a number of ritual specialists, such as a Brahmin priest, Buddhist lama, dami or spirit medium, that a Nepali community is apt to have. Like the others, the jhakri promotes social integration and community solidarity whenever an audience gathers to watch him perform. The jhakri's ritual performances serve to maintain and reinforce the community's belief in the shamanic conception of world
order and the "moods and motivations" that concept incorporates. The functionalist would see the promotion of social integration, community solidarity, and the reinforcement of the belief system as generally contributing to the survival of the society.

Specific functions

There are a number of specific functions performed by Nepali shamans and their seances. Some shamanic rites, for instance, constitute rites of passage. The Gurung pai, or post-funerary rites, are important social gatherings where relationships are re-cemented and statuses reaffirmed (Messereschmidt 1976:204). The ostensible purpose of the pai is to insure that the spirit of the dead does not return to trouble the living, but the ceremony also marks the final separation of the deceased from the world of the living (Messereschmidt 1976:210). The Bhujel seance that attempts to "kill" the spirit of a ra or dead child, functions in essentially the same manner as the Gurung pai ritual. Although the child may be physically dead, it continues to live on in the hearts of its parents, inhibiting family members from being fully engaged in their usual and required roles because of the constant memory of the lost child (Hitchcock 1976:192). The ra is "killed" by trapping it in a gourd and then smashing the gourd.

The new direction for the parents is taken when they will the death of the ra... Although they do not themselves "kill" the spirit, it seems significant that part of the act is performed by a brother of the mother, one of her closest consanguines. Acting through the two men who smash the gourd, the family achieves a violent severance from the child and makes a voluntary choice of life that no longer is umbilical to death. For them this is what "killing" the ra means (Hitchcock 1976:192-93).
For whatever particular purpose a shamanic seance is held, it provides a kind of entertainment for the community. Sunuwar seances resemble dramas composed of several acts, including scenes that are separated by the entrance or exit of an agent or instrument; the public may be called upon to play walk-on parts in the drama (Fournier 1976:118). "This...is one of the major reasons for the success of the Sunuwar shaman who entertains the hill men at the same time that he cures them" (Fournier 1976:118). Even though some shamans are not highly regarded for their abilities or are known to be drunkards, cheats, or practical jokers, they will always have a clientele who will call on them for the pleasure of listening to their drums, to the recitation of the names of feared deities, and watching them fall into trance (Macdonald 1976:318). "Even if the jhakri were not seriously believed in, they provide, in a world where entertainment is rare, a living spectacle, where the unexpected is not lacking and for which it is worthwhile to spend a few rupees" (Macdonald 1976:318).

The primary social role of Nepali shamans is that of healers. As an initial step in the healing process, many Nepali shamans perform a divination ceremony to determine the nature and cause of the patient's illness (Michl 1976:159; Paul 1976:146; Reinhard 1976a:273). The identification of the cause of an ailment would serve to reduce the patient's anxiety and tension, especially if the shaman is confident that he can effect a cure. Immediately after a ritual cure has been performed, the patient usually feels better, but the symptoms can return fairly quickly (Reinhard 1976a:283). While the shaman may be able to mitigate mild neurotic maladies, it would be a mistake to assume that he can have much.
effect on severe illnesses with a pathogenic origin (Reinhard 1976a:291). The shaman's curing rite probably produces more psychological relief from anxiety and tension for the patient's family than it does for the patient himself since

...it is made to feel...that it is doing all that can be done, by making offerings to the gods and atoning through sacrifice for whatever guilt they may feel as a psychological reaction to the illness of the relative, toward whom they doubtless have harboured some grudge, ill will, or resentment at some level (Paul 1976:146).

This idea that the family gains more psychological relief than the patient does is substantiated by the fact that the patient is often a child, a senile adult, one who is so sick that he is beyond communication, or even a cow, yak, or water buffalo (Paul 1976:146).

The research done in Nepal does not indicate that the shaman functions to uphold public morality or that the shamanic seance provides a setting for cathartic sessions. Lewis' idea of central possession (1971: 147) which serves to uphold public morality is not found in Nepal. Nepali shamans are possessed by spirits, deities, or other supernatural beings, but no example of possession by ancestor spirits was located. Requiring individuals to confess to sins or breaches of taboo as part of a curing seance functions not only to uphold social mores but also provides a relief from tension associated with repressed guilt. No examples of such practices, however, are found in the literature on Nepali shamanism. These important shamanic functions appear not to pertain to any of the Nepali complexes.
Strategies

There is some limited data from Nepal to suggest that the shamanic role is used as a means of advancing one's position within the social structure. One such incidence from Nepal and another from the border area just to the west of Nepal in India conform to Lewis' (1971:32) hypothesis that people who become shamans do so because other means of gaining heightened social status are denied them. The first case is that of a Limbu woman who served as a cook for the anthropologists (S. Jones 1976). The woman's husband had gone to Assam looking for work, leaving his wife and their children in the village with little means of support. After working for the anthropologists for some time, she became possessed by the goddess Yuma Sammang and claimed to be unable to work (S. Jones 1976:26).

Before we came to Limbuan, Kanchi's position in Limbu society was certainly disadvantaged. Our entrance into the scene served to emphasize this deprivation through her assumed servant role, and created additional stress and conflict for her. Her possession provided a situation in which she could improve her status, receive material rewards, and avoid unpleasant work responsibilities (S. Jones 1976:28).

She used her state of possession as an "oblique strategy of attack" against those who held positions of authority over her - the anthropologists in this case (S. Jones 1976:28). The second example from the Indian Himalayas involved an untouchable who used his possession to gain considerable notoriety far beyond his own village (Berreman 1972:381-88). Assumption of the shamanic role not only brought Kalmu fame, but provided him an escape from continual denigration, economic insufficiency, and the difficult, tedious, defiling work that his low status caste position included (Berreman 1972:393). While peripheral possession that
is used as an "oblique strategy of attack" against one's social superiors undoubtedly does occur in Nepal, we have only one example of it from within Nepal's boundary and that one is questionable. The fact that the Limbu woman, Kanchi, became possessed while working for the anthropologists who were studying shamanism renders this an atypical situation; the very presence of the anthropologists may be the reason for the possession of the woman.

The idea that individuals seek out the shamanic role because of the promise of economic gain is not supported by the evidence from Nepal. The Raji gurau appear to receive more compensation for their services than any other shamans of Nepal. In addition to receiving food and drink during the seance, the Raji shaman is entitled to yearly payments from his clients; he receives from 50-95 pounds of grain from the larger households and from 20-50 pounds from tenant farmers (Reinhard 1976a:265). Since all gurau are also agriculturalists, they can usually afford to sell some of the grain they receive as payment for shamanizing (Reinhard 1976a:265). The Sunuwar (Fournier 1976:112), Limbu (R. Jones 1976:47), and Sherpa (Paul 1976:146) shamans all receive food and alcohol during their performances and payment is usually a small amount of cloth or grain. There is one example of a famous Chantel shaman who is able to support himself solely by shamanizing, but he is not wealthy (Michl 1976:155). Any economic gains that might be realized by Nepali shamans appear to be scant reward for the considerable time and effort involved (R. Jones 1976:47; Allen 1976:126; Macdonald 1976:310). With the possible exception of the Raji, the expectation of economic rewards is not a plausible reason why a Nepali would choose to become a shaman.
In conclusion, the sociological approach to the study of shamanism points out the important contributions Nepali shamanism makes to the promotion of social integration and community solidarity which in turn contribute to the continual survival of society. The repetition of various types of rituals, whether they be rites of passage, divination, or curing seances, function to validate and reinforce belief in the religious conception. As an explanatory theory of Nepali shamanism, however, the functional school falls short. Functionalism becomes tautological when it attempts to explain the existence of an institution, like Nepali shamanism, in terms of its contribution to social integration and the survival of society. While shamanism may contribute to social survival, it cannot be said that it was originally established for that particular purpose. The functionalist approach is not exhaustive in its analysis of the shamanic complex and cannot adequately "explain" the existence of this religious phenomenon.

The strategies that suggest an individual seeks out the shamanic role as a means to better his relative social position do not appear to operate to a very great extent in Nepal. In the vast majority of Nepali communities, the jhakri receives relatively little economic compensation for his services. In a caste society like Nepal, where even tribal groups are placed within the caste hierarchy, one would expect that a considerable number of lower-caste individuals would seek the shamanic role as a means of improving their social position and thereby validating Lewis' hypothesis of an "oblique aggressive strategy" by social inferiors against their superiors. With one possible exception, however, the research does not indicate that this is the case in Nepal. Lewis'
formulation is probably more applicable to India where the caste system is stronger, the population culturally more homogeneous, and the belief system more uniform than it is in Nepal. Despite the continuing process of Sanskritization within Nepal, most ethnic groups retain something of their own shamanic traditions. Thus, while a particularly powerful shaman may treat members of different castes and tribes than his own, each caste and tribal group usually has its own shaman to serve that particular group. Therefore, it is unlikely that the assumption of the shamanic role would increase one’s social status across tribal or ethnic boundaries although it could do so within a particular tribal group or caste.

Cultural Approach to Nepali Shamanism

Nepali shamanism will now be analyzed in terms of the symbolic cultural approach. Of the three approaches dealt with in this paper, the cultural or symbolic is the most encompassing and therefore provides the best analysis of Nepali shamanism. After dealing with the shamanic myth, initiation, costume, paraphernalia, ritual, and a comparison of the shaman with the Hindu and Buddhist religious elite, the elements of the shamanic complex will be briefly examined in terms of Geertz's definition of religion.

The basis of Nepali shamanism, like that of shamanism in other parts of the world, resides in the belief that supernatural beings - gods, goddesses, and various types of spirits and witches - can affect the lives of man and this world. The malevolent behavior of these supernatural creatures provides an explanation of illness and misfortune. Most Nepalis
...accepted the idea that disease, misfortune, crop-failure, weather and other unexplainable events had supernatural causes. In order to understand these causes and to rectify unfortunate circumstances, they called on a series of religious practitioners which we in anthropology call shamans (R. Jones 1976:29).

It is the shaman who must attempt to counter the supernatural forces because it is he who possesses the power and ability to make contact with and control these forces.

The Nepali shaman's power and unique ability to contact and control the supernatural realm is spelled out in various myths. The first Limbu shamans, from whom all subsequent shamans inherit their power, were brought into existence by Ningwa Phuma, the creator; this myth, called the mundhum, is recited by shamans as part of the shamanic ritual (Sagant 1976:78). The myth relates how mankind was given the phedangma and bijuwa, two types of Limbu shaman, to deal with sickness and attacks of sogha or the wandering spirits of those who died a violent death (Sagant 1976:79-80). After having 17 children the first parents realize that their union is incestuous and that they must separate. Nine children remain in heaven with Ningwa Phuma while eight descend to Limbu country. Experiencing difficulty on Earth, a messenger is sent to ask the creator for help. Ningwa Phuma returns the messenger to Earth next to a spring from which the first phedangma arises. Sometime later, the messenger is sent back to the creator to ask for help in controlling the sogha. The creator again sends him to the spring and this time the first bijuwa appears who "kills" the sogha. "When Ningwa Phuma created the universe, especially mankind, he unleashed both good and evil, but in the creation of shamans he gave man the powers with which to harness these forces and maintain a balance between them" (R. Jones 1976:33).
The influence of Buddhism is reflected in the shamanic myths of Nepalis living in Sikkim and those of the Tamangs. Most Nepalis in Sikkim agree that the first shaman was Mahadeo (Macdonald 1976:319-20). Mahadeo met a Tibetan lama on Mt. Kailas and it was decided that they would compete to determine who was the most powerful. The final test of power was a race to the sun; Mahadeo was able to reach only half way before it became dark and he could no longer follow the path; the lama, however, was successful in reaching the sun. It was decided that henceforth the lama would perform during the day and Mahadeo only at night. Angered that he had been unable to reach the sun, Mahadeo constructed a drum which would carry him to the sun. After some time, he thought he no longer needed the drum and gave it to an orphan boy who lived alone in the jungle. This boy became the ban jhakri, or forest shaman, and the progenitor of all subsequent jhakri. The Tamang believe their shamans, bombo, to be descendants of Tusur Bon, the First Shaman who was tamed by Padmasambhava, the legendary Buddhist missionary in Tibet (Hofer 1974a: 173). In taming Tusur Bon, Padmasambhava divided ritual tasks between shamans and lamas. Bombos are given the task of curing the sick which was possible because Padmasambhava compelled all evil beings, noccen, to be content with a scape-goat of the sick instead of taking the sick one's soul. "Today, whenever the shaman presents such a scape-goat for his patient, he has to remind the noccen of this obligation" (Hofer 1974a: 173).

The Bhujel jhakri's power over witch evil is derived from Rama, the First Shaman. The myth that spells out these powers is called the song of the Nine Witch Sisters (Hitchcock 1974:153); they lived in the First
The nine sisters were the gift of God to an aging childless couple; the sisters began to practice evil upon growing up. For help, Rama, the First Shaman is called in. Rama invites all the sisters on a journey during which he kills all but the youngest and most beautiful sister. Obviously attracted to her, Rama nevertheless tries to bring himself to kill her when she reminds him that if he does so, he will no longer have a job. "Appreciating the cogency of her argument he refrains and she in turn agrees to stop tormenting any client of his whenever in the future he ritually offers her the proper food..." (Hitchcock 1974:153).

Whenever the Bhujel jhakri attempts to cure a patient of witch evil, he sings the Nine Witch Sisters song which serves "...to validate and explain the shaman's power to control it" (Hitchcock 1976:181). In their different ways, each of the myths discussed above explains how the shaman came into being and the nature of his powers which are used to contact supernatural powers, believed to be the cause of illness and misfortune.

As was pointed out earlier, the contact between the shaman and the supernatural in Nepali shamanism is usually interpreted as the shaman becoming possessed by a deity or spirit. This represents a modification of Eliade's classical shamanic complex whose essential feature was the flight of the shaman's soul or spirit to the realm of the supernatural (Eliade 1964:506). The ability of the classical shaman's spirit to travel to the supernatural realm was symbolized by the shaman climbing the world tree in the form of a pole, ladder, or rope during the initiation (Eliade 1958:94). Since the spiritual flight of the shaman is not found in most Nepali tribes, this ritual initiatory climb has disappeared from...
all Nepali shamanic traditions except the Limbu bijuwa (Sagant 1976:97) and the Bhujel jhakri (Hitchcock 1976:175). The vestiges of this rite, however, are reflected in the initiation of several other Nepali groups which will be dealt with presently.

The bijuwa and Bhujel jhakri must symbolically travel to the supernatural world during their initiation. An elaborate bamboo altar is constructed for the bijuwa's initiation (Sagant 1976:97). A ladder of eight rungs leads to the top of the altar which is a solid platform. When the bijuwa climbs the ladder and reaches the top it is said that he has arrived at the village of yepone thungema pangbe, his "master-spirits" (Sagant 1976:97). The final initiatory step to becoming a full-fledged Bhujel shaman is the pole-climbing rite. It is interesting to note that not all of Hitchcock's (1976:175) informants believed this was a necessity, but the three most highly respected jhakri confirmed that it was essential. The lack of consensus on this point undoubtedly stems from the fact that Bhujel shamanism is characterized by possession of the shaman rather than spiritual shamanic flight (Hitchcock 1976:186). While the initiatory physical climbing of a pole or other "bridge" to the supernatural realm has been abandoned by other Nepal groups whose shamans become possessed, the Bhujel retains this element which suggests an earlier belief in shamanic flight.

Since most Nepali shamans are believed to contact the supernatural by possession, possession and demonstration of divinatory power is an important feature of the initiation. This appears to be the most important part of the initiation even for the Bhujel initiate. Having climbed to the top of the pole, he is asked several questions by his guru which
he could only answer by divining the future (Hitchcock 1976:175). The most important moment of the initiation of the Limbu Yuma shamaness comes when the guru asks the possessed initiate questions submitted by the spectators (Sagant 1976:96). This is the first time she has been asked to divine the future and her subsequent reputation will largely be based upon her ability to accurately predict the future during the initiation (Sagant 1976:96). The Raji shaman's initiation consists of being possessed, divining the future, and walking through hot coals, the latter reminiscent of the classical shamanic idea of the shaman's mastery over fire (Reinhard 1976a:268).

Vestiges of the ascensional theme and/or reference to shamanic contact with the supernatural are found in the costumes, altars, and ritual paraphernalia of Nepali shamans that do not travel to the other world as well as in those that do. Ornithological references, which symbolize the shaman's flight, are found in the form of feathered headdresses or feathers attached to the costume among the Bhujel (Hitchcock 1976:174), Limbu (R. Jones 1976:34-5), Rai (Allen 1974:7; 1976:130), Gurung (Messeseschmidt 1976:203), and Tamang (Hofer 1974a:171). Additional references to the bird are found among the Gurung. The nami, a small wooden bird, is the principal ritual artifact of the Gurung khepre which he holds at all times during a seance (Messeseschmidt 1976:204). The bird is the repository of the khepre's mystical power over the supernatural. Each time the khepre completes a funeral or post-funerary ritual, he attaches a small piece of cloth, which resembles a feather, to the bird; his experience is expressed by the number of tassels attached to the nami (Messeseschmidt 1976:204). The funeral rites for the khepre differ from
a layman's with the inclusion of a final ceremony at the end (Messereschmidt 1976:210). A small wild bird is kept caged during the rite. Above his cage is erected a tall bamboo pole which is symbolic of a ladder into the sky upon which the spirit of the dead khepre ascends (Messereschmidt 1976:210). It is hoped that when released the bird will ascend the bamboo pole a branch at a time before flying off as this signals "...not only the successful and unimpeded journey of the guru's spirit to the afterlife in lamas, but also that the guru has successfully bequested his mystical power and efficacy as a shaman to his immediate successor..." (Messereschmidt 1976:210).

The drums and altars are additional ritual objects which point to the shaman's ability to contact the supernatural. As was pointed out earlier, the drum represents the ability of the shaman to fly to the supernatural world or summon the supernatural beings to him. Almost every Nepali tribe discussed so far includes the drum or dhyagro as part of its shamanic complex (Hofer 1974a:170; Allen 1974:146; Reinhard 1976a:270; Fournier 1976:108; Messereschmidt 1976:213; Hitchcock 1976:174; Jones 1976:35; Allen 1976:129). For both the Tamang (Hofer 1974a:171) and the Limbu (R. Jones 1976:35), the shaman's altar includes a symbolic ladder which is a materialization and a bridge to the other world. The Rai incorporate a series of cotton threads on the shaman's altar which symbolizes the road to heaven (Allen 1976:134).

Having to deal with supernatural forces, the Nepali shaman often is perceived ambiguously or even as potentially dangerous. Although the Raji believe that the benefits of having a shaman far outweigh the potential danger, they always treat him circumspectly and try to avoid any conflict.
with him; his knowledge of evil spirits can be used for evil as well as good (Reinhard 1976a:267). Before the Limbu shaman is initiated, he is thought to be very dangerous because he is at once associated with evil spirits but has not yet learned how to control them (Sagant 1976:72).

The ambiguity with which the shaman is often perceived can go beyond a mere association with evil and symbolize underlying conflicts inherent in a particular culture. We must return to the myth of the Nine Witch Sisters and Rama, the First Shaman, to illustrate the point. This particular myth is subscribed to by a number of different groups in the Dhalagiri region of north-central Nepal. One such group is the Magar tribe which practices generalized exchange among localized patrilineages—any patrilineage is either a wife-give or a wife-receiver in relation to other patrilineages (Hitchcock 1974:151). Both the wife-givers and a new bride are in an anomalous position as perceived by the wife-receivers and the groom. Wife-givers are good because without them marriage would be impossible, but they have the upper hand in marriage negotiations because they can withhold the potential wife or fight to be sure that her rights and desires are catered to (Hitchcock 1974:152). Before the first child is born, the wife herself is a potential trouble-maker. She often returns to her natal home for extensive visits and can easily attain a divorce during this first stage of marriage (Hitchcock 1974:154). The ambiguous position of the wife is symbolized in the Nine Witch Sisters song by Jammu, Rama’s faithful wife to whom he returns, and the ninth witch who he banished to a crossroads but did not kill (Hitchcock 1974:154). Although Rama returned to his wife at the end of the story, this is not the final meaning of the myth.
For Rama has allied himself with the Witch as well as with Jammu. Rama, flanked by two kinds of women, divided in loyalty, symbolizes, though in male guise, the opposition of two lineages allied in marriage, and the anomalous position of wives. He represents the persistent social context in which are nourished the husband's fears (Hitchcock 1974:154).

The story also reflects the ambiguity of the shaman's status in the pact he makes with the witch. The shaman's power against evil comes both from his knowledge of it and his implication in it. "At this level, Rama, as presented in the song, represents the community's attitude toward the shaman, and the reasons for it" (Hitchcock 1974:154).

The Nine Witch Sisters song is instructive on yet another aspect of Magar culture. Rama does not kill the ninth witch not only because he would no longer have a job, but also because he is sexually attracted to the young beauty (Hitchcock 1974:155). Here is a universal and conflicting feeling about women. Is the witch a potential wife or a lineage sister? If she is unmarriageable, Rama's banishing of her represents his allegiance to the rule of exogamy (Hitchcock 1974:155). The evil he feared she would cause if he allowed her to live in the village "...is a description of the socially disruptive effects of incest; and it mirrors also the attraction that must be repressed if incestuous desires are to be overcome" (Hitchcock 1974:155). If the witch is marriageable, however, Rama's desire and abhorrence of her reflect the apparently universal human ambivalence toward women derived from the child's earliest associations with the mother - as benevolent and nutritive when present and destructive when absent (Hitchcock 1974:155).

The song is impressive from the metaphysical point of view, serving as a model of the Magar world view. The myth maintains awareness of opposites and the continual tension between them; it is a symbol of
ambiguity inherent in relations between mother and child, male and female, maritally aligned kinsmen, and good and evil.

Evil is everpresent and in his nightlong seances Rama, Champion of the Good, provides only a series of temporary stays against the Witch. He prevails, but just barely and only briefly, and he prevails at the cost of an alliance with evil, possibly even at the cost of "knowing" the Witch, with the dual implication carried by the word (Hitchcock 1974:155). The song of the Nine Witch Sisters is also the central myth of the Nauthar, a group of Matwala Chetri of Nepal. The ambiguities inherent in the localized patrilineages, in women, and in the shamans of Magar society which are reflected in the myth apply with equal force to the Nauthar (Hitchcock 1978:3). There is an additional ambiguous facet of Nauthar life, however, which is dealt with in the Nine Witch Sister myth - the salt-route journey. Before the Chinese occupation of Tibet, the Nauthar made an annual October journey to the Tibetan border to trade ghee and potatoes for Tibetan salt (Hitchcock 1978:3). The first two days of the journey were through populated areas, but the last four days were through uninhabited, desolate, mountainous terrain with no trees for firewood, no rock shelters, and little water. If caught by an early October blizzard in the latter stages of the journey, the traders would probably not have survived (Hitchcock 1978:3). The journey was also perceived as dangerous from a cultural viewpoint by the Hindu Nauthars as the people they traded with were different from themselves linguistically, religiously, and in other ways; most importantly, the Buddhist lamas of the region were thought to be powerful and potentially malevolent wizards (Hitchcock 1978:4). The journey, then, was dangerous and life-threatening, but at the same time, a source of life as salt was regarded as an absolute necessity (Hitchcock 1978:4).
The salt-route of the Nauthar is the same journey that Rama takes with the nine witch sisters when he kills eight of them. The actual hazardous potentiality of the latter part of the journey, both meteorologically and culturally, is an appropriate setting for the witches as it is for Rama: "As a whole the long wilderness portion of the route between villages is an appropriate setting for the First Shaman in his guise as the frenzied dancer who wears the skins of wild animals and the feathers of wild birds" (Hitchcock 1978:5). On the other hand, the journey's life-supporting potential is reflected in the myth when features of it appear that mitigate its hazards and are associated with Rama in his benevolent aspect (Hitchcock 1978:5). In the first segment of the route, Rama creates caves, rock shelters, springs, and guiding landmarks; these are still life-supporting, especially the caves and rock shelters as havens during potentially lethal snowstorms (Hitchcock 1978:6).

Thus what appears to the Nauthars when their shaman sings of some 30 to 40 landmarks along the salt-route, and recounts how some of these places figure in the journey of the First Shaman and his nine witch companions, is a mythic symbolization of what they have experienced. Bi-potentially, the route may either provide shelter, water, and even food, or it may provide none of these, depending on where one happens to be during the long traverse. Or, looked at more broadly, the journey can be life-supporting because it provides salt, or can be life-destructive, if a blizzard should strike (Hitchcock 1978:6).

As was the case with the Magars, this myth which tells of the destruction of the eight witches and partial control over the ninth, is a symbolic expression of the Nauthar world view. "It says that the evils and dangers of the world, though ever present, at least have been reduced, so that the odds are weighted, if only slightly, in favor of life" (Hitchcock 1978:6).
Given the potential danger which the shaman is perceived to embody, why do Nepalis continue to follow him and retain his institutionalized role? This question becomes all the more interesting when we realize that most Nepali tribes call themselves Hindu, a tradition that does not formally incorporate the shaman as a religious practitioner. The answer to the question lies firstly, and perhaps most importantly, in the world view of these tribes which is symbolically reflected in the person of the shaman: the physical, cultural, and supernatural entities of the world, like the shaman, possess the potential of both good and evil. This is most readily seen in the song of Rama and the Nine Witch Sisters. Despite the shaman's potential for evil, or perhaps because of it, he is thought to be able to control the forces that would otherwise make life impossible. Or, in the words of a Raji informant, "if there were no gurau, we would all be dead" (Reinhard 1976:263).

To find the second part of the answer to our question, it is necessary to examine the role of the Hindu religious elite and compare it to the role of the shaman on the one hand and that of the Tibetan Buddhist religious elite on the other. The emphasis in Hinduism is on the maintenance of the supernatural order and on karma and the transmigration of the soul. Hindu Brahmin priests, then, deal primarily with death by seeking to insure that people achieve a favorable afterlife and rebirth (Berreman 1964:55). Shamans, on the other hand, are concerned with health and this life; "their immediate responsibility is the immediate and worldly welfare of their clients" (Berreman 1964:56). While the individual Nepali may believe in karma and reincarnation, those concerns are far removed from day to day living; concern with the next life might occupy
the thoughts of the very old and sick, but it is with immediate prob-
lems that most Nepalis are concerned and it is to shamans rather than Brahmin priests that they turn for help.

Further evidence for people's need for assistance with their every-
day problems, as opposed to those concerned with the next life, is sug-
gested by the emergence of ancestor spirit possession of the Indian lay population in defiance of the Hindu religious elite. In non-tribal India, possession, especially by spirits of the dead, is found among the laity and not religious specialists like the shaman or priest (Hofer 1974b:164). The spread of possession among the lay population may be due to the nature of the Hindu religious elite. With the emergence of the religious elite, the distance between humans and the supernatural was reduced by the development of (a) figural and verbal representations of gods in sculpture, painting, and literature; (b) mysticism; and (c) the concept of incarnation whereby gods may temporarily become human (Hofer 1974b:162). However, all of these distance-reducing techniques were developed by the elite and remained its exclusive privilege; the distance between the elite and the laity, on the other hand, increased (Hofer 1974b:162). Possession of the laity may have been in defiance of, an alternative to, the distance-reducing techniques of meditation and asceticism as practiced by the religious elite (Hofer 1974b:163).

It may also have been in defiance of the elite because, firstly,

...the intellectualism and other-worldliness of the elite could not satisfy all the religious needs of the laity and/or because, secondly, a specific concept of status debarls parts of this elite from serving as priests among certain groups of the popu-
lation or on certain occasions during the life-cycle from which impurity accrues (Hofer 1974b:163).
If this hypothesis concerning possession in India is correct, the retention of the shamanic tradition in Nepal, despite the spread of Hinduism, should come as no surprise. Not only is shamanism indigenous to Nepal, but the other-worldly philosophical principles of Hinduism and its concern with the next life do not meet the religious needs of the Nepalis, or it appears, those of some Indians.

The difference between the religious elite in India, on the one hand, and the Buddhist elite in Tibet and the Nepali groups that practice Tibetan Buddhism, on the other, has important implications for the study of shamanism. The Tibetan lama, like the Brahmin priest, is concerned with esoteric philosophical doctrines and seeing to it that the laity achieve a suitable rebirth, but his involvement with the community does not end there. The Tibetan lama is unique to all of Buddhism in that he is not just a reclusive monk, but is also a priest who deals with the everyday needs of his people (Waddell 1959:153). It is not simply that the lama has taken on many of the functions that shamans perform in other cultures; the Tibetan lama is a syncretic amalgamation of the traditional Buddhist monk and the Bon-po shaman of ancient Tibet. When Padmasambhava converted the Tibetans to Buddhism, it was necessary to incorporate a number of the pre-existing elements of Bon into Buddhism in order that the new religion would be accepted (MacDonald 1929:66). In his study of Tibetan Buddhism, Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956) details many of the vestiges of the ancient Bon beliefs and practices, including Bon shamanic practices and themes, as they appear in Tibetan Buddhism.

The incorporation of shamanic elements in the religious practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism accounts for the lack of shamans in post-Bon Tibet
and the tenuous position of the shaman in the Buddhist culture of the Sherpas of Nepal. Possession and flight are characteristics of the Tibetan tulku and vajramaster which they share with the shaman. The tulku is believed to be the incarnation in human form of a divine being; at birth, the divinity possesses the tulku but not so completely as to overcome the personality or mind of the individual (Aziz 1976:347). Rejecting Buddhahood in order to help others achieve that goal, returning to the world in the form of a series of reincarnations, the tulku, like the shaman, experiences his own death many times over (Aziz 1976:347). In addition to this life-long possession, the tulku may experience a second and concomitant possession when he goes into trance during divination rituals (Aziz 1976:355) or when he attempts to exorcise a malevolent spirit who has possessed another individual (Aziz 1976:356). The vajramaster, the ritual specialist of Mahakala, a demoniac Tibetan deity, is also believed to be the reincarnation of previous majramasters (Stablien 1976:367). During the Mahakala ritual, the vajramaster does not become possessed in exactly the same manner as a shaman; rather Mahakala enters his body so that he and the divinity are thought of as one (Stablien 1976:368). The devotees of a vajramaster believe that he can fly; a number of vajramasters who were asked about this ability denied that they themselves were capable of flight but believed that vajramasters of the past did fly and that some still living today may yet retain that ability (Stablien 1976:368). The Mahakalatantra, the scriptural text of the Mahakala ritual, contains scores of formulas which will take the vajramaster on a flight to the heavens or a descent to the underworld (Stablien 1976:371).
The tulku and the vajramaster, again like the shaman, but unlike Hindu priests, serve as healers. In addition to learning the textual treatises on healing, the tulku must learn to develop the magical powers with which he is imbued by virtue of being a tulku (Aziz 1976:354). It is the tulku's success as a curer which generates the interest and following he enjoys (Aziz 1976:354). Tulkus are not relegated solely to the concerns of philosophy and securing a favorable rebirth for their followers; rather, "...it appears that it is here in these curative and divinatory exercises that their main occupation and power is exhibited" and a major portion of their time spent (Aziz 1976:356). The vajramaster effects his curing function by the production of ambrosia in what is called an inner, arcane, or vajrabody; the ambrosia is then introduced into the ritual circle from where its healing powers are projected onto the community and the world (Stablien 1976:364). The arcane body is probably derived from the idea that shamans could store up medicine within their bodies for later use; "the vajrabody is an evolutionary extension of this earlier inner storehouse for inner medicine" (Stablien 1976:369). The vajramaster's community is believed to be dependent upon the dissemination of the ambrosia for health and prosperity; "in every ceremony presided over by the vajramaster, his role as healer, creator of prosperity and nullifier of unseen malicious forces is apparent" (Stablien 1976:369). Although neither the tulku nor the vajramaster is a shaman, their amalgamation of shamanic traits with Buddhism may allow us to characterize them as para-shamans (Aziz 1976:358) or neo-shamans (Stablien 1976:371). The shamans of Tibet disappeared after the introduction of Buddhism not because the beliefs and needs of the people were suddenly
altered with the coming of a new religion, but because the belief system and services entailed in the shamanic complex became an integral part of the Buddhist religious elite.

Although shamanism exists in the Sherpa culture where Tibetan Buddhism is the dominant religion, it is slowly dying out. The long struggle that took place in Tibet between the Bon-pos and the Buddhists over the acceptance of Buddhism did not effect the Sherpas; organized Tibetan Buddhism was introduced to the Sherpas long after the conflict between the Bon-pos and the Buddhist adherents in Tibet (Furer-Haimendorf 1955:52). Consequently, Sherpa shamanism and Tibetan Buddhism remained separate. The identical shamanic elements evident in the Buddhist religious elite of Tibet are found in the lamas, tulku, and vajramasters of the Sherpas. The Sherpa shaman, then, is in direct competition with his Buddhist counterparts. "Everything that a shaman does in Sherpa culture can be accomplished by some other means - there is no situation which requires a shaman and nothing else" (Paul 1976:147). The Sherpas view their shamans with a somewhat critical eye as they are always compared to the lamas (Paul 1976:147). The lama receives his power, ngak, through long years of training and subscribes to a strict moral code of ethics. The shaman, however, lives as a layman and receives no formal training and yet is presumptuous enough to attempt to control powerful gods and other supernatural beings (Paul 1976:147). The relative unimportance and wasting away of Sherpa shamanism is indicated by the fact that little of the original traditions have been retained; most of Sherpa shamanic elements have been borrowed from other Nepali groups (Paul 1976:141). The rapid decline of the shaman in Sherpa society and his disappearance in
Tibet is not, then, the reflection of a total alteration of the conception of the universe or the religious beliefs of these Buddhists. The Tibetan Buddhist religious elite, like the shaman, is believed to be a master over potentially malicious supernatural forces which are perceived as the cause of illness and misfortune. The Buddhist elite concerns itself not only with the doctrines of Buddhism and the securing of a favorable afterlife for those it serves, but, unlike the Hindu elite, also with the supernatural forces which affect everyday life.

Returning again to Nepal, we see that the shamanic seance, like similar seances elsewhere and like all religious ritual for that matter, is an acting out, an affirmation, an experiencing of religious beliefs. After the Sunuwar shaman's spirit returns from its journey to the supernatural world of the deities and souls of the dead, the shaman answers questions put to him by the spectators about gods he encountered and the dead relatives he saw (Fournier 1976:116). His trance and the answers he gives to the questions confirm for the Sunuwar that indeed he did visit the supernatural world and that it and the souls of the dead do in fact exist. When he requests members of the audience to play walk-on parts during the seance, which resembles a drama (Fournier 1976:118), the experiencing of the supernatural world by the Sunuwar approaches the degree of involvement in that world that the Balinese experience during their Rangda-Barong ritual. The same validation of the supernatural realm takes place for the Gurung when the khepre recites the geographical place-names, both supernatural and real, that the spirit passes on its return journey to the village (Messereschmidt 1976:208); or, when the khepre is seen engaged in a violent struggle with a malevolent deity in order
to recapture a stolen spirit from it (Messereschmidt 1976:209). The Sherpa shaman's recitation of both sides of the exchange between himself and the deity he confronts is proof to the audience that the deity and the realm from which he comes is as real as the material, human world that the Sherpas inhabit (Paul 1976:146).

The shaman's explanation for the cause of an illness and his successful curing of that illness represent another form of proof to his believing community that he has mastered the spirits and that they do exist. No matter that the shaman is occasionally unsuccessful in effecting his cures. For the Limbu, this eventuality is simply the "will of God" (R. Jones 1976:40). If the Raji shaman is unable to cure a patient, a process of secondary elaboration takes place where other beliefs are used to explain the failure so that there is no challenge to the basic assumptions of the belief system; "thus, rather than conclude from failures that the shaman might be faking and/or that the supernatural beings might not exist, the Raji find reasons for failures that serve in effect to uphold the belief system" (Reinhard 1976a:283). Not only does the shaman provide a verification of the supernatural world for his believing audience but by successfully manipulating the entities of that world he also provides a model of the world for his community to pattern their lives after.

An analysis of the Nine Witch Sister song and the shaman who sings it is an excellent example of a particular Nepali shamanic religious conception. In Geertz's definition of religion, the song is a set of symbols which not only reflects the Magar and Nauthar conception of the universe but serves as a model for the ordering of the social and psychological world. Those material and cultural elements which are considered
necessary for life - lineages, women, the shaman, and salt trade - are symbolized in the mythical song. As this pervasive set of symbols reflects the ambiguous nature of life and its necessities, it established a particular set of moods and motivations in those Nepalis who listen to the shaman sing it. It is the mythical song of the Nine Witch Sisters which formulates the general order of existence by telling of the creation of evil and the first shaman to control it. The evil, suffering, and absurdities of the world are symbolized in the ninth witch who the first shaman lets live. Despite the presence of evil, this conception of the world becomes a thing to celebrate because Rama and all subsequent shamans possess the power to control the evil and thus give man reason for hope. The Nepalis who listen to the Nine Witch Sister song recitation during a shaman's seance have no doubt that the world order it describes is veridical. Rama's dangerous flirtation with evil during his journey is the same encounter with potential evil that the Nepalis experience when they travel the same route as Rama in order to obtain salt; it is also the same encounter with potential evil they experience in marital and lineage relationships. Thus, the song is not only a tale of what happened in the first age of existence, but a description of what the Nepali himself experiences, and consequently, the moods and motivations the song establishes in man are indeed realistic.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This paper has presented an analysis of the shamanic traditions as found in Nepal and adjacent areas. Three basic approaches to the study of shamanism—psychological, sociological, and cultural—were discussed generally and then applied to the shamanism of Nepal. Each of the three approaches makes its own type of contribution concerning our knowledge of Nepali shamanism.

The psychological approach focuses on the initiatory sickness of the shaman and suggests that this sickness is psychological in nature. The shamanic role is viewed as one which serves as a social niche in which psychologically aberrant individuals can play out their neurotic or psychotic fantasies without harm to themselves or society. Nepali shamans do experience illness, often of an apparently psychological nature as it may include prophetic dreams, visions and hallucinations. What the Nepalis interpret as a call to assume the shamanic role, is interpreted as evidence of severe mental problems by the adherents of the psychological approach. There is no direct evidence from the research that has been done in Nepal, however, that shamans suffer from any type of psychological disorder. As was pointed out earlier, several investigators concluded from their research that at least some shamans are not only psychologically healthy, but are gifted, highly intelligent individuals. While the psychological approach is basically reductionist and is limited to an analysis of only part of the shamanic concept, its value lies in
pointing to what may be "primitive" explanations and treatment of psychological disorders.

Additional research in at least two related psychological areas could provide valuable new information about Nepali shamanism and shamanism in general. First, a comparison of the results of Rohrschach and other projective psychological tests administered to shamans and non-shamans would give us a clearer picture of the psychological health of Nepali shamans. Second, very little is known about the trance states which many shamans supposedly enter when conducting seances. Research on Zen meditation (Hirai 1974; Kasamatsu and Hirai 1969) and Indian yogic meditation (Anand et al. 1969) indicate that these states represent a different level of consciousness than that of wakefulness, sleep, or hypnosis. Similar measurements of the brain wave activity of entranced shamans could provide important psychological data concerning not only the psychological state of mind of shamans but also the differences between various types of shamanic trances.

If the shamanic trance does represent a different level or altered state of consciousness, the psychological hypothesis of shamanism may have to be re-evaluated in light of this information. Brain wave studies might also reveal a basic difference between the states of consciousness of those shamans who purportedly experience soul flight and those who are said to undergo possession by a supernatural being. If different states of consciousness do, in fact, characterize these two means of alleged contact with the supernatural, it would have important implications for the study of the evolution of the shamanic tradition and for the study of shamanism in general.
The sociological approach, like the psychological, does not provide an exhaustive analysis of shamanism. It is valuable in pointing out many of the ways in which shamanism contributes to promoting social integration, community solidarity, and reinforcement of the religious conception. It also suggests some interesting hypotheses concerning why some individuals may seek to become shamans. The functional analysis of shamanism, however, does not lead to an adequate explanation of the phenomenon.

One way in which the sociological approach to the study of Nepali shamanism might be advanced is by the use of statistical studies. Cross-cultural studies have demonstrated that there is a significant relationship between trance and possession on the one hand, and social structure on the other (Bourguignon 1976, 1968; Bourguignon and Pettay 1964; Bourguignon and Greenbaum 1973). Similar studies applied specifically to Nepali shamanic possession might prove to be interesting and relevant to the sociological hypothesis. It would be particularly interesting, for instance, to know if there were any differences between the generally egalitarian indigenous tribes of Nepal and the highly caste conscious Hindu Nepali groups that emigrated from India in the 17th and 18th centuries vis-a-vis the incidence of shamanism and its relationship to social structure.

The cultural approach to the study of shamanism is a symbolic analysis of the complex. By looking at all of the elements of the complex, it is the most comprehensive of the three approaches dealt with here. It is also essentially an emic analysis of the shamanic complex in that it interprets shamanic symbols in terms of what they represent to those who embrace the shamanic conception of reality.
Further cultural studies of shamanism should focus on a deeper analysis of what a particular shamanic ritual means to those who participate in it. An analysis along this line of research is suggested by Geertz's (1972) interpretation of the Balinese cockfight. For Geertz (1972:29), various incidences of a people's life, like the cockfight in Bali, provide a "text" of a culture which can be "read" in the same way as a book. A correct "reading" of these "texts" leads to insights not only into the psychological and social life of a people, but also into the very minds of the characters who populate those "texts". Such an in-depth "reading" of a shamanic "text" would give us a greater understanding of the temperament, feelings, and emotions of those who believe in this particular religious conception of the world.

Another interesting area for further research along cultural lines is indicated by the above discussion of Tibetan Buddhism. Is the religious elite of Tibetan Buddhism unique in incorporating shamanic elements in a literate religious tradition? Religious beliefs are usually the last element in a culture undergoing change to reflect that change. Could it be that the belief in supernatural beings as the cause of evil is so strong and that the shamanic complex provides such an adequate means of dealing with that belief, that the shaman never really disappears from a culture that at one time regarded him as its only religious specialist? Certainly this is true for the Sanskritized tribes of Nepal and the Buddhist laity of Tibet. An analysis of the religious practitioners of other cultures which were once shamanic but have since embraced another tradition might well provide an affirmative answer to this question.
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