

PAPERS RELATING TO THE TRIAL OF FEODOR BASHMAKOF
FOR SORCERY AT SITKA IN 1829. TRANSLATED FROM THE
RUSSIAN BY IVAN PETROV, WITH ETHNOGRAPHIC COMMENTS

by

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC INTRODUCTION

In the manuscript collections of the Bancroft Library of the University of California at Berkeley are to be found a series of translations of Russian accounts relating to their colony in the New World. These translations derive from the collections of the historian Hubert Howe Bancroft and were prepared for him by his secretary, Ivan Petrov. A number of these translations deal with accounts which are still relatively inaccessible—having remained unpublished or untranslated. Because of this situation, the Kroeber Anthropological Society will, from time to time, publish or reprint such of these works as are of interest in the field of anthropology.

The first of these manuscripts selected for publication bears the title:

PAPERS / RELATING TO THE TRIAL / OF / FEODOR BASHMAKOFF /
FOR SORCERY / TRIED AT SITKA / IN / 1829,

where the slanted line (/) indicates line termination in the original. The manuscript may be described for bibliographic purposes as follows:

Manuscript translation in the handwriting of Bancroft's secretary, Ivan Petrov. Designated as manuscript P-K 12 (Bashmakoff—Sorcery) of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. The manuscript consists of 17 leaves (30.5 by 20 cm.), of which the first four are unnumbered (the third containing the title on the recto), the next eight leaves being numbered on both sides, except the last, which is numbered only on the recto (pp. 1-15), and the last six leaves are unnumbered and blank. The text of the manuscript is found on the numbered leaves—on the recto and verso. The manuscript is bound in a red cloth cover.

The only evidence relating to the location of the original documents from which this translation is made comes from the text itself. It is possible that the Russian copies are now to be found in the Alaskan Archives at Juneau. Other copies relating to this case are undoubtedly to be found in the archives of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Bancroft, in his History of Alaska (The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, vol. 33, pp. 700-1), comments on the case as follows:

As an illustration of the condition of the colonial clergy at the end of Chistiakof's administration, may be mentioned the trial for sorcery of Feodor Bashmakof, a servitor at Novo Arkhangelsk [Sitka] in 1829. The charge was preferred by one Terenty Lestnikof to the effect that Bashmakof, a native Kolosh [Tlingit], baptized at Novo Arkhangelsk in November, 1805, educated at the parish school, and admitted to the subordinate priesthood in January, 1827, had been observed by competent witnesses in the act of assisting at certain pagan rites intended to effect the cure of a sick native, and had been seen 'to go through the motions and steps of Shamans or Sorcerers in the service of Satan,' and also of having at various times desecrated an orthodox shrine by taking pagan charms into the holy water blessed by the benediction of the priest, and of receiving payment in furs for such sacrilegious action. In the opinion of Veniaminof, which was afterwards approved by the holy synod, Bashmakof sinned more from ignorance than from malice, and he was discharged with a severe reprimand. Though informed that he was free to return to Novo Arkhangelsk, Bashmakof voluntarily entered the convent of the Ascension at Nerchinsk. The proceedings in this case display a remarkable degree of leniency on the part of the higher Russian clergy, and are in remarkable contrast with the tribunals of the Roman Catholic Church in similar cases. It is doubtful, however, whether Bashmakof's retirement to one of the most desolate convents in Siberia was entirely a voluntary act.

The text which is here presented follows that of the manuscript except for a few corrections of spellings for English words, the addition of hyphens in such names as Tanga-Nook (Petrov is not consistent in his usage), and the addition of a number of quotation marks. All other interpolations are enclosed in square brackets. Page numbers in the manuscript are given in square brackets before the text appearing thereon.

B. G. H.

[p. 1] Papers Relating to the Investigation of
charges of Sorcery against Feodor
Bashmakoff, subordinate priest
at Sitka in 1829.

(Translated from originals now in pos-
session of Rev. Mitropolsky at
Sitka.)

I. Copy of charges forwarded to the Holy Synod:

For the good of the Orthodox Church and the maintenance of proper discipline in the clerical establishment at Novo Arkhangelsk and subordinate parishes, and in my capacity of superintendent of parochial affairs I hereby denounce to the Holy Synod Feodor Bashmakoff, a Kolosh by birth who was baptized at Novo Arkhangelsk November 5th, 1805; educated in the Parochial School at that place and finally admitted to subordinate priesthood in January 1827.

On the third day of February of the present year the said Feodor Bashmakoff was seen by competent witnesses (baptized natives) in the act of assisting at certain pagan rites, intended to effect the cure of a sick native. He was heard to join in an incantation to pagan idols [p. 2] and seen to go through certain motions and steps employed by pagan shamans or sorcerers in the service of Satan.

The said Feodor Bashmakoff is also accused, on the testimony of competent witnesses (baptized natives), of having at various times desecrated an orthodox shrine by slipping pagan charms, such as sorcerers sell to the benighted natives, into the holy water, blessed by the benediction of a priest, and receiving payment in skins from the pagan natives for such sacrilegious action.

Having temporarily suspended and disciplined [the] said Feodor Bashmakoff, I hereby forward the above charges for final action by the Holy Synod through His Eminence the Bishop of Irkutsk and Kamtchatka.

March 6, 1829

Terentius Lessnikoff.
Priest at Novo Arkhangelsk

II. Testimony in support of charges against Feodor Bashmakoff.

Mikhail, a baptized native of the Kolosh village at Novo Arkhangelsk, 40 years of age and formerly named Kash-le-oot, having received the Sacrament with due reverence testifies as follows before Roman Sokaloff, Parochial Clerk, this 10th day of February 1829;

"One week ago to-day Tanga-Nook, a native of Chilkhat, was lying very sick at the house of his brother, Tanga-Sha, in this settlement. The brother, being a pagan, sent for two Shamans (sorcerers). They built a fire near the feet of Tanga-Nook and another near his head, burned some of his hair and some clippings of his toenails and chanted for several hours, but the sick man grew worse. One of the sorcerers then said, 'If we can get Feodor to help us Tanga-Nook will get well.' Tanga-Sha said, 'You get him and I will give him what he asks.' One of the Shamans went out, while the other still kept on singing. After a while a boy came and said, 'Feodor will come to-night, about midnight, but he must have two sea-otters, killed by an unmarried hunter.' I did not believe that Feodor, being a priest, would come and thought the sorcerers would plan some trick. I went home to my house, but in the evening, after dark, I slipped into [p.4] Tanga-Sha's house without being seen and laid myself down among some blankets and skins. The sick man was no better, but the Shamans would do nothing, saying that they must wait for Feodor. All women and children were turned out of the house and I heard the Shamans tell Tanga-Sha that nobody who had been baptized must come into the house or the sick man would surely die."

"I waited a long time and then somebody came in, dressed in a red blanket. One of the Shamans said; 'That is Feodor!' and when he stepped up to the fire I saw it was Feodor Bashmakoff. Tanga-Sha got two sea-otterskins out of a box and Feodor looked at them and said; 'They are too small, I must have one more.' Tanga-Sha fetched another one and Feodor tied them up in a bundle. Then he took out of his pocket a little box, such as the Kolosh use as charms and placed it on the sick man's head. Then the fire was stirred up and Feodor and the two Shamans walked around the sick man, chanting and after a little while Feodor took out of his bosom a little bottle and poured a few drops on Tanga-Nook's [p.5] head, on his breast, on his hands and on his feet. Then he told his brother to make the sick man drink plenty of tea and cover him up with blankets and never take them off until sunrise. He then went out and the two Shamans followed him. During all the time he staid in Tanga-Sha's house, Feodor never made the sign of the Cross or mentioned the name of God or the Holy Trinity."

"I remained hiding until the fire burned down and then made my way home."

Grigor, a baptized native, fifteen years old, formerly named Shanta, having partaken of the Sacrament, testifies as follows:

"I was in Tanga-Sha's house one week ago. His brother was very sick. Shamans came and prayed as the Kolosh do for a long time. After a little [sic] one Shaman tells me to go to Feodor. Feodor is my mother's brother. The Shaman said I must go and see if Feodor is all alone, and nobody near to hear what I say, and [p.6] then I must say: 'Feodor, will you see a sick man at Tanga-Sha's house, Tanga-Sha's brother?' I went into the fort and saw Feodor in his room reading a book and said to him what the Shaman told me. He said; 'Tell Tanga-Sha I will come at midnight and that he must get two sea-otters, killed by unmarried men, but do not tell anybody else or you will die in two weeks.' I was frightened and ran back and told the Shaman. I believe I shall die soon. The sick man, Tanga-Nook, is better and has gone back to Chilkat where he lives."

Avdotya, a baptized native woman, 20 years of age, formerly called Kish, having partaken of the Sacrament, testifies:

"One moon ago my sister was sick. My sister is not baptized. One Shaman said my sister must die. He gave two charms, one for the breast and one for the head and said Feodor can [sic] make them strong so that my sister cannot die. I said, 'You must not say that, Kolosh charms are very bad, Feodor [p.7] does not look at them.' My sister said nothing. Next day my sister told [the] Shaman to take the charms to Feodor. The Shaman came back and said Feodor put the charms in the water the priest makes holy and he put the charms on my sister. My sister got well. My sister gave Feodor six fox skins."

Anton, a baptized native, 35 years of age, formerly called Shlukta, having taken the Sacrament, testifies as follows:

"I live at Khutz-Nov village. The Khutz-Nov people are all pagans except four. They buy charms of the Shamans when they are sick or when sickness is in the village. About one year ago one woman was very sick and was made well with a charm that came from the Sitka Kolosh. They said that Feodor had put it into the water in the church. Since that time many people have bought such charms and paid many skins for them. The charms all came from Feodor Bashmakoff and the skins were all sent to him. The [p.8] Khutz-Nov people think Feodor's charms are better than any they get from the Shamans."

III. Endorsement by His Eminence the Bishop of Irkutsk and Kamtchatka.

The enclosed papers, relating to charges of sorcery and sacrilegious action committed by one Feodor Bashmakoff, subordinate priest of the Parochial clergy of Novo Arkhangelsk in the American Colonies, are hereby respectfully forwarded to the Holy Synod. Having no personal knowledge of the man or the circumstances, I am unable to express a competent opinion on the matter, further than to recommend the case to the Holy Synod for

immediate action and suggesting that an example be made should the proof be considered sufficient.

In the name of the Holy Trinity
I subscribe myself as your
humble servitor
Innocentius
Bishop of Irkutsk and Kamtchatka

Episcopal Residence
Irkutsk, September 29, 1829.

[p.9] IV. Reply from the Holy Synod.

St. Petersburg, Palace of the Holy Synod, January 17, 1830.

The Bureau of East Siberian and American Missions has been in receipt of certain papers concerning charges against Feodor Bashmakoff of Novo Arkhangelsk signed by Terentius Lessnikoff, Parochial Superintendent, and endorsed by His Eminence the Bishop of Irkutsk and Kamtchatka. The Bureau finds occasion to express the astonishment of the Holy Synod at seeing papers of such importance arrive here without certified proceedings of the personal investigation of the accused. Whether no proceedings have been forwarded at all or whether they have been lost in transmittal, it is of the highest importance that the omission should be rectified immediately. In the meantime the accused should be forwarded to Irkutsk by the first opportunity for trial, accompanied by all the necessary papers. The Russian American Company will furnish the necessary transportation.

Nikolai Bestuchiff.
Secretary Bureau of East Siberian and
American Missions, Holy Synod.

[p.10] V. Copy of Proceedings of the Preliminary Examination of Feodor Bashmakoff on charges of sorcery and sacrilegious action.

On the 20th day of August, 1830, Feodor Bashmakoff, of the subordinate clergy of the parish of Novo Arkhangelsk, appeared before a Commission consisting of Terentium Lessnikoff, Priest; Vassili Tetroff, Chief of [the] Bureau of Novo Arkhangelsk of the Russian American Company [;] and Roman Sokoloff, Parochial clerk, to answer certain charges preferred against him. The presiding member of the Commission, after reading the charges to the accused, asked:

Q—"Did you, on the night of February 3rd, 1829, proceed to a certain house in the native village at Novo Arkhangelsk [?]"

A—"I did."

Q—"Did you go there upon the request of a certain Shaman or Sorcerer?"

A—"No, I went there at the request of Tanga-Sha, whose brother was sick."

Q—"Did Tanga-Sha request you in person to come?"

A—"I do not remember - but I think he sent his brother."

Q—"What ? the sick man?" [p. 11]

A—"Oh, no! I mean a boy!"

Q—"Was it not the boy Grigor, otherwise named Shan-ta?"

A—"Yes, I believe it was."

Q—"And is not that boy the son of your sister?"

A—"Yes, that is what I meant to say in the first place. Grigor asked me to come."

Q—"What was your object in going; are you a doctor?"

A—"I wished to pray with the sick man who was said to be dying."

Q—"Was the sick man a Christian who desired or was entitled to the last rites of the Church?"

A—"I do not know whether Tanga-Nook was ever baptized, but I thought I would pray for him because his brother asked me to come."

Q—"Did you pray over the sick man alone or did anybody help you?"

A—"Two men stood up beside me when I prayed, but they did not say anything."

Q—"Were the two men Shamans or not?"

A—"I do not know - I was absorbed in prayer."

Q—"Did you receive any skins from [p. 12] Tanga-Sha for praying over his brother?"

A—"Yes, I accepted them because I thought it right to receive something for getting up at night."

Q—"Was it night when the boy called you?"

A—"I do not remember, but I think it was."

The presiding member of the Commission then said that it seemed necessary to refresh Feodor's memory and by his order the testimony relating to the first charge was read. The accused became very much confused and finally asked whether the Commission would allow him to make a confession. The Commission concluded to allow the accused to confess and Feodor Bashmakoff then made a statement to the following effect:

That the allegations against him contained in the testimony just read, were substantially true, but that he had acted under the conviction that to introduce the prayers of the Orthodox Church among the pagan natives at any time and by any means would be a step toward the conversion of the whole people. He also claimed that he sprinkled the body of [p. 13] the man whom he thought to be dying with holy water because he thought it might do his soul good and induce others to be baptized. He also acknowledged that he had dipped pagan charms into holy water and claimed that by so doing he expected to destroy the influence of the devil adhering to those charms and sow the seeds of Christianity instead.

We certify that the above is a correct transcript of the examination of Feodor Bashmakoff.

Terentius Lessnikoff
Vassisi Tetroff
Roman Sokoloff

(Seal)

Examining Commission

VI. Communication from the Episcopal Bureau at Irkutsk concerning the trial of Feodor Bashmakoff.

Episcopal Bureau, Irkutsk, Government of Eastern Siberia, May 20, 1831

His Eminence the Bishop of Eastern Siberia and Kamtchatka instructs me to inform [p. 14] the ecclesiastical authorities at Novo Arkhangelsk of the following results of proceedings concerning Feodor Bashmakoff forwarded to this place for trial from Novo Arkhangelsk.

In accordance with instructions received from the Holy Synod the accused was tried before His Eminence immediately upon his arrival. The most careful and impartial scrutiny of the testimony produced and of the transcript of preliminary examination at Novo Arkhangelsk, failed to establish such position and incontrovertible proof as is necessary for conviction on a charge so heinous as the one preferred in this case. In the opinion of His Eminence, which has since been approved by the Holy Synod, Feodor Bashmakoff sinned more from ignorance than from malice or wickedness of soul. Consequently the accused was discharged with a severe reprimand.

Though informed that he was free to return to Novo Arkhangelsk, Peter [sic] Bashmakoff has voluntarily chosen a life of eternal seclusion in the convent of the Ascension at Nertchinsk, to which plan His Eminence the Bishop has graciously [p. 15] extended his consent.

With reference to the above affair His Eminence suggests that henceforth the ecclesiastical authorities in our American Colonies submit native converts to a more careful training before admitting them to the priesthood and the responsibilities pertaining to that sacred calling.

In the name of the Trinity
Grigor Totemkin
Secretary of His Eminence
The Bishop of Eastern Siberia
and Kamtchatka

COMMENTS ON THE SORCERY TRIAL AT SITKA, 1829

The preceding account of the trial at Sitka in 1829, of a Tlingit Indian who was a Russian Orthodox priest and was accused of sorcery, is very helpful in illustrating the hold which some of his people's traditions still had on him. It may not be merely a coincidence that the Indian accused of practicing sorcery, or his own religious shamanistic beliefs, should also have become a Christian priest, but may reflect his characteristic personality trait, which caused him to interest himself in the manifold aspects of the supernatural. It is very likely that he approached the Christian doctrine, and his function as priest, with the same philosophical and emotional attitude as his native religion. Unfortunately this account cannot give an insight into the defendant's real thoughts, either about his own philosophy or the Christian beliefs. Probably he was not clear about them himself. Even the eyewitness accounts of the curing procedure and treatment of the patient omit certain important data, such as a description of the various "charms" mentioned, or the nature of the "incantations to pagan idols" and the "certain motions and steps employed by pagan shamans." Apparently the witnesses could have given a better account of what had gone on, but it is only natural that they did not, since they would have admitted their own associations with these practices and would have left themselves open to further persecutions. As a result, the reader gets only the bare outlines of what had happened. On the other hand, this account has the virtue of describing a particular, documented incident, and demonstrating the actual procedure in a case—uncolored by a traveler's interpretation, or an individual informant's ideas.

The curing procedure, as described in this trial, does not conform in all particulars to the information supplied by the various sources cited in the bibliography. This may be due partly to the fact that the defendant, as a Christian priest, had to be careful not to draw attention to himself, and also that he had to deceive himself somewhat about his motives. In a number of details there are certain inconsistencies, which will be brought out below, but the particular actions which are described by the witnesses have their roots in native tradition. On the one hand, while the details of the religious ceremony have been kept, they are used partly out of context, and partly incompletely. On the other hand, the whole performance seems uninfluenced by Christian principles.

The curing ceremony and the events which led up to it will be discussed as much as possible in their sequence in the following paragraphs:

Tanga-Sha, the brother of the sick man, was a pagan, and sent for two men who were shamans of the Tlingit. They built a fire near the feet of Tanga-Nook and another near his head, burned some of his hair and some clippings of his toenails and chanted for several hours, but

the sick man grew worse. This is the sum total of the first unsuccessful treatment by two shamans who were not Christians.

It is worth noting that nothing suggests that they became possessed. The ability to be possessed by a spirit is indicated by the sources, such as Boas, Swanton, and Krause, to be an essential characteristic of a true shaman who has any real claim to power. Unfortunately these sources are not always in accord with one another in every detail, but the information suggests that the shaman must be possessed by one or more of his spirits to find out the cause of the illness before he can undertake the cure. Also, according to the sources, the Tlingit had only one kind of shaman, the possessional shaman (McCleod 1925, p. 134), while the Haida also had a group of seeresses (Murdock 1934, p. 257), and the Kwakiutl had at least four groups of specialists (Curtis 1915, p. 63). If the information from these sources is correct, it would rule out the possibility that the two shamans present were some sort of non-possessional specialists.

The first thing these two doctors did was to build two fires, one at the head of the sick man, one at his feet. This should be noted because it is a procedure not described by the sources. All the latter are in accord that one fire, around which the shaman dances and around which the ceremonial centers, is essential to any religious ceremony. Two fires at these particular positions seem to be a novelty. But some leeway did exist in the manner of the performance, and this may be the particular prescription advocated by these doctors.

The two shamans "chanted" for several hours. These chants have been described in the literature as the songs belonging to various spirits. Usually at performances the audience, which had gone through a process of fasting and purification, sang these songs to invoke the particular spirits required for the occasion, but at some ceremonies, such as that of curing, the shaman would himself sing the songs given to him by his spirits (Swanton 1922, p. 353; Jones 1914, p. 156). Note that there is no mention of drumming or rattling. This is strange, since the rattle and drum are the most important tools in these ceremonies and help to invoke the presence of the spirits. However, this may be only an omission in the story of the witness.

The two shamans are stated to have burned some of the patient's hair and some clippings of his toenails in the fires which they had built. This is rather odd. It is quite in accord with the information which states that illness was thought to have been due mainly to witchcraft by means of imitative and contagious magic. The exuvia of an individual played an important part. They were treated in various ways intended to transmit afflictions to the victim. But the procedure of these two doctors, if compared with the information in the literature, is aberrant. What is supposed to happen is that the shaman, by means of his helping spirits, discovers the sorcerer, who is then forced to confess by various means. Recovery of the patient, it is stated, can only be effected by a special procedure and treatment of the exuvia on the

part of the sorcerer. In this case, evidently, the shamans did not try to find out who the culprit was. Instead, they resorted to the above method, apparently as a substitute measure for the accepted procedure. This may have been due to the fact that the presence of the Russians prevented them from giving some sorcerer the conventional treatment, and may have been the reason why they did not succeed in curing the patient. He may not have considered it a satisfactory substitute. The reason for burning these objects may be that this procedure is sometimes followed in the treatment for loss of soul, during which powerful objects, such as mountain goat tallow, red paint, and eagle down, are burned, and then the soul is held over the fire before being returned to the body (Boas 1889, pp. 854-855).

The witness continues to tell what happened. One of the shamans said, "If we can get Feodor to help us Tanga-Nook will get well." This may be a hint that Feodor already had a reputation among his colleagues as a better than average doctor. It may also indicate, however, that the Tlingit looked at a Christian priest as a shaman, possibly a particularly powerful one, and in this case, one who had proved his power by the efficacy of his charms dipped in holy water. In view of the succeeding curing procedure, there is good reason to believe the defendant saw himself somewhat in the same light.

To continue, "Tanga-Sha said, 'You get him and I will give him what he asks.'" This illustrates the necessity for paying a shaman, usually in skins and other valuables, a point which is brought out a number of times in this trial. It is interesting that this aspect of a shaman's activities was adhered to so firmly, in view of the fact that the native religious pattern was not followed consistently in every respect. One might be tempted to think that the shamans saw to it that this particular custom was kept, as the most important attraction in their profession. While this probably was a consideration, it should be kept in mind that the defendant, Feodor, had become a Christian priest, which would certainly hinder any shamanistic activities, something which must have been of financial disadvantage. This implies that he was more interested in the religious than the material considerations, in spite of the fact that he apparently was not slow in turning it into a financial profit.

The next step was the following. One of the shamans went out and commissioned Shanta or Grigor, a fifteen year old boy, to deliver the message to the defendant. Shanta was the defendant's nephew, his sister's son. This is an important point. The nephew, son of the shaman's sister, was the prospective heir to the shaman's spirits, which were kept in a particular family and descended in the maternal line. Exceptions to this were rare. If there were more than one candidate, the most promising one would be chosen. The prospective heir was apprenticed fairly early to his maternal uncle. It is, of course, possible that it was a coincidence that they sent this particular messenger, but it also seems that any number of the people concerned would have been more logical messengers, particularly since,

as it turned out, Shanta could not be trusted to keep his mouth shut. It would have been in everybody's interest to have as few people as possible informed about what was going on.

Shanta tells what happened when he delivered the message. The defendant said to him: "Tell Tanga-Sha I will come at midnight, and that he must get two sea-otters, killed by unmarried men, but do not tell anybody else or you will die in two weeks." Night time ordinarily was the proper time for these performances. According to Swanton, the great exhibitions or performances of the shamans were undertaken only during the new or full moon (Swanton 1922, p. 353).

The request for sea-otter skins is of interest. The sea-otter is considered one of the more powerful animals, and it may have been one of Feodor's special protective spirits, perhaps the main one. In some ways, anybody who was successful in hunting sea-otters had a certain degree of power. Swanton says: "People asked the sea for all kinds of things, but especially for sea-otter. They thought that it brought great luck. Shamans talked to it also." (Swanton 1906, p. 453). At another occasion he says that frog medicine was given by sea-otter hunters to sick persons who desired to recover (Swanton 1909 a, p. 45). This suggests the particular power of hunters of these animals. When a man was going to hunt sea-otter, he had to go through a fairly complicated procedure, involving the acquisition of an eagle's talon, carving a small canoe with hunters in it in imitation of himself, and a number of other ritual acts. Mainly, he had to fast and keep away from his wife for a month (Swanton 1906, p. 447). This was part of the requirement of ceremonial purity, "cleanliness," since the spirits like cleanliness, and only aid people who are ceremonially clean. Note that Feodor required that the sea-otters be caught by unmarried men. Again, this suggests a make-shift substitute. The idea is, apparently, that unmarried men are less likely to have had something to do with women recently. Perhaps it would have taken too long to go through the proper purification procedures, and this was an emergency.

In preparation for the arrival of the shaman, all women and children were turned out of the house, and the witness heard the shamans tell Tanga-Sha that nobody who had been baptized must come into the house or the sick man would surely die. Note again the stress on ceremonial purity. Women were a potential source of ceremonial contamination, mainly since some of them might be menstruating. Matters connected with child birth and menstruation were considered very dangerous and unclean, and the spirits would not approach such a place. Undoubtedly a baptized person was considered in the same light, that is, unclean and contaminated, and thus objectionable to the spirits.

Here follows the eyewitness account of what went on at the curing ceremony. The defendant came in dressed in a red blanket, and stepped up to the fire. Tanga-Sha got two sea-otter skins out of a box, but Feodor said they were too small and that he needed one more. He then tied the three in a bundle. Then he took out of his pocket a little

box, "such as the Kolosh use as charms," and placed it on the sick man's head. Then the fire was stirred up and Feodor and the two shamans walked, chanting, around the sick man, and after a little while Feodor took out of his bosom a little bottle and poured a few drops on Tanga-Nook's head, on his breast, on his hands and feet. Then he told his brother to make the sick man drink plenty of tea and cover him up with blankets and never take them off until sunrise. This concluded the procedure.

Note that the only comment on the defendant's appearance was that he was dressed in a red blanket. He may have worn any number of adornments or charms not mentioned, and he may have taken off the blanket during the procedure. However, note also that the witness says he took the object out of his pocket, suggesting some form of European clothing. The usual apparel of a shaman was standardized for the most part, but some distinguishing marks were intended to represent the particular spirit or spirits he wished to invoke. During a performance, the sources say, the shaman wears only a "dancing apron" or special kind of loin cloth, a bone necklace composed of pieces representing spirits, bones through the septum of the nose and the top knot of the hair, and a head scratcher, or bird's head, around his neck. He may also wear a special "claw hat" instead of a bone, or perhaps on top of it. The hair could never be cut, or touched by hands, or the shaman would lose his power (Swanton 1909 b, pp. 167, 318). Swanton describes the apparel of a particular shaman. This shaman dressed as he saw his spirit, putting on a very large hat with a high crown, a dancing blanket, leggings, and a Chilkat blanket, and painted red stripes across his face (Swanton 1906, p. 465).

Similarly, there were certain standardized paraphernalia the shaman used, even though differences in detail were intended to represent various spirits. The main item were the masks. When the shaman put on a mask, he became the spirit that mask represented. The drum and rattle were also very important instruments which formed part of a shaman's equipment. These items are considered indispensable at a shamanistic performance. Besides them, the shaman also needed such specific implements as a hollow bone tube to catch souls (Swanton 1922, p. 353; Swanton 1909 b, p. 318).

In comparison with these distinctive requirements of a shaman's tools and dress, the defendant seems to have had a minimum. None of the truly characteristic features are mentioned by the witness. Partly this may be omission by the witness, and partly the priest could not, of course, conform to the traditional requirements, such as the long hair. However, insofar as he wore a blanket, he did conform to the tradition, at least in part. It is important to note that the blanket was red. Red was a very common ceremonial color. As Swanton says, "eagle down and red paint were much used by shamans and are spoken of in the stories as principal media in restoring the dead to life." (Swanton 1906, p. 455).

Note that the defendant considered the sea-otter skins too small, and required another one. These skins evidently represent payment for services to be rendered, and the defendant seems to have felt that two small skins were unsatisfactory for that reason. This does not necessarily invalidate their ceremonial importance.

The shaman then proceeded by placing a box on the sick man's head, and later he poured a few drops of liquid, according to his own statement, holy water, on the head, breast, hands and feet of the sick man. In between, he and the other shamans walked around the sick man, "chanting," evidently singing their spirit songs.

The difference between this treatment and the previous treatment by the other two shamans should be kept in mind. One cause of illness, the most important, has been mentioned above, namely witchcraft, involving contagious magic. The first curing effort seems to have been based on that assumption. Illness, however, might also be due to loss of soul, or the intrusion of a foreign object by the agency of a spirit, shaman or wizard. The procedure followed by Feodor suggests that he went on the assumption that illness was due to the intrusion of a foreign object, and perhaps loss of soul as well. The reason for the latter idea is that a lost soul is returned by capturing it in the hollow bone tube which is usually an essential in the shaman's equipment, and after due treatment by placing this tube with the soul on the head of the patient, the proper place for its return to his body (Boas 1889, p. 855). On the other hand, if illness is due to intrusion of a foreign object, the cure consists of blowing or sucking, or of passing over the affected parts carved objects supposed to have power (Swanton 1906, p. 464). In the main, Feodor's therapy applies to the latter. Actually, both Feodor and the others may have agreed that illness was due to witchcraft, but they evidently differed in their ideas as to the proper treatment. It may well be that Feodor's method conformed more closely to current ideas of how it should be done, for the cure seems to have been a success.

Feodor's orders to cover the patient closely with blankets and have him drink "tea" is in accordance with accepted ideas, according to which the patient is to be covered with a mat and is to be given purgatives, both before and after the treatment.

The use of charms has been left to the last in this discussion. Charms played a large part in the life of the individual, as shown both in this account of the trial and other sources. A shaman's powerful charms usually consisted of many split animal tongues which he had acquired in his vision quest for power, and eagle claws, small carvings, curious pebbles, and any number of other objects. They were used for almost any purpose which was desired, mainly for good health, luck in various enterprises, such as hunting, acquiring property, carving, dancing, increase of physical power, fishing, war, etc. Mainly, they were indispensable in the general acquisition of "power," and a shaman was likely to have a great number of such objects. Swanton describes

and illustrates the contents of a shaman's medicine box, or bundle. He shows a shaman's carved box, in which was a smaller box or case containing the following "medicines": Two bits of abalone shell each pierced at one end as if for suspension, one fragment of a dentalium shell, two or three bits of iron, a small piece from the border of a Chilkat blanket, and fragments of two different kinds of plants (Swanton 1906, p. 468, figs. 114-116).

These charms, according to the ethnographic sources, had to be acquired either through personal effort, or by inheritance within the maternal family line. A shaman might increase his power by acquiring such charms from the spirits in repeated vision quests. Swanton tells the story of Sgaga'ngo, the shaman, who obtained the secret of certain medicines from the Medicine spirit. These afterwards belonged to the family of which he was chief, the Pebble-Town-People, and were handed down from generation to generation (Swanton 1909 a, p. 45).⁽¹⁾ But even a layman could obtain such charms if he underwent the proper ritual and purification to make him receptive to the attentions of the spirits. None of these sources mention anything about the sale of these charms by the shamans, which, to judge by the account of the Sitka trial, seems to have been a very flourishing business. However, in one of the tales told by Swanton, the shaman gives a boy a magic object by which he can protect himself (Swanton 1909 b, p. 200). Perhaps the practice of the sale of charms originated in this, that a shaman helped an individual in a certain situation by endowing him with "power" for a particular endeavor by means of one of his charms. In accordance with the ideas of the region, he naturally would require payment for this service. Quite evidently such charms were greatly in demand, and their sale had developed into a flourishing and far-flung trade.⁽²⁾ The traditional rule of transmitting such charms by inheritance only probably continued also, in that these latter required no payment.

Apparently the defendant, Feodor, had been instrumental in spreading the belief in a new powerful substance of the nature of a charm, holy water. At least, his own reputation grew together with that of holy water, and lucidly demonstrates the way in which Christian religious ideas were adjusted to native beliefs.

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The account of this trial at Sitka, then, is very illuminating from several points of view. It shows, for one thing, that Christian ideology had no significant influence, either on the pagan or on the professed Christian Tlingit. What outward influence there may have been apparently diminished rather than increased with time, since travelers and students such as Krause (1885), Swanton and Boas (around 1900), describe religious ideas and practices which seem entirely unaffected by Christian beliefs. But the trial does indicate that in 1829 there was enough outside pressure to induce a number of Indians to be baptized and to inform

against one another. It may be that under the first impact of this pressure, impressed by the unusual tools and appearance of the Russians, the Tlingit had the tendency to consider the Russian religion a type of shamanism with superior power. This is suggested both by the far-flung popularity of charms dipped in holy water, and by the defendant's reputation as a more powerful shaman than the others, which was very likely enhanced by his position as a Christian priest.

On the other hand, the hold which their own religion had on them is illustrated by Shanta, a baptized boy of fifteen, who was so impressed by the defendant's threat that he was convinced he would die. This suggests that in spite of his baptism and professed Christianity he had been brought up in his native beliefs. This hold is illustrated even more impressively by the defendant himself. In spite of his own testimony, and the final verdict that he had acted in error rather than intent, it seems fairly clear that he made his preparations with great deliberation, and knew that this would not be acceptable to the church — witness his threats to Shanta if he were to talk. There is also some indication, in the certainty and self-assurance with which he seems to have effected the cure, that he had quite a bit of experience and practice and knew exactly what he was about. His specific instructions concerning the use of sea-otter skins suggest that he may have been a professional shaman with his own spirits before he was a Christian priest, and that these spirits had not relinquished their hold on him. (3)

While it must be concluded, then, that Tlingit religion was basically uncontaminated by Christian beliefs, there is also some evidence which indicates that the traditional procedure was not followed in every respect. Partly this may have been due to the fact that secrecy had to be maintained, and that certain gestures had to be made toward the Christian church; partly it may have been due to the fact that this was an emergency situation, which prevented adequate preparations. However, it should be emphasized once more that the practices were quite variable among individuals, and that this interpretation may be colored too much by standard ideas on how to conduct these ceremonies.

ENDNOTES

- (1) This example is taken from the Haida, but it illustrates a situation which exists also among the Tlinkit.
- (2) Note the places involved: Sitka, on Baranof Island; Chilkat, near Skagway; and "Khutz-Nov" village. The identity of the latter place is not given. However, it probably refers to Admiralty Island, directly east of Baranof Island. Hutsnuwu is the Tlinkit name for Admiralty Island, and means "Bear's Fort." The Tlinkit give this name to the island because of the numerous bears on it. (Francis A. Riddell, personal communication based on field work in 1950 at Angoon.) Swanton says about it: "Anciently the Hutsnuwu (Ḫutsnuwu', grizzly-bear fort) people or Ḫu'ts:īda qoan (which means the same thing) occupied two different towns on the west coast of Admiralty island. The more southern, called NAktū'ck-ān, was in White Water bay, and the northern, Āngū'n, on the coast above modern Killisnoo where the whites had established canneries and whither the inhabitants of both of these towns have now removed." (Swanton, 1906, p. 412.) Swanton then adds some information concerning their clans.
- (3) The reason these sea-otter skins are considered of ceremonial importance rather than just payment is that Feodor specified this particular animal, singled out by its ceremonial importance, and that he stipulated that unmarried men must have hunted it.

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