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SELF-IDENTITY AND POLYCULTURAL SPACE OF POSTMODERNITY: NEW FACES OF SHAMANISM

The purpose of the study is to explore neo-shamanism as a cultural, spiritual and psychological phenomenon through the lens of polycultural space of postmodernity. **Methodology of the study.** The authors have used integrative anthropological approach, multidisciplinary analysis, comparative, cultural-historical, and descriptive methods. **The scientific novelty.** Rejecting classical rationality, dualist thinking "either/or", postmodernism returns to the deep traditions of the mythological consciousness associated with nature and full of desire to live in harmony with it. Shamanic magical thinking is a part of human inherent wisdom and is expressed in the act of merging of shaman's personality with the deity or spirits or in fetish worship. Shaman's consciousness is fragmented into parts and his/her "I" exists in any part of the fragmented reality. He/she is self-identical in multiple identities. Within the framework of the postmodern worldview, identity loses its unitarity. The idea of the multiplicity of "I"/stream of consciousness is deeply inherent in the shamanic worldview. The emphasis on miraculous, imaginary, symbolic allows us to talk about the return of irrational. **Conclusions.** For modern individuals, shaman practices represent a way to go beyond the limits of their own Selves, maintain some affiliation with spiritual unity, and avoid emptiness. Neo-shamanism offers the way of personal spiritual renewal through shaman practices, which may be seen as a psychotherapeutic method for mind-body healing.

Keywords: shamanism; neo-shamanism; self-identity; multiple identity; spirituality; postmodern.

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Самоідентифікація та полікультурний простір постмодерну: нові обличчя шаманізму

Мета дослідження. Стаття спрямована на дослідження неошаманізму як культурного, духовного і психологічного феномену в контексті полікультурного простору постмодерну. **Методологія дослідження.** Автори використовували інтегративний антропологічний підхід, мультидисциплінарний аналіз, порівняльний, культурно-історичний та описовий методи. **Наукова новизна.** Відкидаючи класичну раціональність, дуалістичне мислення «або/або», постмодерн повертається до глибинних традицій міфологічної свідомості, пов'язаної з природою і сповненої бажання жити в гармонії з нею. Шаманське магичне мислення є частиною людської мудрості і виражається в акті злиття особистості шамана з божеством або духами чи в поклонінні фетишам. Свідомість шамана фрагментується і його «Я» існує в будь-якій частині фрагментованої реальності. Шаман самоідентичний у множині ідентичностей. У контексті постмодерного світогляду особистість втрачає свою унітарність. Ідея множинності «я»/потіку свідомості притаманна шаманському світогляду. Акцент на чудесне, уявне, символічне дозволяє нам говорити про повернення ірраціонального. **Висновки.** Для сучасного індивіда шаманські практики являють собою спосіб вийти за межі власного «Я», відчувати причетність до певної цілісності, уникнути почуття тотальної самотності. Неошаманізм пропонує спосіб духовного оновлення особистості через шаманську практику, яка є психотерапевтичним методом відновлення цілісної системи тіло-розум.

Ключові слова: шаманізм; неошаманізм; самоідентифікація; множинна ідентичність; духовність; постмодерн.

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Самоідентифікація і полікультурне просторство постмодерну: нові обличчя шаманізму

Цель исследования. В статье предпринята попытка исследования неошаманизма как культурного и психологического феномена в контексте поликультурного пространства постмодерна. **Методология исследования.** Авторы использовали интегративный антропологический подход, мультидисциплинарный анализ, сравнительный, культурно-исторический и описательный методы. **Научная новизна.** Отвергая классическую рациональность, дуалистическое мышление «или/или», постмодерн возвращается к глубинным традициям мифологического сознания, связанного с природой и исполненного желания жить в гармонии с ней. Шаманское магическое мышление является частью человеческой мудрости и

выражается в акте слияния личности шамана с божеством или духами или в поклонении фетишам. Сознание шамана фрагментируется и его «Я» существует в любой части фрагментированной реальности. Шаман самоидентичен во множестве идентичностей. В контексте постмодерного мировоззрения личность теряет свою унитарность. Идея множественности «я»/потока сознания присуща шаманскому мировоззрению. Акцент на чудесное, воображаемое, символическое позволяет нам говорить о возвращении иррационального. **Выводы.** Для современного индивида шаманские практики представляют собой способ выйти за пределы собственного «Я», почувствовать причастность к определенной целостности, избежать чувства полного одиночества. Неошаманизм предлагает способ духовного обновления личности посредством шаманской практики, которая является психотерапевтическим методом восстановления целостной системы тело-ум.

Ключевые слова: шаманизм; неошаманизм; самоидентификация; множественная идентичность; духовность; постмодерн.

Introduction. Paradoxically though it may seem in the 21st century, shamanism increasingly enters our lives. Numerous articles and seminars offer an opportunity to get acquainted with the so-called archaic techniques of ecstasy. Nowadays, they are increasingly explored by religious scholars, philosophers, historians, psychologists, anthropologists, and ethnographers. A great wave of amateur and professional interest arose, in particular, as a result of recent transformations in the Western and Eastern cultures. These changes reflect the growing interest in Oriental cultures, especially their healing and spiritual practices. Some of these practices, such as yoga, have become so popular that literally millions of people in the Western society are involved into them. The study of other communities, religious traditions, meditation, yoga has revealed the striking plasticity of consciousness. Exceptional concentration, calmness, clarity of mind, and increasing perceptions are just some of the states that have been identified.

Despite the fact that shamanism refers to the most ancient forms of religious practices, some of its elements organically exist in the postmodern culture. This is partly due to the fact that postmodernism is syncretic: it combines dissimilar elements, styles, concepts, etc. The postmodern worldview looks like a puzzle and we are players who need to collect puzzle pieces. Through the lens of this chaotic, uncertain worldview, it is necessary to rethink the very concept of human identity to create new constructive projects for the future of both individuals and the world community as a whole [4; 18; 29; 30].

Postmodern thinkers oppose the traditional understanding of the subject as a sovereign being who determines his/her activity and life position consciously, independently, and actively. They deny the existence of substantial, eternal, indivisible "I" in the center of the world introducing the notion of subjectivity: "I" exists only through a constant dialogue with Others as a part of the human universe. Postmodern thinkers are focused on linguistic structures; this entails the decentration of the subject. The subject him/herself becomes changeable, situational, constructed; his/her identity is constituted and reconstituted in relation to the existing social reality.

The rational individual, enclosed in the framework of stable institutions, is replaced by a personality who is much less predictable, hungry for life and change, whose soul takes pagan delight. The era described by Jean-François Lyotard as the end of the great meta-narrative gave rise to a new reality, in which everything is an interpretation: we create our own reality by interpreting the world around us [5]. The awareness of the existence of alternative ways of thinking, world perception and human self-determination changes the very understanding of human identity: human "I" is no longer single and indivisible; on the contrary, it consists of various, often contradictory, parts, and represents itself in different forms.

One of the forms of self-identification in postmodern culture is neo-shamanism, which is seen as a way of self-realization of spiritually oriented city dwellers. It is not that much an ancient religion or magical superstition, but one of the ancient human's attempts to break through to the lost Eden [3].

Literature review. There is no single definition for shamanism. It has been regarded as one of the world's oldest religions as well as one of its newest. The narrowest conceptions of shamanism describe it as a specific form of religious practice in Siberia. On the other hand, the use of the concept of shamanism was extrapolated to a universal set of beliefs about spirits and occult realms [24]. First published in 1951, Mircea Eliade's seminal book "Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy" had a tremendous impact on the development of ideas on shamanism [10]. Claude Lévi-Strauss's "Structural anthropology" was also of great importance, namely explaining shamanic practice as a form of psychotherapy [20]. Carlos Castaneda contributed to the popularity of shamanism amongst Western cultures [1]. Postmodern turn in anthropology has led to a new understanding of shamanism.

Among the various areas of psychological science relevant to the problems of shamanism, experimental study on altered states of consciousness conducted by Stanislav Grof was of particular importance. Analytical psychology of Carl Gustav Jung and transpersonal psychology of Stanislav Grof moved the problem of shaman's psyche to a universal level. Michael Harner, Arnold Mindell, Terence McKenna, Sandra Ingerman, Nevill Druri, leaning upon their own transpersonal understanding, were deeply interested in the phenomenon of shamanism. They referred to shamanism as a universal mode linking humans with cosmos during their magical journey [8], as a system and path to access spiritual information [16], as an ancient system of body-mind healing [13].

The purpose of the study. This paper aims at exploring neo-shamanism as a cultural, spiritual and psychological phenomenon through the lens of polycultural space of postmodernity.

Theoretical basis and results. Many researchers contribute to the ongoing debate on neo-shamanism. The term neo-shamanism is rather conditional and is often interpreted different ways. There is disagreement

whether it describes contemporary versions of shamanism in traditional societies, attempts by contemporary societies to reconstruct a practice based on patterns of traditional societies, neo-paganism, New Age, psychological help, etc.

Neo-shamanism may be seen as a set of discourses and practices involving the integration of indigenous shamanic, psychotherapeutic techniques by the Western urban residents [27]. Neo-shamanism is not a cult. It demonstrates a holistic approach to Nature and Humans; it is an individualized method of communication with spirits-helpers, "all appeal to all members of a society, which is seen as highly fragmented and diffuse, secular in its approach to healing, education and social interaction" [17, 177].

The term neo-shamanism was coined by Jerome Rothenberg in the mid-1980-s and was applied to distinguish between indigenous shamanism and Western spiritual practices [23; 26]. The other names for the modern shamanism are core shamanism, urban shamanism, modern European shamanism.

An American anthropologist and authentic white shaman Michael Harner introduced the term Core Shamanism. He defines neo-shamanism as a set of shamanic psycho-techniques beyond cultural or historical context [13]. Harner established The Foundation for Shamanic Studies - a nonprofit public charitable and educational organization dedicated to the preservation, study, and teaching of shamanic knowledge for the welfare of the Planet and its inhabitants [31]. Harner bridged the worlds of indigenous shamanism and the contemporary West through anthropological fieldwork, cross-cultural studies, experiment research, personal experience, as well as experiences of his students: "what Yogananda did for Hinduism and D.T. Suzuki did for Zen, Michael Harner has done for shamanism" [31].

The cornerstone of Harner's system is the shamanic state of consciousness. Harner calls ordinary reality the Ordinary State of Consciousness (OSC) and the altered state of shamanic trance - the Shamanic State of Consciousness (SSC). Eliade referred to the shamanic trance as ecstasy [10]. According to the shamanic cosmology, the universe is represented as a world of things seen and things unseen and there is no insurmountable boundary between them. Shamanic cosmos is divided into three levels: Lower, Middle, and Upper Worlds. The Middle World covers things seen and unseen, while the Upper and the Lower Worlds are the unseen domains only [11]. These worlds are connected through a certain world axis - the World Tree. The Upper and the Lower Worlds are filled with compassionate spirit helpers. The Upper World is primarily populated by Spirit Teachers, Ancestors, Ascended Masters, Angels, etc., whereas the Lower World is represented by Spirit Helpers, Spirit Guides, Spirit Animals, Natural and Mythical Animals, Indigenous people, Elfin Creatures [7]. Shamans often prefer not to draw on the spirits of the Middle World (Low Level Souls, Lost Souls, Nature Spirits, Spirits with Ego), because many of them are confused and lacking in power [14]. Spirit helpers are unable to reach our ordinary reality - the Middle World - without shamans. The shaman bridges the gap between two realities. To take a shamanic journey to the spiritual realm, a practitioner induces an altered state of consciousness while being in complete control. Shamans make a journey to get information about the human's problems from a spiritual point of view in order to restore a person's connectedness to his/her spiritual power.

Although the experience acquired in a shamanic state of consciousness may seem fantastic and illusory, this does not mean that everything that happens with a shaman in the SSC is a figment of his/her imagination: shaman practices are in a completely different substantive area. Harner's system of experimental shamanism suggests that each of us is able to gain experience of accessing non-ordinary reality without using any special psychotropic substances: "Michael Harner's technique of Core Shamanism, probably the best-known shamanistic method in Western practice, is centered on the use of rapid drumming (220 beats per minute, corresponding to a little less than 4 Hz) to attain shamanic trance states" [12].

Besides exploring the theory and practice of shamanism, The Foundation for Shamanic Studies provides advice on various international issues, as well as provides treatment for tackling stress and depression. According to Harner, any person can become a shaman. For Harner, shamanism is a well-known and proven way of healing - healing of the soul. Interest in shamanism is a reaction to the collapse of the principle of knowledge in science and the replacement of knowledge by faith - faith in the spiritual power of a human. Harner calls his concept "spiritual democracy", which is free of any authoritarian ideologies, totalitarian principles, and regimes [15]. In the 21st century, spirituality might be seen as a kind of bridge between secular and religious worldviews with room for many perspectives: "Spirituality is the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, and to the significant or sacred" [26].

Spirituality is a transcendent journey to something bigger than us. Many religious institutions, their leaders and followers, become that rigid, preach about their exclusivity, and claim superiority over others [2]. Thus, religions are turned into ideologies and are not helpful anymore. Lacking spiritual enquiry and development, people move away from religion. But the secular world and its queen - science - failed to replace it: classical rationality turned a person into an element of a huge economic, social, political, ideological machine, and "selfish, material and commercial values overtake spiritual and humanitarian values" [2]. It is time for contemporary humans to bring themselves in touch with a spiritual domain, sacred reality.

The scientific novelty. It is not coincidence that neo-shamanism has gained popularity in the postmodern world. Rejecting classical rationality, dualist thinking "either/or", postmodernism returns to the deep traditions of the mythological consciousness associated with nature and full of desire to live in harmony

with it. Myth is timeless: the one who knows the present, knows infinity [6]. In terms of mythological consciousness, there are no clear barriers between the natural and supernatural worlds. Thus, shamans make their trips along the World Tree entering the realms of things unseen. The subject does not oppose him/herself to the object. Shamanic magical thinking is a part of human inherent wisdom and is expressed in the act of merging of shaman's personality with the deity or spirits or in fetish worship. During the rituals, a good shaman experiences a certain psychological transformation associated with the altered state of consciousness. He/she gains awareness and sensitivity to others relying on the "second eyes" – human senses that are neglected or ignored. This is a state of synesthesia, in "which sensory states are blended and combined in unusual ways into a unified perception" [19]. Shaman's consciousness is fragmented into parts and his/her "I" exists in any part of the fragmented reality.

Postmodern interpretation of the self tends to move away from Cartesian rational indivisible self towards pre-scientific fragmented identity [9]. An individual "explodes" in order to expand the boundaries of his/her subjectivity: in the group, in nature, in religion. He/she is self-identical in multiple identities [21]. Within the framework of the postmodern worldview, identity loses its unitarity. The idea of the multiplicity of "I"/stream of consciousness is deeply inherent in the shamanic worldview. An "internal vision" and sensual imagination are valuable gifts for a shaman. A shaman is immersed into a virtual reality – the reality of the Other "I". The shaman's ability to transform into a patient, overcome his/her "I" to become a significant part of the Other is a vital precondition for healing. As William Dunning emphasized, multiply identity of postmodernity "is more readily affected by powers that are not entirely rational, and pursues meaning through the following: myth rather than history; religion rather than science; and a sense of time that is cyclic rather than linear. Thus, the well-heralded fragmentation of society coupled with renewed interests in a collective identity, myth, religion, and cyclical time all demand an idea more complex than the "death" of the private self. They demand acknowledgement of the rebirth of a divisible self" [9, 140]. The emphasis on miraculous, imaginary, symbolic allows us to talk about the return of irrational.

Conclusions. For modern individuals, shaman practices represent a way to go beyond the limits of their own selves, maintain some affiliation with spiritual unity, and avoid emptiness [28]. Neo-shamanism offers the way of personal spiritual renewal through shaman practices, which may be seen as a psychotherapeutic method for mind-body healing. Neo-shamanism reflects a social and spiritual request for a new philosophical paradigm in a postmodern world and indicates drastic changes in cultural codes. According to Michel Maffesoli, "we could say that we are witnessing a return to syncretism in our society, which could be the melding of astrology, American New Age, pseudoscience in its many forms... Our century will see many of these somewhat mystical or esoteric forms returning" [22].

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