

PIAO HAN: THE CREATION OF MANZU IDENTITY
AND THE SHAMANIC TRADITION

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

The Guan are a Manzu clan living in the village of Yi Lan Gang, Heilongjiang province, People's Republic of China. Research was undertaken in China from 1995 to 1997. A discussion of social relations in north-east China is provided to establish context. The Manzu way of life is described diachronically using the work of Sergei Shirokogoroff and the author's own research. The various anthropological approaches to shamanism are reviewed and consideration of the social and political role of shamanism is proposed. Analytical categories of ethnicity are developed that are reflected in Manzu communities, where concerns with tradition, authenticity, and regional variation lead to an active consideration of the nature of shamanism. By examining what occurs while the Guan are planning and performing their ceremonies, the meanings of shamanism for the Manzu are revealed. The Guan shamans counteract opposition to the retention of their ethnic identity by stressing the importance of their genealogy and adjusting their shamanic practice to emphasise aspects of their ethnicity that they wish to promote. They use shamanism to improve *guan xi* with potential collaborators in their project to preserve the integrity of the clan and the sense of ethnicity that entails. Much of what was distinctive about their ethnicity has changed profoundly, but they believe deeply that they are *piao han*, meaning fearless and competent, and that this is the core of Manzuneess. Shamanic rituals honouring the ancestors are used to reconstitute the essential elements of Manzu identity for the benefit of the clan members. The shamanic performance is a symbol that provides an opportunity for the people to consider an idealised reflection of themselves and integrate that image into their understanding of who and what they are.

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Fieldwork Sites



Map of People's Republic of China showing locations referred to in the text. Dotted lines indicate provincial boundaries in *Dongbei*.

Introduction: Accessing the Field

Introduction

Methods of negotiating relationships common in north-east China significantly influence any attempt to conduct fieldwork in that setting. To understand some of the problems surrounding anthropological fieldwork and the fieldwork situation itself in China, it is necessary to consider the social institution of *guan xi*. First, the problem of an outsider achieving effective participation in the social order is a considerable one. Without establishing *guan xi* it would have been almost impossible. Second, *guan xi* is situated within a hierarchical framework that provides insights about relations with the spirits and ancestors in Manzu shamanism, the subject of this thesis.

An understanding of *guan xi*, leads to critical insights about social relations in north-east China. *Guan xi* emerges at various points along a continuum of relational subsets that are negotiated between social actors depending upon historical, ethical, ethnic and hierarchical inputs. To argue that *guan xi* has one specific nature misses the essential richness of the phenomenon. While *guan xi* draws heavily upon tradition, it is subject to subtle distinctions each time it is implemented or even considered by the actors who invoke it.

While officially atheist and Marxist, China is also still “traditional”. While few Chinese profess a reverence for the past, many — including intellectuals and Communist party cadres — present offerings at shrines and subscribe to traditional values. Even when overt subscription by the individual may not be apparent, the influence of Confucian and Taoist ethics upon popular morality is manifest. The level of comfort with the relationship system and participation in it may be directly related to conscious or unconscious self-justification based upon popular and long-standing moral principles. This is not to suggest that ethics in the 1990s are identical to any particular period in the past. The concept and utilisation of *guan xi* has a long history, and its role today is complicated by a situation of scarcity, partly brought about by population pressures, partly by politics and largely by the inescapable corruption of the ruling elite in the army and government. However, consideration of the problem of *guan xi* requires that we adequately account for the historical dimension of ethical thought.

Cultivating relationships with “gatekeepers” was critical to my success, and I was subject to manipulation by individuals whose actions can be understood through considering the nature of social obligation, rather than corruption. It is easy to ignore the problem of *perceived* unscrupulousness, yet I would suggest that insights can be gained from examining such

behaviour (see Turner 1972; 1989, ch.1 on dealing with administrative authorities in the Australian Outback). My lessons in social relations in north-east China at the hands of gatekeepers in the Fall of 1995 improved my understanding of Chinese society as I experienced it and considerably eased my subsequent fieldwork experiences.

Closely Bound Connections

The Chinese term that describes the system of social relations is *guan xi*, which translates as “relations/connections”. To have *guan xi*¹ means to have established a social relationship with someone, which provides influence with that person. It does not equate directly with power over someone, for the purpose of the system is to construct a social relationship, akin to a family relationship, which leaves both members of the dyad feeling obligated toward the other. Often, the relationship is uneven, as is the case in any patronage system. This is consistent with structures in late pre-liberation north China where middlemen monopolised authority and prestige over villagers in a system of unequal power relationships (Duara 1990). Cultivating contacts, and establishing a network of support, is one object of developing *guan xi*. However, the term is rich in meaning and also simply refers to warmth of feeling and social intimacy. While dependent upon circumstances, having *guan xi* may also refer to bonds of friendship. In towns in Liaoning province I encountered individuals whose primary connection was that they had been rusticated in the same location during the Cultural Revolution. It was shared experience that was the basis for their relationship, and not more overt ways of cultivating *guan xi*, such as gift exchange or banqueting. The significance of this will be developed below.

In north China it very difficult to accomplish one's objectives, particularly if they have anything to do with the state. This is due to the fact that official channels are notoriously slow, and simply overwhelmed in a country of 1.3 billion people. Often the best way to get things done is *zou hou menr*, or through the back door. Whether one is buying train tickets, getting a building permit, or changing one's residence, the obstacles often seem insurmountable without special consideration. This is neither a simplification nor an over-generalisation. Anyone who has ever tried to buy sleeper tickets out of Shenyang or Harbin is aware of this. Of course, it is easy enough for the foreign tourists who buy their tickets through a hotel or travel agency. But those tourists see no sign of the relationship that the ticket agency has developed with the local railway ticket office in order to gain access to the tickets. Most work units attempt to develop *guan xi*

¹The characters are 关 (*guan*) and 系 (*xi*). The first character means to close or to involve, while the second means to fasten or relate to and depicts "one hand grasping several threads or lines" (Moran, 1995: p. 202).

with the railway corporation; however, this is a situation of competition for scarce resources. I have spent cold winter nights in Harbin waiting while friends attempted to find tickets for me. In some cases, we were forced to resort to the black market.

On one level, *guan xi* may be described as a system of transactions which allows those involved to proceed with projects and undertakings which would otherwise be delayed or impossible. *Guan xi* often involves the negotiation of relationships, co-operation and entitlements within society. This is not a matter of bribery and corruption. On the contrary, the process is about dealing with scarcity, but also about proper social relations. The objective for the vast majority of Chinese is not to realise excessive or unreasonable gain, but to simply manage day to day transactions as efficiently as possible in the face of extreme competition and indifference. The scarcity natural in a developing nation with an immense population is exacerbated by the ruling elite who enrich themselves and advance the interests of family and friends. Hence, the importance of *guan xi* is redoubled. The process of negotiation allows the average Chinese to deal with exigencies in a dignified and regulated fashion.

Patronage systems are culturally specific in terms of how they function and how a participant must behave in order to negotiate his way. Furthermore, they are morally regulated and require that the participants proceed in a proper fashion. In contemporary China, the New Socialist man is old hat and the virtues of serving the people and the state have been replaced by the virtue of striving for money and material wealth. Previously, the ethics of socialism never successfully uprooted the old Confucian-derived popular ethics and in fact drew heavily upon them (Huang 1977). The concept of social relations, which lies at the heart of the patronage system, is justified by the popular morality. This is not to suggest that *guan xi* is simply a holdover from the pre-Revolutionary past. However, social relations in north-east China require a serious consideration of the persistence of traditional ideology in order to achieve a more complete appreciation of their function.

Guan xi takes place within the context of a larger system of cultural mores and ethics. To understand this idea, the general nature of the Chinese system of thought that underlies and supports it must be examined. It is important to remember that the ideas presented here are not always manifest, but are often imminent, and as such they are neither fixed nor immutable. It is often the case that one approach is in ascendance, and then is displaced by another, as circumstances, the influence of others, and personal morality indicate. To suggest that traditional ideology is irrelevant to understanding social mores is inaccurate. In all walks of life traditions

Hence, the phrase implies a close and binding relationship.

still play a significant role. This does not demonstrate by itself the role that they play in morality, but it is suggestive of a link. However, I want to stress that I have witnessed individuals of varied background and position, including farmers, social scientists, physicians, agricultural scientists, Communist Party cadres and electronic journalists, all of whom participated in Buddhist and/or Taoist devotions.

Madsen writes that the average contemporary Chinese is a practical philosopher who, in assessing the actions of local leaders, is caught up in a dynamic process of “ever-moving whirlpools of moral argumentation The currents of such whirlpools were continually shifting as argument and counterargument interacted with changing political situations to create new torrents of moral discourse” (Madsen 1984: 3). Madsen refers specifically to village leaders, but within the context of their evaluation by other villagers who are heir to an ethical tradition and call each other to account in terms of a moral discourse. He argues powerfully for a Maoist-Confucian synthesis emerging out of the Maoist critique of Confucianism. He concludes that the Communist cadre “build up a political following by dispensing patronage and justifies that patronage by Confucian moral discourse”(ibid.: 248). While he is discussing rural morality, the argument pertains to the urban situation as well. *Guan xi* must be understood in terms of the ethical dimension, in addition to its instrumental and sentimental aspects.

Madsen also concludes that the Chinese often “conceive of their interests and hopes in terms of the conceptual idiom of an ethos with deep roots in the Confucian tradition [T]he Confucian idiom uses metaphors; one of the most apt metaphors is that of the traditional Chinese family. And a good society is like a good family writ large” (ibid.: 245). This metaphor, as I argue below, is prominent in the fraternal conception of *guan xi* relationships. Friedman et al. present evidence which supports Madsen's view. In documenting the history of the Maoist revolution and its direct affects upon social relations they suggest that:

Although the Communist party, in trying to improve social life, both adapted to and transformed peasant values and social relations, Chinese villagers -- including party members -- kept to their own agenda. Even when the party brought economic gain and cultural healing, centre and hinterland were frequently at odds. Over time personal networks grew, connecting the system in complex and contradictory ways. The structure was not merely top down. Villagers were not merely pawns permitting socialist kings to push them around. . . Villagers and their allies and patrons among officials tried, as they had for many generations under various regimes, to dodge, deflect and blunt the impact of demands detrimental to local interests and values (Friedman et al. 1991: xv).

The implication is that the use of *guan xi* is a long-standing practice that emerged out of previous traditions and was adapted to the present circumstances. This is crucial to understanding *guan xi* — it must be understood within the circumstances in which it occurs and should not be presented as identical in all cases. Nevertheless, it emerges out of common elements that may be found in the history of Chinese ethical thought. Friedman, et al. establish the persistence of traditional values in the face of adverse state actions: “villagers, expropriated of so much they treasured, clung more tightly to surviving, virtually sacred, household resources, from the home to the lineage to the marriage bond” (ibid.: 269). In my experience, this is often also true in dealing with urban residents, and thus the art of *guan xi*, while adapted to modern circumstances, has deep origins in tradition.

It is important to understand that the justifications that the Chinese draw upon are not derived from one source. China is, in many ways, a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society. Chinese popular ethics are an amalgam of different schools of thought and methodological approaches which have merged with folk traditions and Western, especially Marxist and Christian, ideas (see Gernet 1985). The most important aspects of popular Chinese ethics are derived from Taoist and Confucian philosophy. China is an ancient society, and while it is not unreasonable to claim Western roots in Mesopotamian civilisation, and certainly a strong connection to Greece and Rome, in China the tradition is not only living, but frequently pervasive in its influence over the lives and thought of the modern Chinese. The basic Confucian ethic that influences Chinese morality even today is a commentary on, and an expansion of, ideas and methods that predate the Spring and Autumn period (circa 6th century B.C.) during which Confucius flourished. The most important moral strictures that have come with this tradition are filial piety, loyalty to elders, rulers, and country, fairness in work and trade, and concern and compassion for others.

Another important idea -- that the world is a fairly unpredictable place -- is also very ancient. From the perspective of the patronage system this means that individual actors must be prepared to deal with unexpected circumstances. Rules and regulations do not stand as guarantees, and everything is subject to negotiation at all times. It is not the arbitrary laws that matter, but the relations between individuals and their ability to deal with each other in a just and mutually beneficial manner. What one strives for is the ability to come together successfully with others and establish *guan xi*, a relationship based on respect and hierarchical ordering. This indifference to attempts at regulation may be traced to an ancient recognition that the future is unwritten:

[B]oth the *Bardo Thödol* [the Tibetan Book of the Dead] and the *I Ching* denounce any deterministic approach to reality. They do not say what is going to happen. They do not forecast what will take place. That is why they are not based on the causality principle. They are based on the synchronicity principle, which is an acausal connecting principle (Lee 1984: 5).

However, this lack of determinacy is tempered by the recognition that all moral actors are obligated to operate in a manner that is not detrimental to other actors they encounter. That is, an individual with true understanding recognises that the behaviour that benefits one most is that which is of benefit to others:

The wise man is always good at helping people, so that none are cast out; he is always good at saving things, so that none are thrown away. This is called applied intelligence (Lao Tzu 1983: poem 27).

This is not conceived in the abstract, for the benefit that accrues to the wise man is not to be found in some future paradise, but rather is founded upon a *quid pro quo* basis. There is more here than pragmatism, for it is part of the system of establishing and maintaining *guan xi*. The wise man helps others, but he expects help, or loyalty and support, in return. *Guan xi* relies upon the expectation of a genuine feeling of connectedness. For example, in return for sponsoring my research in China, it was expected that I would in turn provide help in translating my sponsor's work into English and attempt to find a Western publisher. It was not a matter of being something which I *ought to* do, but of something I *must* do, and not because I have an obligation, but because we have a relationship. An obligation may be said to arise from the relationship, but it is the relationship that is the primary factor. Based on my experience and observations, the relationship functions in such a way that the two parts of the dyad treat each other as close friends (*hao peng you*) who are motivated more by good will towards each other than by any hope of personal gain. While they may truly be friends, and the economic aspect of the relationship usually is not remarked upon, both understand that they are not simply friends. Rather, the economic obligation is reinforced through frequent references to the strength of the friendship, and the use of terms like *ge-ge* (elder brother) and *di-di* (younger brother) in reference to each other. This hierarchical terminology emphasises the unequal nature of the relationship and indicates who stands in the dominant role.

How do we account for the role of socialist morality within this context? In works such as To See Ourselves: Comparing Traditional Chinese and American Cultural Values (Pan 1988), we find that traditional values are persistent within peasant communities. However, an

examination of the traditional ideas that are most persistent indicates that they find parallels within Maoist thought. The idea of chastity for women is often reinterpreted in terms of the one child policy, even though the original ideal applied to widows. Ideals of frugality and hard work fit well with the concept of the New Socialist Man, and the importance of kindness and generosity are reflected in the modern Chinese ideal of mutual assistance (*hu xiang bang zhu*). This was confirmed by my own research in Heilongjiang province. I interviewed 50 people in the village (population 430) where I lived about traditional values.² Forty of them agreed that "generosity and virtues" (*ren yi dao de*) were still desirable, and half of those stated that this was also a socialist value. More telling perhaps were the responses to the ideals of "benevolent father and filial son" and "submission to authority" (*fu ci zi xiao* and *shun cong zun zhang*). Half of those interviewed agreed with the former ideal and 70% agreed or partly agreed with the importance of the latter. This evidence is suggestive of the resilience of cultural mores in accounting for the practice and significance of *guan xi*.

Popular Ethics

An important aspect of Chinese popular ethics is the apparent (to the Western observer) absence of emphasis upon personal autonomy. The Western concept of individuality is essentially at odds with the traditional Chinese idea of the paramountcy of the family and the importance of collective agreement, collective action, and collective benefit and fault. The paternal characterisation of social relations is attributable to China's Confucian heritage, and "all people are so pre-programmed to certain kinds of action that [even] monks cannot help but re-establish shadow family networks in their temples, in spite of their best efforts to avoid the lay world" (Munro 1977: 26). The idea that people are pre-programmed may be overstating the case somewhat, and the concepts of free will and individual responsibility are not absent from Chinese society. However, they are less central to the justification of individual actions. Individual acts tend to be more readily explained in terms of the directives of the state or the community. This is argued concisely by Sun:

² These interviews were conducted during the second six months of fieldwork, in the fall of 1997. Informants were questioned about a range of expressions of traditional values, including relations between men and women, the duty to have children and the moral superiority of peasants over merchants. I interviewed precisely 30 men and 20 women, ranging in age from 27 to 64. Twenty of the men and 13 of the women were over 50. All the people I interviewed were members of the Guan clan. The interviews proved impossible to conduct in private so other family members who were present influenced the answers given. Also, I would sometimes have to explain the expressions further in order that the informant understood their meaning. Obviously, the data that I gathered has severe limitations. A breakdown by gender, age, occupation, etc. awaits further research in a more controlled setting.

In this sense, a Chinese individual, far from being a distinct and separate *individuum* is conceivable largely in the continuum of 'two persons'. The Chinese anthropologist Francis L.K. Hsu argues that 'the concept of personality is an expression of the Western ideal of individualism' but that 'the meaning of being human is found in interpersonal relationships'. . . . If One is understood as a non-self-sufficient 'body', the Other is then understood as the party whom one has to match in a paired relation (*duifang*) (Sun 1991: 4).

There is a duality in this concept which is widespread throughout Chinese thought.

Just as the recognition of the need to treat others well (see below) cannot be reduced to a Christian-like ethic, so the desire to avoid casting out people is not necessarily motivated by a Marxian sense of egalitarianism. On the contrary, the reality of inequity as natural and unavoidable is an important component of popular Chinese ethics. This is illustrated clearly in the *Dao De Ching* :

For indeed there are things
That must move ahead,
While others must lag;
And some that feel hot,
While others feel cold;
And some that are strong,
While others are weak;
And vigorous ones,
With others worn out (Lao Tzu 1983: poem 29).

Furthermore, this passage implies a complementary duality believed to exist in all ways at all times that is essential to the proper functioning of the world. It is not only natural, but also necessary that there exist in social relations those who are in a dominant position and those who are in a subordinate position. This aspect of social life is elaborated in dyads that encourage respect and obligation. However, dyadic relations are not conceived of in terms of a Cartesian dualism, involving opposition and conflict, but rather a yin/yang complementarity. Therefore, the patronage system that emerges out of the hierarchical relationships is perfectly comprehensible in the normal functioning of social relations.

As the relation between two individuals is usually conceived of as either ruler-minister or elder brother-younger brother, there is an obligation that extends both ways. While the one in a dominant position is obliged to be fair, the one in the subordinate position is obliged to show respect and provide support. This means that the subordinate is expected to show respect through willingness to provide financial support, to do work on behalf of the elder brother and to defer to the elder brother in matters of how to go about negotiating contacts and contracts, or in setting up

other social relations. The elder brother may be dominant because he/she has something to offer, because of age, or because of a senior administrative position.

The first obligation of the younger brother is to establish *ren qing* (sentiment). This is done, more than any other way, through food. The importance of food in the negotiation of social relations cannot be over-emphasised. Gifts of food are standard and it is necessary to always offer tea and fruit to guests. If this is not done it is either an insult or an indication of a lack of any formally constituted social relation between the actors involved. That is, it indicates a lack of *guan xi*. Essentially, the subordinate actor builds a relationship through gifts of food, taking the dominant individual out to dinner and having the elder brother in to take tea and fruit, or later a full meal, at home. The importance of food in the negotiation of Chinese social relations has been dealt with in a number of works (see Chang 1977).

Relations between friends can also be understood in terms of *guan xi*. If you are not friends, you lack *guan xi* and there is no obligation to assist. The first obligation is still to establish *ren qing*. However, it is *guan xi* in the sense of a relationship, not just a useful connection. This is a somewhat confusing aspect, but it is important to realise that one has *guan xi* with friends as well as with other social actors. The difference is that you are friends first, and thus gain useful *guan xi*. In other social realms, it is a mutually beneficial relationship that is established along with protestations of friendship. *Guan xi* is a dominant concern partly because of the different shades of meaning that the term implies. Most actors want to have *guan xi* (close relations) with their friends, and *guan xi* (useful connections) throughout the social realm.

If you are old enough (like a senior professor) this is evidence that you have behaved with rectitude, for, according to the *Tai Shang Kan Ying Bien* good and evil are rewarded and punished by the Supreme Deity's control of one's life span (Ching 1993: 216). Senior individuals are justified in their actions by the popular ethic which assumes that the older you are the more virtuous, and that your actions are therefore difficult to question. However, an individual does not have *carte blanche* to act just because of age or seniority. There is an equally important Confucian ethic that constrains one's actions:

To regard everyone as an important guest, to manage the people as one would assist at a sacrifice, not to do to others what you would not have them do to you (Analects 15:23, quoted in Ching 1993: 57).

This dictum should not be simply interpreted as a Chinese Golden Rule. Everyone is connected within society, but those from outside are not necessarily subject to the same strictures or protections. There is a general sense that one should help one's neighbours, which arises out of

the thought of both Mencius and Confucius. Yet this is not generally held to be a universal obligation. The abbot of a Taoist monastery told me on Qian Shan that “Taoism is not for Westerners. It is only for Chinese.” It is often acknowledged that the Chinese system is not meant for foreigners, and it is expected that most foreigners cannot master it and have no desire to do so. However, to remain in China one must at least make an effort to master the system. Essentially, the moral strictures will be extended to those who understand and operate within them. A foreigner who acts properly will be treated properly. Proper behaviour means making the effort to cultivate *guan xi*.

Fear and Loathing in Shenyang

I travelled to China to conduct ethnographic research in the north-east, once called Manchuria. I had previously lived in north-east China as an English teacher for one year, and had made arrangements to come back to the same area for research purposes with sponsorship provided by the Chinese Studies department of a regional university in the city of Shenyang. While I did enjoy an official invitation, this in no way provided me with any influence upon the administrative authorities. I arrived in Shenyang in the fall of 1995 and made my way to the university. At the foreign affairs office the administrative staff were not expecting me, and in fact had not processed my application fully. They had only just that day received approval of my invitation from the Public Security Bureau. I managed to locate someone from the Chinese Studies department who knew that I was coming and he convinced them to give me a room. They did not want me to stay there because they were not expecting me and thus I caused them extra work, even though they were supposed to accommodate me. Once I was supported by someone known to them this mitigated against their reluctance to assist me. In essence I was able to borrow a bit of *guan xi*. However, they immediately began requesting various minor administrative fees for which there was no clear explanation. There was no proper way for me to question these fees or request an explanation of their purpose without creating an uncomfortable situation in which I was clearly subordinate.

The individual from my sponsoring department left without saying anything to me about what I should do next. I waited for someone to tell me when we would meet to discuss my arrangements. I quickly discovered that no one in the Foreign Affairs Office knew anything about my situation. It was not a matter of them not caring, but rather that they did not have anything to care about. I was an unknown quantity without any relation to them. It was unclear what my status was, and to the extent that we did have a relationship, it was solely economic,

since I was someone who paid sponsorship fees and rent. In that regard I was of low status, since they had expected me to rent an apartment and I had instead opted for a dorm room. Worse, I had asked for a roommate (in hopes of improving my language skills), which was the lowest rent possible. The possibility that they saw me as something of a milch cow, and that I was not meeting expectations, was apparent in their reaction to my request. They laughed, and tried to convince me that I would be better off with a suite of rooms.

It was in meeting with the department administrator that I encountered my greatest obstacles. His main concern was not with knowledge, but with improving his position. His idea of research was to have me read and translate his works and assist him in getting them published in the West. In addition, the fees that we had agreed upon before I came were apparently subject to further negotiation. The initial agreement had involved paying a foreign scholar's fee in exchange for sponsorship and language instruction. I was informed after I arrived that I would also have to pay a rather large amount in U.S. dollars to the local governments of the districts in which I was planning to conduct research. This was simply a fee for permission to conduct research. Furthermore, I was told that I would have to pay a regular foreign student's tuition for language instruction, in addition to the scholar's fee.

I subsequently learned that this fee for the local administrations was not standard operating procedure at all. I also learned that the amounts I was being requested to pay for rent, sponsorship and language classes were far in excess of what was required at other institutions. In sum, I was being taken for every penny they could get out of me. Unfortunately, I felt constrained since I was dependent upon the good will of my sponsors. Without them, I could not get the residence permit I needed to stay in China and conduct my research. However, since I had no *guan xi*, they felt no obligation towards me.

There was some room for negotiation of the terms on my part. I was attempting to research Manzu shamanism. Strictly speaking, shamanism is illegal in China for the majority Han and therefore it is not appropriate to study it since, if it is illegal, it cannot be officially acknowledged to exist. Therefore, since it does not exist, there is nothing to study. Shamanism practised by non-Han minority groups is not actually illegal, but according to the administrator it is considered marginal and is discouraged by the authorities (when I eventually got into the field I found that this was not true, and that indeed the local government helped to sponsor shamanic rituals). My desire to study the Manzu people was welcome, but shamanism was a bit riskier and since I had no *guan xi*, my supervisor was not willing to take a chance on my behalf. I was not in a position to argue vehemently nor could I get around his refusal to allow me to conduct

officially the research I was really interested in. It was possible to get permission to study the social organisation of the Manzu and then observe the shamanizing on my own, but if the Public Security Bureau confronted me I would be on my own. However, if I had had the time to develop a relationship and engage in mutual assistance (e.g. translate his articles into English) things probably would have been different. However, I lacked a sophisticated understanding of how to conduct myself in the situation, and I was also short on time and financial resources.

In comparison to the Confucian/Maoist ideals of fairness in work and trade, and concern and compassion for others, it may seem as if this administrator was acting outside the bounds of morality. However, this is not the case due to the absence of *guan xi*. The lack of a relationship within the Confucian hierarchy placed our interaction within a morally neutral zone, governed if anything by Deng Xiao Ping's dictum "to get rich is glorious". Our (not just my) lack of *guan xi* not only meant that I lacked leverage, but it also meant that we did not stand in relation to each other as social actors *qua* human beings. We lacked a relationship that contained elements of human feelings.

A tale similar to my own was related to me by another foreigner at the university in Shenyang. A graduate student from another Canadian university's history department had travelled to Shenyang to conduct archival research through the same Chinese university with which I was dealing. The keys to the archives were literally held by a Chinese professor in the history department who required that the foreign student take a course from him at a substantial fee before being allowed access to the archives. The student disputed the necessity of the course, but in the end capitulated even though he was only fluent in written Chinese, and not in spoken Mandarin. The friend who related these events to me felt that this was graft, pure and simple. When I questioned some other Chinese friends about the incident, they concurred in questioning the fee, but were equally certain that as a senior professor the Chinese academic was well within his rights to expect the foreign student to defer to his judgement in terms of how the research and relationship would be conducted.

Making *Guan Xi* Work for Me

Eventually, Chinese friends I had met through other foreigners advised me that the scholar I was working with was dishonest and known for exploiting foreigners and locals alike. They convinced me that I was better off going another route. The solution to my problem was to attempt to establish relations with individuals in research institutions through people with whom I already had a friendly connection. The key here was to draw upon my friends' *guan xi* with

other individuals who could help me. Being introduced by my friends would mean that I had a connection to the researchers I was asking for help. These individuals would be obligated to support our mutual friends by assisting me. In essence, my friends gave me *guan xi*. From then on, it was my responsibility to build my own relationships, primarily through mutual feasting, research collaboration and assistance in translating or making contact with other Western scholars and institutions. These friends evinced a willingness to assist me that was not evident with my first contacts and the obstacles that the dishonest professor had described for me were non-existent under my new sponsors' tutelage. I returned to North America at this point, having spent three months in Shenyang improving my *guan xi*.

In attempting to gain access to the field, I spoke to my friend Mu Dai who worked in the philosophy department of the Liaoning Academy of Social Science (L.A.S.S.). He in turn put me in touch with the co-ordinator of the Foreign Affairs Office of the Heilongjiang Academy of Social Science (H.A.S.S.) and the director of the history institute at L.A.S.S., who specialised in Manzu studies. Through this latter individual I acquired a letter of invitation to return to China as a visiting scholar. This allowed me to secure a visa. Beyond that I was responsible for myself and could expect no assistance from the L.A.S.S.

I was indebted to the director and it was incumbent upon me to take him out to dinner. I also brought him some American cigarettes once when I met with him, although I was quite awkward about it and I believe that insofar as prestations are determined by form as well as intention, it may have seemed more a bribe than a gift. However, he accepted them with good grace. Interestingly, my attempt to treat him to dinner failed and in fact he insisted on taking me out for dinner. This seemed odd since I was asking him for help, but he wanted me to meet his co-workers and insisted that I was his guest. In this case he was acting as the patron of the entire group, taking us all to lunch and dispensing largesse derived from his departmental budget. Although I was indebted to him, the flexibility of *guan xi* and his mastery of it allowed him to assert his dominant position by treating me. This is rather similar to the time that my neighbour in Shenyang took me out for dinner and drinks, although we were already friends, because he wanted to ask for my assistance in enrolling his daughter in English language courses back in Canada. He was invoking a more formal *guan xi* structure in order to allow him to make a request that might have been seen as burdensome if presented informally. Again it was a matter of form having significance equal to sentiment or intention.

The second part of my solution came through the contact at H.A.S.S. They arranged for me to meet with a professor (Mr. Sun) at Mudanjiang Teachers' College (M.T.C.) who worked

with the Manzu (although I later learned that he did not provide the best entrée to the village since he had videotaped their ceremonies and never provided the village with copies). A scholar from H.A.S.S. (Mr. Huang) accompanied me to Mudanjiang to meet Mr. Sun. That night Huang, Sun and I had a large dinner involving many kinds of fish and numerous teachers from M.T.C. The three of us proceeded to Ning An to meet with local scholars and members of the cultural bureau to discuss the best location for my research. Huang, Sun and and I had a large dinner at a Korean restaurant with local scholars and Manzu elders, for which I later received a bill. This was a matter of cultivating local goodwill. The next day Huang, Sun, two local officials from minority affairs, one official from the cultural bureau (the latter three and Sun having *guan xi* with each other) and I went to the Public Security Bureau (P.S.B.) to get permission for my research from the cultural affairs division of the P.S.B. Then Mr. Huang, Mr. Sun, the member of the cultural bureau (Mr. Xie), a P.S.B. officer and I went to Ning Xi, the county seat. There we met with the local P.S.B. to discuss my plans, gain their approval and decide if the village we had selected was appropriate. These connections all needed to be consulted in order to show them proper respect, or give them face. In addition, by working together on this matter all those involved were cultivating *guan xi*, both new and old.

Finally, accompanied by a representative of the county P.S.B. (cultural affairs) Huang, Sun, Xie, the Ning An P.S.B. official and I all set off for a small Manzu village to present ourselves to the local party members and the family I was to stay with. As far as I could tell, this was presented to the villagers as a *fait accompli*. As we ate lunch an announcement over the village public address system informed the community of my presence and enjoined them to welcome me and aid me in my research. I had thought that the success of my research depended more upon my own acumen than official pronouncements. I had hoped to slip in unobtrusively and without the weight of official sanction behind me, as I feared this might prejudice attitudes about the nature of my research. This luxury was taken from me by the loudspeaker, but I later discovered that it was really by negotiating relationships carefully that I made the most progress.

The village had been selected for me in discussions with local scholars and officials on the basis of its suitability to meet the research needs that I had attempted to express in my fractured Chinese. Local scholars such as Mr. Sun had visited it, along with many other villages in the area, for short periods. I was the first researcher to propose conducting longitudinal research (initially for six months) in the village. It is true that the location was an officially recognised Manzu village, but by no means was it a favoured site for research or the standard place to which foreigners were sent. Undoubtedly it was chosen with agendas other than my own

in mind. These agendas may have been political, but the most important factor was the influence of Mr. Sun, who had visited the village and felt an affinity for the inhabitants. There was *guan xi* between Sun and the villagers. However, as I subsequently discovered, the leaders of the village did not return Mr. Sun's *ren qing* to the degree he might have expected. I feel that it is important to stress that the assistance of these government officials and academics was immensely important to me, for they smoothed my way in the village and gave official approval to my research. This meant that the local officials were cooperative, and even helpful. This did not necessarily impress the average inhabitants, but neither were they obviously put off by my presence or the official sanction for my research.

As Gladney (1998: 3) points out, it is common to be restricted and even accompanied by local academics or officials on research trips in China. On my brief foray to visit the Tungusic cousins of the Manzu, commonly called Oroqen and Evenki, I was accompanied at all times by a member of the Heilongjiang Academy of Social Science. His presence was necessary both to assist me and to control my activities. I was aware of this and accepted it as their right. Unlike Gladney's experience in the 1980s, I was not prevented from spending a long period of time in one village (*ibid*: 6). Except for my first and penultimate days in Yi Lan Gang, I was never joined by people from outside the village. The question of what the inhabitants themselves wished to convey to me about traditional Manzu culture is another matter. Certainly they were sophisticated enough to recognise that they were presenting an image of themselves to me. I base this on the fact that many of my informants referred to books about Manzu culture and history (published by the Minority Affairs Institute in Beijing and by academic publishing houses in China) in order to answer my questions. However, even when they were discussing questions of method or meaning among themselves, without being prompted by my questions, they would utilise the written works that they had available. There was no official programme to promote Manzu 'traditions' other than that carried out by the clan.

While a Manzu village, I do not intend to suggest that the life of the inhabitants of Yi Lan Gang is perfectly representative of the Manzu. In subsequent chapters I will discuss the research I was able to conduct in other locations, which demonstrates that there is a good deal of variety within and indeed among the Manzu, despite their and the state's conception of them as an ethnic group. Life in this one village can provide insights into the meaning of being Manzu, but it is not a stand-in for the whole. As I wanted to investigate identity and shamanism, it was necessary to concentrate on a locality that practised shamanism. There are many other villages in the north-east whose population is predominantly Manzu. Some of these villages are designated as Manzu

villages and some are not. In fact, this designation extends beyond the village level, and there are Manzu counties and towns as well. I was able to find works describing these other locales, or interview people from these locations, or in some cases visit them myself. In some of these places shamanism is also practised, in various forms.

While in Yi Lan Gang I made a point of visiting nearby villages, most of which contained a Manzu population. All of these villages operated on the personal responsibility system of land use, with market gardening and livestock management the primary economic activities. Generally, there were no substantial differences between the villages, and actually Yi Lan Gang is a fairly typical village of the north-east of China. It is not terribly wealthy, nor is it poverty stricken in the way that villages in the Chinese interior tend to be. Of course, because of special considerations arising from being Manzu a village, it is not entirely representative, but it is not for the most part an exceptional place.

Once I was established I was free to speak with whomever I chose provided they were willing to speak with me. I never actually found myself unable to elicit information from villagers, or frustrated in the course of an interview by intransigence or hostility. On the contrary, the people of Yi Lan Gang were remarkably helpful, with the exception of shy children, many of whom I reduced to hysterical fits of laughter with the simplest of Mandarin phrases. Mandarin was the field language, for as I explain in the following chapters, it is the quotidian language of the contemporary Manzu. I picked up some of the language when I first came to China to teach at an agricultural university outside of Shenyang from August 1993 to July 1994. With the help of a private tutor I was able to develop a basic grasp of the spoken language. This was in an area of Manzu farmers, and close to the tomb of Nurhaci, founder of the Manzu power. Later, I studied Mandarin for a term (January to May 1996) at Wake Forest University and for another term at the Shenyang Normal School (August to November 1996), while I was conducting research on the Manzu in Liaoning province. The officially sanctioned dialect is indistinguishable from the dialect of the north-east, and thus I was able to communicate without difficulty. I was able to spend two six month periods in Yi Lan Gang, first from December 1996 to May 1997 and then in the fall and winter of 1997. The process that brought me to Yi Lan Gang began in 1993, when I first arrived in Shenyang and began to meet Manzu. As I struggled to both learn the language and arrange and conduct research in China, I became better prepared to spend time working in the village. There was an element of serendipity in my progress, for I did not plan to encounter the complications that taught me proper social behaviour.

When I was attempting to (re)arrange my research after the initial disaster, and later when I was in the field, it was often the case that I would meet people through my friends with whom I could see no point in developing *ren qing* (sentiment). However, I would accept the suggestions of my friends present and toast with them or put food on their plates and light cigarettes for them. Often, it turned out that they had something to offer me or were in a position of influence such that politics required the cultivation of *guan xi*. Beyond that, I was improving relations between my friends and these others by giving them face. This was especially true in the countryside where I was such an unusual social phenomenon in myself. However, I found it difficult at times, because I felt somewhat on display. I often found myself repeatedly answering the same questions, some of which were rather insulting (e.g. "Does your wife have a boyfriend while you are away?"). Nevertheless, one individual whom I found particularly perplexing revealed to me after numerous encounters that he was a shaman in his clan and allowed me access to a shamanic song book in his possession which was over 100 years old. I believe that this individual was testing me to see if I could behave in a proper and respectful fashion, and thus allow us to establish a proper relationship. Once this was done, he felt comfortable about revealing information that was important to him and that he knew would be of value to me.

Guan xi as a method of negotiation in the social realm is not about finding a way to get around the system or to use people, but it is about finding a way to establish a relationship and thus deal with people. This is done by following the popular ethics which establish a hierarchical system of domination and subordination whose Ur-form is filial piety. *Guan xi* is developed through mutual assistance and the shared meals that are central to most activities in China. It cannot be acquired overnight, and is a matter for negotiation in a dialogic fashion. It relies heavily upon mutual friends who bring people together, and thus allow the web of *guan xi* to be extended for each individual while strengthening their own *guan xi* with them both. It is not just friendship, for the hierarchical element is always present, if only as a part of the social actors' understanding of social networks. The convivial elements are essential as a part of traditional behaviour, but the object includes the facilitation of one's own objectives. Thus the use of *guan xi* is an economic activity, and a social activity.

Guan xi is also the close connections between true friends who gladly assist and support each other. Friends often call upon each other for assistance in going through the back door. Friends are involved in convivial activities and frequently present each other with gifts of food, liquor and household goods. In my experience, individuals with *guan xi*, whatever the origins of their relationship, often refer to each other as good friends, and mix business with pleasure.

Thus, the line between friendship and useful connections is constantly blurred. In this there is revealed an element of pragmatism. It is expected that you may use your close connections with your *germenr* (buddies) for practical purposes. Even in relations between *germenr* it is understood that there is an element of hierarchy. Age seniority is always clarified and remains in the background. One of the first questions typically asked by new acquaintances concerns respective age. For members of the same age cohort hierarchy may be established in terms of some other criteria such as education or employment. However, these types of friends tend to be less concerned about hierarchy in their relations. Nevertheless, they use their relations for pragmatic reasons just as freely as in more hierarchical relationships. The lesson for the foreign participant in Chinese society is to put aside any reluctance felt about calling upon friends for support. To develop and use *guan xi* is to participate in Chinese society.

Traditional values have exhibited resilience in urban and rural areas of north-east China. The practice of *guan xi* can be seen to arise out of adherence to familiar practices in combination with the demands of the present. However, how the phenomenon emerges depends on other factors within particular social relationships. Oftentimes *guan xi* is concerned with the good feelings between friends, but it may involve the cultivation of useful connections for the long-term, or simply the attempt to resolve practical problems in the day-to-day. To understand *guan xi* as one encounters it requires that the social actor, foreign or native, carry with them the knowledge of a "practical philosopher" in order to negotiate effectively in concert with numerous, sometimes conflicting, factors.

Understanding the importance of hierarchical relations also contributes to an understanding of Manzu shamanism. The ancestors are central to the shamanism I researched, and respect for the values they represent is the focus of the shamanic practice I discovered in Yi Lan Gang village. The persistence of tradition in China helps to explain the factors behind the enduring Manzu identity. Shamanism is a way of cultivating *guan xi* with the ancestral spirits, and many elements of the shamanic ritual recapitulate the obligatory behaviour in an archetypal *guan xi* dyad.

As a Westerner, I found my personal ethics in conflict with the approach I have described above. I took for granted the value of meritocracy from a background in which individualism and self-reliance are the most important virtues. I thought that the last option available is drawing upon one's connections or relationships for support. On the contrary, asking for help is reserved for times of dire emergency. In the conduct of one's day-to-day affairs or business (and ethnography can be construed as my "business") it is necessary to rely on personal ability to

make one's way in the world. This seemed to directly conflict with the Chinese system. It is possible to argue that arrogance prompted my initial decision to attempt to conduct fieldwork without the assistance of friends and connections. However, I quickly discovered the necessity of modifying my personal stance in favour of adapting to the indigenous system. If my original approach was arrogant, then my change in attitude may be seen as an attempt to respect the culture of the people with whom I am working. This does not mean abandoning my own values, but rather understanding the function of another ethical system and adapting to it.

My research goals provided me with an initial exposure to a particularly significant social phenomenon that I was to encounter again and again in north-east China. As Yang (1994) notes, the study of *guan xi* as a pragmatic issue is widespread in China. Ironically, because one cannot be "outside it" to understand it, *guan xi* has become a topic for study by foreigners. The practical philosophy of the Chinese and the academic's concerns fundamentally diverge. In retrospect, I have no doubt that my use of *guan xi* was awkward at best, and often inept. Fortunately, I had good guidance throughout my fieldwork, and for that I am truly grateful.

Chapter One: Overview of the Manzu

Introduction

The Manzu³ are a Tungusic speaking people who live primarily within the Chinese provinces of Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang, in what is known as Manchuria or in China as Dongbei. A significant number of Manzu are also found in Hebei province, Beijing and the Xinjiang Uigur Autonomous region, while others are scattered throughout the country. They are not the only Tungus group in China and share many cultural similarities with the Evenki, Hezhe, Oroqen and Xibe. Unlike these minority groups, who number in the thousands or at best tens of thousands, the Manzu today are about 10 million. This is a remarkably recent circumstance, and is indicative of a major resurgence of Manzu ethnicity. Those designated as Manzu increased 128% between 1982 and 1990 due to a massive upswing in self-identification as Manzu, among those who had previously presented themselves as members of the Han majority.

In order to understand the situation that presently faces the Manzu, some basic facts about modern China need to be established. The population of China is approximately 1.2 to 1.5 billion. Of these, 91% are Han Chinese, or the “ethnic” Chinese. How reasonable it is to consider the Han all one is an open question (see Gladney 1994). The point is that for the Manzu and other ethnic minorities the Han represent the predominant and often oppressive “other”. The ethnic minorities live for the most part in marginal spaces (mountainous regions, deserts, jungles) or, as with the Manzu, in border regions and new territories. Many of the 80 million Chinese who live in extreme poverty are members of minorities. The Communist party cadres in minority regions still tend to be predominantly Han.

The Chinese nation-state has existed in various forms since the emergence of the Qin dynasty some 2200 years ago. While there is debate about the nature of so-called pre-modern nationalism in China (see Townsend 1992; Duara 1993), the coercive aspect of *Zhongguo* (the Central State) has been felt by minority groups throughout this long history. The Chinese policy towards other nationalities or ethnic groups may be summarised as: treat them as hazards while they remain without, treat them as subjects when they are brought within. The approach has always been that the barbarians (*yi*) or minority groups (*minzu*, from the Japanese *minzoku*, a

³ A note is in order here regarding the terms I use to refer to the Manzu. They are generally referred to in English as the Manchu. However, this is derived from a previous variation of their name (in Mandarin Chinese) which approximates their name in the Manzu language. Prior to *Manchu* they were known (in Mandarin) as *Manzhou*. In the case of these earlier names, the Qing rulers chose the Chinese characters used to write the name. Thus, none of these terms, strictly speaking, are exactly the term as it would be in Manzu. However, Manzu is the term by which these people refer to themselves today, and therefore it seems most appropriate.

term introduced by Sun Yat-sen) must assimilate to Han culture. Failure to do so is taken as evidence of their inferiority.

For the Manzu, the problem of their ethnic identity is complicated by many factors, not the least of these being the conquest of China which they accomplished first in the 13th century as the Jurchen-Jin dynasty, and then between 1644 and circa 1700 as the Qing empire. Even prior to the success of the Jin dynasts, the Jurchen were exposed through trading and raiding to the material and intellectual riches of the Song dynasty. The brief Jurchen rule of northern China before the Mongol invasions intensified this exposure to the point where the Manzu became reliant upon many of the products of China (including scribes, teachers and priests), and thus the long process of cross-fertilisation began. The Manzu brought with them many military, bureaucratic and administrative innovations, and not the least of these was an inversion of the social order that placed Han Chinese at the lowest level. However, the Manzu, especially during the Qing, came to be more and more like the people they had conquered, until even many of their distinct contributions were identified as Han, and the true origin of these innovations was forgotten.

For example, the *saman jiao* (shamanism) of the Manzu was adopted by various Han in some parts of north China from the Qing court ritual and from Manzu garrisons, but it is not today recognised as being of non-Han origin. Even in name it is not known as *saman jiao* but as *tiao da shen* (spirit dance). Nevertheless, it is the practice of shamanism that remains as one of the most distinctive activities identified with Manzu ethnicity (even the characters for Man in Manzu and *man* in *saman* are identical). The Qianlong emperor, recognising the importance of *saman jiao*, attempted to control the influence of the shamans by ordering the codification of the ritual in written form in the mid-18th century. It was also under the early emperors that the ban against Han immigration into the Manzu homelands was promulgated and enforced. However, the degeneration of Qing rule after circa 1850 led to the relaxation of the ban, and subsequently 150 years of Han colonisation of Dongbei.

Throughout the Qing Empire and after, the question of identity became much more complicated. Originally, the Manzu designation was a political one invented by the emperor Hong Taiji which, in addition to the Jurchen who were at the core of the Qing, included Mongols, Koreans, Han and other Tungus peoples. The definition of Manzu at that time could be summed up as banner men, or military slaves of the Qing emperor. As the Manzu came to adjust to the conditions of their existence as conquerors and ceased their period of territorial expansion (after the 18th century), the emperors acted to convert the designation Manzu from a

circumstantialist definition centred around toughness, loyalty and the conquest into an ethnic definition centred around so-called primordial characteristics of a shared heredity, language and customs. This was an effort to preserve the core Manzu values and sense of historical mission which stood in opposition to what was seen as a corrupt and decadent Chinese culture. It was a rearguard action fought in the face of the process of the blending of cultures that the common people experienced. At this time many Han, Koreans and Mongols were expelled from the Manzu ranks. However, it was impossible to prevent the Manzu garrisons from engaging in social relations with their neighbours. Since the Manzu were often impoverished due to the corruption of the government in the 19th century they were forced to go out into the world and leave the protection of their garrison enclaves which had served as islands of ethnicity as well as centres of occupation. This primordial approach to ethnicity had a lasting influence upon how the Manzu conceive of themselves, both in terms of cultural identity and how they understand ethnicity. In combination with other factors, it has strengthened the self-concept of the Manzu as tough and fearless and still today they promulgate a primordialist understanding of ethnicity.

During this period the Qianlong emperor codified the practice of shamanism within the Qing court. The argument made by the major Russian ethnographer of the Manzu, Sergei Shirokogoroff, is that "the formalization of Manchu ritual did not occur on genuine soil. In fact, by this time the imperial family was already under a strong Chinese influence, and what is found is not an exact picture of the original Manchu complex" (1935: 204). Shirokogoroff (1935) and other more recent authors (Crossley 1997, Humphrey 1993) have argued that the act of committing rituals to a written form had the effect of petrifying the complex and stifling innovation, spontaneous creation and vitality. This may be true for the Qing court. The relevance of this problem for the Manzu peasants in the north-east is one of the questions the present work seeks to examine.

After 1850, the government essentially abandoned the Manzu garrisons and ceased supporting them, simply hoping that they would melt away and merge with the larger society. Yet, as was demonstrated in the Taiping War, the Manzu commoners were seen as outsiders and hated occupiers and so had ethnic identity thrust upon them in a haphazard manner. The Taipings identified the Manzu as a people, and as an enemy. Not only did they make the identification, but they also acted upon it, hunting Manzu and murdering them wholesale. Manzu banner men were encouraged by circumstance to see themselves as Manzu first and banner men second, and took whatever steps they could to preserve themselves. This experience was repeated in the nationalist revolution that led to the first Chinese republics. In the period of radicalisation of the Chinese

nationalist movement between 1905 and 1911 the Manzu were frequent targets for assassination (it is ironic that the Han Chinese who today face Moslem separatist terror in fact pioneered the terrorist techniques with which we are all presently familiar).

The climax came in 1911 and 1912 when Manzu banners, who had received no military training for generations and essentially lived in ghettos in the cities throughout China, were slaughtered in their tens of thousands. While some made their way back to Manchuria, the majority had neither the means nor the inclination to return to what was for them a foreign land (Crossley 1990: 215). They chose to lay low, conceal their ethnicity and preserve themselves. The supposed haven of Manchuria proved illusory, as the warlord system of rule provided no protection to the Manzu there and opened the region to more immigration from elsewhere in the republic. In time the Japanese arrived and during this period the people were unable to communicate with other clan members in distant locales. Large gatherings were forbidden, which had the effect of preventing the shamans from carrying out the rituals that were central to the community. In addition, the Japanese actively suppressed cultural expression, as they desired to replace the indigenous culture of Manchuria with Japanese culture. Hard on the heels of the Japanese came the Civil War (1946-1949) and the triumph of the Communists.

With the liberation in 1949, the Manzu enjoyed a nine year grace period in the heady and idealistic days of the first decade of the new China. Again, they were able to express their culture without fear. However, with the advent of the Great Leap Forward in 1958, and then the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1966, the Manzu experienced what they refer to as 20 lost years. The objective of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution – to smash the four olds (old ideas, old habits, old customs and old methods) – was particularly aimed at the minorities. Periods of political radicalisation in China are hazardous for those who are not of the majority, as they are likely to harbour sentiments of ethnicity, to feel a link with history that would impede their socialist transformation or to look sceptically on life from the margins to which society has assigned them. It was at this time that the Manzu shamans were forced to give up their practices, Manzu poets were rusticated, traditional clan structures and banner or administrative units were struck down and important economic activities such as ginseng cultivation and deer ranching were collectivised and essentially devastated.

Today, the Manzu in Dongbei alone number about nine million. The urban Manzu seem indistinguishable from the Han who (along with Russians, Uighurs and Hui) began flooding into Manchuria in the late Qing dynasty and have come to far outnumber the indigenous population groups (which include Koreans, Mongols, and other Tungus groups). It appears that the Manzu

have acculturated extensively. But this appearance may be deceiving. Gladney (1991) claims that contemporary urban Manzu call upon rural shamans for healing rituals, and I have encountered evidence of the retention of Manzu identity within the cities of the north-east as well as in the villages. This is mainly in the form of self-identification, literature (poetry) and commercial ventures (e.g. Manzu style restaurants). A contemporary rediscovery of Manzu identity by recent generations of people who now choose to identify themselves as Manzu has emerged. Many Manzu speak of parents or grandparents who seemed to carry a secret all their lives and on their death beds would recite banner and lineage details revealing their Manzu ancestry (Crossley 1990: 216). The acculturation (or sinicization⁴, as it is styled) of the Manzu is, then, a problematic issue.

Theories of Ethnicity

Until recently, the governing assumption in Manzu studies has been that the Manzu are heavily sinicized, and that they are most easily treated in conjunction with the Han majority in China. Any evidence of a self-conscious cultural identity is understood as a recent manifestation which is part of modern processes of social change within China (Gladney 1994). Such assumptions neglect the long-standing negotiation of the meaning of being Manzu that has concerned these people for centuries. The argument presented in this work contradicts generalisations about the Manzu, and asserts that the Manzu of the north-east are very different from the Manzu of the rest of China. A close look at the formulation of cultural identity among the Manzu of Yi Lan Gang in Heilongjiang province reveals a complex and ongoing process which may challenge commonly held conceptions of both shamanism and ethnicity.

The Manzu traditionally have conceived of cultural identity and ethnicity in a manner that is different from popular conceptions in China and the West. The essential difference is that ethnicity is fluid, but cultural identity is treated as primordial (although manipulated). That is, while popular Western and Chinese (both Confucian and Marxian) social theory conceive of ethnic identity as reflecting kinship and having a predetermined and inevitable quality (Handler and Linnekin 1984), the Manzu model is strikingly divergent. For the Manzu ethnicity is something which is always open to negotiation, while cultural identity depends upon the clan and

⁴ Sinicization is a problematic term as it suggests the assimilation of the foreigner to Chinese culture. This implies Chinese culture is monolithic, rather than pluralistic and that when the Manzu or other ethnic minorities take on traits of the dominant Han majority they do so as outsiders or foreigners. This is both inaccurate and insulting to the people in question. Sinicization is a term that has arisen out of assumptions about Han dominance and is not reflexive in nature. The term implies a one-way flow of influences, which is inaccurate. A better term would be hanification, or something similar. However, conventional usage favours the former term over the latter, and for this

the symbols of the clan enacted in various ways, including shamanism. In the discussion that follows it will be evident that the Manzu have traditionally had well-developed ideas about cultural identity and the symbols that demarcate it. They have also been very comfortable with the idea that ethnic identity is changeable, or that membership in the ethnic group can be redefined. This is part of the historic process of ethnic identity formation. Ethnicity in the Western popular discourse has been accepted as naturally occurring (although this has frequently resulted in a failure to separate Western concepts of ethnicity from the use of ethnicity as an analytic tool). While it is accepted that culture is constructed, ethnicity is still partially understood as arising out of biology, even if it is not subject to biology (see Barth 1969; De Vos 1975; Smith 1981; Stack 1986).

The approach to ethnicity among the Manzu is actually not entirely inconsistent with the analytical argument put forward by Comaroff (1987). He writes that ethnicity “exists above all else as a set of relations” (*ibid*: 304). Certainly the Manzu have, as we shall see, always understood themselves as Manzu in terms of an opposite ‘other.’ Comaroff also demonstrates that the meaning and salience of ethnicity vary for social groups depending upon their place in the social order, and that historical structures impinge upon ethnicity as a form of consciousness (*ibid*: 306). The very idea of Manzu emerged as a part of the conquest process, an historical confrontation with the Han other. As we will see, the emergence, submergence and re-emergence of identities associated with the contemporary Manzu had a great deal to do with social relations and hierarchy. Comaroff, in his discussion, draws primarily upon pre-colonial and colonial Africa for his illustrations, but he does generalise to an understanding of ethnicity in a global sense. Comaroff also proposes that ethnic consciousness (membership in a social group that is a product of class hierarchy and that is defined through ethnic identity) is understood by social actors as it is “construed in shared signs and symbols” (*ibid*: 311). This is also consistent with what I encountered among the Manzu and is a key element in the way in which the Manzu construct an ethnic identity.

However, the point at which the Manzu and Comaroff appear to diverge is in the proposition that ethnicity takes on the “appearance of an autonomous force, a ‘principle’ capable of determining the course of social life” (*ibid*: 313). Comaroff has found that membership in an ethnic group affects the actors perception of the social system so that social relations are viewed through the prism of ethnicity and other aspects of those relations (e.g. class, status) seem to have been ordered by ethnicity rather than the other way around. This process is dialectical in

reason the former will be used here.

nature, and over time “reproduces and/or transforms the character of the social order itself” (*ibid*: 313). But we will see that for the Manzu ethnicity has been perceived as the product of social relations and not the producer. Even in modern times, they have readily changed ethnic identification in response to historical circumstances and particularly their relations with the dominant other, just as Comaroff found in Africa. But while Comaroff found that relations within a nested hierarchy tend to be fixed and seem natural, for the Manzu some levels of allegiance are malleable, and can be manipulated by the individual and by the ethnic group. That is, while the clan and banner retain their salience (which Comaroff identifies as totemic) the ethnic identity is only manifested by conscious choice. In recent times, it has been advantageous to do so, and the Manzu living in Yi Lan Gang have chosen to stress that aspect of their identity in a manner markedly different from the recent past.

The Manzu living in Yi Lan Gang do not spend much time discussing theories of ethnic identity or even what it means to be Manzu, except in certain contexts. It is difficult to say exactly what they mean by the term Manzu, except that it is their identity. The image of the Manzu that was presented to me in Yi Lan Gang was as something that the clan members needed to hang on to and perpetuate. There is no other way to put it except that being Manzu gives the villagers a sense of connectedness. To be Manzu is to have *guan xi*, not just with other clan members, but with all other Manzu and with spirits that help to define a Manzu identity.

Over time, critiques of social scientific assumptions about ethnic identity have emerged. In particular, the primordialist and circumstantialist debate has focussed attention on the confusion between ideas within Western culture about the sources of ethnic identity and the critical understanding of the nature of ethnicity. This debate is concerned with supposed givens and situational factors in the emergence of ethnic self-identifications (see Hechter 1986, Nagata 1981, Norton 1983, and Stack 1986 for discussions of the issues involved). These ideas are relevant to the questions considered in this essay for a number of reasons. The traditionally fluid nature of identity in the north-east lends itself especially well to an understanding of ethnicity as a circumstantial creation of the actors involved. The efforts of the later Qing emperors to control membership in the Manzu identity (see below) were largely predicated upon an appeal to primordial characteristics. This strongly affected both how the Manzu conceive of themselves today, and the formation of ethnic theory within China among the Republican and Communist theorists. Finally, the actual nature of the modern Manzu identity challenges the assumptions of both approaches, and provides insight into an alternative understanding of the nature of ethnicity.

The most important delineation of the primordialist position is that provided by Geertz (1973). The argument is that certain basic factors (place, kin, language, religion, and custom) are influential to the point of ineluctability, such that they are viewed as natural affiliations. This position maintains that ethnicity is a human universal fundamental to all societies and understood at some level by all societies. Furthermore, Geertz maintains that the “patterns of primordial identification and cleavage . . . are not fluid, shapeless, and infinitely various, but are definitely demarcated and vary in systematic ways” (*ibid.*: 268). What Geertz terms “primordial alliance” is the product of “centuries of crystallization” and is “lovingly conserved” (*ibid.*: 268). Those who subscribe to the functional-ecological (Gates 1981) or circumstantialist position have critiqued this assumption regarding primordial solidarity.

The circumstantialist position treats ethnic attachments as “epiphenomenal and malleable” (Hechter 1986: 13). Social and political conditions – which change over time – shape the expression and understanding of ethnic identity. This understanding of ethnicity tends to be expressed in terms of conflict theory and as a manifestation of power relationships (Vincent 1986). Circumstantialists see ethnic identity as becoming salient through encounters with the cultural other (Salamone 1985), categorisation by the dominant society (Green 1981) or other external means. I mention these two factors as being particularly relevant to understanding the forces at play upon the Manzu. These tend to intersect rather well with the concept known as sinicization. In the literature, it has been argued that the Manzu have wholly succumbed to the assimilative effects of sinicization. That is, in interacting with the dominant society which has tended to control the very definition of ethnicity and impose that definition through coercive means, the saliency of Manzunes was inchoate and never fully expressed except as a category to be denied or overcome either for safety’s sake or in the process of developing a socialist consciousness.

There have been attempts to blend the two approaches to ethnicity (see Castile and Kushner 1981) but even within these reconciled understandings the fount of ethnic identity is still accepted as differences in descent, place and so forth which are reinterpreted in terms of cultural awareness. Yet this begs the question, in the case at hand, of how the Manzu interpret what it means to be Manzu. What is the meaning of being Manzu for the individuals who participate in Manzunes and how do they participate in it? In other words, how do the Manzu maintain their ethnic identity? In the circumstantialist approach, the social actors in each generation may potentially manipulate ethnicity through cultural symbols to rationalise their identity (Gladney 1998: 46). Yet, as Gladney points out (*ibid.*: 47), ethnic identity is powerful,

and ideas of identity endure in the minds of actors, despite the instrumental nature of ethnicity. Gladney goes so far as to suggest that ethnicity contains a dynamism of its own. In the case of the Manzu, with their history of manipulation of cultural identity (i.e. what defines Manzunes) and ethnic identity (i.e. who are Manzu), and manipulation of identity by the state under Qing, Republican and Communist regimes, a complex picture of the genesis of ethnicity emerges.

The primordialist/circumstantialist debate asks whether social relationships or cultural and physical traits acquired at birth determine ethnic identity. The circumstantialist approach allows for conscious individual choice by social actors. However, it is quite conceivable that individuals acting dialogically with social and cultural others make cultural identities out of the materials available in a deliberate and calculating fashion. This is exhibited through participation, and through the overt recognition of the differences in the cultural other. Gladney (1998) introduces this idea and emphasises the coercive and limiting power of the state in considering the experience of the Hui (Chinese Muslims). Culture, and cultural identity, are not always consistent or even coherent, but contain numerous contradictory elements held at once and expressed at various times. As Gladney (*ibid.*: 48) suggests, ethnic identity emerges when there is agreement on what elements of cultural identity (primordial loyalties, if you will) constitute the idea of shared descent. In the following sections of this chapter I will suggest that the Manzu and other Tungusic groups did not demonstrate a concern with real ethnic distinctions between them or even at times in their relations with other peoples. This is not to suggest that they lacked a consciousness of the other, or that they were unreflective about ethnicity. On the contrary, I intend to demonstrate that identity within a pluralistic social environment was dependent upon action and self-interest in response to relational factors more than descent or interpretation. Participation tended to blur distinctions, and this understanding of social identity still influences the nature of Manzu identity among the contemporary Manzu.

Who are the Manzu?

Central to Manzu studies is the question of who are the Manzu. It has had a direct effect on decisions about how to consider the Manzu within a scholarly context (Shirokogoroff 1973: 1), yet this is not merely an academic question, for within China it is an issue that affects the relationships that the Manzu have with their compatriots and the State. It also constrains to a degree the ability of modern scholars to approach the problem of the Manzu, because so very little has been written about them, especially by foreign researchers. This is attributable to assumptions about sinicization, or the assimilation of the Manzu into Han culture. This paucity

of scholarship is as true of the Chinese until fairly recently. Prior to the end of the Cultural Revolution, considerations of the Manzu in pre- and post-liberation literature have tended to the vilification of the Manzu in general and the Qing in particular (Crossley 1997: 192). Furthermore, Chinese scholarship has been and continues to be more concerned with the past than with the contemporary Manzu.

While a fair body of work has been produced by Japanese researchers, both during their occupation of Manchuria and in the last few decades, little of this information is available in translation. Even then, it is mainly concerned with folk studies, which is to say the collection of so-called traditional practices of the past. This is also the case with Chinese efforts to study Manzu culture. Blum, in assessing perceptions of self and other in south-west China, states that academic interest in minorities is “the extreme exception” (1992: 278). I cannot completely agree with this, for I found numerous books and journals devoted to, for instance, the Tungusic peoples. However, the research topics dealt with in these works were limited to the past (see below). I can relate from personal experience the frustration of dealing with Chinese scholars who were interested only in what was done in the past, and who asserted that the contemporary Manzu have nothing left of their past traditions but rather are just like the Han Chinese. This manifested itself in an obvious fashion in the field, for it took me perhaps two months to bring the people of Yi Lan Gang to understand that I was interested in what they were doing today. They were used to dealing with Chinese scholars whose focus was exclusively on the past, and what they saw as living vestiges of the past, so that it was natural for them to assume that this was my interest also.

Chinese scholarship on the Manzu has focussed on topics such as astronomy (Fu 1994), Jin dynasty intellectuals (Yu 1996; Dong, 1995), garrison culture (Chen 1996), the eight banners (Ma, et al. 1995), folk literature (Han 1997) and shamanic epics (Fu 1995). These works make an important contribution to the understanding of Manzu history and culture. The works that deal with contemporary Manzu tend to focus more on economics (see chapter three). The living Manzu are mainly encountered in print in laudatory articles by Chinese Communist party cadres addressing the progress made by minorities towards raising their socialist consciousness and emulating their elder Han brothers. Whatever reforms have been introduced in China in the last two decades, the production of knowledge is still guided and controlled by ideological concerns that owe their origins to socialism, Han ethnic nationalism and Chinese nationalism. These issues will be dealt with in some detail later in this chapter but all three of these motives are especially strong when dealing with the former foreign rulers, the Manzu.

Some of the work of Fu Yu Guang is more applicable to developing an understanding of the shamanism of the Manzu. Fu writes that,

During memorial ceremonies and festivals, or before a war, the shaman would tell clan members legends of their origin in order to strengthen and unite clan power. Thus the morals and behaviour of the clan were first established and then strengthened Shamanism as an institution undertook the important task of maintaining and developing the clan. Shamans performed a crucial function and merited higher prestige and position. Thus, shamans have long been accredited as keepers of clan culture and perhaps one of the most highly esteemed members of the clan. Without a shaman, clans would have gradually deteriorated and become extinct (Fu 1989: 257).

The idea that shamans are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the clan is a central insight. Fu is arguing that this has been a traditional function of the shamans, and that shamanism as an institution was concerned with signifiers of cultural identity for the clan. For the Guan clan at Yi Lan Gang, shamanism maintains this function today. The question that remains to be addressed is how the shamans accomplish this task.

Emergence of the Manzu

It is difficult if not impossible to know where the Manzu originated. Nor for that matter is it easy to say who the Neolithic or bronze age people were who lived in the region we call Manchuria and which the Chinese and Manzu today refer to as Dongbei (the north-east). The argument followed in this essay is that there has been a movement back and forth, and a mixing of peoples. Nelson suggests that “[b]efore the rise of the Manchus this region was largely occupied by other Tungusic speakers, wholly or in part Manchu ancestors” (1995: 2). The evidence as summarised by Nelson indicates that the population of the region was remarkably sedentary, almost from the beginning of the Holocene, and that based on the evidence it is not necessary to derive the Neolithic population from outside the region (*ibid.*: 252). Early sites from the region display elements of a pottery complex found throughout north-eastern Asia, from Hebei to Japan and Siberia (*ibid.*: 10). Furthermore, the earliest sites tend to be agricultural village sites which “are probably not derived from China south of the Great Wall” (*ibid.*: 12). Perhaps most telling of all,

the custom of covering the face of the deceased, either with a cloth decorated with bronze bosses or with jade covering the eyes and mouth, known to have been practised by Tungusic groups, is present at various sites in the Bronze Age of Dongbei (*ibid.*: 16).

None of this evidence is conclusive, but it is highly suggestive of an ongoing process of contact from the Neolithic right up to the Iron Age (*ibid.*: 12). The Tungusic Jurchen (later Manzu) were accustomed from the earliest times to the constant flux of allegiances and identities that characterise their later experiences.

An admixture of Tungusic peoples, descended from earlier Tungusic states, along with Koreans, Tungucised Chinese and Mongols, came together to form the Jurchen people. In the 11th and 12th centuries, and under the leadership of their khans, they created an imperial state and an ethnic identity. This was partially in response to the actions of the Chinese Song dynasty and the Mongol Liao dynasty. In 1115 the Jurchen overthrew the Liao dynasty and established the Jin dynasty in Manchuria and northern China. For one hundred and twenty years they co-existed uneasily with the Song. This fragile arrangement was shattered in 1234 when the newly unified Mongols overthrew the Jin and incorporated the Jurchen into their imperial project. After the Mongol Yuan dynasty was overthrown in 1368 by the Han Chinese Ming dynasty, the Jurchen identity continued for some Tungusic people and in fact entered into relations with the surrounding ethnic groups as the Jurchen Jianzhou federation. This situation continued until the emergence of the hero Nurhaci, who became leader of the Jianzhou in 1582. In 1618 Nurhaci was established as khan of the Jin. In 1636 Nurhaci's heir, Hong Taiji, declared himself emperor of the Qing and created a new ethnic identification for the Jurchen and other groups that were included in the Qing polity. This new group identity was designated the Manchu. In 1644, during the reign of the second Qing emperor Fulin, the conquest of Ming China was undertaken. Qing emperors reigned in China until 1912. The republican revolution of 1911-1912 treated the Manchus as foreigners, partially because the republicans were establishing a nationalistic Chinese identity through opposition to the Manchu.

Manchuria can be partially understood in terms of geography. It has been linked in the south with China since the third century B.C. (Lattimore 1962: 103). Its western plains are an extension of Mongolia, its eastern mountains of Korea and the northern forests of Siberia. Lattimore suggests (*ibid.*: 104) that the different peoples in different parts of pre-conquest Manchuria were not assimilated to each other. They were rather linked in a gradation of activities as one moved north to the Amur River. It seems as if Manchuria constituted a series of points along a continuum of related activities conducted by related peoples who moved easily between their respective economic systems and exhibited a flexibility in material culture complexes and identity:

General homogeneity is offset by particular disparities; but changes are not abrupt and the degree of homogeneity that prevails therefore serves as a flux, making it possible to change from one to another of the more specialised forms or to merge them into each other (*ibid.*: 114).

Lattimore also recognises this fluctuation among early Manchurian peoples that led to the emergence of many identities, from the Sushen of the second millennium B.C. to the Mohe and Jurchen of the 11th century A.D. This suggests a constant merging of peoples and identities in the region that is consistent with the malleability of the Jurchen/Manzu identity.

Lattimore traces the history of the imperial Aisin Gioro clan in particular, and describes their movement up the Hurka (the modern Mudanjiang or Peony River) to the vicinity of Ninguta (modern Ningan), then down to the Changbaishan region and finally to the edge of the Chinese occupied regions in modern Xinben county, Liaoning (at sites known as Fe Hala and Hetu Hala). The Manzu today relate tales of the experiences of Nurhaci at the hands of the Chinese in these regions, and the blood feuds carried out by Nurhaci and his brothers in vengeance for the murder of their father. It was during this period of Jurchen unification that Nurhaci acquired his boon companions, members of other Jurchen groups who went on to become the founding ancestors of the "illustrious clans". Perhaps his closest supporter was Fiongdon (or Niyanhana), who is revered as the ancestor of the Guwalgiya or Guan (see Crossley 1990). This is a tale well known to the Guan of Yi Lan Gang with whom I worked and lived.

Lattimore notes that Manzu legends indicate an original northward, downstream migration followed by a second southward, upstream migration (described in historic records). He infers that the Tungusic peoples of the region were involved in a constant cyclic movement between "forest-and-river tribalism " and "dynastic and imperial politics." By this argument, the people who came to be known as Manzu were entirely accustomed to movement both physical and cultural in nature. It may even be the case that concepts of ethnic identity were equally fluid. The Tungusic people in the area, to the extent that they differentiated between themselves, were known by the region in which they resided. Thus, the Hurka, who for many years opposed the Jurchen expansion northward until they were incorporated into the banner system, lived in the region drained by the River Hurka and by their own account had at one time been organised into a highly urbanised kingdom. Yet they followed a tribal and nomadic existence at the time of the Jin expansion under Nurhaci and Hong Taiji. Deliberate choices were made on a constant basis about what aspects of Tungusic culture and activity would be emphasised in establishing an identity and ethnic affiliation with other neighbouring groups.

Lattimore argues that the Manzu were exceptional because their forest derivation provided the social knowledge needed to handle the forest peoples they incorporated and their familiarity with Chinese influences made it easy to handle both the Chinese and the part-Chinese, part-Mongol, part-Tungus, steppe fringe people who made up the Jianzhou Jurchen federation (1962: 129). In addition, there were many different ideas of what it meant to be Manzu depending on social status and origin. Being Manzu came to mean a compromise between clan cohesion based on personal leadership, and the identification of the leader not with a clan but with a territory. By creating a standing army organised into "banners" Nurhaci instituted an important change in the identity creation process (*ibid.*: 131). As Crossley points out (1997) the banner system resolved this tension by defining the meaning of being Manzu as an elite military slave of the emperor.

As the Chinese Manzu became more important, the Manzu enlisted more Tungusic forest dwellers as *ice manchu* (New Manzu) to balance the Manzu ethnic mixture within the banners (Lattimore 1962: 135). This had the likely effect of strengthening the modern Dongbei Manzu identification with the forest. While the emperors did in a sense create the Manzu identity and had their own ideas about what it meant to participate in being Manzu, the actual meaning of being Manzu was dialogic in nature. I use the term dialogic rather than contested, because I accept Lattimore's contention that the Nikan (Chinese bannermen) saw their interests as lying with the Manzu, and thus their incorporation was more willing than otherwise. Many of the Mongols came in for their own protection from other Mongol groups. It seems that this process of incorporation was ongoing from earlier periods for the Tungus clan members. The process took place over an extended period (from 1582, when the Jianzhou recognised Nurhaci as *beile* (headman; *bogiya* in modern Manzu) until the late 19th century, as Tungusic and Mongol people moved into Manchuria in response to Russian expansion). The evidence suggests that the Tungusic peoples could move quite readily along a cultural continuum, so that while the continuum may have taken time to develop, once it was established it was readily accessed. Thus, even during the pre-Qing dynastic period we find the Tungusic peoples interacting with state entities to negotiate an ethnic identity, beyond their totemic or clan identity. This is the sort of relational process Gladney has demonstrated for the Hui, and it seems that in the past and present the Manzu experienced it as well. The progress of Nurhaci himself from *beile*, to khan to emperor symbolised in one individual the evolving ethnic consciousness that was to reach a sort of pinnacle in the creation by the state of the Manzu identity.

The 'Manchu' in the Late Nineteenth Century

An English officer, H.E.M. James, stationed in India, made a journey through Manchuria in the 1880s. His observations provide valuable insights into the country and how the Manzu conceived of themselves at that time. One is struck by how readily his descriptions relate to the contemporary Manzu. It was apparent to James that the Manzu consisted of numerous groups, including Solon, Sibó, Gilyaks, Goldi and Orochen (James 1968: 24), and that while they considered themselves to be different from each other, they still referred to themselves collectively, and distinguished themselves from the Chinese commoners. The collective term used was *qiren*, meaning bannermen, and not *Manzhou*. The term bannermen included Mongols, Koreans and Chinese as well as Tungusic members. This is nevertheless the beginning of a collective identity, and as Crossley argues (1990; 1997), it was the beginning of the ethnic identity of the Manzu, which coalesced during the tribulations of the 19th century. The ability to easily incorporate outsiders within the collectivity is evident, as is cohesion in the face of competing collectives. The dichotomy between the external face of the Manzu and the internal faces of the Manzu is clear to James, who notes the diversity in religious practice among the Manzu in various locales (op. cit.: 109) and the competition for loyalty between the court and the clan (*ibid.*: 156).

James notes that the population of Manchuria in 1888 was 20 million, and of these one million are Manzu (*ibid.*: 107). He goes on to write that the number of actual bannermen in Manchuria numbered only 183'000, plus additional family members and dependants. Nevertheless, many more Manzu referred to themselves as bannermen than were actually actively enrolled in the banners (*ibid.*: 123). This seems to be because the banner identity constituted more than merely military service. It was a form of self-identification in opposition to the *minren* (commoners), a term which designated the Chinese in Manchuria, and which indeed the Chinese used to describe themselves.

Another traveller in the region, Alexander Hosie, offers similar observations. For 1895, he claimed a population of 17 million for all three provinces of Manchuria (Fengtian [modern Liaoning], Kirin [modern Jilin] and Heilongjiang), but states that no more than 10% were Manzu in the sense of being bannermen. While the numbers do not entirely agree, the minority position of the Manzu is clear, as is their multiple ethnic makeup. At the same time both Hosie and James saw in the banner identity what we can identify as a kind of nascent or inchoate ethnicity.

Hosie mentions the difficulty he encountered in distinguishing between Manzu and Chinese (1980: 156) while James states quite the opposite. Interestingly, Hosie indicates that he

had no trouble distinguishing Manzu women from Chinese, for the Manzu were distinct not only in not having bound feet but also in carriage, coiffure and dress, and "independent bearing and sprightliness" (*ibid.*: 156). Hosie also indicates the extent of Chinese colonisation of Manchuria in 1895. Thus we learn that very little of Heilongjiang has been cultivated by the Chinese, while 50% of Kirin remains untilled. Even Fengtian is 30-40% undeveloped. This information is important in indicating the penetration of the region by assimilating influences, and thus in understanding the nature of Manzu cultural survival in Manchuria.

Lee's The Manchurian Frontier in Ch'ing History is a seminal work which considers the "reaction of the indigenous population to the intrusion of Chinese culture" (1970: 2). After the conquest, garrisons were established not only in China but also in the frontier region of Manchuria. In fact, the Guan of Yi Lan Gang tell of how they were moved from the region around Jilin City, Jilin to Ninguta (now Ningan). Ninguta was the administrative capital of the frontier from 1653 to 1676 (*ibid.*: 9). It is tempting to assume that this movement away from the conquered territories would have fostered cultural conservatism. However, Lee argues convincingly that this was not the case.

Before the conquest, when the Jianzhou Jurchen were vassals of the Chinese, they were actively absorbing from the Chinese and Koreans details of technology and material culture (*ibid.*: 7), and likely much more. Under Nurhaci, the Jurchen came to control a sizeable Chinese population. Nurhaci and his son Hong Taiji were obligated to evolve a feudal and bureaucratic state in order to organise the conquest, counteract the influence of shamans and clan leaders, and finally to undermine the feudal prerogatives of the banner masters through the bureaucracy. All of this made the maintenance of a separate Manzu identity (an imperial priority both before and after the conquest [*ibid.*: 8]), difficult even on the Manchurian frontier.

The frontier garrisons had already been exposed to Chinese culture, and the local tribal Tungus were also familiar with the advantages of trade with the Chinese. Indeed, many enjoyed more than a passing familiarity, for as noted above these people moved easily between different ways of life. Many members of the frontier Tungus groups had lived in the agricultural regions, served in the army and even travelled into China itself. Additionally, the Chinese had penetrated even the most remote regions before the conquest as trappers, traders, bandits and ginseng collectors (*ibid.*: 22). Finally, those Chinese taken as slaves were a powerful influence in a society where slavery was a malleable institution (remembering that to be Manzu was to be a military slave of the emperor) and most slaves were eventually adopted into the family (*ibid.*: 14).

The tribal origins of groups absorbed into the banners were obscured, and they were all known as New (*ice*) Manzu. But even the *fedoro* or old law Manzu were a mixture of Jurchen and other Tungus groups along with Koreans, Mongols and Han Chinese who had identified their interests with the Manzu and gone over before the conquest. Many Chinese took Manzu names and were largely assimilated into Manzu culture while helping to invent the very essence of that emergent culture (*ibid.*: 34).

Lee's thesis is that the Qing authorities forbade Chinese immigration to Manchuria in order to:

- 1) preserve an ancestral homeland and traditional Manzu values and way of life;
- 2) safeguard the Manzu right to exploit the resources of Manchuria (i.e. ginseng, furs, pearls);
- 3) prevent the kind of alliance between ethnic groups which the Qing created to overthrow the Ming from forming again by minimising contacts between groups;
- 4) maintain a pool of military reserves (*ibid.*: 20-21).

By maintaining control of the region and isolating it from China, the Qing administration was intent on preserving a Manzu identity for its own recondite purposes. Efforts were also made to promote Manzu identity among the garrisons within China, and in fact the government both before and after the conquest carried out the organised invention of Manzunes. Thus, while Lee suggests that "[i]t was only on the Manchurian frontier that the possibility of keeping alive the 'original' Manchu ways of life existed" (*ibid.*: 9), it is probably more fair to say that the government was continuing policies which had been in place for a long period, and which were not limited to the frontier zone. As far as promoting the traditional Manzu life, while this was the avowed aim of the government, the Qing was hardly unaware of the mixed nature of Manzu origins and of the fact that they had invented both the name and the definition of Manzu. Therefore, while Lee is quite correct in his summation of Qing motivations in isolating Manchuria, he may perhaps have missed the mark in his understanding of their method.

Lee contends that "[b]y elevating the martial skills . . . as the paramount virtues of the frontier Manchus, the emperors, in effect, ill-prepared them to resist the peaceful encroachment of Chinese ideology and material culture" (*ibid.*: 14). Yet, Lee notes that the leadership in the frontier was by banner men with deep exposure to Chinese culture, and that the frontier banners often served for a time in China, and then brought Chinese influences home with them. The martial skills of the Manzu, and the identification of the importance of the forest life and shamanism, were only parts of the diverse concept of Manzunes. It also included the many

aspects brought to the Jurchen by the Koreans, Mongols and Chinese. While the Qing wanted to avoid the enculturation of the Manzu in China, it did not mean that their object was to maintain tribal culture or to somehow retain a reserve of "Tatars" in the forests of the north-east.

Lee argues that the frontier Manzu lived a Spartan life devoid of intellectual or artistic embellishments and that there was no native intellectual tradition to oppose "sinicization" (*ibid.*: 22). Yet, there was indeed a native intellectual tradition that was found in a number of different repositories. It existed among the educated Manzu who could read and write in their language, as well as Mongol, Mandarin and Korean. It certainly existed in the vigorous communities of tribal Manzu and Tungus, with their own oral histories and legends, and their own traditions of political organisation, warfare and conquest. The idea that these people were simple savages existing in a creative void, as Lee seems to suggest, is untenable. A visitor to China today may find evidence of their artistic and intellectual brio in the museums and archives of the minority groups. The beauty of their decorative arts and the robustness of their handicrafts, tools and weapons all demonstrate a vibrant culture. Finally, the shamans existed as central repositories of epic poetry, spiritual activity and specialised knowledge about the environment in which the people lived.

Certainly, the frontier Manzu wanted to participate in the benefits of the conquest, but this did not represent a wholesale surrender to Chinese culture. On the contrary, while the garrisons and fugitive settlements became centres of Chinese culture (*ibid.*: 113), the frontier clan villages remained as separate and autonomous entities. The banner system served to organise the garrison communities on the frontier so that there, too, the Manzu were encouraged to maintain a separate identity in a context where that identity conferred upon them elite status and special considerations. At first, there were no strong incentives to participate in sinicization, while there was opportunity and reason to resist it. It is important to keep in mind that not all the Manzu population consisted of garrison communities. Villages were long-standing population centres that served to isolate and preserve the essence of clan-based cultural identity more effectively than any decrees of the emperors. It was these people whom Shirokogoroff was to encounter in the early part of this century, and he found them still to be the most traditional of the Manzu. To be a traditional Manzu was to be innovative and not conservative. In examining the history of Manzu culture, it is evident that they were masters of variation and departure. It was only when confronted with the problems of rule, and later violent opposition to their rule in China, that they attempted to reify the meaning of being Manzu.

There is some rigidity in the scholarship pertaining to the Manzu. The fluid nature of the Manzu identity is dealt with extensively by Crossley (1990), but her work does not encompass the experience of the Manzu who remained in the north-east after the conquest of China in the mid-17th century. This rigidity is especially evident when considering the Manzu who are of Chinese origin, as opposed to Jurchen, Korean, Mongol or Tungusic origin. Despite their Han Chinese origins, these bannermen were Manzu in any meaningful way. Yet according to Crossley (1990, 1997) in the majority of historical works it is clear that they are treated as Chinese who have gone over to the enemy, and as such, as traitors. This is an oversimplification. This argument is found in the traditional attitudes towards Wan Fu Gui, and also the Three Feudatories. Wan was the Chinese general who allowed the Manzu forces through the Great Wall and the Three Feudatories were Chinese generals who first went over to the Manzu and later rebelled against the Manzu. In all these cases they were in fact tied to the mix of north-eastern cultures from which the Manzu emerged. Their shift in allegiances ought to be understood as the manifestation of a change in emphasis, rather than a betrayal. It is also made manifest in Western works from the last 120 years and more, which frequently characterise the *hanjun* (Chinese martial) as merely mercenaries (see for example James 1968 and Hosie 1980). Many were originally of Jurchen or Tungusic descent, had taken on extensive Chinese cultural elements and then later become Manzu. Other *hanjun* were Han Chinese who identified with or saw their interests as best served by the Manzu khans.

Still, this is not a satisfactory explanation of what it meant for these people to join the Manzu, for this implies that to become Manzu one simply had to join the forces led by the khans of the Aisin Gioro clan, regardless of ethnicity. On a certain level it is fair to suggest that the meaning of Manzu (as much as the term has any meaning) is something like “military servant of the khan” (later emperor). However, the term also involved the attribution of certain cultural traits, a common social organisation and system of social relations and a sense of exclusivity and separateness. There was also a sense of character that was especially expressed by the term *piaohan*, which is translated most fully as “brave and agile, quick and fierce”. This bears directly upon the modern Manzu’s conception of themselves and their distinctive ethnic identity. It is important to note that the cultural traits that were accepted as being Manzu were to a significant extent derived from Jurchen (i.e. Tungusic) origins. There is ample evidence that the Manzu did not conceive of themselves as long separated from their Tungusic cousins who still lived in the forest and by the hunt. Indeed, it was and is a point of pride among the Manzu that they are in origin a hunting people, whatever their present sedentary and agricultural circumstances. Thus

we may look to the various Tungusic peoples and the forests of Siberia and Manchuria in order to improve our understanding of what it means to be Manzu.

The Manzu language⁵ is part of the Tungusic group of languages, and falls within the Ural- Altaic language family. “Manzu” refers to a language descended from the dialects of the Jurchen peoples who inhabited Manchuria as far back as the last century BCE (Crossley 1997: 16). These people were exposed to Chinese culture directly and indirectly, and also to the influences of Korean and Mongol (especially the Kitan Mongol Liao dynasty) cultures. This is an important consideration, since the tendency has been to consider Manzu culture in terms of the effects of Chinese influence exclusively (Crossley 1990: preface). It is perhaps more reasonable to suggest that the Jurchen people were a product of various influences and circumstances which brought about the consolidation of loosely constituted bands into an ethnic entity with a sense of self and a definite sense of the other.

This consolidation is largely comprehensible in terms of other Tungusic peoples with whom the Jurchen/Manzu share many similarities, as they themselves recognise. The Jurchen in their primordial form consisted of hunting groups who inhabited a specific range that they exploited systematically not only for edibles but also for useful items that they could trade with the numerous others that they encountered. This apparently included furs, pine seeds and later ginseng, pearls, deer antlers and other items. It is apparent from this period that the Jurchen were not known to the other peoples they dealt with as a distinct group, but rather as unconnected small bands who shared common cultural traits and similar languages, but no common political or ethnic identity. At this point, the Jurchen were not distinct from the Hezhe, Oroqen, Evenki or Sibó who are now considered to be the other Tungusic peoples of China. It appears that it was only as these latter came into contact with the Chinese, ethnically conscious Manzu, Russians and others that they developed a consciousness of identity beyond the clan level. By the same token, the Jurchen emerged as a distinct ethnic and political entity as a result of their experiences with the others that surrounded them.

For example, the Puyo kingdom of northern Korea and southern Manchuria led directly to the emergence of the Mohe people in Manchuria. The Puyo in turn emerged in response to Chinese military domination in northern Korea during the Han dynasty (see Appendix A for a list of Chinese dynasties and coinciding dates). Prior to this point, the Tungusic peoples of the region had subsisted by a mix of nomadic pastoralism and sedentary hunting and fishing, with

⁵For simplicity I have chosen to refer to the language as Manzu. Otherwise the term would have to be Manwen (for the written language) and Manyu (for the spoken language).

some agriculture in southern Manchuria (Crossley 1997: 17). There was no evidence of prior political organisation other than that which was imposed by the Puyo and by the Chinese in the western part of Liaodong (the most south-westerly portion of Manchuria, east of the Liao river, and colonised by Han Chinese beginning in the Tang dynasty period). As previously noted, these scattered groups did not conceive of themselves as part of a larger ethnic group. They tended to identify themselves in terms of the region that they inhabited. But not only did the Mohe emerge in the wake of the Puyo (after the Puyo dissolution in the 5th century A.D.), but two important polities can be traced to this period, one being the northern Heishui Mohe, and the other the southern Sumo Mohe. Other lesser Mohe groups are also referred to in the records from this period. These latter are the unorganised bands that persist throughout Tungusic history; however, outsiders identify them and the larger Mohe groups as associated with the Mohe. This identification was inherited by the Jurchen and later the Manzu and served to maintain a sense of themselves as forest-dwellers and hunters par excellence which persists as an important part of the understanding of the meaning of being Manzu.

The Liao Empire (11th century) of the Kitan nomads can be seen as having played a major role in the crystallisation of the Jurchen people. It was after the Liao conquered the Heishui that the Jurchen people emerged from within the northern Mohe. Crossley explains that:

[F]requent skirmishing with the northern Mohe forced the Liao empire into a carrot-and-stick policy . . . for Heishui Mohe willing to declare themselves neutral -- or, better, accomplices -- in the Liao imperial enterprise. In this scenario the Mohe, the forest-dwelling peoples north of Parhae, increased their influence . . . (*ibid.*: 20).

From within the influential Mohe emerged a group calling themselves the Jurchen at the beginning of the 12th century. In a short time the Jurchens had overthrown the Kitan Liao Empire and established an empire that took in parts of Korea, Mongolia, Manchuria and China north of the Yangzi River.

This is not to suggest that the creation of an ethnic identity depends upon the organising influence of foreign political domination, although in the case of the Manzu it is a relational process that is being described. Rather, the evolution of the idea of being Manzu was preceded by a number of other ethnic inventions, all of which were a result of the dialogic process of negotiation of meaning. The understanding of the identity Mohe was not universally the same. The Tungusic groups which emerged as powers in the region (Heishui and then Jurchen in the

north, Sumo and then Parhae in the south) were identified with all of the Tungusic peoples in contact with the ethnic other, such that they were all conceived of as Mohe. The hunting bands so identified did not necessarily subscribe to this designation, just as the Oroqen of China did not until recently see themselves as members of a minority nationality called *Elunqunzu*, and as many of the Evenki of China still do not identify themselves as *Ewenkezu*. Other Tungusic people did come to an agreement about this identification which allowed them to participate in it in such a way that they attained a political identity and influence upon the other political states within the region.

As these people were organising themselves for imperial exercises or negotiating authoritatively with the leaders of empires and kingdoms, they did not necessarily distinguish themselves in any immutable fashion from the other Tungusic peoples in the region. They were able to negotiate a certain identity in their relations with the ethnic others that surrounded them; at the same time they maintained flexibility in their relations with the Tungus peoples who did not participate in their national projects. The same ethnic mobility that they had exhibited before they emerged in regional politics as Mohe, Jurchen or whatever continued even as clear definitions of ethnicity were invented for interactions with non-Tungusic groups. The Manzu were willing to incorporate other Tungus peoples, or to allow them to exist as forest-dwellers under only nominal Manzu suzerainty. This is why other Tungus groups remain available to be subjected to the inflexible, scientific categorisations of the Communist regime in China.

The problem is how to integrate the two concepts. While the Tungusic peoples did not necessarily think of themselves as a tightly knit ethnic group, they did nevertheless conceive of themselves as sharing certain common traits which were exclusive to them and distinguished them from others. This effectively entails a conception of themselves as “people”, as opposed to those who are not (common throughout East Asia), and does not necessarily extend to any organising capacity or loyalty to an identity. At certain times, certain Tungusic groups came together for special purposes and identified themselves in certain terms to facilitate their dealings with outsiders. This idea is important if we are to understand what it meant to be Manzu when that identity emerged, and why what it means to be Manzu today is so different from what it originally meant.

The meaning of being Manzu today retains a strong similarity to the past in the strong identification with the culture of other Tungusic groups in north-east China. Although the Manzu

today are almost entirely sedentary and agricultural⁶, they demonstrate an immediate and vivid remembrance of their forest traditions, and consider these to be an important marker of their identity. By the same token, they tend to identify strongly with the other Tungusic peoples in the region, seeing them as representative of what they once were. Even though the majority of Manzu do not speak Manzu, many of those I met were aware that Evenki and Manzu were almost identical and mutually comprehensible languages.

Beyond the matter of language is the commemoration of a hunting lifestyle in the rituals that the shamans carry out on behalf of the clan. This will be dealt with in detail in the following chapters, but it needs to be considered here in order to comprehend the meaning of an important category of behaviour that the Manzu treat as a salient marker of their identity. This is the concept of *piao han*, perhaps the defining characteristic of what it means to be Manzu. This is not just a characteristic that applies to Manzu men, but has cross-gender significance and is manifested in a number of ways. The implication of the term is a highly developed toughness and self-reliance, or even a kind of ruggedness that allows the Manzu to stand outside the standard self-characterisation of north-east Chinese culture traits.

Piao han is understood as it relates to the hunting life, the conquest heritage and the shamanic tradition. The Manzu of the Guan clan exhibit a certain social nonchalance and a lack of reticence in comparison with their Han, Korean and Hui neighbours. It is manifested in quotidian social intercourse, but it is more powerfully expressed in the shamanic rituals that they maintain. The very act of shamanising is of itself *piao han*, and not just a tribute to the severity of the ancestors. The grace of the dancing, the power of the music and the chant, the danger of the interaction with the ancestral and natural spirits, all require bravery, agility, strength and fierceness. The idea of shamanising is an expression of the core meaning of Manzunes.

While it is true that the Manzu of the Guan clan in Yi Lan Gang do not hunt, ride or practice other martial activities (although the sport of pearl ball might qualify as a substitute), nevertheless they are still *piao han*. Most significantly, they actively think about and discuss the meaning of *piao han* and whether they still manifest the complex of traits that the phrase represents. We also need to bear in mind that the Guan use their written genealogy to determine who is and who is not entitled to inclusion in the clan and therefore identification as Manzu.

⁶There are a few Manzu who still live by herding reindeer in Jilin and Heilongjiang, fewer still (numbered in single digits) who live by hunting and trapping. Yet, these few holdouts tend to be popular subjects in the underground videos that circulate among the Manzu peasants, along with the videos depicting shamanic activities.

As noted above, the understanding of what it means to be Manzu is derived from the Tungusic heritage that the Manzu share with other Chinese minorities. It extends beyond that since it is obviously also a part of the imperial project undertaken by the Jinzhou Jurchen federation under the leadership of Aisin Gioro Nurhaci and his descendants. This is not simply a matter of saying that Nurhaci's son invented the Manzu (or Manchu) when he declared that they were to be so named. Just as the Jurchen before them came into being as a result of a Tungusic response to internal and external circumstances, so too is the emergence of the Manzu a result not of the will of one individual nor simply of geopolitical impetus, but rather of the ability of a number of groups to come to an agreement about how they would understand their relations with each other in terms of group identity.

In order to comprehend this relational process we need to pick up the thread of history with the rise of the Jurchen people and the creation of the Jin empire. Within a relatively short time the Jin were swept away by another coalescent force, the Mongol empire, which came to be known in China as the Yuan. This did not result in the destruction of the Jurchen identity, nor for that matter were the Jurchen excluded from the imperial project undertaken by the Mongols. In fact they were participants, along with other Tungusic peoples, in the Mongol conquests. This had two apparent consequences. One was that the Jurchen were able to maintain a sense of unity that again stood in opposition to a number of distinctly different others. The other was that the martial and imperial impetus was not extinguished among the Jurchen, but was kept alight by their participation as junior partners in the Mongol's empire-building.

Ethnicity as a Chinese Problem

Pursuing the theme of dialogic interaction with rival polities and the ethnographic other leads us to the idea that the experiences of the late 19th and early 20th centuries had a profound impact not just upon the fortunes of the Manzu but upon the very idea of what it means to be Manzu. The suffix *zu* means race, nationality or ethnic group, and in the latter sense is the most appropriate understanding in the context of this discussion. In the extreme, the change of name from Manchu, with its all-encompassing ambiguity, to Manzu, a limiting and arbitrary ethnic designation which carries with it the implication that the "Man" are just one nationality within the larger Chinese polity, both reflects and helps to create the contemporary conception of Manzuneess. Ethnicity in China is fraught with ambiguity and menace. Issues of identity have been dealt with either as problems for the Chinese state (e.g. Dryer 1976, Gladney 1991, Wu 1990) or as classic questions of ethnic identity (e.g. Blake 1981, Cohen 1991). Blum (1992)

provides an elegant illustration of the problem and demonstrates that for the most part the Han Chinese are not interested in other Chinese ethnic groups except as a “Modal Ethnic Other” which can be contrasted with the Han. As I have suggested in the preface, the Han marginalise those from outside the bounds until they adopt Han attributes. This is carried on under the Communists whose mission is to raise the socialist consciousness of the minorities. Since the Han are assumed to have the most highly developed consciousness, they serve as the model for the minorities, just as in much of the past.

Blum suggests that the state guides stereotypic thinking about minorities to emphasise certain characteristics which can be contrasted with the “Modal Han Self” (*ibid.*: 268). This contrast is used to unite the Han, who are internally diverse, under the leadership of the state. The result is that certain groups are over-represented in Han thinking about minorities while others are essentially absent from the minds of the vast majority of Han Chinese. Colourful, friendly and sexy minorities (usually from the south-west) and violent and dirty minorities (the Muslims, the Tibetans) loom large, while others are blotted out. At one time, especially during the late Qing and Republican periods, the Manzu loomed largest of all as the despised ethnic other. That period is long past, and while anti-Manzu sentiment was revived somewhat during the Cultural Revolution, today it is only among the Manzu themselves that a reputation for ferocity survives.

Duara approaches the problem of ethnicity through an attempt to understand the growth of the modern Chinese nation out of its historical antecedents, while at the same time reconciling the Chinese understanding of their history with Western historiographic approaches. The author’s purpose is to “see the continuities without falling into the trap of the evolutionary model of the continuous nation” (Duara 1993: 25). This is required in order to refute the view that Chinese nationalism is a “modern phenomenon” (*ibid.*: 2). However, he tends to treat the social actors involved as automatons, so that he cites the fact that after the 1911 revolution the revolutionaries who had advocated a racialist Han China reverted to the old Qing boundaries that brought into the state many non-Han peoples. This, Duara suggests, is due to the nationalists choosing to build a nation based on political universalism. It seems more parsimonious to suggest that this reversion was motivated by hegemonism, economics, security concerns and personal ambitions. In sum, Duara’s desire to advance his thesis causes him to neglect other, alternative, explanations.

Duara also develops the idea of the awareness of the people of China of their multiple identities in terms of relations to each other and the state. This point is extremely important, for it

allows Duara to argue that the pre-modern Chinese were politically self-aware. This is a reasonable assumption since the Chinese had in the past demonstrated national cohesion in the face of Jurchen and Mongol invasions, not to mention the prolonged and popular resistance to the Manzu conquerors in the form of secret societies. What is neglected here is the essential point that multiple identities also mean that the Chinese people were largely divided for much of the time. It is true that Punti and Hakka are equally Han. Nevertheless, a case can be made for considering them as ethnically distinct, and certainly ambivalent, if not antipathetic, toward each other. Introducing this division among the Han will contribute to our understanding of the place of the Manzu in contemporary China. The effort to unify the Han under the Republican and Communist regimes, at least partially, accounts for the persistent vilification and often violent treatment of the Manzu long after they ceased to be a threat to the Chinese state.

The crux of the matter is found in Duara's distinction between culturalism and ethnocentrism (*ibid.*: 2-4). He maintains that racial identity is separate from cultural identity and that the Chinese had shifted at various times from one to the other. He admits that it is difficult to distinguish between the two. A better analytical approach is that ethnicity is a constantly shifting entity, open to negotiation and restructuring at all times. While Duara argues that ethnic identity emerges in China in various forms at various times, stimulated by crisis or the elite, it is in fact continually emergent and in play at the microlevel. Ethnic groups are not based on extended kin groups, but rather are determined by dialogue, circumstance *and* transmission. Ethnocentrism arises out of ascription and self-ascription, not descent groups. Yet, crisis points do emerge and must be accounted for, as Duara indicates. Understanding the situation of the modern Manzu depends upon recognising the validity of Duara's argument.

For Duara, history is a discourse, a manipulation of information in order to promote a specific agenda or vision. This is certainly true, but history is also a dialogue between groups and between individuals that allows for contested views, as Duara suggests, albeit somewhat obliquely (*ibid.*: 11). History is not just invented but is a playing field where the flow of play shifts constantly at the levels of individual and group social life. Duara maintains that social science views history as either primordialist or instrumentalist. He proposes an alternate view in which "a plurality of sources of identifications in a society -- which do not necessarily harmonise with one another" are the source of history. Plurality is not a new idea, yet it is significant because of the conclusion to which it points: there is no such thing as a national Chinese identity. The obvious problem is of course the national minorities. The Tibetans, Mongols and others do not see themselves as Chinese in a nationalist sense. In peasant society, the ethnic

distinctions of the local community are of far greater importance than the national identity, and constitute the essential definition of ethnicity. Certainly, there are many people who see themselves as Chinese in an ethnic sense, but few are Chinese in a nationalist sense. There is little ethnic loyalty to the political entity of modern China. Among the Han, the peasantry cannot afford the luxury of nationalism, while in the cities regional divisions make a mockery of national unity. A paramount Chinese nationalism does not exist for the vast majority of Chinese, Han or minority.

Siu starts out with the assumption that “‘Chineseness’ is not an immutable set of beliefs and practices, but a process involving emotions and being” (1993: 19). She emphasises the fluidity and negotiation of cultural identity and is particularly concerned with understanding in terms of those who are asserting the identity. This is particularly important since it implies that she will attempt to analyse ‘Chineseness’ as the people she studies conceive of it. She goes on to raise two questions: is Chinese identity “an intensely unifying and differentiating experience” which always relies upon a master narrative, and; “what are the analytical implications for cultural autonomy and criticism” (*ibid.*: 20)?

Siu provides a well illustrated description of the nature of “Chineseness” in the Guangzhou-Hong Kong region or “nexus”, as she terms it. The choice of the word nexus is important since it implies a connection or tie that is of profound importance. It is clear that the author’s analytical orientation is towards the diversifying nature of identity negotiation. She presents a concise synopsis of the historical roots of culture in South China. She indicates that this history revolves around a “cultural definition of being Chinese” (*minzu*), legitimacy of a regime (*guojia*), and *zhengfu*, or state apparatus.

From the outset we find that Siu is concerned with the deep structure of culture. Her use of the terms *minzu*, *guojia*, and *zhengfu* seems to indicate that she views culture in terms of ideas which are expressed in symbols. In this sense, traditional ideas and their attached values form the core of culture. There is also the emphasis on fluidity and negotiation which indicates a more Parsonian approach to culture as consisting of interaction between individuals, the social system and the ideological system, which are not reducible to each other. There is something of a contradiction in her approach. Siu wishes to include the individual as an agent of social change within her work, but ultimately tends to treat social actors as puppets of their class or other symbolic orientation. The recent immigrant to Hong Kong is always disoriented, while the middle classes are driven by their education to move abroad or support democratisation.

Siu's argument is that the negotiation of cultural identity has always been a part of the nature of "Chineseness". She makes this point very convincingly. A problem arises with her suggestion that the same situation prevails today: "[a]s in the past, the negotiation of cultural identity and the politics of difference in the 1990s are sustained by tensions in the public sphere as much as in private lives" (*ibid.*: 36). In the past, the central government benefitted from the diversity in China due to the wealth it generated (*ibid.*: 26) and tolerated difference. But this tolerance conflicts with the Marxist ideal of the withering away of ethnicity in the socialist state. As the author notes herself, diversity is now viewed as subversion (*ibid.*: 37). All of this would seem to indicate that the process today is not identical with the past, and that different outcomes may be expected. While socialism itself may have been abandoned in practice, the assimilation of minorities is still policy in theory. Nevertheless, the argument presented by Blum does demonstrate that Siu is right in suggesting that the state still recognises some usefulness to diversity. It seems evident that the tolerance of diversity is limited to the benefits that accrue to the central state. The willingness of the centre to engage in negotiation with any group is likely so limited.

The problem with Siu's approach should caution us against treating the Manzu as puppets rather than actors. It is suggested here that fluidity and negotiation are the key to understanding the Manzu, and that ethnicity is crystallised and actuated through symbolic means (genealogy and shamanic ritual). It is easy to fall into the trap of reducing ethnicity to a set of symbols which dictate the response of the social actors and become more important in the theoretical eye than for the actors themselves. The importance of Siu's emphasis on the negotiation of cultural identity through symbols should not be ignored. While this work builds a case for the prevalence of negotiation and reinvention among the Tungusic peoples and especially the Manzu, this process was reinforced rather than diminished by contact with the Chinese. If the negotiation or reinvention is carried on in modern China as Siu maintains, then the opportunity should remain open for the Manzu as well. While Blum points out that these symbols can easily become stereotypes, they are also powerful tools wielded by Manzu individuals and groups. The efforts made by Crossley to debunk the myth of sinicization (1997) reinforce this idea since the negotiation of identity undertaken by the Manzu would not be merely a subset of Han identity, but something, or rather some things, quite separate:

Certainly, the traditional cultures of Manchuria had their reflection in the imperial culture of the Qing. On the other hand, to characterise the inner culture of the Qing court as an unmodified survival of ancient cultures of unconquered

Manchuria would be a serious mistake – as bad a mistake as the previous depiction of the Manchus as “Confucianized”, “sinicized”, empty epigones of the great Chinese empires that had gone before them. “Manchu” identity and the Qing state revolved around one another, in a mutual gravitational pattern that was not broken until the last decades of the empire (1997: 13).

The historic relationship with the Qing court remains today a factor in the creation of the Manzu’s identity.

Gladney (1994) responds to the issues raised by Siu to establish that there are clear cultural and ethnic differences between the various ethnic groups of China and most importantly within the dominant Han Chinese. He details the diversity of the Han, and meditates upon the political significance of this diversity. Unlike Siu, he seems to make a distinction between ethnicity and cultural difference. Gladney presents a very convincing analysis of the politics involved in official recognition of ethnic status. The crux of his argument is that the Nationalists and Communists felt a need to forge a sense of nationhood within China through the identification of a unified history, culture and social life. This required that the majority be incorporated into one *minzu*, the Han, but still left room for the recognition of other groups precisely because they stood in opposition to the Han and thus helped to define who and what are the Han. That is, Gladney provides a classic explanation of definition of Self in relation to the Other. This works well, but where Gladney fails to provide an adequate account is in his explanation of the governments present motivation for recognising nationalities. He traces it back to promises made during the Long March and the struggle with the Nationalists. He also mentions the need for a “united ethnic front” (1994: 179), which is perhaps still somewhat relevant today, but fails to discuss the difference between securing the loyalty of minorities in border regions and submerging ethnicity in the Chinese heartland. It is not, I think, naive to suggest that the post-Cultural Revolution exhaustion motivated the political leadership to essentially give everyone a chance to recover in their own ways. Finally, he neglects the simple explanation that the desire to mobilise the economic initiative of the Chinese peoples to an extent compels the government to liberalise its attitudes towards self and group expression.

Gladney makes an especially telling point in noting that few scholars question how the Han came to be considered the typical Chinese. That this is a recent phenomenon, and that the inclusion of other nationalities in the Chinese nation (as opposed to the state or empire) is even more recent, is a significant problem for scholarship. Gladney's main concern is in explaining the unity of the so-called Han. He argues that it is a result of “the power of the Chinese state and the fear of foreign domination” (*ibid.*: 182). Obviously, the foreign domination perpetrated by the

Manzu was a major factor in this development. The development of a Manzu identity in concert with the development of a Chinese and nationalistic Han identity, both as recent phenomena, is especially powerful as a transforming element in the invention of ethnicity.

Townsend critiques the culturalism-to-nationalism thesis which he describes as "underlying . . . the academic literature on China" (1992: 97). His main argument is that nationalism, whether of a state or ethnic variety, is not as important in modern China as is often maintained. He does not suggest it is irrelevant, but rather that its role has been exaggerated, especially in the post-Cultural Revolution period, and that it exhibits weaknesses which require a less dogmatic approach to the question of Chinese nationalism.

The strengths of the thesis are summarised by Townsend as having two main aspects. The first is the change in "elite belief and official doctrine about the nature of the Chinese community and its place in the world" (*ibid.*: 122) (note the use of the term community as somehow equivalent to the nation, on which more later). The old style "culturalism" was incompatible with the emerging "nationalism". The former was based upon the superiority and incorporative nature of Chinese culture, which allowed foreigners to participate in Chinese society and even allowed the rationalisation of foreign dynastic rule in China. The latter emphasised the territorial nature of the state, the validity of alternate cultural and political approaches and an international community of states, and the rights and duties of citizens within a state. The second strength is the intellectual change among the elite that accompanied the emergence of nationalism. Townsend maintains that this psychological conception is valuable as a tool of analysis, even though it may overstate the case somewhat.

Townsend then goes on to examine the weaknesses of the thesis, which he summarises nicely as exaggerating " . . . the totality and clarity of the change in question. It overstates both the dominance of culturalism and the weakness of pre-modern nationalism in imperial times, as well as overstating the eclipse of culturalism and triumph of nationalism in modern times" (*ibid.*: 123). Townsend is on the right track, and a cogent extension of his argument is that so-called culturalism and nationalism are not in competition. Townsend recognises that they are not mutually exclusive, and that culturalism can "lend support" to nationalism. What he fails to note is that the ethnic community and the national community operate on entirely different levels. Nationalism should be treated as it relates to state policy (or state formation) and elite formulations for mobilising the ethnicity of the population, along with other aspects, such as resources, manpower and art, to pursue political ends. Ethnicity, however, is the conception by a community of what defines its nature.

We must at this point consider the question of community mentioned above. That a Chinese ethnic community has existed for a considerable length of time is really beyond serious debate. However, community is a flexible conception, as demonstrated by the continued resurgence of Han chauvinism throughout Chinese history. Moreover, “elite belief and official doctrine” represents one sort of community, but this state-sponsored community must not be conflated with local communities. It is in its dialogues with the local community and the state community that Manzu ethnicity is invoked and created (largely by local elites, but certainly all social actors participate in this). The activities of the Manzu in defining and defending their ethnic identity do not equate with nationalism. This is why it is possible for the people in Yi Lan Gang to live as both Chinese and Manzu without sensing a contradiction. In fact, loyalty to the state was manifest in the community, and working under both Han and Manzu leadership does not now appear to be seriously problematic. This has been true since the Qing, when the official doctrine of Manzu ethnicity at court was a distant voice in the dialogic negotiation of Manzu identity in Dongbei that reflects upon the Manzu to this day.

Crossley (1997) discusses the relations between the court Manzu and the Manzu in Manchuria. She raises the issue of what it means to be Manzu and indicates that it was a category with dubious ethnic significance, at least during the Qing. She acknowledges that the “ruling lineage may indeed have been Manchu – giving due consideration to the elusiveness of this as an ethnic title – but the conquest elite comprised peoples of many origins . . .” (*ibid.*: 9). The important point here is that she is discussing the court, and the conquest elite. The ethnic identities for the common bannermen in the garrisons, and again for the Manzu left behind in Manchuria, developed in different circumstances and alternative directions. In fact, she writes that Manzu culture in Dongbei showed “marked fundamental continuities with traditional life in north-eastern Asia” (*ibid.*: 15). Crossley also writes that geographic dispersion and cultural diversity meant the old name of Jurchen no longer had meaning. While there is some validity to this in terms of political considerations, this diversity was always a part of being Tungusic and there is no reason to suggest that it was incompatible with the pursuit of a new imperial project. On the contrary, the continuities that Crossley acknowledges included a flexibility in ethnic identity that might be termed a kind of ethnic mobility. This mobility is what allowed the Tungusic peoples to consolidate under the Jin/Qing leadership and create the banner system that proved so effective. The desire to control the banners on the part of the Aisin Gioro khanate, a political motive as Crossley mentions, was the main impetus for the new identity.

The creation of the Manzu by the Aisin Gioro khanate under the name Manchu or Manzhou was an attempt to create a new and unified identity for the bannermen in allegiance to the khan. This was an inclusive invention that the Jin/Qing leadership consciously pursued in order to consolidate their power. In doing so they deliberately undermined the Tungusic clans which had originally served as a source of military organisation for the banners. The “court had attempted to emasculate” (Crossley 1990: 30) the clans, even though the individual Manzu saw the clans as “the limits and the substance of Manchu identity” (Crossley 1990: 31) and they saw Manzuness as mediated by the survival of the clans, as they still do today. It is ironic then that during the reign of the Qianlong emperor Hong Li (1736-95), an attempt was initiated to restrict membership in the Manzu ethnic group based on genealogy. Originally, Manzuness was determined by language, religion, occupation and place of residence. Under Hong Li, in response to a perceived movement away from traditional Manzu values and behaviour, there was a deliberate effort to restrict the Manzu identity to those who expressed the Manzu ideals most effectively. This effort was based on the publication of four works: “General History of the Eight Banners” (1739); “Comprehensive Genealogies of the Clans and Lineages of the Eight Banner Manchus” (1745); “Ceremonies for the Manchu Worship of the Spirits and of Heaven” (1781); and “Researches on Manchu Origins” (1783).

The purpose of these compilations was to provide a basis for the officially sanctioned emphasis upon a clearly defined and artificially constructed authentic Manzuness. The importance of this process should not be underestimated, for it involved not only the strict definition of Manzu cultural traits and activities, but it was also used to delineate membership in the ethnic group. Being Manzu was converted from a broadly inclusive category to an exclusive and inflexible elite. The effort to reaffirm the Manzu traits was specifically motivated by the fear that the bannermen were taking up Han customs (Crossley 1990: 23). It seems that the effort to restore purity was extended genealogically to eliminate any possible perceived sources of contamination. This had a direct and significant effect on attitudes towards and the practice of shamanism. This issue will be dealt with in following chapters.

As already noted, the Jurchen were diverse and the political and martial activities of the Latter Jin (or Qing) leadership served to bring unity with diversity. While the multivariied Manzu shared numerous similarities in clan organisation, spirituality, ritual and oral tradition, the recognition of division as well as connection was fundamental to the meaning of being Manzu at this time. This was an extension of the flexibility of Tungusic life in Manchuria. It was in fact a strength because it allowed the people to maintain a place in the social world despite the

fluctuations of frontier existence and military contest. The modern Manzu and traditional Manzu easily integrated because of the recognition of a kinship with the woodland hunters. Did the Jurchen conceive of themselves as a nationality or an ethnic group? Probably no more than did the Mongols or even the Chinese, or for that matter the Koreans and the Tungusic bands found in the area. The concept of nationality is a highly modern one, of course, but the Chinese empire itself did not exist in terms of a national consciousness.

It was through the clans primarily that the individual Tungus was able to retain a sense of social place (Crossley 1990: 34). In turn, it was through shamanic ritual that the cohesiveness of the clans was largely maintained. It is necessary to ask, do the Manzu in late-20th century China exhibit the flexibility of their ancestors in terms of incorporating diverse socio-cultural traits within a Manzu identity? If the answer is yes, then the result has been the continued evolution of a Manzu identity that has emerged in the present as an ethnic identity. Yet this is only the latest manifestation of a continually emergent process. It is not the end of identity for the Manzu. Returning to a consideration of the problem of ethnic theory, there is a tendency in Western social science to treat modern ethnic groups as the end result of a process, rather than the most recent formation which will continue to transform itself and be transformed in conjunction with external and internal forces. The Manzu remain flexible because they have maintained a belief in the possibility of transformation that is illustrated and reinforced through the trope of shamanism.

Chapter Two: Understanding Shamanism

In this chapter, the various approaches to the shamanic complex are considered with the objective of placing the research presented here within a larger theoretical context. What is important is the realisation that ritual is the key to understanding. Shamanism as it is practised in Yi Lan Gang is more than a model for the community, and it is not simply a reflection of social structure. It (that is, the practise) is engaged in the creation of ethnic identity in a dialogic fashion. Shamanism functions on numerous levels, many of which have been attributed to it by researchers, but integration of these concepts reveals that it is profound and creative. Shamans operate as originators of social life and identity, and not merely as a reflector. They are not of course the sole source of society and culture, but they are profoundly important contributors to the creation of ethnic identity and social life. An attempt to understand shamanism depends on the ability to find analytic categories within the practice of shamanism.

Underlying this is the question of the role of trance in shamanism. For some theorists, the essence of shamanism is trance. I have found that for some contemporary Manzu trance is not required. The issue that I am attempting to resolve about Manzu shamanism is how the ritual functions without trance. I feel that a profound description of the nature of shamanism must come from the Manzu themselves, illuminated by the theoretical approaches of the scholarly community. Trance certainly had a purpose for the Manzu shamans, but in the present instance shamanism still functions socially without trance. Therefore, shamanism can be understood socially, but it is necessary to place the phenomenon within a larger theoretical context. I came to the field expecting to find classic north Asian (ecstatic) shamanism among the people who invented the word. As was the case for Maskarinec in Nepal, the more time I spent the less I was concerned with proving theory and the more comfortable I became with concentrating on relatively small aspects of the events that surrounded me (1995:234). In writing this dissertation, I have been slowly moving away from a concern with shamanism as a category of anthropological discourse. My intention is to simply describe what the Guan, and other clans like them, call shamanism and account for it theoretically as a part of their lives. Nevertheless, in order to be meaningful analytically, it is helpful to examine other methods of considering shamanism.

Approaches to the problem of shamanism in anthropology have often arisen out of the conceptual framework of the researchers, rather than that of the shamans and/or their audience. Scholars have tended to look for parallels between different shamanic practices and Western

approaches to healing and psychotherapy, or have been concerned with specific elements of the shamanic complex, rather than treating it holistically. Thus, typical understandings of shamanism are centred on Western modes of analysis and consequent analytical categories. This has led to extremes such as the emphasis on psychopathology in the “Arctic hysteria” approaches or Kehoe and Giletti’s (1981) calcium-deficiency hypothesis (which I. M. Lewis amusingly characterises as “extraordinarily unconvincing”). To understand shamanism in this instance, I do not apply fully preconceived analytical categories or theory (Maskarinec 1995: 12). I have identified a particular social phenomenon, shamanism without trance, and attempt to explain what it does. I want to know what the Guan clan of the Manzu is doing with the practice that they refer to as *saman jiao* (shamanism). I do attempt to incorporate an indigenous explanation into the broader theoretical construction of this essay. I also suggest that understanding what has happened in this case can provide insights into the nature of shamanism more generally, or at least for northern and eastern Asia.

Shamanism is a gestalt that can be effectively understood via a thorough engagement with all aspects of its functions and roles. Examining other attempts to define shamanism will contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon as a whole. The intention is not to dismiss other approaches or definitions, but to appreciate the insights that they provide. Shamanism is not readily comprehended in a particularistic fashion, but requires a phenomenological approach. Suffice for now to suggest that shamanism is not a collection of knowledge or facts used for a specific purpose, but rather an accumulation of procedures for discovery (Townesley 1993: 452). The object of utilising this aggregation of techniques is not specifically to learn methods of healing or divination, but to gain insight of a more general nature. For the Guan clan shamans what is learned is the meaning of being Manzu. Thus, shamanic practice is a way of coming to a profound understanding of ethnic identity that can be demonstrated to the members of the community through symbols of cultural identity. The repetition of known techniques is secondary. The shaman operates at all times within a social milieu, and while the mediative aspects of shamanism have been considered as epiphenomenal, it will be argued here that the social role is in fact the primary impetus behind the shamanic vocation among the Manzu of Yi Lan Gang village. The shamans of the Guan clan create an authentic experience for the clan members to strengthen their identity as Manzu. This activity has become more important in response to the ideological role of the Chinese government.

One approach that relates to this argument focuses on the creative aspects of shamanism. Andreas Lommel provides an example of this concept. He begins with Findeisen’s (1957)

assumption that in shamanism in various parts of the world, the spiritual essence of hunting is concentrated as a gestalt (1967: 23). He develops this to argue that hunters view all living things as having a spiritual and physical aspect, and that the physical parts individually retain a link with the spiritual and thus power over life. Trance represents a deliberate attempt to penetrate the spiritual world. Lommel's approach is an attempt to generalise about shamanism, rather than treating each case within its sociocultural context, but it is useful insofar as it points to similarities in shamanic practice. Lommel goes on to suggest

that shamanism on a psychological level is 'a technique in which imaginings are transposed into images and then played off against one another,' an activation of otherwise unreachable levels of the mind where 'the essence of this process of self-healing consists in imposing order and form upon these confused and chaotic images, which threaten to overwhelm the individual' (Nowak and Durrant 1977: 11).

The importance of his suggestion is the idea that the shaman imposes order over chaos and that he strengthens the collective psyche through the integrative nature of the shamanic performance. Nowak and Durrant state that, "Few other works deal directly with the concept of the shaman as creator, intimately involved in the artistic process" (*ibid.*: 12). Though reductionist in a sociological direction, Lommel's insight is central to the understanding of the shaman, and indicates the importance of shamanism to the community. This is helpful in formulating ideas about the importance of shamanising to group identity.

Conceptual Bias

In order to carry this argument forward it is necessary to establish that some sort of conceptual bias exists within anthropology that affects the study of shamanism. That the term shaman is of venerable usage is clear. One of the earliest references in Western literature is found in the writings of E. Ysbrant Ides, a Dutch diplomat who accompanied a Russian embassy to China from 1692 to 1695. He described a Tungus shaman (using the term) in a 1698 publication (Laufer 1917). The term came to be used with increasing frequency from this time forward until the present (see Grim 1987, Hultkrantz 1977, 1985 and Nowak and Durrant 1977 for discussions of this history). It is worth noting the initial characterisation of shamanism as primitive and bizarre, which is reflected in modern scholarship through its treatment as either the *Ur*-religion (in the first case) or psychopathology (in the second case).

The main consequence of this Western (over)familiarity with the term 'shaman' is that it has come to be treated as a general rubric for many different forms of healing and spirituality.

This is problematic for a number of reasons. First, shamanism tends to be used to describe, as similar, a number of disparate phenomena that are really quite different. Treating them as one thing leads to a false understanding of their natures. Second, the long-standing debate has tended to become polarised along certain lines which have prevented the development of an understanding of shamanism as something other than the evidence of theoretical constructs of Western sociological inquiry. Essentially, the dispute centres on the question of whether the shaman is disturbed or well adjusted and gifted (Kennedy 1973: 1149). This leads to a situation where most have been unable to see the forest for the trees, as they concentrate on this issue at the expense of understanding the larger phenomenon. Finally, the nature of East Asian shamanism as a system of knowing through voluntary spirit mastery has escaped most researchers because of the failure to differentiate this from spirit possession. This is not to suggest that spirit possession is not also epistemological, but rather that the differences and similarities between possession and mastery need to be explored.

The problems of shamanic scholarship are well illustrated by this extract from an article by Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney:

Sakhalin Ainu shamanism focuses on the diagnosis and cure of diseases. Its central concept is that the shamans are at the mercy of the spirits which enter them. Individuals do not become shamans of their own volition; the spirits decide to possess them. Even an evil shaman who engaged in sorcery is believed to be unaware of his actions until he is later informed of them by the evil spirit responsible.

. . . [T]he shamanic ritual nevertheless embodies, through a rich assortment of symbols, many of the central concepts of the Ainu world view (1973: 26).

In this work the author conflates shamans with both medical practitioners and spirit mediums. The lack of volition ascribed to shamans denies their exceptional abilities and treats them simply as healers. Her conclusions are inconsistent with her own description of Ainu shamanic ritual, which involves spirit helpers (ibid.: 16), and not possession, as well as active exorcism of evil spirits by a shaman who seems to retain self-control (ibid.: 21). This article epitomises the confusion that has arisen over the nature of shamanism. The idea that shamanism embodies the Ainu worldview is helpful, although the author ignores the possibility that the shaman is privy to an exceptional shamanic worldview. Yet in stating that Ainu shamanism is focussed on diseases, the author neglects the significance of shamanism as recapitulating and contributing to the Ainu's complex of symbolic self-representation.

The greatest problem with the conflation of shamanism with other related phenomenon is that it contributes to a confused picture of what kind of experience shamanising entails, for both the shaman and the audience. Whether they are all the same phenomenon or not remains to be seen, but greater care needs to be taken in order to avoid over-simplifying, as in the example given above. Taken to an extreme, this has led to the characterisation of shamanism as an unsophisticated or debased religious experience. This is most evident in earlier works that presented shamanism as essentially a degenerate form of higher religion that made up in fury for what it lacked in sophistication or elaboration. It is not far from this to the characterisation of shamanism as psychopathology, which originates with Bogoras (1904) and Jochelson (1905).

A Question of Etymology

The word shaman or *saman* is related to words involving movement or raising and refers to a person who is excited or jumps upwards. A great deal of print has been expended upon the etymological origins of the word shaman itself. The two most important theories have been that it is rooted in the Sanskrit *sramana* or the Turko-Tatar *kam*. While it is certainly valid to research etymology to find clues to understanding a tradition, the fact that shamanism is a dynamic process tends to obviate the importance of distant origins. More than this, the concentration on origins is intended to illuminate the underlying structural destiny of shamanic practice. If it is Buddhist inspired, then it must be this, if Mongol, it must be that. We find that from the outset scholarship is directed towards understanding shamanism as an outcome, rather than as an originator. The fault is in the idea that, as Nowak and Durrant wryly note, "if only the ultimate origin could be proved and traced, the phenomenon could then be understood" (1977: 4).

Beyond etymological debates lies a more central conceptual issue. The problem lies in the acceptance of the term shamanism as a gloss for many forms of transcendent methodology. This has made it very difficult to appreciate the distinctive nature of shamanism. We find for example that Hultkrantz recognises that shamans and medicine men overlap in their occupational areas (1985: 514), but finally argues that they are distinct because the shaman is an ecstatic voyager who sometimes heals through supernatural means, while the medicine-man is a healer who sometimes employs ecstasy in his work: "What matters here is that both shamans and medicine-men take over the medical control when there is supernatural interference . . . In so doing, they are medicine men and, when they are able to fall into a deep trance, shamans as well" (ibid.: 515). Hultkrantz makes a worthwhile differentiation between the two, while at the same

time he recognizes that they are very close to each other. It appears to be a difference in emphasis, but this difference is crucial.

There may be a fundamental difference between mastery by and mastery of. To be mastered by something is to gain a certain type of experience, different from the experience of the master. To be the master or mastered still means that one is involved in the negotiation of the visionary experience. Both sides create and control the arena of thought. Shamans and mediums both use trance, and may use it for divination, sorcery, healing, heroic feats or epic journeys (which we may term shamanising). However, it is likely that the two systems (shamanism and mediumship) do not produce identical experiences or understandings. This is not a question of profundity or importance, but of kind. However, it is reasonable to suggest that the social purpose of possession is to heal the community (see Boddy 1994). The analysis of Guan clan shamanism presented in this work emphasises the social role, and this is similar to the social purpose of possession described by Boddy. The relationship between spirit possession and shamanism does call for further examination.

Approaches to Shamanism

An important early trend in the attempts to understand the nature and origin of shamanism is that of evolutionism. This approach is related to the etymological method in that it directs its energies to understanding shamanism through its history, and not in terms of present practice and meaning. Nowak and Durrant discuss Zelenin's attempt to uncover the evolutionary determinants of shamanism in totemism. Zelenin concluded that the shamans are in fact totems, and successors of totem animals (1977: 5). That is, the shamans are the living embodiment of the ancestral spirits of the clan. The idea of shamanising then is seen to arise out of a concern with contacting ancestral spirits. This is a non-reductionist approach that concentrates on the spiritual aspect of the phenomenon. That the shamans are the embodiment of the ancestors is a bold assumption, and does not significantly inform shamanism as practised within the context of contemporary peoples. However, it is valuable to our consideration of the body of scholarship because it is an early indication of the treatment of shamanism as a primitive religion that has survived as an anachronism.

The contrast with the idea of primitive religion that is found in some other works is that shamanism is in fact a recent development and has arisen out of the great religious traditions of Asia. This is usually presented as having come from either Buddhism via the Chinese, or Hindu mysticism via the Mongols and Turkic peoples. However, the essential bias remains, for this

approach treats shamanism as a degenerate or debased form of a more sophisticated religion. This is not satisfactory for a number of reasons. First, the mechanism of transmission is neither documented nor convincingly explained, but appears merely as a postulated sequence of possible links. Second, the assumption that it is degenerate fails to explain the how and why of its degeneration. Finally, we are provided with a tautological reduction that says more about the theoretical inclinations of the writer than shamanism as it is experienced within a society.

Schmidt's work in particular illustrates the problems inherent in speculation about degenerate religions. Using diffusionist principles, he postulated that the shamanism of central Asian pastoralists is a reaction against the original shamanism that arose among agrarian people (1955: 617). This is used to explain the existence of black (chthonic/agrarian) shamanism and white (celestial/pastoral) shamanism. The argument against this is that many shamanic complexes include both types. Moreover, Schmidt relied upon inductive reasoning to arrive at these conclusions, formulating his theory first, then finding evidence that fit. Schmidt's main contribution to the debate is his insistence that there is no need to place shamanism at the most primitive level in the unilineal evolutionary progress of religion. By recognising that so-called primitive societies could evolve sophisticated religious concepts he freed the study of shamanism from the shackles of hierarchical classification.

Another approach to shamanism is found in Roberte Hamayon's article "Les Heros de Service" (1978). We may call the approach "Functional." Based on pre-1917 Buryat practices, Hamayon defines shamanism according to five principles: 1) the crossing of boundaries between categories (by spirits and shamans) is the cause and the remedy of misfortunes; 2) these categories are not defined in the absolute but progressively and empirically (the order is revealed only through disorder); 3) the model of disorder is sociological (it reflects the social realm); 4) the otherness of the shaman is a model for individualities (he is an epic hero); 5) the world of the living is dominated by the world of the spirits. The shaman is the ultimate mediator because he represents both worlds to each other and crystallises all values to all.

Hamayon's conception is clearly dominated by the principle of the occurrence of misfortunes and their remedies. She comes closest to dealing with epistemology in point number two. She defines shamanic knowledge as progressive and dynamic and her assertion that it is reactive knowledge (arising out of disorder) limits the creative aspect of shamanism. But she essentially ignores the possibility of shamanic knowledge as transcending applied purposes. Hamayon concentrates upon public performance and the consequences of those acts. While her approach provides a useful summary of the social aspects of shamanism, a more holistic

approach would be helpful. Beyond this, Hamayon's assertion that spirits dominate the living is not supported by the evidence available regarding classic Siberian shamanism of the kind discussed above in relation to spirit possession, and practised by the Buryat (see Balzer 1987, Czaplicka 1914, and especially Mikhailovsky 1894).

Hamayon's description of the shaman as a model for individualities is deserving of a closer look. She posits the idea that the shaman is the archetypal Buryat, and that his behaviour is the embodiment of an actualised Buryat worldview (Hamayon 1978: 87).. The shaman is in essence the perfect Buryat. This suggestion is of value for two reasons. First, the shamans receive special training directly from the spirits of shamans while living on the margin of Buryat society. This means that they are instruments of continuity. Second, the shaman utilises a unique and trope-laden vocabulary that has little or no meaning for the average Buryat (see Mikhailovsky 1894). The training that the shaman receives is not carried out in the public sphere, nor is it associated directly with public functions. The shamans emerge as heroes worthy of emulation by the other Buryat. In fact, the shamans epitomise what is admirable and virtuous in the Buryat world view. To suggest that the shaman is a model for Buryat behaviour in some idealised sense is to confuse the public actions of the shaman for the internal motivations, which for the Buryat come from contact with *shamanic* predecessors. The integrative activities of the shaman serve as a model for Buryat social life, and in this sense the shaman functions as an important archetype.

The Shaman and the Structuralist

Among the most highly influential works on shamanism are Lévi-Strauss's discussion of the story of Quesalid and his analysis of the effectiveness of shamanism (1963a, 1963b). Lévi-Strauss is concerned with understanding the effectiveness of shamanising as a therapy for psychological disorder. He is not really interested in understanding shamanism as an epistemological enterprise in and of itself. He is concerned with the applied results of shamanism, but in this he aspires to describe the true nature of shamanism. In sum, Lévi-Strauss treats shamanism as essentially a healing tradition. Shamanism often has healing consequences, but it is doubtful that it is either the primary focus or the main motivation for the enterprise.

Lévi-Strauss also takes up the theme of order and chaos. In the "The Sorcerer and His Magic" (1963a) he takes a psychological approach, proposing abreaction as an explanation (a strong emotional reaction to an image or symbol which leads to understanding or revelation). In the "The Effectiveness of Symbols" (1963b) he argues that the shaman provides the sick person

with a language to express psychic states which are otherwise chaotic. Releasing the psychic state alleviates the physical symptoms. In this regard Lévi-Strauss makes his most significant contribution to the understanding of shamanism by providing effective support for the creative aspect of shamanic practice. It is the desire to push the boundaries of knowledge, to explore in a patterned fashion, which is central to the epistemological project of shamanism.

Lévi-Strauss suggests that the shaman is a shaman by virtue of his ability to heal, and that the healing power comes from the public's investiture of the role of shaman in an individual, and a belief in the healing power associated with that role. But as Hultkrantz points out, while not all shamans heal (1985: 515), nevertheless, they are still shamans. In fact, they are recognised as shamans before they begin to shamanise (public healing, divination, etc.) by virtue of their exceptional abilities and behaviour. These latter do not constitute a public service, nor does the general populace understand these things in a profound way. A shaman who does not heal, perhaps because he is prevented by injury or external forces, does not therefore lose the status of a shaman, although he may not be able to fulfil the social role of shaman. That is, the title and rights or duties (status) of the shaman still accrue to an individual despite their present inability to perform certain functions that are associated with the role of shaman. It is the knowledge that imbues status, while the actions merely establish a role. The two aspects may be made manifest in one individual, or the role may be absent. Someone who does not also obtain to the status however cannot presumably perform the role of shaman. When the Manzu imitate the shamans during the performance of rituals, their actions have no affect and are not taken seriously by the other Manzu present.

Lévi-Strauss is concerned with establishing a structural correspondence between the shamanic rites and a physiological reality (1963a: 188), which is in fact a mythical anatomy. This, he says, mobilises the belief of the patient and explains the healing efficacy of shamanising. The problems with this approach are that, first, it assumes a coherence in the rites (especially the songs) for the patient which may not exist; and, second, it assumes that shamanism merely expresses mundane knowledge in an obscure way. As shamanism is not necessarily concerned with worldly problems, it may not be expressing mundane knowledge, but rather something genuinely transcendent. Lévi-Strauss's structuralist approach provides insight into one aspect of shamanism. It may help to explain why the healing rituals are effective, but the parallel with psychoanalysis that Lévi-Strauss develops does not encompass the entire phenomenon. This is not a problem when restricted to concerns with healing, but it is necessary

to be careful not to understand this approach as applying to all shamanisms, or all aspects of shamanism.

Jane Atkinson offers an elaboration of Lévi-Strauss's approach in her analysis of the *mabalong* ceremony of the Wana of Sulawesi, Indonesia (1987). She suggests that the therapeutic efficacy of the ceremony depends upon the shaman's appeal to the entire community, not just the individual. The shaman is required to attract an audience, and thus in Atkinson's formulation is akin to a performer or a faith healer. There are problems with Atkinson's decision to focus on the competition for attention. She does point out that the Wana shaman does not offer a geographical parallel to the anatomy, and that the Wana do not understand the shaman's chant (*ibid.*: 344). However, she also emphasises the shaman as a cultural ideal (like Hamayon) or hero (following Lévi-Strauss), and as relying on reputation (effective fulfilment of a role) to establish status as a shaman, when in fact it is the status which enables the role.

Atkinson touches upon the nature of the shaman, but then seems to glide directly past: "In the *mabalong* the shaman leads his spirit cohort in a struggle against the forces of illness. In everyday life, it is the shaman who presses beyond the limits of ordinary experience to engage in hidden sources of power" (*ibid.*: 345). This suggests that power over illness is the object of shamanism, rather than knowing, and consequently must confuse what is paramount in shamanism by placing healing above moving beyond the ordinary. It is probably the case that Atkinson has emphasised the ritual performance of the shamans at the expense of the entire complex. For the common Wana, shamanising is what shamanism is about, and so Atkinson is correct insofar as her analysis extends to the perception of the shaman within the community. However, as an understanding of what occurs for the shamans, and especially of what she perceives as competition between the shamans, there is room for other interpretations. Yet, while Atkinson is dealing with a specific case, her emphasis on the effect of the performance upon the audience is important. This suggests an important idea about how the shaman creates an impression that will inspire the audience in some way.

Psychological Approaches

Psychiatric approaches to shamanism, as has been noted above, are quite widespread. Philippe Mitrani, quoting Hamayon and Delaby (1977: 8), notes that "'the tendency to attribute a pathological source to shamanism, and to reduce its manifestations to the manipulation of epileptic and psychotic episodes' appeared simultaneously with the publication of the first studies on the subject" (1992: 145). Some theorists, such as Bogoras (1907), Czalipcka (1914) and

Ohlmarks (1939, cited in Mitrani 1992), have attributed shamanism to Arctic hysteria, and related illnesses. In these views, the shamans are either ill/deviant themselves or a necessary function to treat the illnesses of others. Wallace attributes the illness to an identity crisis while others (Ackerknecht 1943, Gillin 1948, Boyer 1964, Nadel 1965, and Sasaki 1969 (all cited in Mitrani 1992)) characterise the shaman as suffering from chronic and intense neuroses. Silverman (1967) and Devereux (1970) treat the shaman as a paranoid schizophrenic, but the former sees the shaman as effectively reintegrated into society while the latter assumes that while remission is possible, cure is not because the shaman lacks access to the root of his conflicts.

Two problems are readily discernible. First, the theorists are actually writing about a number of unrelated phenomena, once again falling into the trap of treating shamanism as a catch-all category, "the sole end of which is comparative speculations" (Mitrani 1992: 149). Mitrani notes that "the shaman has often been equated with all sorts of religious guides; with miracle-workers, curanderos, marabouts, sorcerers, bone-setters and . . . others" (*ibid.*: 148). Unfortunately, this brings unnecessary confusion to the investigation of shamanism. Second, there is a great disparity of viewpoints about the causes of shamanism. This can be attributed to the uncertainty of transcultural psychological endeavour, the extremely hypothetical nature of psychiatry itself and a lack of understanding of the cultural context in which the shamans operate. This last cause is not merely a matter of social milieu, but the specific cultural context of the shamans as cultural specialists. This must be understood as treating all practitioners as equivalent in doctrine, method, etc., when they are in fact remarkably diverse even on the individual level.

Mitrani, in his assessment of psychiatric approaches, asserts that most of the data used "comes from societies that are either somewhat acculturated or are in the process of an extremely rapid cultural transformation" (*ibid.*: 150). The circumstances are marginal, he concludes, not the shaman. But, as many studies have shown (Atkinson 1987, Balzer 1987, Boddy 1994, Eliade 1964, Grim 1987, Heinze 1992, Kendall 1996, Lewis 1989, Nowak and Durrant 1977, Townsley 1993), shamanism is not simply a product of cultural transformation, it is an important tradition in itself and the shaman is marginal to an extent. The practice of the shaman and the understanding s/he has are far beyond the comprehension of the laity. Though well integrated into society, the shaman is not always or precisely the embodiment of society's ideals, although the work s/he produces and his/her public role are very important. It is true that the shaman helps to produce the important ideas and categories of the community, but s/he works far beyond these communal mundane and spiritual issues. Mitrani is right to assert that the question of madness is

actually irrelevant to the nature of shamanism. The creativity and genius of the shaman is such that they have the potential to play an especially important role in a community at a time of "rapid cultural transformation." And while this is a manifestation of the integrative aspect of shamanising, it also functions as an important clue to the internal sense of the shamans themselves. We may glimpse in the shamans' invention and reinvention of social life a clue to their epistemological undertakings. That shamans are effective social psychiatrists is due to their wide-ranging knowledge, certainty about who they are and habituation to confronting and resolving perplexities.

The more conceptually biased psychological hypothesis about shamanising, the psychopathological approach, assumes that the individual is expressing an extreme form of mental illness or is epileptic. It is also sometimes posited that it is an environmental adaptation or a type of arctic hysteria operating as defence mechanisms grounded in a cultural system: (e.g. Aberle 1952 and Foulks 1972). Eliade summarises Ohlmarks' idea that great shamanising with full trance is found in the dark Arctic regions where the environmental pressures are greatest and small shamanising, with artificial or imitative trance, in the subarctic. This represents an intriguing distinction, but the problem remains that Ohlmarks (1939) argues that the only difference between a shaman and an epileptic is that the shaman can deliberately enter into a trance (cited in Eliade 1964: 24). This is further reduced for the lesser shamanic tradition, which is represented as essentially a degenerate form.

That shamanism has a psychiatric role is the thrust of Shirokogoroff's work, in the sense that the shamanic tradition is an adaptive response to group and individual dysfunction (1935: 259, 268). For Shirokogoroff, shamanism itself is not a psychopathology, but its treatment is the practical aim of shamanism (1935: 422). In the end, shamanism is a method of restoring equilibrium in the face of external pressures of various origins, such as environmental catastrophe or colonisation. While this is a valid insight into one aspect of shamanism, and perhaps even its origins, it is too limited in scope, as with the entire psychological school. It would seem that while shamanism may have emerged as a form of problem solving related to practical issues, it has grown far beyond that. Besides, Shirokogoroff's conviction that it is a recent development and an off-shoot of Buddhism adapted to overwhelming environmental pressures is unsatisfactory for it treats the Tungus peoples as ciphers who merely respond rather than create, and because it rests on too many unproved assumptions about the transmission of Buddhist doctrine.

The classic discussion of shamanism and psychosis is Julian Silverman's, "Shamans and Acute Schizophrenia," (1967). He discusses extreme psychosis among shamans, and concludes that it is an alternative to more drastic forms of deviancy (*ibid.*: 25) in response to an extreme threat (similar to Shirokogoroff, Foulks and Aberle in the latter aspect). Silverman attempts to place it within a cultural context as far as understanding how the deviancy allows the shaman to function within society, but he reduces it to western notions of psychopathology, rather than applying native criteria, and fails to go beyond these assumptions to examine the overall mental abilities and social role of shamans, both of which are formidable, and tested constantly by the other members of the shamans' communities.

The issue of the cognitive abilities and mental stability of shamans is a difficult one to resolve. The problem has often been that researchers have started with the assumption that shamans are operating at a reduced capacity and have attempted to explain shamanism within that context. However, no proof has been offered that shamans are in any way mentally defective or pathological other than arguments by analogy based on the cultural referents of the researchers. That is, shamans seem like people that we consider in the West to be pathological, therefore they must be pathological too. This is a fallacious argument that should call into question the rationality of its proponents, and not shamans. As no proof is offered, it hardly seems necessary to disprove the argument. However, since the idea has been proposed, it is necessary to offer some refutation.

The effectiveness of shamans in fulfilling the needs of their community in an holistic fashion (Heinze 1992), and their widely acknowledged ability to attain altered states *at will* (see Nowak and Durrant [1977: 28]) for a summary of sources on this point) seem to offer ample evidence of the exceptional nature and self-control of shamans. Furthermore, it is demonstrated in Manzu shamanic epics such as "The Tale of the Nisan Shamaness" what a remarkably diverse and extensive vocabulary the shamans command. Balzer (1987, 1996) and Townsley (1993) both attest to the self-possession and dignity of the shamans they encountered, while Kendall (1996) describes the savvy and contemporary relevance of modern shamans in her article about Korean shamans.

An interesting counterargument to the psychopathology hypothesis that also attests to the ordering abilities of the shamanic mind is found in Shweder's (1972) paper on Zinacanteco shamans. Shweder compared responses of shamans and nonshamans to photographs in varying degrees of clarity. The results confirmed the Zinacanteco's own thesis that shamans have exceptional cognitive abilities:

"They are imposers of form on diffuse sense data. Second, shamans are more productive in their responses; they are more generative of different responses. Third, shamans seem to have available to themselves their own constructive categories and remain relatively insensitive to the alternative categories provided by the experimenter" (*ibid.*: 402).

Shweder's efforts represent an innovative conception that links with research that suggests that shamans are creating art and imposing order on chaos. Furthermore, the attempt to understand shamanism through a hypothesis put forward by the Zinacantecos, rather than the social scientist, is an approach worthy of imitation.

In sum, while the psychopathology approach is not immensely useful, it does draw attention to the important differences between true shamans and those with genuine mental disturbances who superficially resemble shamans. In addition, the psychiatric approach, while limiting, does affirm the social role of the shaman and leads us to a greater understanding of the effect that shamanic performance has upon the audience/clan. We must remember that the shaman is not primarily concerned with treating individual illness, and that healing itself is an aspect, but not necessarily the motivation behind the shamanic vocation.

Comprehensive Approaches

A seminal work on shamanism is Eliade's Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy (1964). He is concerned with deciphering and revealing the meaning of religious phenomena through analysis, interpretation and comparison. He is not a phenomenologist, but a historian of religion and as such he compiles even when he cannot explain. His central theme is that ritual ecstasy allows the shaman, as mediator, to reinstate the primordial connection between this world and the world beyond. It has been noted that Eliade's approach "might have the same limitation that characterises the diffusionist school: an overemphasis on morphological and sequential considerations in data gathering"(Nowak and Durrant 1977: 15). He is also deeply concerned with the desire to classify within a sociohistorical schema rather than explaining its function. The breadth of his scope prevents Eliade from bringing sociological focus to his study. The strength of the work, its comprehensiveness, is also its weakness.

Eliade's work is widely regarded for the approach to the problem of shamanism that he proposes. He is primarily interested in providing a diagnostic account of shamanism. Eliade is certain that "any ecstatic cannot be considered a shaman" (*ibid.*: 5). The obvious problem is what type of ecstatic is also a shaman. Eliade considers the difference to be that the shaman controls

the spirits and is not controlled by them. In other words, the shaman *qua* shaman, is not subject to spirit possession. This is a significant insight and is confirmed by the work of Shirokogoroff. Interestingly, Lewis disagrees with this assessment and attempts to establish that since the shaman possesses the spirit in a controlled fashion, this too is a form of spirit possession. Lewis uses evidence from Tungusic peoples in proposing this argument (1989: 48). He develops the argument by considering that the initial ecstatic experience is uncontrolled shamanic sickness which later “can be turned on and off at will in shamanistic séances”. Furthermore, illness can be caused in others by spirit possession. Lewis presents an argument which is intended to be contrary to the view of Eliade, but the essence of Eliade’s theory, that the key to understanding shamanism is that the shaman is the master/mistress of spirits, still holds true and is upheld by Lewis.

Eliade notes that while shamanism has two roles, one in the general religious life, and one in the realm of ecstatic experience and magic, the shamans seem more at home in the latter. However, this is not, we are told, a matter of “two wholly different religious universes” (*ibid.*: 12). Rather, the difference lies in the intensity of the religious experience. This argument is noteworthy because it fits with the Guan shamans’ own apperception of their practice. However, Eliade chooses to concentrate upon the mystical aspect, and in essence treats shamanism as separate from general religious life. That the shaman is at home in both roles is a helpful idea when considering shamanism without trance. If we can accept that shamanism is not solely manifested through the ecstatic, then the circumstances in Yi Lan Gang become more readily comprehensible. The ideal type of shaman as ecstatic and mystic, largely derived from Eliade, is not necessarily accurate as a generalisation, as even Eliade indicates. The shaman as representative of social institutions is a reasonable concept, in contrast to Weberian oppositions of priest and prophet.

A key distinguishing factor for Eliade is that, in North and Central Asia, shamanism is not a religion, though it “dominates the religious life” (*ibid.*: 7). This seems to be a fine distinction and one that Lewis at least disagrees with (see below). What Eliade argues is that the shamanism of the Arctic, Siberian and Asian peoples is not the producer of religion but the product. Lewis maintains that shamanism is a social institution of centripetal import. In this matter I will attempt to demonstrate that in the case of the Manzu it is Lewis’ thesis that is supported by the evidence in the literature and the research I have conducted. The fault in Eliade’s reasoning arises out of the desire common to shamanic studies to determine the origin of shamanism. Eliade’s location of a Buddhist influence (1964: 498) upon shamanism leads him to

the position that shamanism is a product of the larger religious milieu. The truth of this assertion is not under consideration here, but rather Eliade's neglect of the possibility that shamanism itself can become a shaper of religious thought in a dialectic process. In addition, Eliade, as noted above, sees shamans as marginal because they are of the elect (*ibid.*: 7). This concept, in combination with the concern with origins, precludes the consideration of shamanism as a social institution. Shamanism by itself is not socially valid in this view, but is dependent upon incorporation into a larger historico-religious milieu for validation (*ibid.*: 504).

For Eliade though, it is not Buddhism that is the source of the core of shamanism – its “primary phenomenon”. Eliade maintains that the central element in shamanism is the ascent to the sky. This, he holds, was incorporated into the historico-religious milieu to emerge as shamanic practice. The source of ecstasy, then, or the celestial ascent of the shaman, represents the survival of an archaic ideology centred on faith in a celestial supreme being (*ibid.*: 505). This is the conclusive argument in Eliade's work. The approach taken by Eliade led him away from the possibility that shamanism could come to play a central role in contemporary religion. The logic of Eliade's argument is that the core of shamanism is ecstasy, which is an archaic survival imported into the religious context of Buddhism, although the ecstatic trance originated before and outside of Buddhism. Therefore, Eliade concludes, it is not possible for shamanism to function as a social institution, that is as a religion. Yet if a shamanism survives without ecstasy, as in the present instance, then what is at *its* core? Eliade is quite correct in advocating that shamanism must be understood within what is essentially a social milieu. But it is not as a liminal element that the shaman functions. Rather, shamanism is a central force that validates and is validated by the larger society. We can accept Eliade's argument that shamanism is intimately connected with social life without agreeing that the origins of shamanism are such that the phenomenon must remain marginal. Rather, shamanism can be understood as a social institution within which social actors engage in dialogic negotiation of its meaning in relation to other aspects of culture, such as ethnic identity.

I. M. Lewis is an important advocate of what can be described as a holistic approach to the study of shamanism, although he would perhaps quibble at the use of the word holistic. In what he prefers to term a sociological approach, he attempts to place shamanism and its meanings within the larger social context. Lewis writes that “the peripherality, or centrality, of possession cults can only be adequately assessed when we take into account the total social and political circumstances in which they occur” (1989: 128). And he defends the relevance of psychological approaches when he notes that “all social phenomena which exist in the minds of

men have a psychological dimension” (*ibid.*: 11). However, he does not advocate a deterministic approach, sociological, psychological or biological.

What Lewis does propose is that students of shamanism can learn from the work of social anthropologists in the study of witchcraft who focus “on the social nexus in which sorcery and witchcraft accusations are made” (*ibid.*: 23). Aside from the problem of imposing etic categories and the refusal to believe on the part of anthropologists (which he acknowledges) Lewis gets to the crux of the matter by insisting that the central question is, “How does the incidence of ecstasy relate to the social order?” Lewis demonstrates a key element through his insistence that the moral force of ecstasy is grounded in society. Without the legitimacy that is granted to the shaman through social relations, shamanic activity would remain peripheral. This insight offers a way out of the trap of preoccupation with the origins of shamanism and takes investigation beyond considering only such elements as healing and mediumship.

Using a comparative approach, Lewis attempts to establish an opposition between possession cults of the masculine ancestors that are directly concerned with public morality and peripheral spirit possession illness cults which are dominated by women (*ibid.*: 13 & 121). In the case of the Manzu and other Tungus, this argument does not hold up in some regards. Antique shamanic epics and oral tradition all treat women as central to shamanism, and shamanism as socially important at the same time. The male establishment did not traditionally dominate shamanism until after the Qing conquest of China, when the influence of patriarchal Confucianism was strongest. After the collapse of the Qing, women returned to a role within shamanism, at least among the Manzu of Heilongjiang province. Today, without a doubt, shamanism is not a male-dominated enterprise.

Lewis provides a “catalogue” of sociological preoccupations in the study of possession by social anthropologists:

- 1) the social role of the shaman;
- 2) religious ecstasy as the basis for authority;
- 3) the evasion of responsibility through recourse to the gods, and;
- 4) the employment of revelations to conserve social order or authorise change.

Lewis rightly wishes to move beyond this to questions about the social order, and to understanding the social motivations and benefits of ecstatic possession (*ibid.*: 23). Yet he follows in the footsteps of other researchers in that he remains focussed upon possession – the “seizure of man by divinity” (*ibid.*: 15). But what happens when there is shamanism without ecstasy? As Lewis himself notes, shamanism can become a “central religious institution” which

fulfils a wide variety of functions (*ibid.*: 119). For the Manzu of Yi Lan Gang, shamanism operates as a social institution that does not require the element of ecstasy to retain its centrality, even in terms of relations with the spirits. By examining non-ecstatic shamanism an understanding of the institution of shamanism in Yi Lan Gang as it relates to the social order is possible. Lewis points us in this direction when he briefly considers the various Tungus groups under Russian rule: “possession became the vehicle for Tungus cultural nationalism and protest against the policies of their new masters. In this setting, shamans joined forces with the *kuiak* clan leaders as agents of local resistance and disaffection” (*ibid.*: 141). While Lewis refers to possession as the vehicle, the insight lies in the realisation that shamanism can act as a focus for disaffection, or relational negotiations (in this case contested in nature). Shamanism as the symbolic locus of ethnic identity among the Tungus is not unprecedented then, and this is the case for the Guan clan as well.

The work of S. M. Shirokogoroff is essential to any study of the Manzu. Shirokogoroff produced an encyclopaedic body of scholarship on the Manzu and the various other Tungusic peoples found in Manchuria and Siberia. In addition, he attempted to place his research within a larger theoretical construct that revolved around his theory of ethnos. No attempt will be made here to assess the entirety of his work, but we find his influence throughout the literature on shamanism. Shirokogoroff summarised his theory of Tungusic shamanism in eight points:

1. “*Animism . . . is among the Tungus tribes a primary condition for the existence of shamanism*”;
 2. Shamans possess spirits, but “the characteristic peculiar to shamanism consists in the *recognition of the special rites, clothing, instruments, and the peculiar social position of the shaman*”;
 3. “Although, during the performance of the shaman, the consciousness of the shaman is almost suppressed, nevertheless *the influence of the shaman on the people and his superior knowledge got by special means, unusual for the present ethnographical milieu, are highly developed*”;
 4. Shamans must be physically and mentally sound;
 5. Shamans protect the clan from psychic maladies and as such “*shamanism . . . is a kind of clan self-defense and an apparent aspect of its biological functions*”;
 6. The shaman is a very influential member of the clan;
 7. Shamans can become ineffective and refuse to perform their social duties;
 8. Shamanism “cannot be considered as a religion in the ordinary sense of the word”
- (Shirokogoroff 1923: 364-366).

When we consider these characteristics, it becomes evident that some are of particular relevance. The first point still holds true today. Many Manzu do accept the idea that the world around them is animated by spirits, while at the same time they reject the Chinese spiritual pantheon which had worked its way into the shamanism practised by their ancestors (Shirokogoroff 1982: 128). And these spirits are still controlled by shamans today, either through trance or through ritual, but it is the social role of the shaman in particular that is noteworthy. The first seven points will come under closer scrutiny in the following chapters, but for now the main concern is the eighth characteristic, that shamanism is not a religion.

Shirokogoroff maintains that the sole basis of shamanism is the ability to influence individuals by mystical means and thus treat “nervous maladies and psychopathological cases” (1923: 366). Yet he also maintains consistently that the shaman has a significant social role and is responsible for maintaining the social equilibrium of the entire clan by acting as a safety valve. Furthermore, we learn of the different kinds of shamans, including the *bogun* shaman who manages the dead and regulates the ancestor worship that is so central to the clan system (1982: 218). Shirokogoroff maintains that they are not shamans but priests, although he states that the institution “received its particular forms owing to the original Manchu conceptions” while in many clans the *bogun* shaman takes on the role of the ecstatic as well (*ibid.*: 218). Among the Manzu today shamans may fulfil both roles.

As noted above, Lewis suggests that the centrality of shamanism as a social institution compels us to understand it as a religious institution. Shirokogoroff also writes that “the shaman’s aim is not the same as the medicine man,” but rather it is social: the regulation of psychomental complexes, and the treatment of individual and mass psychosis, not the treatment of diseases or physical ailments (*ibid.*: 359). Shamanism, as practised among the Tungus (including the Manzu), is largely concerned with the stability of social units (*ibid.*: 275), while the shamans assume a special social position associated with the clan organisation. Furthermore, Shirokogoroff maintains that shamanism might be styled as a system of philosophy. Yet, despite all this, he holds that it is not a religion because it lacks an ethical element. In all other respects, he does not deny the possibility of its functioning as a religious system. Shamanism as practised in Yi Lang Gang may be considered to include an ethical element because it functions to emphasise the importance of ethnic identity and loyalty to the values of the ancestors.

Models of Shamanism

Nowak and Durrant present an analysis of a widely known and important Manzu shamanic epic, "The Tale of the Nisan Shamaness" (1977). The tale reveals the centrality of mediation, particularly "the mediation of a mundane problem and a supernatural solution" through trance (*ibid.*: 29). But this epic also involves mediation between the world of the living and the dead, mediation of polarised social relationships, mediation of order and chaos, and of nonsense and meaning. All of these connections depend upon the ability of the shaman not only to accomplish the ecstatic journey but also to present the results in a socially acceptable and convincing fashion. This is why at the end of the epic the shamaness must give up her practice, for she comes to represent the accommodation between Manzu ways and Chinese ways (*ibid.*: 118). She is a model for the future and the past, and yet this transition is predicted within the course of the shamanic journey and thus validated as well.

In Nowak's interpretation the following characteristics are presented as typical of shamanism within a holistic context in north-east Asia:

"(1) a trance or ecstatic state that the shaman is able to induce himself (unlike epileptic seizures); (2) a group-held belief that some non-physical component of the shaman's being either "leaves" or "empties itself" so that the shaman can serve as the instrument of some other dimensional reality; (3) a period of training, initiation, or near madness prior to public acknowledgement of the shaman's status; (4) a social, rather than an individual motivation for achieving a trance state; and (5) a fundamental concern for righting something that has gone awry, that is, a reaffirmation of cosmic or microcosmic order over whatever form of chaos is threatening to overwhelm the group or individual concerned" (*ibid.*: 28).

The last three points are not problematic. The first two warrant reconsideration, if we can consider what the Guan shamans practise as shamanism. If the fourth and fifth characteristics are true, then it may be helpful to question whether the first and second are necessarily universal. Is shamanising about trancing? Is my desire to respect the people I work with preventing me from acknowledging that their practise has been transformed into something other than shamanism? For the Manzu who live in Yi Lan Gang, what is important to them about their shamanic tradition has been retained. To suggest that they are wrong to call it shamanism (which they certainly do) would be the worst kind of analytical arrogance. But we will also see that the Guan shamans acknowledge that their shamanism has changed from what it used to be, and they are well aware that other Manzu clan shamans still practise trance. Simply put, they do not care about that because that is not the focus of their activity. As for this work, I am attempting to

describe what the Guan clan refer to as shamanism and understand what that means for them in order to help to generate useful analytical categories regarding shamanism and cultural identity. My focus has evolved from an attempt to redefine shamanism, and I have come to realise that what matters most is not whether the Guan shamans are “real” shamans (as they would term it) but what they are doing and why they do it.

Besides, even if these shamans do not trance, they are still exceptional members of the community. While members of the community are familiar with the performance, the shaman utilises a *language* (both oral and visual) which expresses their specialised knowledge in a way that transcends the comprehension of the laity. In fact, the average Manzu has a vocabulary of about 5000 words while the Manzu shaman employs a 20,000 word vocabulary, and utilises it in a tropic style (Fu 1989: 242). This generalisation does apply to Guan clan shamans, who are involved in mastering specialised knowledge. Traditionally, the shaman is highly innovative and able to cope with changing circumstances in a radically creative fashion. Thus the shaman is able to express information which is helpful to the clan in adjusting to changing circumstances, redefining their identity and reconstructing the nature of shamanic practice itself within the community. It is not surprising to find that even shamans without trance retain the responsibility to assist the clan in redefining themselves.

Humphrey presents an important critique of Eliade’s method. She points out that the latter turns shamanism into a “timeless mystery“ (1994: 192). Humphrey emphasizes that this sort of religious practice must be analysed and understood in context. Shamanism, she suggests, is not a coherent ideology but a collection of representations that appear in the cultures of northern Asia as a product of a discourse in contexts of power arising in different historical situations:

Shamanism has changed over these centuries or, to be more precise, the aims of inspirational specialists and therefore the content of their practices have responded to the different configurations of power in changing historical circumstances . . . In this kind of discourse, preoccupations with kinship, ancestry, and geography colored the traditional cosmic imagery of shamanism, and I will show that it had different registers in the center and periphery of the Manchu state (ibid.: 194).

Humphrey goes on to demonstrate that the elements of shamanism were constrained by political considerations and that shamanism was always engaged in representations that were contested by other practitioners of symbolic representation of the social group (ibid.: 198). These insights are crucial to the understanding of shamanism used in this work. By drawing attention to how shamanism interacts with politics to reproduce particular forms of society, and arguing that

the people involved in this process are aware of hegemony, challenge and independence, she points to a consideration of shamanism as a product of agency and discourse. However, as the author herself writes, she provides a "sketchy suggestion", and "[a]ctual shamanism depends on the concerns of the participants, both patrons and shamans, and on the point of view from which they act" (ibid.: 224). We are still left with the problem of generating appropriate categories for analysis. An understanding of shamanism requires a syncretic approach. Balzer envisions this as "merging analysis of its social roots, symbolic significance and changing contexts" (1987: 1085). In the examination and deconstruction of the public shamanic rituals such a project can be carried out.

A model for this analysis can be found in Turner's Return to Eden (1989). Turner describes his experience with "laughing waves" and the realisation of Wave-form "over and above the individual waves (ibid.: 172). In this, Turner came to understand the meaning within the metaphor of Aboriginal songs. Later, he describes the realisation of the nature of categories among the Aboriginals. In a discussion of the kinds of sharks, he recognises that "the very idea of 'all inclusiveness', of unity on a universal level, was an anathema to these Aboriginal people" (ibid.: 186). Categories always include some element of something else, a part of one given up to the other. Thus he eventually came to recognise the songs as a metaphorical expression of the connections and renunciative nature of Aboriginal society. This was achieved through patience and taking seriously the message of the songs. That is, Turner proceeded from the songs to a sociological analysis, rather than imposing an analysis upon the songs. Turner's is a model for an approach to shamanic ritual as well. Shamans and their shamanising, and the laity, must be treated as the source of analysis, not just data for analysis. Turner's approach directs us to ask not how and why it works but rather what is done, who does it and what its consequences are. This involves analysing all aspects of the ritual performance and its context and accepting that our preconceived analytical categories are inadequate. This represents a truly syncretic approach, involving "emic" analysis, that must be carried out to uncover consistencies within the shamanic product that can be expressed in terms comprehensible to the outsider. Conclusions should incorporate the perceptions of the shamans and be confirmed by them.

Chapter Three: The Contemporary Manzu

This chapter is intended to familiarise the reader with the Manzu as Shirokogoroff described them most comprehensively in the past and as I encountered them in Yi Lan Gang and a few other sites in the 1990s. Comparing them diachronically (from the 1910s to the 1990s) will help to illustrate the nature of the pressures that have been brought to bear upon them and give an indication of the success of their attempts to maintain their identity and revitalise their culture. I have also attempted to describe the general village life of the Guan, other Manzu and non-Manzu villagers to allow the reader to understand the general milieu. There is little ethnographic information on Chinese peasants living in the mainland in the era of economic reform. Comparisons with pre-Liberation Han peasants or peasants in Taiwan are not particularly meaningful since their history, experience with the state and cultural complex are actually very different. Thus, the best comparisons are diachronic and with their fellow villagers.

As my researches with the Manzu began, I was working with local scholars through the Liaoning Academy of Social Sciences in an attempt to determine the best approach to the problem and select an appropriate field site. I was informed that shamanism was still practised by the Manzu and other Tungus, mostly in Heilongjiang, but also in some parts of Jilin and isolated pockets of Liaoning province. Heilongjiang held out the most promise, but I decided to take advantage of my connections in Liaoning to get an idea of conditions in that province as well.

I travelled to Xiu Yuan county, near the border with Korea. This is an area known for its jade production and is also a Manzu Autonomous County. It had originally been suggested to me as a possible research site, but my investigations dissuaded me. Clan structure was barely present, and spirit connections existed primarily as mediumship practised by the Han. Local people said that there were Manzu in the county who also practice shamanism. Interestingly, I discovered that they work solely as healers, and without clan affiliation. This *wuwate* or *bogan* shaman was described by Wu as having appeared later than the clan shamans did and “at the time of the disintegration of tribal society” (1989: 263). Healing in Xiu Yuan was the only activity of the Manzu shamans, and there were few of these types of shamans. As they had no clan affiliation, they were unconcerned with ancestral spirits. This represents another change in the practice of shamanism by the Manzu, and an intriguing contrast to developments in Yi Lan Gang. Apparently, even among the Manzu of the north-east, a variety of reactions to social change and the intrusion of the state developed. Further investigation is required, but Xiu Yuan is heavily urbanised, closer to Korea and to Beijing, and has better transportation routes. The

county actually has 11 different nationalities within its borders, and the Manzu make up 25% of the population. Perhaps these and other factors are important to the development of shamanism in this district. The Manzu I met expressed interest in but little knowledge of the subject and were unable to give a coherent account of their clan affiliations or what they did that differentiated them from the Han. In fact, most stressed the similarities between themselves and the Han.

A noteworthy manifestation of Manzu influence in Liaoning was the Qing dynasty era dancing in Shenyang, that people characterise as “Manzu-style.” Many of those who participate are in fact Manzu and do this as a way of expressing their sense of ethnic identity, but these are urban Manzu who have few other opportunities for participating in their ethnic milieu. Most participants are not Manzu, however, and use it mainly for exercise and fun. These dance troops started small and now have three groups of 350-400 dancers, who meet in parks in the early morning. I also saw such groups in Beijing. One Han male that I spoke to said that he did not know much about it but that he thought that this minority folk dancing was great exercise. The dress ranges from street clothes to elaborate Jing Ju (Beijing Opera) costumes that reflect the Qing dynasty origins, as does the opera music. They dance in a snaking line for about two hours and perform stylised moves and wave cloths, fans, canes, pipes, etc. They also socialise and chat with each other and audience members. Many people just come to watch. The vast majority of participants were over 50, with none under 30 years of age. The main import of this activity was for the urban Chinese, and it has little to do with the Manzu identity. It was interesting because it was popularly characterised as of Manzu origin. This is a nice example of the ethnic other introducing an element into the cultural identity of an ethnic group. The rural Manzu I am familiar with certainly do not accept this dancing as valid, but as urbanites attempt to resurrect an identity they may draw upon this as a device to demonstrate their difference.

Within Shenyang, capital of Liaoning province and former capital of the Manzu empire (prior to 1644), one can still find urban Manzu populations concentrated around the Imperial Palace and in Bei Shi Chang district. The Lama temple in Bei Shi Chang was the traditional Manzu and Xibe family temple. It was originally founded during the Tang dynasty. All the monks there today are Mongols but it was visited by the emperors and is frequented by Manzu worshippers. Two of the buildings are memorial halls for the families that use the temple. One was torn down during the Cultural Revolution and subsequently rebuilt. The temple was closed during the Cultural Revolution and to reopen it they had to bring in Mongol monks. The monks do not think of it as a Manzu site. Between the Guomindang (GMD) and the Red Guards the

temple suffered a great deal in the past. In the grounds of the temple are the ruined foundations of the old temple buildings that were destroyed by Red Guards. Also, the temple used to house famous gold statues that the GMD took to Taiwan. However, the temple today appears quite prosperous. They have a shop selling Buddhist paraphernalia, and you have to pay to get in. They enjoyed frequent worshippers, especially on festival days, and the memorial halls were full of tablets. The temple was most significant in that it demonstrated clearly that the urban Manzu had taken up the spirituality of the Chinese, including ancestor worship with the assistance of Buddhist monks.

In October 1993, I interviewed a young student at Shenyang Agricultural University named Wong Mei. She was representative of many urban Manzu that I met. She was from a place called Feng Huang Cheng, which was soon to become the Manzu Autonomous City of Long Hai. She was part Manzu on both her mother's and father's sides, but for her ethnic identity was mostly manifested in the food that they ate, such as salt cabbage soup, *tongzi* (corn-flour noodles) and *sa qi ma* (a pastry). Yet they eat dog now, which was traditionally taboo because a dog once saved Nurhaci. She also said that many of them still wear the quilted vests of the Manzu, but now sometimes without any trim. She knew something of her ancestry: "I am a descendant of the yellow banner, the most important branch of the Manzu. During the Qing dynasty, most governors were from the yellow banner." She also understood that each banner has its own customs. In this she was almost certainly confusing the banners and the clans.

Wong did not think that the Manzu were very different from the Han. In terms of social life, she tended to focus on birth, death and marriage. The only difference for her was that in death a small cloth of banner colour is used to cover the deceased's face while the body is displayed in the house. Otherwise, in these three areas, she thought the Han and Manzu were identical. These criteria are not her own, but are defined for her by the education she has received. She said, "I don't think I am very different from Han. Manzu nationality has not been emphasised." In fact, it has been portrayed as a negative, for, "When foreigners come they do not like to work with minorities because they are poor. The Manzu are just like the Han."

While her grandfather believed in the importance of their ethnicity, she did not agree. She felt that the young people were not interested in these traditions, just the old people. Her grandfather said that the Manzu have two layers of nail on the little toe, or the nail is split unevenly (I never heard of this from anyone else). But Wong is not like this because of the Han admixture. She does not intend to tell her children that they are Manzu, because it does not

matter. "I think it is not important to me. We don't think we are different from other nationalities. The nationality is just like the name of a person. It means nothing."

By contrast, an older man, Dr. Song Zhen Qing, was much more knowledgeable and proud of his origins. He was from Beizhen County. For all his knowledge, he still tended to characterise Manzu in stereotyped ways: "Manzu like dancing and song. They will dance and sing day and night during the holidays. The women dance with peace and tranquillity. Two men will dance together. Young women like to dance very much." He also cited the three unusual things of the north-east:

1. Window paper is pasted on the outside;
2. Women smoke very long pipes;
3. Children are placed in a cradle that was hung from the rafters and rocked.

He also discussed the national costume, but distinguished between the Beijing opera style Qing dynasty dress and traditional Manzu dress (although in his home county nobody today wears either). He mentioned the fact that Manzu women never bound their feet, and that this was a good thing. In terms of socialist consciousness, Manzu tend to emphasise the relative freedom of Manzu women in imperial China. This was manifested in the absence of foot binding, women's smoking, the political role of women in the court and in the clans, and the importance of women in shamanism. He was also aware of the complexity of Manzu kinship and the difference between terms of Han origin and Manzu origin.

In March and April of 1994, I interviewed six self-identified Manzu students at Shenyang Agricultural University, in Liaoning province. The topics covered included knowledge of Manzu ancestry (banner and clan, lineage history, migration history), language ability, cultural practice and customs and traditions. I interviewed half a dozen students, both male and female, and the typical picture that emerged was of an individual of mixed Han/Manzu descent (or in one case Russian/Manzu) with a Manzu father, from an area of predominantly Manzu population (from 50% to 90%). All of the students were in their early to mid-20s. Most of them had some knowledge of Manzu customs, usually revolving around foods and costumes. They spoke of wearing Manzu costumes to be photographed, or for weddings or holidays, although the holidays were Chinese holidays (Qing Ming or New Year) and the weddings were not Manzu style. Only two individuals had ever seen a traditional Manzu ceremony, though in both cases they had witnessed shamanic rituals. For them the shamans made the "festivals" more exciting and *renao* (lively), and while they appreciated them as children, they did not feel strongly about them now. Four out of six had practised Manzu folk dancing as children, but did not keep it up. A 23 year

old veterinary student named Lu Jun who said, "For me, Han and Man customs are equally important, and both make an important contribution to Chinese culture. I care most about modern culture," best summed up the attitude of these urban young people.

I was able to examine a number of publications on Manzu communities in discrete districts of Liaoning province. A typical work was Li's work on the Beizhen county Manzu. Emphasis was placed on the massive economic development after liberation: production has expanded 66.4 times since liberation and they have experienced average annual growth of 11.4% (1990: 220). It was fairly obvious that there was a heavy element of propaganda in the book. There was little consideration of social change or the impact of development on social organisation. Ethnographic elements involved extensive discussion of elaborate social rituals of greeting and respect, although it is acknowledged that these are largely archaic, while some remain (*ibid.*: 155). The traditional costume is also described: cuffed gown, men's short coat, vest and cotton trousers (for old people), but it is noted that they are now reserved for formal ceremonies today (weddings, funerals) (*ibid.*: 156).

According to Li, the Manzu of Beizhen still hold to the idea that you cannot marry Han Chinese except those within the banners and that you should not marry someone from your own clan (*ibid.*: 159). In 1990, many people still avoided marrying Han, while some young people were breaking the prohibition. This restriction was not maintained by the Manzu clans in the villages around Ning An. The arrangement of marriages and the use of professional go-betweens was not uncommon in Beizhen (*ibid.*: 161). It is also still quite common in Ning An. The other traditions still followed in Beizhen include the presentation of gifts by the groom as part of the courtship, and the presentation of foods for good fortune. These are presented by an old man of the groom's clan, who stands upon the victory pole of the groom's family (laid horizontal) and recites a prayer for good fortune while presenting a bowl of rice and a bowl of meat. The bride and groom then throw these on the roof. The bride also predicts the gender of the first child by choosing between two covered bowls, one containing dumplings (a boy) and the other containing noodles (a girl).

After Liberation, the burial customs were greatly reduced from the former practices. The family stays home for three days. On the first day relatives and clan members come to the house to be greeted by the family of the deceased. That night the children stay up to keep the spirit of the deceased company. On the second day, at noon, they place the remains into an iron box. Neighbours and relatives give the family wreaths and imitation money. The family writes an epitaph on a cloth and displays the banner in the yard of the deceased's home, along with the

wreaths. A farewell ceremony is held for the deceased. A shaman who honours the ancestors and asks them to accompany the deceased leads this ceremony. Offerings of cakes and liquor are made, and the prayers said are to thank the ancestors for their previous aid and to encourage them to assist the spirit of the deceased. This is a small scale ritual and, while not private, does not usually involve a large portion of the community. This depends on the prominence of the deceased within the clan and within the community. The ancestors propitiated are the mythical ancestors and animistic spirits, not the historical ancestors honoured by the Han. On day three, they take the body to the cremation site. The ashes are then buried in a tomb, usually on a hillside, preferably facing west and over looking water. After 7 days, the family holds a memorial service at the tomb, during which they offer wine and burn paper money. Food is also usually left at the site, and those present consume some. After 49 days (the seventh seventh day) and 100 days, and on the subsequent anniversaries of the death of the individual, memorial services are also held.

The description of the history of Xin Ben Autonomous County is typical of the problems faced by many Manzu in Liaoning and Jilin provinces during this century (Anonymous 1986). The Manzu population in the area declined after 1911, rebounded somewhat during the 1920s, but had plummeted again by 1949 (*ibid.*: 11). By 1985 the population of the county had recovered to pre-revolution levels. What is interesting to note is that the population in 1985 was 64% Manzu, while in 1906 it was 62% Manzu (*ibid.*: 29). Thus, the proportions have not changed significantly, and yet it is commonly held that the Han are steadily displacing the Manzu in the south of Dongbei. This at least represents *prima facie* evidence to contradict this claim. Yet, the history of the county is that the bannermen sold their land and fields during the late Qing and became servants and peasants, or moved on to homestead in the mountainous regions (*ibid.*: 30). The Manzu of the county were largely impoverished and struggling, but they were also evidently very conservative, and considered themselves to be true Manzu. They maintained the queue and the *qian zi* (a kind of hair piece for women) long after the fall of the Qing empire. They justified this by arguing that they were honouring their parents. They also continued to wear the *pao fu* (the long coat for men) and the *qi pao* (the full length woman's dress), which was still popular in Xin Ben county in 1985. They still maintain clan exogamy, and some of the elaborate greeting ceremonies involving the kou tou and other forms are still practised.

By the Liberation, 66% of the people had no land and were forced to surrender much of their harvest to landlords. Some reform was instituted under the GMD regime, but the communal

reforms of the Communists were the main reform. This took place in 1947, and took the form of land redistribution and the formation of co-operatives (*ibid.*: 80). The communes were established in 1958. There was a bad famine in 1948, partly due to a lack of labourers since so many Manzu went to fight with the People's Liberation Army in the civil war. Despite this contribution, the Manzu were treated as enemies of the people, and were often excluded from full participation in the communes or denied access to good land and equipment. The Manzu suffered the humiliations, depredations and atrocities of the Cultural Revolution, and were largely excluded from government and Communist Party membership. The reforms after 1979 included the formation of a nationalities committee in Beijing. This led eventually to the establishment of Xin Ben as an autonomous Manzu county. However, there is still an emphasis on Han party cadres, although an attempt has been made to redress the balance. On the other hand, the local head of the Communist Party is always a Han Chinese, while the district directors under his control are often members of a minority (*ibid.*: 86). Even in this latter regard, the Manzu are still deprived, for they constitute a majority throughout the county, but do not control a majority of the districts.

The Manzu Then and Now

Shirokogoroff conducted the majority of his research in the Aigun district of Heilongjiang (not far from the site of my own fieldwork) and supplemented this with investigations of the Manzu in Shenyang and Beijing. He felt that his work could be applied to the Manzu throughout the north-east (Shirokogoroff 1924: 5). The Manzu of Ning An (Ninguta) district, which includes Yi Lan Gang, living in close proximity to the Manzu of the Aigun district, may certainly be compared over time with Shirokogoroff's portrayal of the Manzu.

In 1904 the Qing government changed its policy and the obligatory language of instruction for schools was ordered to be Manzu, but the Republican government banned the teaching of the language. In south Manchuria, the Chinese language was already dominant, while in the Ninguta district in which Yi Lan Gang lies, the "use of Manchu was already limited in the first half of the last century and almost disappeared" under the Republic (*ibid.*: 4). Today, there are only two people in the village who can speak and read Manzu, Guan Yu Lin, who is 73, and Guan Jia Sheng, 66. These two are also leading shamans and local experts on Manzu history, culture and ritual. Guan Jia Sheng went to Beijing during the course of my research to study the Manzu language (or *Manyu*) at the National Minorities Institute. Otherwise, most of the people know a little *Manyu*, even the young children, but none approach fluency at all. However, they

are exposed to the language, and not just in the shamanic ritual. In the homes of the youngest sons, their aged parents are usually responsible for child care, and the home often functions as a day-care for the all the grandchildren in the extended family. Many of the grandmothers sing songs, particularly lullabies, which contain a mixture of Mandarin and Manzu words, and whose content is distinctly Manzu in nature. These lullabies tend to deal with topics such as being orphaned in war, and the importance of not crying while the family is travelling through the woods, either for the hunt or to war.

Swing, swing zha, babuzhe
Swing, swing baby sleep!
Baby cries, come baby;
Little child sleeps wrapped in a quilt.
Baby sprout, don't you cry;
Grow up to be an adult and study.
Student studying, closed up the book;
Embroidering girl rolled up her thread.
Wolf came, tiger came,
Goblin jumped over the wall.

You , you zha, ba bu zhe
You you bao bei shui jiao la!
Bao bei ku, lai ba bu
Shao hao shui gai huar bei.
Bao bei ya, ni bie ku
Cheng ren zhang da hao nian shu.
Nian shu de xue sheng he shu ben le
Zha hua guniang pan rong xian le.
Lang lai-le, Hu lai-le
Ma hou tiao guo qiong lai-le.

As this lullaby was explained to me, it contains three themes. The first three couplets are peaceful, the fourth is hopeful, and the last couplet threatens the child. These were seen as illustrative of the Manzu way of life. Guan Jia Kai told me about a lullaby in which they sing about the baby rising to high rank through practising traditional Manzu martial skills from an early age. The Manzu ideals are contained in these songs, and everyone in the village knows them. I found in fact that the men in the village remembered them more clearly than the women, presumably because the men had heard them from childhood, whereas many of the women originated from outside the clan, and learned them as adults.

Social Life

Yi Lan Gang has 110 households and a total population in the village of 430 people. This is neither large nor small compared to other villages in the area. The closest neighbouring village, which is called Jiang Fu and is dominated by the Manzu clan Zhao, has only 100 people. Across the river is a larger village of about 600, while the district seat at Ning Xi has close to 1000 people. In the summer, they swim and bathe in the Mu Dan (Peony) river along the banks of which the village lies. In the past, the women caught fish in the river but today few fish are to be had there. Fu, Xu, Guan, Yang, Zhao and Shen are the Manzu clans represented in Yi Lan Gang, although Shen is only present through the marriage of a Shen woman to a Guan man. Slightly more than half the population of the village is Manzu (although the exact number varies depending on what kind of a mood some people are in when you happen to ask them their ethnicity), and of these the Guan number about 200.

During meals, the men and women usually eat separately. At most meals there is a guest present from one of the other Guan houses, so the men eat together and discuss their business. The children and women eat separately, with the women serving. In some households, the men and women eat together, if there are no guests present. They will press their guests to eat and drink more, and in all the time I was there I always received this treatment, never progressing beyond the status of a guest in the household. However, at other times, Guan Jia Kai, the head of the household, enlisted me as a secondary host, so that I was pouring drinks and placing food on other people's plates as a way of showing respect for them.

Guests and neighbours generally feel free to drop by at anytime after sunrise. As for the lateness of the hour, as long as you can see a light on inside, it is perfectly acceptable to "split the door" as you see fit. Often, neighbouring men will drop in to discuss business or just gossip over a breakfast of steamed buns, leftovers, preserved and fried eggs and pickled vegetables. This is usually washed down with hot water and a glass of *baijiu* (hard or "white" liquor). At the same time, the female neighbours often come by to visit in the kitchen and share food, discuss plans and gossip. It was difficult for me to determine what the women talked about because Shimu (Mother Teacher — my hostess) would chase me out of the kitchen, or send me away if I tried to accompany her to someone else's place. But it appeared that the primary topics of conversation were the same for both men and women. These were marriages, farming, and children. During my time in Yi Lan Gang, there was avid discussion about new strains of potato that were reputed to do quite well in the local climate and soil, and of new types of tobacco that had been imported from Ontario and were being pushed by the county administration. However, there were many

occasions when the topic of identity was discussed. This was often in the context of upcoming events or rituals, and will be discussed in detail in chapter four.

Card playing and story-telling are very popular with the Manzu and Shirokogoroff indicates this as well (*ibid.*: 149). The Manzu like to play cards as a family game, and do not have much interest in gambling today. This is seen as a Han Chinese activity, and a foolish vice. In the past the *mokun* or village would usually have a “semi-professional story-teller,” but today the stories are known by elder members of the community, who take turns to recite tales. The Manzu were characterised by Shirokogoroff as enjoying inviting guests to dinner parties (*ibid.*: 149). This is certainly true today, but drunkenness is more tolerated now. This indulgence and occasional general over-consumption is partly explained by the Manzu as a reaction to the Cultural Revolution.

During meals, the Manzu in Yi Lan Gang usually put out four bowls of condiments which contain preserved tofu, pickled vegetables, sesame paste and garlic cloves. These are placed at each corner of the table and are intended to represent the rocks that held down the corners of the hide they laid their food out on when they were nomadic hunters. The old men took great pride in explaining this to me and I later witnessed the same care taken in explaining it to children. Now, since they are sedentary, they still memorialise their ancestors thus and regularly maintain before themselves a symbol of where they came from.

Shortly after I arrived in Yi Lan Gang, a meeting was held at Guan Jia Kai’s house with the leading shamans in the village to discuss my research and determine how I could best carry it out. This was due to the influence of the local authorities, and ultimately to my network of *guan xi*. While this surprised me at the time, I do not believe that it compromised my work, for there was no conflict or suspicion in the dealings between the local government and the people. On the contrary, the leading party cadre in the village helped to organise the major ceremony that they held that fall, and at least two of the shamans’ helpers that I know of were also party members.

While we were chatting before the meeting, getting acquainted, Guan Zhong Xing, who was 70 at the time, decided to explain to me about the three distinctive customs of the Manzu. These have already been described above (Manzu women smoke, the Manzu paste paper on the outside of their windows, and they hang their cradles from the ceiling). I listened patiently, although I had read of this in books, Chinese tourism brochures, and heard it from almost every Manzu person that I had ever interviewed. What became clear to me was that even here, in the Manzu heartland, these seemingly stereotypic attributes were considered as indicative of the unique nature of Manzu culture. An examination of the elements reveals a deeper meaning. The

paper was placed on the outside of the windows, before the advent of glass windows, which stands in opposition to the practice of the Han Chinese, who pasted the paper on the inside. But the reason is that the snow in the north-east would accumulate on the window-sill and then melt, dissipating the glue and ruining the seal. By placing the paper on the outside, the snow can not accumulate. By holding up this action as an icon of Manzu culture, the Manzu are emphasising the extremity of the environment in which they thrive. This refers to the harsh nature of their traditional life and that they are *piao han*, which in this context means they are physically tough and readily adaptable to any exigencies. They are emphasising a difference between themselves and the Han that serves as a meaningful trope.

The hanging cradle also is a reminder of the nomadic past, and as such is an important symbol for the Manzu. It is not just that the cradle is hung from the ceiling and rocked, but also that the ability to make these cradles is limited to a few specialists. The same is true of the drums the Manzu use in their ceremonies. Today, few people are able to make the drums properly, and the ones that are produced are generally inferior and prone to warping. The Manzu point to this with some wistfulness, and yet I sensed not resignation but determination. Deficiencies such as this were emblematic of the urgency of their efforts to preserve their cultural identity. Those who still have cradles use them with great care, but use them consistently. They are not merely artefacts. During the time I was in Yi Lan Gang, there were three craftsmen — spanning three generations of the clan — engaged in experimental attempts to successfully reproduce drums and cradles. They choose to emphasise the importance of these items because they are perceived as unique but also because they are reproducible. By contrast, the “three luxuries” (*san bao bei*; ginseng, marten skins and insulating grass — *wu la cao*) are not discussed by many Manzu and were only mentioned to me once or twice in passing, although they are sometimes referred to in the literature. These items do not require any particular expertise to produce and are now within the economic domain of Han, Koreans and ethnic Russians among others, in addition to the Manzu.

The top village Communist Party cadre, a Han Chinese named Qin, had two altars in his home, one for the kitchen god, and one for the god of commerce. He also set off firecrackers to frighten the spirits and sacrificed a chicken when the village dredger was started up. These sorts of altars are not present in the Manzu homes, and they do not offer such sacrifices or attempt to deal with or propitiate any spirits except through the offices of the clan shamans. This includes offering to plague gods, even in the event of an acute illness to a child. In the hills surrounding the village, I came across evidence of sacrifices to healing spirits, including an effigy of the

stricken child, eggs and liquor offerings and a small altar with ashes from burning incense. Han Chinese villagers left these items. The Guan sometimes turn to shamans to deal with health problems, and mainly rely on Chinese and Western medicine. Perhaps most importantly, the Manzu in the village do not have ancestral tablets honouring recently deceased ancestors in the manner of Han Chinese ancestor worship. The honouring of the ancestors that is led by the clan shamans is focussed on distant, mythological and even non-human ancestors.

Many people know how to play *er hu* (Chinese violin) or *la ba* (suona, or Chinese cornet). They greatly enjoy music, but these seem to be the only instruments they play, although they are widespread. They know a few Manzu songs, but most of the songs they play are Han. Most people have their favourite songs but do not really know which are Manzu and which are Han. However, what they seem to enjoy most is getting together and playing these songs in large gatherings, especially during the winter months. Yet, when I stood outside at night and walked through the streets of the village under the cold moon, what I usually encountered was not strains of music but the pale, flickering glow of the television sets that are found in 90% of the village households.

Zhu qiu (pearl ball) is a modern sport invented by Manzu in Harbin and popularised throughout Dongbei in the past few decades. It is only played during the summer while they are awaiting the harvest. Since it is played out of doors, it also requires suitable weather. It is played on a field the size of a basketball court, and requires that the offensive players strike the ball with paddles, past the defenders, passing the ball to an offensive goaltender who catches it in a hand-held net to score. The name was chosen to represent one of the famous products of the region, freshwater pearls. It is usually played in tournaments at ethnic minority games. The Manzu of the Ning An region are quite enthusiastic about it. They acknowledge that it is played by other nationalities but maintain that the Manzu are the best and that it is really their sport. It represents the deliberate construction of a symbolic act designed to maintain a sense of ethnic identity. Anthropologically it is problematic because the government helped introduce it as a harmless distraction, but it has become a meaningful trope. For the Manzu it represents strategic acumen and physical prowess, which are two characteristics that they claim as their own. *Zhu qiu* is a tool used by the government to reduce ethnicity to quaint activities. The Manzu in the Ning An district have succeeded in keeping other aspects of identity while adding pearl ball to their repertoire, and interpreting it as part of a much larger complex, in which it plays only a minor role.

Qin, the village cadre, who organised and coached the team, enthusiastically endorsed pearl ball. He saw it as a way to unite the Manzu and the Han villagers in a common activity. While the village is responsible for itself in ways unprecedented until recently, Qin is still required in his role as party cadre to promote the development of socialist consciousness. As ethnicity is officially a manifestation of class differences he is still charged with promoting the disappearance of ethnic identity. This means that he has, by himself, to figure out schemes to unite the people within his village. In addition to this he is primarily responsible for producing plans to develop the village, to improve infrastructure and to raise the standard of living. All this for an individual with limited information and experience whose education ended in middle school. His job is complicated further by the fact that he is dealing with his neighbours and friends. Not only that, but sometimes the measures he takes to develop the village turn out to be a double-edged sword.

The designation of the village as an officially recognised Manzu village is a case in point. In order to be installed as such, the participation of the Guan clan in the petitioning process was an absolute must. Qin elicited their co-operation by convincing them that the village would benefit economically but also that the clan leader would be supported by the local party (both in the village and the district) in their efforts to strengthen the Manzu identity. The result is that now Qin is constrained from his duty to help eradicate ethnicity by his duty to support the Manzu. Yet the village has benefited economically, as will be discussed below. The contradiction between the desire to treat minorities fairly, unlike the previous regimes, and raise socialist consciousness, is irresolvable. But there are other methods that may be employed to deal with minorities. In Yi Lan Gang, pearl ball is one such method. However, the majority of players on the team are Manzu, and, as noted, the sport is taken as consistent with their cultural identity.

Regarding the benefits that come from being a Manzu village, the decision to emphasise the role of the state or the clan and ethnic group is an individual matter. That is, some view the government as the main benefactor of the village, while others give credit to the Guan clan because without their presence the village would not be designated. A persons thinking in this matter naturally depends on where their loyalties lie, but also on their attempt to manipulate the situation for their own benefit. Thus, the elders of the clan were able to press Qin for assistance with their rituals by pointing out that the village owes its status to the clan and therefore the clan should be rewarded. On the other hand, some of the more entrepreneurial villagers tend to stress the role of the state in economic liberalisation. Thus, the question of what plays the most significant role in the lives of the clan members is contested, even though it may appear that the

state holds all the cards. In fact, now that the state has withdrawn from the means of production, it falls most heavily upon the clan to organise co-operative activities (see below).

The larger community also challenges the clan for the loyalty of its members. Those who have relatives in Harbin may travel there once every few years, but otherwise it is only visited in cases of medical emergency. This is surprising since Harbin is really only a one or two day trip away. However, the destination of choice is the nearby Jingbo Hu, or Mirror Lake. This is the original home of the Guan, before they moved to Jilin and Changbaishan, from a period long before the rise of Nurhaci and the founder of the Guan power, Niyahana. Today, Jingbo Hu is a small resort centre, with hotels and boat tours. I was able to visit the site and what surprised me was that the villagers can afford to come there. For a couple to make an overnight trip would cost half a years income, with transportation, a room, a boat trip and meals. Yet most of the villagers, Manzu and Han, have been there at least once. Combining this with the presence of televisions and other electronics in so many of the houses caused me to doubt the income figures provided to me by Qin and so often quoted by other villagers. It seems likely that many are more prosperous than they claim.

When their children move to town this is welcomed by clan members because it means they have a good job and have opportunities for a better life. Yet, I met people from Yi Lan Gang who were working in the town at only part time or low paying jobs which did not represent an improvement in their living at all, especially after the additional expenses of city life took their share. The people in the village also feel that moving to the city means that their children and grandchildren are distanced from the well-spring of their identity and that the risk of adults and children losing touch with their traditions is greater. However, the situation at this time is not one of massive migration to the cities, especially since the lot of farmers has improved. Also, the grandchildren often come to live with their grandparents before they begin school and even during the early school years. This helps to perpetuate traditional enculturation.

Guan Jia Kai often insisted to me that the Guan who remained in the villages were quite happy and more fortunate than city-dwellers. Yet he also told me that his son was trying to get him to move into town. Not everyone agreed that the country life was better. Guan Jia Kai was not apparently troubled by the contradiction between these two realities until I queried him about it, and yet he did not seem surprised by the contradiction when I pointed it out to him. Life in Yi Lan Gang is good, and they do want to preserve their traditional ways, but they also know that change occurs constantly and all around them.

A common event was neighbouring villagers coming over to borrow some plant cuttings or tools. They are privatised in the village but the spirit of mutual assistance is still very much alive. One morning, Shi Mu's nephew and two Guan's came over to help Guan Jia Kai stack up his corn stalks (saved for fuel) and clean up his yard in preparation for planting his seed-beds. Later that day, in the afternoon, they returned for a meal and drinks. However, this was not, as it was explained to me, a payment for assistance. Rather, the help given in the morning and the meal in the afternoon were both motivated by the connection that existed between the individuals involved (Shi Mu and her nephew, Guan Jia Kai and his clansmen). The significance of these actions was seen to be in their affirmation of a relationship. The desire to be alone, or to want to do things on one's own, does not make sense here. In fact, such a desire is seen as aberrant, although benign.

Relations within the village tend to be quite harmonious. I certainly never witnessed open conflict, and discussions at meetings, whether concerning village or clan affairs, were never characterised by rancour. Of course, this is not to say that problems did not arise. Shortly before my arrival, a man had been arrested for theft and dealing in stolen goods. He had been stealing from other villages, and was not accused of malfeasance within Yi Lan Gang. He was also a Han. Clan members assured me that no Manzu would ever commit such actions. By and large, it was felt any troubles in the region were caused by migrants who came up from south China, ostensibly to look for work, but in reality to seek out opportunities for easy gain and exploitation of the local population. South China people, it was universally agreed, could not be trusted. Even when I appealed to Communist ideals of solidarity, the people of Yi Lan Gang were not willing to extend their forbearance to the southern Chinese.

Various informants maintained that they did not discriminate between clan members and non-members. However, when I gave a specific example of a situation where they would have to make a choice Guan clan members tended to respond differently. When asked who they would first help with getting in the harvest, most were willing to admit that they would choose a clan member over the non-clan neighbour. Furthermore, it was stated to me frequently that the Guan did enjoy a special kind of *guan xi* with each other, which transcended other considerations. This was not a matter of a calculable obligation, but rather an acknowledgement of sharing a particular and compelling connection. That is, they are quite conscious of the clan connection and ultimately are loyal to clan members first. Most of those I asked explained this in terms of primordial factors, for they simply stated they were inclined to be loyal to the clan and its members. But most of the informants I asked also indicated that they were aware of the

instrumental aspect of this mutual support. And they were able to articulate this in a sophisticated way. They were conscious of the importance of *guan xi* in China, and were eager to take advantage of an opportunity to develop it. Sometimes discussions of *guan xi* led to a discussion of the relationship between the Manzu as a group and the Chinese state. The adversarial nature of this relationship and the need to pull together as a group was acknowledged. The clan members tend to band together and assist each other through contributions of labour, goods or money and through mutual advice and protection. Shirokogoroff found that the clan members feel obligated to ensure that all members improve socially and materially. He attributed it to the desire to uphold the clan honour (*ibid.*: 59). I think that it is reasonable to suggest that today part of the motivation for clan loyalty is the sense that all members of the clan will lose face if one member is allowed to fail in some way. This is essentially the same as what Shirokogoroff was describing. As Shirokogoroff notes, “The Manchus can exist as an ethnical unit, it seems to me, only by being united by the clan organisation” (*ibid.*: 61).

When people in *Dongbei* meet, regardless of ethnicity, a fantastic sparring takes place as they attempt to determine whether they enjoy a pre-existing social relationship. That is, they are attempting to establish their *guan xi*. This is not motivated by a desire to gain advantage. It takes place in all circumstances: strangers on a train; patients in a doctor’s waiting room, or; reporters at a press conference. People work assiduously to ferret out a connection, through school (the same teacher, but 10 years apart) or some other place, through mutual friends, or by being related in some obscure fashion. For the Manzu I encountered, this is facilitated by the very fact of being Manzu, or part-Manzu. This is a signifier in its own right, as is a shared Mandarin derivation of the patronymic, even if the Manzu clan name is different (e.g. Guarjiya and Guwalgiya are two separate clans, but both are denoted as Guan in Mandarin. When two non-clan Guan meet, it is still identified as a potential for *guan xi* identification). In my experience, the circumstance under which two or more Manzu meet is considered to be appropriate for a discussion of Manzu history, an examination of clan affiliations, and the interclan (or interbranch) comparison of traditions and customs. There is a genuine joy in these discussions, and in the construction of *guan xi*. This helps us to understand that *guan xi* is about human sentiment (*ren qing*) most of all. The feeling of being connected, of having a place in the larger world, is the desired end. This is also one aspect of the prominence of Manzu identity and the development of signifiers for that identity. In Yi Lan Gang and other villages, the Manzu identity provides a sense of connectedness, of *guan xi* which is humanising in a way that membership in the Chinese empire was and is not.

This Manzu identity is not simply a matter of existing in opposition to Han identity or Chinese identity. It is a matter of meaningfulness for those who participate in that particular identity. While conscious of a meaningful difference between themselves and other Chinese, which they carefully maintain, they do not conceive of themselves as separate from other Chinese or the rest of China. They also have *guan xi* relationships with those out there in the rest of the world, which are also based on real human sentiment. When the Guan participate in their cultural identity, in both its clan and ethnic forms, they are not rejecting a Chinese identity. The two ideas at this time are not mutually exclusive, although they were at times. When the Qing dynasts attempted to separate the Manzu from the rest of China's population, or when the Republican and Communist regimes ostracised the Manzu, it was at least possible for Manzu people to conceive of themselves as not just different but excluded or excluding. Naturally, no one in the village has any memory of imperial times, but many remember the periods of disruption in the 20th century.

Guan clan members who lived through those periods are not reluctant to discuss them, which surprised me somewhat. By and large it was a time when they were forced to use their ingenuity to survive the physical and social attacks upon them. Yet today, they feel that the relations between the Manzu in the village and the other villagers are quite harmonious. What occurred in the past, and what that meant in terms of their identity, was a consequence of the action of the state. Even though during the 1940s and 1950s, and again in the 1960s, they were severely criticised by their neighbours and condemned as feudalistic and reactionary, this differentiation was a product of the time. This ability to set aside the past excesses is not limited in China to the Manzu in Yi Lan Gang. What is notable is that they were criticised not only for economic or political failings, but also for being labelled with a specific ethnic identity.

Villagers with whom I discussed the issue attributed the local harmony to the following reasons:

- 1) many of them are part of the same clan, and they learn to put the clan and harmony within the clan first;
- 2) the other villagers have been here a long time and are also very much members of the community;
- 3) they have learned from working to thwart the Japanese and the teachings of the Communist Party to work and live together co-operatively and supportively, and;
- 4) the clan elders can intervene in disputes.

Sometimes, as I observed, individuals get drunk and fight, but these incidents are not taken seriously and are immediately forgotten. It is obvious that the clan is an instrument of social order, but not to the extent described by Shirokogoroff, since the Party and the State have taken over much of the judicial function of the clan elders. The Guan clan relies most heavily upon moral suasion and the ability to socially isolate the maleficent or recalcitrant. "As shown, the major part of crimes and civil cases are submitted to the clan jurisdiction. But sometimes the clan is not able to exercise jurisdiction over its members and is obliged to require governmental intervention" (*ibid.*: 143). Clan organisation was required to yield this function to the state. However, the situation is not so straightforward.

Social Organisation

From 1898 to 1900, a movement known in the West as the Boxer Rebellion, supported by the Qing regime, moved against the foreign presence in China. The Boxer period brought great hardship to the Manzu population. When the Western powers moved against the Boxers, the Russians took advantage of the situation to seize parts of Manchuria. Many thousands of Manzu were driven south and when they eventually returned they found that the foreign troops had destroyed their villages. As a result, some Manzu clans lost not only their ancient paraphernalia but also their clan lists. Without these, they were unable to re-establish the relationships of the clan members (Shirokogoroff 1973: 4). This had the affect not only of disrupting their social organisation but also of severing an import link with their heritage that was then painstakingly reconstructed, often with only partial success. The decline that the Manzu experienced at this time apparently inspired a cultural revival movement. Shirokogoroff contends that:

the Manchu have come to realise that the cause of their present state was the unnecessary imitation of the Chinese so they are now becoming nationalistic. Therefore, at the present time they follow the ancient social and shamanist practises and are carefully collecting written Manchu documents and strongly regret the loss of their indigenous customs (*ibid.*: 5).

These clans lost not only their clan lists, but also the *situs* for the spirits and the shamans were destroyed. The people did not know the text of the shamanic chants or the names of the spirits, and the rites were performed silently to unknown ancestors. Shirokogoroff wrote that the people knew that what they are doing was not adequate and that these rites were not sufficient to stave off the assaults of the harmful spirits of their clan. At the time of Shirokogoroff's researches, the clan members were losing their sense of connectedness and they appeared to be in

decline (*ibid.*: 62). Certainly, the clans that Shirokogoroff referred to, and that he never identifies specifically, can be found in *Dongbei* today. The Manzu I encountered in Xiu Yuan and Xin Ben were likely members of such clans. Whatever the process that led to their present state of cultural identity, they stand in marked contrast to the Guan clan. Yet in other regards their lives resemble that of Yi Lan Gang. Largely involved in agriculture, with similar income levels, identical state structures (including designation as Manzu Autonomous Counties), education and access to infrastructure and technology, the main differences seem to be the absence of clan lists, attendant elaborated hierarchical kinship terms, and some sort of shamanic rite involving ancestral spirits. But as noted, along with those differences there is a lack of strong ethnic group affiliation. I cannot suggest that the one has resulted in the other. It is suggestive of a link, but requires closer study of the clans in these other districts.

The Manzu today, as in the past, divide themselves into the Ancient Manzu (*fe doru manzu*), the New or Modern Manzu (*ice manzu*) and the Mongol-Manzu (*mongo-manzu*). This is a long-standing system that predates the conquest of China. As such, it is important to note that the three groups have divergent customs, traditions and practices. To be more precise, they have different ideas about what it means to be Manzu. This variance is important because in trying to determine how culturally conservative a group of Manzu is it is necessary to be careful about not confusing the divisions. As in the past (*ibid.*: 12), the Ancient Manzu emphasise that they are pure Manzu or true Manzu, and have a stronger claim to association with the heritage, history and conceptions of Manzu power and distinctions. The divisions do exhibit differences in the way that they sacrifice, so that the *ice manzu* do not use singing and dancing. The Modern Manzu also do not use the elaborate clan lists, but practice Buddhism and Confucianism (particularly ancestor worship). This was determined by Shirokogoroff (*ibid.*: 14), and my own investigations yielded identical information. The Guan clan of Yi Lan Gang never practices ancestor worship and adjoins Buddhism (even while using Buddhist terms to describe their shamanism when speaking Mandarin). This was also true of the Fu who lived nearby in another village. However, the Modern Manzu Wu clan, who no longer practice shamanism and live in a village only 500 metres from Yi Lan Gang, practice Confucian ancestor worship and at least some of them have travelled to Buddhist temples in Harbin. The contemporary Ancient Manzu are aware of these differences and still point to them.

The essence of the Manzu military organisation was the eight banners, which were organised early in Nurhaci's reign to supersede the traditional Jurchen/Tungus military structure based on clan affiliation. The banners gave direct control over the fighting men to the monarch

and his lieutenants, and provided a mechanism for incorporating desirable assets who lacked clan membership, such as Chinese artillerymen, Russian and Mongol horsemen and Korean soldiers. Every Manzu was associated with a banner, and this has carried on today. Even the most urban and “sinified” Manzu today will often know his clan and his banner. Shirokogoroff found that this military organisation “did not influence very much the original social organisation” of the Manzu (*ibid.*: 15). While his judgement in this regard is trustworthy, it also seems evident from the durability of the affiliation that the banners did profoundly affect the idea of what it is to be a Manzu. It is confusing when discussing with Manzu their sense of identity and belonging because reference is frequently made at the outset to the banner connection. Further discussion may lead to an emphasis on the clan, but part of the cultural identity of the clan is always its banner affiliation, even though the banners do not operate in any way at all today.

Shirokogoroff informs us that life outside the clan was impossible, since the clan controlled all important social phenomena (*ibid.*: 15). This is certainly not the case today, and participation in the clan could be avoided. The social pressure to conform and participate is strong, but there is no coercive element remaining which allows the leaders of the clan to impose their will upon clan members. One of my neighbours In Yi Lan Gang, Manzu on both sides and the son of a shaman’s helper, was adamantly opposed to participation in any clan events. He neither attended clan meetings nor contributed money, labour or materials to clan events. He had no interest in shamanic rituals and felt that they were a waste of time. There was no apparent animosity between him and other clan members, and in fact he was a frequent visitor in my host’s home. However, his recalcitrance was a subject that no one else in the clan was willing to discuss with me.

Today many Guan clan members marry Han Chinese who are not banner members. Land is owned and distributed by the state, and contributions to clan rituals are difficult to collect because no one is compelled to pay. Nevertheless, the essence of the clan as defined by Shirokogoroff remains intact:

The Manchu clan is a group of persons united by the consciousness of their common origin from a male ancestor and through male ancestors, also united by the recognition of their blood relationship, having common clan spirits and recognizing a series of taboos, the principal of which is the interdiction of marriage between the members of a clan, i.e. exogamy (*ibid.*: 16).

A concern of functioning Manzu clans is keeping track of the members of their clan and their relationships with each other. For this purpose clan books and clan lists are kept hidden in

someone's home. Originally, the lists were kept in the clan altars, which were openly erected in the home of the clan leader. Since the destructive excesses of the Chinese revolution and the Cultural Revolution, those clans that have retained or reconstructed their lists tend to take precautionary measures to protect them. Many urban clans or branches keep multiple copies in various households. The Guan clan of Yi Lan Gang kept the old copies of their lists after the Liberation, rather than throwing them in the river as prescribed by tradition. During the Cultural Revolution they turned over these copies to the Red Guards who came to their village, and actively participated in their destruction, feigning great enthusiasm. Apparently, the villagers made such a good impression that they were left alone for the remainder of the ascendancy of the Red Guards. Happily, they managed to convince the Red Guards to dispose of the lists in the established manner – they were thrown in the river.

Shirokogoroff found that the original clans, the *hala*, were broken up by the garrisoning of China, so that subdivisions called *mokun* were created to assume the functions of the clan within a compact territory. They retain the same name as the clan (e.g. Guan) but for practical reasons function as if they were separate clans. When two members of the same *hala* but different *mokun* meet, they would behave as clansmen (*ibid.*: 18). Today this hiving off is no longer necessary, and the clan members who live far away are still able to remain connected thanks to mail, telegraphy and telephony, and modern transport technology. However, the *mokun* that developed after the conquest remain divided, so that you can have two members of the same *hala* living next to each other in Qingdao, Shandong province who retain their allegiance to distant *mokun* and have a weakened connection to each other.

The Guan of Yi Lan Gang is called in Manzu the Guwalgiya clan, which is Gora in spoken Manzu. It is a *fe doru manzu* clan and has four branches. According to the Guan, they originated in Jilin, near Jingbo Lake. Today they do not know what their name means, but according to Shirokogoroff, it translates as “The ditch around the kitchen garden” (*ibid.*: 21). The clan functions as the locus of organisation of social relations. Shirokogoroff devotes extensive attention to the description of the ranked relationships within the clan (*ibid.*: chapter II *passim*) and Lévi-Strauss has attempted to demonstrate that the Manzu kinship system suggests a regression from generalised exchange to restricted exchange (Lévi-Strauss 1969: 379). While the problem of Manzu kinship is beyond the scope of this work, a brief overview is important to understanding its relevance to the retention and reconstruction of ethnic identity and the role of shamanism therein.

Relationships are divided into three generational classes, based not on age but on standing in relation to ego.⁷ That is, an uncle of the same age is still senior, while a much younger cousin remains within the same class. The kinship terms used to refer to them indicate the nature of the relationship. The class is the basis of the classificatory system, and while the direct progenitor is distinguished from other members of his class, the system is otherwise consistent throughout. However, the system has appropriated many terms of Chinese origin (Shirokogoroff 1924: 44), and this Shirokogoroff attributes to a shift from a matrilineal to a patrilineal system in the recent Manzu past. The patrilineal terms used are predominantly Chinese. The significance of these classificatory relations is summarised by Shirokogoroff:

The family is not only a group of persons united for the purpose of continuity of species, but it is also an economical unit, which is very closely connected with agriculture; it is an organisation differentiated on the principle of the family members' utility and on the other hand it is differentiated on the principle of the degrees of relationship (*ibid.*: 127).

All women who marry out of the clan (as they must) become members of their husband's clan, and are referred to by a specific kinship term (*wurta*) within their new clan. They refer to their old clan as their mother's clan, and must transfer their primary loyalty to their (husband's) clan. A woman who becomes a shaman does so within her clan by marriage. The Nisan shamaness was punished at the end of the tale because she attempted to return to her mother's clan. However, the class organisation is not limited to the patriline, but the same system of classification (with different terms in primarily the Manzu language) is also applied to the mother's clan (i.e. the natal clan) and to clans related by marriage. When two people from the same *hala* meet they will first determine if they are of the same *mokun*. If they are of the same *mokun* they will then ask their interlocutor's class. While this may seem like stereotyping, I remind the reader of the description provided above of *guan xi* relations and the importance of establishing a connection. The reality is very close to what I have described, for Manzu throughout the north-east.

Shirokogoroff summarises as follows:

1. The clans are divided into classes (*dalan*) and relationship is based on this division;
2. The division into classes are conserved better in the clans of materline filiation;

⁷ See Appendix 3 for a diagram of the relationships.

3. The relationship terms resulting from marriage, i.e., my relationship with my wife's clan and the clans in which the women of my class were taken, usually are of Chinese origin;
4. The subdivisions within the classes are designated by the terms of Chinese origin or by descriptive terms (i.e. have no special designations) (*ibid.*: 48).

Shirokogoroff argues that the original division within the clan was by class and sex. Later, the need arose to divide the classes into two groups when the Manzu adopted a patrilineal system. The Manzu then borrowed the Chinese classification or used descriptive terms. By this system, the position of each clan member relative to others is exactly fixed. This involves a complicated system of 3-4 agglutinated terms, but it is being replaced by a simplified system using Chinese terms. According to Shirokogoroff, this will lead to the annulment of the ancient clan organisation and its replacement by the family and the state (*ibid.*: 50). My observations of life in Yi Lan Gang do not bear out this conclusion. Yet, in the village today the exact definition and full terms are usually only used in dealing with the most serious affairs of clan life when the strict delineation of rights and duties is required.

Shirokogoroff provides an in-depth discussion of the role of the *mokun* in social organisation: "in the competence of the *mokun* are included the following affairs: marriage, affairs of justice, home affairs, inter*mokun* affairs, administration, financial and economical questions" (*ibid.*: 51). Broadly speaking, this is still true for the Guan clan today, but there is competition in many of these matters from the state. The clan cannot dictate to its members, but pressure and moral suasion may be brought to bear. They must have a general meeting that all *mokun* members attend not less than once in three years. The clan meeting may be postponed due to extraordinary events, such as war, sometimes repeatedly. All men from the oldest down to the boys of 5-6 years of age attend. This is preceded by a clan rite and sacrifice to the ancestors, followed by a dinner.

This is when they select the clan chief (*mokunda*), from candidates who are wise and educated, honest and tactful, and capable. Usually the *mokunda* is a young man, although over 25 years of age (*ibid.*: 52). The *mokunda* presides over the meetings, is a judge, supervises clan affairs and clan rites, upholds morality, authorises marriages, oversees inheritance and the division of families, keeps the clan lists and books, and acts as advisor to all clan members. Since the fall of the Qing, some Manzu attempt to ignore the *mokunda* and appeal to the Chinese authorities. Shirokogoroff believed he detected a slow but ineluctable decline in the status of the *mokunda*.

The *mokunda* is obliged to be present at all important events. The clan chief maintains his influence by consulting with the senior members of the *mokun* (*ibid.*: 54). The *mokunda*'s power was absolute and he treated all members alike. The women had no part in these matters, and had to use the *mokunda* as an intermediary when presenting matters to the clan. But the women had their own meetings and attended to their affairs without recourse to or influence by the men. They would select a *hehe mokunda*. When affairs concerned both the men and women, they would hold a joint meeting. Shirokogoroff was not able to attend the women's meeting or gain much information about the women's organisation.

In Yi Lan Gang the Manzu still select a *mokunda*, and they refer to him either by the Manzu title or the equivalent Mandarin: *hu zhong*. At the time of my research the Guan *mokunda* was Guan Fu Zhe, a man of 74 who lives in the nearby village of Da Mu Dan. He was elected to his position in 1991. He enjoyed life tenure, although he could be impeached for incompetence. The criteria applied to his selection were that he had to be clear thinking and have understanding, and that he must be considered capable of leading. As in the past, age was not a factor. However, it may have a *de facto* influence since generally only older men are interested in the position, while younger men are busy making a living and pursuing material advantage.

It was also stressed to me in conversations with the male members of the community that he had to be elected by the male heads of the households. The women did not consider his position to be as dignified as the men indicated. Nevertheless, the women also treated him with respect and deferred to him in most matters. At the time of my research, the women did not have a formally appointed female equivalent, although Shirokogoroff indicates that this was the case in the past. Certainly, the *mokunda*'s status has declined when compared to the importance of Communist Party cadres, thus accelerating the declining trend that Shirokogoroff identified. However, it appeared that he was still treated with respect, and that he was very active in promoting traditional activities and respect for the ancestors. In this regard it was evident that the role of the *mokunda* had evolved along with other clan institutions, and that rather than fading into irrelevance, the role of the clan leadership had been redefined. It is no coincidence that the *mokunda* was also a shaman and a particularly sincere believer in the efficacy of spiritual intervention. It was Guan Fu Zhe who sponsored a shamanic ceremony for his ailing grandson, whom he was grooming to become a shaman.

Guan Ling Qi is one of Guan Fu Zhe's deputies. He was elected to his position from one of the three active branches of the Guan clan. Thus, each branch elects its own deputy or *fu*. The Guan clan in the Ning An area has three large branches. Each branch has as many subdivisions

as there are homes included within the branch. These should not be confused with *mokun* that derived from the original *hala*, but are ancient branches of the Guan clan which share the same spirits and are thus unable to intermarry. The three branches are the *da tai ye zhi*, the *ba tai ye zhi*, and the *jiu tai ye zhi*. In this context *da* means number one, while *ba* indicates number eight and *jiu*, number nine. That is, the branches present are the first, eighth and ninth, although the numbers are not indicative of a hierarchical relationship. The branches numbered two through seven were separated from the remainder of the clan “a long time ago”. It is presumed by most of the Guan that the separation occurred when they were moved up to the Ning An area as a garrison by Nurhaci while the six other branches joined the invasion of Ming China. While these divisions are known to date from the time of the clan founder, Niyahana, they are not presumed to be descended from Niyahana’s sons or other relatives. No origin story was offered for the branches.

Today, the branches of the clans do not have much of a role beyond the ritual aspects of their lives. It is the *mokun* that is important. The branch deputies organise the people for ceremonies, meetings and the copying of the genealogy, but they do not play a role in planning projects or economic activities. If the Guan decide to build a ritual hall, this would be something that the *fu* and the *mokunda* would direct. The *mokun* is similar to the Han Chinese *zu* (lineage) in that it is based on descent from a common ancestor, uses ancestral rites, kinship terminology, a genealogy and has an interest in maintaining the “welfare and prestige of the group” (Hu 1948: 14). However, the traditional *zu* is more important than any family or individual, while the *mokun* is today at least not nearly so important.

It is difficult to compare the *mokun* with contemporary *zu* in the mainland, since the latter no longer function. In Hong Kong and Taiwan they function essentially as in the past. One important difference is that the *mokun* is an autonomous division from the *hala*. This fissioning occurs frequently and easily. The *zu* may divide into separate lineages, but this happens rarely and great efforts are usually made to keep the *zu* intact even over long distances (*ibid.*: 14). Hu also notes that the *zu* is often absent or very weak in the north of China, and especially in the north-east, where migrants from the south have settled. Another point of comparison is that the *zu* is divided into lines of descent called *fang*, while the *mokun* is divided into branches. Yet the branches of the *mokun* are mainly inactive, and are not divisions that are based on lineal descent. The *fang* are houses descended from “the sons of the common ancestor who first settled in the locality” (*ibid.*: 18). The responsibilities of the *zu* and social relations within the *zu* are organised

from within the *fang*. The head of the *zu* has responsibilities similar to those of the *mokunda* in the past, but the powers of the *mokunda* of the Guan clan today are severely straitened.

Shirokogoroff maintains that the “the most significant expression of clan unity is found in the clan list – in Manchu – *veceku i temgetu*, i.e., ‘the grandfathers ancestors’ seal’ . . . or *dapu*, borrowed from the Chinese” (*ibid.*: 56). Whether this is true or not will be considered in the following chapters. The lists date back to before the Conquest, and also include a biography of the legendary founder of the clan, usually a companion of Nurhaci. The clan list is secret and usually is not shown to outsiders. They assiduously recopy it when it is worn and dispose of the old copy in a large river. In the past, only one copy of the clan list was kept, along with the *situs* for spirits (pictures, ribbons, sculptures), in boxes on the clan altar. The text of clan chants is also kept with it, and is forbidden to foreigners. In Yi Lan Gang the present situation, which will be described in detail in the chapters to follow, has changed a great deal in recent years.

The clan lists are not just genealogies, but also register the relationships between members of the clan. This means that the possibilities of confusion about a person’s rank, rights, obligations, competence and duties are obviated since the list is treated as authoritative and unimpeachable. Insofar as the list’s infallibility is concerned, the disruptions of the past one hundred years have rendered some lists of dubious authenticity, but the fiction of their continuity is maintained for the sake of the clan. Certainly, the relationships of living members of the clan are well enough defined today that any doubts about ancestry are largely irrelevant. While certain clans rely upon reconstructed lists, and maintain their integrity, other clans lack clan lists altogether. The village neighbouring Yi Lan Gang contains such a clan, and a comparison of the state of the two clans is instructive.

The Wu who live nearby have lost almost all vestiges of clan affiliation. They select neither a clan leader nor branch deputies, they have no shamans and never have meetings to discuss or co-ordinate clan affairs. While they are aware of their clan affiliation, they do not observe marriage exogamy and, in consequence, do not take an interest in maintaining the integrity of their clan. They have little conception of their classificatory relationship to each other within the clan, and thus the clan does not provide them with a sense of connectedness any stronger than what obtains to their residence within the village. On the other hand, in terms of other aspects of their lives, there is no appreciable divergence. In fact, they are if anything slightly better off for the villagers have pooled their resources to successfully operate a commercial enterprise. Among the Guan, traditional forms of social organisation are much more in evidence. All the males of one generation usually use the same first given name. This

establishes which age cohort they belong to and thus ensures that they are able to determine readily where they stand in relation to each other. For the women this is not an issue since they will become members of a different clan.

Having spirits in common also unites the clan members. Every clan has its group of spirits peculiar to the clan. The natures and names of these spirits are secret, known only to the clan shamans, and are never revealed to strangers. According to Shirokogoroff, the Manzu say that there are as many systems of spirits as there are *mokun* (*ibid.*: 58). The common interests of the clan members are expressed through the “ceremonies resulting from the worship of ancestors, shamanist practices and so forth” (*ibid.*: 58). The individual is bound to the spirits through the clan and can only gain their aid through the intervention of specialists and with the support of the clan, since the ceremonies involved require an expensive outlay. Other traditional responsibilities of the clan, such as regulating marriage, property, domestic disputes and morality are presently varied in their subordination to the clan.

The Manzu in the village tend to marry about the age of 21, though sometimes the women are a few years older before they wed. Since the clan arranges the marriage, a clan with unmarried males over the age of 21 is assumed by others to be deficient or in decline. The purpose of marriage is not just to wed but to introduce a new productive member into the household. The prohibitions on marriage are three: an absolute restriction on marrying within the clan; a facultative restriction on marrying members of a clan that has a relationship or connection with ego’s clan (e.g. a common clan ancestor). This operates at the *mokun* level, and the restriction is determined by whether or not one has different clan spirits. Thus, the members of the same *hala* may marry if they come from two *mokun* with their own spirits. In Yi Lan Gang, of course, the Guan are all of one *mokun*. There are also numerous incidental restrictions that vary with circumstances. Their purpose is to uphold the class divisions within the clan by limiting the possibility of marriages between members of different classes (*ibid.*: 67-69). The result is summarised by Shirokogoroff as: “all my class women belonging to other clans are my facultative wives” (*ibid.*: 69). However, clans prefer to exchange women in marriage. This saves both clans on organising the bride price and relies upon the facultative connection between classes of the two clans. However, this method restricts the development of relations between clans through matrimony, and this drawback is acknowledged (*ibid.*: 71). At the time of Shirokogoroff’s writing, marriages between Manzu and other ethnic groups were quite common, but particularly *nikan* Chinese and other Tungus. He observed that the Manzu brought women of

other ethnic groups into their clans but tended to have their women marry within the Manzu nationality whenever possible (*ibid.*: 72).

The Manzu at Yi Lan Gang now generally do not quibble over whether the men marry Manzu, *nikan* or Tungus, or non-banner Han Chinese. In fact, it is quite common for a Manzu male to marry a Han Chinese. Yet still today, it is less common for a Manzu woman to marry a man who is Han Chinese, unless he is from a *nikan* clan. There is still a great deal of social pressure for women to marry within the banners, but nevertheless some women do marry outside of these strictures. In these cases they are again no longer members of their mother's clan, but the loss is felt keenly, where it would not be if the woman had married into another Manzu clan. On the other hand, the women who marry into the clan, whether Manzu or of another ethnicity, are fully incorporated into the clan structure. In fact, in the following chapters will we see that many Han women now play a prominent role in Manzu shamanism.

A complex including matchmaking, payment of the bride-price and then the wedding precedes marriage. Matchmaking in the past might have taken place before the birth of the engaged couple. The matchmakers help to negotiate the bride-price, but if matrimonial relations already exist between the two families this is (and was in the past) only a formality. Before making an offer to a family that is not well known, the matchmakers investigate the father's character, wealth and property and so on. After the initial agreement, a celebratory dinner is held, during which the details of the bride-price are determined. Later, the date of the wedding is fixed when the groom's clansmen visit the father. The bride's father pays for the wedding, and the costs will exceed the bride-price, so there is no profit in it for the woman's clan. A poor man may work for his father-in-law for 3 to 10 years to pay off the bride-price. Much of this complex was suppressed during the twenty lost years, but it is being revived in Yi Lan Gang and the other villages of the Ning An district today. Yet today, these matters are still much simpler. Matchmakers still help to arrange marriages, and bride-price and dowry still exist in a modified fashion. The fiancé gives gifts of money to his fiancée, and her family also gives her money. All of this money is used to purchase household items and clothes for the fiancée. The wedding is still paid for by the bride's father, and it will be quite an elaborate affair. The groom and his friends will fetch the bride from her home. Often, a horse and carriage are still used and a large caravan will accompany her to the groom's family home. There, gifts will be given and feast held. No one may enter the house without first paying a bribe to the younger siblings of the bride and groom.

Arranged marriages are still quite common in the village of Yi Lan Gang. In the countryside, there are few opportunities to meet others, so introductions are necessary. Even if a couple meets on its own, they have to use a marriage broker to make arrangements and negotiate such matters as where the wedding will be held, where the couple will live, parental approval (definitely still very much required) and house construction. The go-between also arranges opportunities for the prospective couple to spend time together, observed by the matchmaker, so that they can determine if they get along well enough to live together. It is considered very important that the two understand each other and get along. Now that the exogamous Manzu are immersed in a sea of Han and other nationalities, it is difficult to find another Manzu whom you may marry and whom you actually want to marry. This has led to special allowances being made with regard to who is eligible to become a shaman, as we will see in the next chapter. This also increases the importance of the matchmaker if the prospective bride or groom (or their parents) are set upon a Manzu fiancé(e). As for the go-betweens, they are not paid for the efforts but do it as a matter of friendship.

Once the engagement is agreed, the groom and his family may not see the bride before the wedding. Traditionally, during this time the bride made dozens of pairs of shoes as presents for her future in-laws (*ibid.*: 76). This is no longer the case. The wedding day is calculated according to the determination of Chinese astrologers who fix upon an auspicious time for the event. The date is written on red paper and fixed to the walls of the families involved as an announcement. The entire clan participates in the preparations for the feast, which may involve hundreds of guests. The eleventh day after the wedding the young couple visits the bride's mother's house. They do not visit for long and, for this visit only, may not stay overnight (*ibid.*: 89). Five days after this the bride goes to visit her mother's family again, usually alone and stays for 15 days. This custom is still followed today.

During the marriage, the wife's mother's clan has no particular role to play, but relations with them are close. They visit often and are treated with respect. The villagers say that even if one of them came to visit wearing a dog-fur hat, they would still be a member of the mother's clan. They must be treated as a close relative even if they committed such an outrageous insult to the clan spirits as wearing dog-fur. Divorce is extremely rare, and is only available to the husband. If the wife leaves her husband without his divorcing her, she cannot return to her clan, because her spirits are now the spirits of the husband's clan, and she has lost her connection with the spirits of her mother's clan. The divorce laws in modern China are liberal, although general

morality is not. I do not know of any cases of divorce in the village, but I was told that divorce was frowned upon, even for men.

The Manzu at the time Shirokogoroff worked among them generally lived in extended families descended from the paternal grandfather. This unit was referred to as a *gargan*, or branch. As such, they lived in a branch compound that consisted of a number of structures built around a courtyard. However, the members of the *gargan* all lived together in the main house. This structure invariably had a door in the middle of the south wall, opposite the gate. The eastern house was the granary and the western house was the mill. The main house had windows on the south, west and east walls, but not the back. The front hall opened onto several rooms, and also contained a stove or usually stoves, the flues of which heated the sleeping platform (*nahan* (Manzu) or *kang* (Mandarin)). While slightly altered, the houses today are similar. An important difference is that the main room had a *kang* along the north, east and south walls. Today most Manzu have a *kang* along the north wall only. The kitchen stove is used to heat the *kang*, and the auxiliary houses are not usually constructed to accommodate people. Guests and residents all sleep on the same *kang*, with the men and women lying facing away from each other.

In the past, a large *gargan* may have had more than one main house. Also, the various *gargan* of a *mokun* tended to cluster together. While today the Manzu do not live as *gargan*, the members of the *gargan* do still cluster together, as does the *mokun*. The nature of Manzu housing today is partly due to the impoverishment subsequent to the Boxer Rebellion and may also be ascribed to the affects of collectivisation and the pressure to give up “feudalistic” social organisation.

The eldest members of the family are treated with great respect, and are the most influential members of the household. They are honoured and their seniority acknowledged, and they are served the best food at their own table. The members of a younger class never refer to their elders by their names, but use their classificatory designations. The elders by contrast are permitted to address members of a younger class by name, at least until the younger individuals become married. The lower ranked are restricted in their behaviour among elders, such as not sitting without leave, and speaking quietly in their presence. Correspondingly, the elders might not speak to or have any sort of contact with the wives of the men in the junior class. While these sexual restrictions are more complex than described here, for our purposes it is enough to note that “the principle idea of these restrictions and prohibitions is: to prevent the young women to conceive from old men, but not to obstruct their conceiving from young men” (*ibid.*: 103).

Economic Activity

Agricultural production is the main source of income and the primary manner in which the Guan participate in the emerging market economy of China. They function within the constraints of the personal responsibility system instituted by the government. This means that they are entitled to lifelong leases on a certain limited amount of land in exchange for a minimal fee. In addition, they are charged with the annual production of a certain measure of grain that must be turned over to the public stores. This may vary from year to year. Otherwise, under this system they are free to produce whatever crop they choose in whatever quantity they deem fitting.

The people in Yi Lan Gang plant seed beds while there is still a possibility of late frost. They build mini-green houses with clear plastic tarps and wood, but the weather in the spring is so variable that a killing frost is still possible, even with the plastic covers. This is the risk referred to below. This could prove disastrous, for the cost of the seed would be a serious burden. Those caught out by the frost would also end by getting their crop in late, which would mean that they are late getting produce to market, or that an early fall frost would destroy immature crops. This would be a hardship when they are existing on the last of their resources from the winter, and are largely dependent on market gardening for their income. Cash crops include peppers, eggplants, cabbages, carrots, radishes, leeks, onions, apple pears, apples, strawberries, chives, flowers, tomatoes, potatoes, squashes, watermelon, cilantro and garlic. They also grow staple crops including corn, soybeans, millet and some rice. These latter crops are for quota purposes and crop rotation.

They are able to sub-let their land, or pool it with others in the community, which they often do. Usually, they tend to engage in co-operative ventures with clan fellows. However, it would be a mistake to believe that they are averse to engaging in partnerships with other Manzu, or ethnic Koreans, Hui (Chinese Muslims) or Han. At the very least, since their fields are laid out side by side, it is in everyone's interest to work co-operatively in establishing boundaries, restoring and clearing ditches and sharing equipment, tools and animals, as well as the cost of renting special equipment. The villagers also identify this as *hu xiang bang zhu*, or mutual assistance. This is a socialist value much stressed by the party, which has origins in the older Confucian ideals of harmony, generosity and the middle way. It is also familiar to the Guan as members of a *mokun*. It is still seen as a good to work collectively, however the emphasis is now on forwarding private aims, rather than the community's advancement.

Some members of the community undertake additional entrepreneurial activities. The village owns one separator for processing soybeans, which is rented out at cost. Presently the production of beans outstrips the capacity of one machine to process them before the winter sets in. One of the Han villagers has purchased such a machine with a loan from the village government, and rents it out at a profit. He was able to repay the loan within two years. In the past, the mill owners allowed other members of the community to use their equipment without charge. This no longer pertains with regard to mills or other equipment. One of the Guan clansmen operates a vehicle repair yard and also rents out a heavy duty tractor that he has purchased. He also works as a metal smith. The village contains one fairly large business, a piggery, owned by a Han, which usually contains about 50 adult pigs at any given time. The proprietor uses the former collective piggery, which he leases from the village. There are three stores in the village, two owned by Han and one by a mixed Manzu-Han family. These stores sell basic household goods, beer and snacks. They also sell some of the worst chocolate I have ever tasted. Still, these items were not available at all up until a few years ago, and more goods become available all the time.

Yi Lan Gang's population is about 400, although this varies somewhat as people sometimes take in their grandchildren, and then send them back to their parents who live in another village or town. There are 104 separate households at the present time, although single males who actually spend most of their time at the homes of their parents or siblings occupy some of these. The households of the Han Chinese are often smaller, due to the restrictions on reproduction to which they are subjected. Thirty-eight of these households are Guan clan families. The village is laid out in a regular fashion along a grid system of intersecting roads (although some of the roads barely qualify for the name). The river runs nearby and there is a good road leading from the village to the main road that runs from Ning An to Ning Xi. At the time I lived in Yi Lan Gang, they were paving this road. Telephone service has reached the village and a number of the households have phones. Electricity is provided twenty four hours a day, but water still comes from wells and must be boiled before drinking.

The average monthly income per person is 300-400 RMB per month. This is the same as the pension earned by Guan Jia Kai, my host. This is not to suggest that these people live in a state of anxiety or possible collapse, but this problem is an issue in their lives that drives some people, some years, to take a calculated risk in planting. These people have no other resource to fall back on. The first spring I spent in Yi Lan Gang came early and was very warm. The families greeted this with relief and optimism. The family unit performs most of the work,

whether collecting wild plants for making brooms or chaff to be burnt and ploughed back into the soil. Even though each member of each household has their own land (no matter how young) and the extended families live in separate homes, it is the extended family that collectively undertakes all production. Occasionally, neighbours work together on matters of shared interest, or the village leadership organises collective work parties. However, even when using the bean processors, the family does the majority of the work, while those awaiting their turn only lend a small hand. This lends a tremendous advantage to the Guan, who can and do call upon more distant clan members in time of need. Based on the one harvest season I observed, it seemed that the Guan of Yi Lan Gang got their crops in sooner and were more likely to engage in leisure activities such as ma jiang parties or trips to their ancestral home at Jing Bo Lake. For this reason too perhaps it was always Guan whom I discovered engaged in extra moneymaking activities such as broom-making, fishing and pickling and selling medicinal oils made from wild plants.

Labour was traditionally divided within the *gargan*. Outdoor work and especially heavy work were the duty of the men. Older men cooked the meals for weddings and other rituals and also sometimes sewed and repaired their and their children's clothing. The women tended the livestock and cooked and sewed. The married women carried out the principle work, while the unmarried women spent much of their time preparing their trousseau. The women helped the men in the garden, but it was primarily the obligation of the men to carry out all agricultural work.

According to Shirokogoroff, in the spring the women would go into the fields and forests and collect wild plants, although generally they had a large store of preserved vegetables on hand (*ibid.*: 123). Today the village Manzu still occasionally prepare soup from wild vegetables, although the Han Chinese do not. Women are responsible for all kitchen work, in particular the ongoing task of preparing salted vegetables, which is a mainstay of their winter diet. In the past, the women would also fish using various techniques, along with some old men. The adopted women, or *wurta* (i.e., women who married into the clan) were responsible for most of the work in the household, and were obliged to look after their husband's parents needs. Sometimes they were treated badly by their mother-in-law, and could not complain. However, her original clan could intervene if the situation was abusive (*ibid.*: 125). Generally, the woman was inferior to the husband, and subject to his will. Also, she enjoyed no property rights of any kind (*ibid.*: 126). This is very different from the situation that pertains today. All women are assigned their own land. Women tend to be quite assertive about their rights. The precedence of men in eating meals first and separately from the women is maintained. Yet the woman is truly a member of the clan,

with a right to attend shamanic ceremonies and become a shaman herself. And her welfare is the responsibility of the family and clan. While harsh treatment was a possibility, it was not the rule. In her dotage, the woman could expect to be well cared for, both because it was the duty of the heir of her husband and because the clan's public image would suffer if they appeared incapable of doing so.

Labour that was once strictly divided is now blended. Thus the care of swine and fowls was once women's work, but now the men generally care for the swine (particularly as they comprise a commercial enterprise) and both men and women look after the various ducks, chickens and geese kept in the separate households. Likewise, the entire family shares the agricultural work, and both parents undertake the care of children. Housework and sewing are still the domain of women, as are carpentry and construction the domain of men. On the other hand, it was not unusual to see a wife and husband working together to carry out home repairs.

Shirokogoroff does not discuss trade because it formed such an insignificant part of the Manzu economy. Today it is highly important to the Manzu, not least because they are able to sell their crops on the free market. Many Manzu engage in other business activities, such as commercial livestock and renting agricultural machinery. These are invariably men. Many younger Manzu are educated at a secondary and tertiary level, and work as engineers, teachers, merchants, bureaucrats, mechanics and so forth. These individuals are both male and female, and represent a separate phenomenon from their agricultural kin in many regards. Their situation will be considered below.

The Manzu traditionally lived in villages, rather than isolated farms (*ibid.*: 139). This is due at least in part to the desire to keep the *mokun* physically connected. The Manzu village of today consists of a few rows of houses along a few streets, close to a river, just as in the past. The land was occupied and utilised without registration or dispute. The Chinese introduced such practises, and all land is strictly delineated now to the extent that the Manzu take the utmost care in laying out their furrows when planting crops, so that an error of even a few inches is not tolerated. I became something of a joke in the community for my inattention to such matters, and it was known that I could not be trusted in such an important task despite my willingness to help. Of course, all land is still officially owned by the state, but it is leased on a long-term basis to every individual, from birth. The Manzu traditionally kept some land in common, although an individual could lease this, and the lease was heritable. Thus the present individual responsibility system is not entirely unfamiliar. Nor is the communal system that was previously instituted under the Communists, since the Manzu were communal with the *gargan* and *mokun*. The

animals, instruments, equipment, land and household were all held in common (*ibid.*: 139). The greatest impact of the post-imperial systems was the deliberate degradation and deprivation of the Manzu at the hands of their neighbours, since they were reviled throughout the Republican and Communist eras as oppressors and feudal remnants. This is not a topic that the residents of Yi Lan Gang are eager to discuss, although they are willing to do so.

The division of the *gargan* would take place if the members felt it was necessary to resolve economic or domestic issues. This was carried out in an orderly fashion with the assistance of the *mokunda* and other clan leaders. Today, this is the usual, rather than an exceptional, practice. This is because the elder brothers in a family usually move out and the youngest son is the one to inherit the paternal household. This is consistent with past practice, for now as then “the house and kitchen garden are usually transferred to the youngest son. His duty consists in the care of his old father and the payment of a half of all family debts” (*ibid.*: 140). Today the youngest son still stays in the home to look after the aged parents. The other sons move out when they get married, and at this time their parents build them a house of their own. This will be a small but well built house, with at least one out-building also provided. The parents provide the materials, but the home-owner directs the construction, which is carried out by the members of the clan. When Manzu children move out, in theory they are expected to be independent and build their home. This is their opportunity to personalise their home. But in reality everyone in the clan comes together and helps to build the home and gets the young couple started. Interestingly the Guan tend to characterise Han children as dependent and decadent.

Hunting with falcons was always an aristocratic pursuit. However, the distinctions of aristocracy are meaningless among the contemporary Manzu, and while those who still practice the art are certainly descended from the Manzu elite, their economic circumstances are generally more straitened than the average Manzu peasant. These individuals tend to be among the most conservative of the Manzu, and they have suffered for their conservatism. They were restricted from the practice during the Cultural Revolution and they also were sometimes verbally and physically attacked for their desire to maintain their skills and the identity that those skills symbolise. The hunters' equipment and birds were destroyed and they were forbidden to train others. Shirokogoroff states that hunting as a trade among the Manzu had ceased to exist (*ibid.*: 128). This, as it turns out, is nearly but not entirely true, and a resurgence of interest in the hunters' activities has recently emerged. There are no hunters in Yi Lan Gang, but they are interested in their activities, and have video tapes of them that they watch at clan gatherings. This

interest is due in part to the belief that all Manzu were at one time hunters. The appeal of these few falconers as emblematic of the spirit and meaning of Manzu is powerful. Happily, the Red Guards could not eliminate the wild falcons and hawks from among which the hunters obtain their animals. These hunters also suffer because they prefer to follow a traditional Manzu lifestyle in regard to economic activity, which means that they engage in agriculture only, and do not attempt to participate in the market economy. They tend to be among the most impoverished of their people, although well dressed for the winter. The conservatism they display makes them even more powerful as tropes that the Guan find significant.

Shirokogoroff wrote that “there is no branch of commerce or industry in which the Manchus are to any degree successful” (*ibid.*: 129). During the time of his investigation, manufactures and trade were not pursued nor developed by the Manzu, and they considered this sort of activity as fit only for the inferior classes and peoples, such as the Han Chinese. Today, the young Manzu engage in all sorts of these activities. Every Manzu child has the opportunity to pursue an education and enter into a trade, or at least to find work in a factory. This is rather complicated, as the economy in the north-east, reliant upon heavy industry, sputters and heaves from crisis to bankruptcy. However, those Manzu who are highly skilled do very well.

In some Manzu counties, industry is the dominant occupation of the Manzu. Li describes massive industrialisation in Beizhen, in Liaoning province. As noted above, production in Beizhen has increased 66 times since Liberation, and the county has enjoyed an annualised average growth rate of 11.4% (Li 1990: 220). This region is highly industrialised and has a highly educated population with well-developed access to domestic and international markets. The Manzu who live in the county participate at all levels in the local economy. It should be noted that this sort of information is not reliable because of government censorship and because the north-eastern economy relied too much on heavy industries which were beginning to fail in 1990 and have subsequently done so in distressingly great numbers. Thus, today many of the factories in Bei Zhen are bankrupt. During my time in the north-east I encountered innumerable unemployed workers looking for any sort of temporary employment. This has led to the migration of many people from the north-east to other regions of China and emigration outside of China. Research I have conducted in Palau (1999) has revealed that the large numbers of Chinese (not including Taiwanese) workers and entrepreneurs in Palau are from the north-east. While I have not met any Manzu here, I have met individuals from Beizhen.

Li makes the point that despite the relative education and prosperity of the Manzu in Beizhen, they still maintain respect for the clan relationships (*ibid.*: 155). This is especially

evident during festivals, when the clan members use a series of graded greetings for the purpose of acknowledging hierarchical relations. He describes the range from bowing/curtseying, to kneeling, to the full kou tou. However, in daily life these are not used. This was also the case in Yi Lan Gang. Despite the fact that they are largely urbanised, the Manzu of Beizhen still maintain their clan affiliations and are exogamous to their clans (*ibid.*: 159).

Shirokogoroff emphasises that “their poor economic state is the results (*sic*) of their extraordinary conservatism in the techniques of agriculture and on the other hand of their social organisation” (*ibid.*: 137). It seems that under the Communist regime much has been done to boost their agricultural production. During Shirokogoroff’s researches, the Manzu were poor in comparison to the *nikan* Chinese. This is still relatively true today in some areas of *Dongbei*. However, Shirokogoroff ascribes the difference to their general conservatism and “the habit of dreaming of their former political influence” (*ibid.*: 138). This is certainly not the case today, when the past glory of the Manzu seems as distant as Genghis Khan does to the Mongols. That is, the past is honoured, even revered, but is not an object of nostalgia. Rather, we must look to the contemporary situation to determine what restricts the lives of the Manzu today. Does their desire to conserve their identity restrain them from accepting innovation? Rather more likely is that their allegiance to a distinct identity has, as discussed above, often made them the target of political charges. They have been held back more by the policies of the present regime than their own actions.

Attempts to organise collective industry are still led by the Communist Party. The difference today is that no one is required to participate, although there is strong social pressure to do so. Interestingly, it is the clan that applies this pressure. When the local cadres decide to promote a scheme to establish some sort of enterprise, they turn to the leaders of the clan, some of whom are also members of the Party, to promote the plan among the villagers. Thus, the leaders who are most respected are used to pressure their clan fellows. This is of limited effect, since their power today is strictly dependent upon moral and rhetorical persuasion. However, they are more readily able than the cadres are to gain the ear of the clan members. Collective activities are limited at present to operating a dredger for the purpose of replenishing the fields with fresh mud from the river. However, the incumbent lead cadre is attempting to organise a more ambitious programme of attracting investment so that the village can build some sort of factory, or possibly a small hydroelectric dam. They are also examining the idea of constructing a Manzu traditional village for tourists. None of these ideas were moving forward at the time of my fieldwork.

Individual farmsteads keep fowl, usually chicken and geese with some ducks as well. No one keeps pigs privately because they are easier to buy and the meat is inexpensive. They also keep numerous sheep and goats, and every family owns one cow, often more. Some also keep bullocks for transportation and animal traction. However, many families own small single wheel tractors, or a small truck. I counted and found that fully 50% of the households have some sort of tractor, even if it is only the one wheeled hand tractor (*shou fu tuo laji*), which resembles a rototiller with a trailer jack. Motorcycles and motorscooters are popular with the young men who often go in to Ning An to work for limited periods of time, especially in the winter. The ubiquitous vehicle is the bicycle, and every family keeps at least one in working order, with numerous broken down bicycles and parts on hand. The roads in the area are quite rough, and the bicycles are heavy iron-framed monstrosities.

On Fridays there is a market in Ning Xi. On Sundays there is a market in Ning An. Everyone goes to town whenever they like, and they go especially on the market days to deal in produce and livestock. Both markets are essentially the same in terms of goods available, and the only real difference is that the Ning Xi market draws on populations that include those for whom Ning An is too far. The markets feature durable goods and household items, and both are abundantly stocked. The Ning An market also has many used items on offer, particularly equipment and vehicles. This is not surprising considering the amount and uncertainty of peasant income and the need to save money. In the summer and fall the villagers go to Mu Dan Jiang to sell tomatoes, potatoes, eggplants, peppers, peas, watermelons, and sweet potatoes. Families that own tractors or hand tractors will travel to Mu Dan Jiang to sell produce. Those with only animal traction or bicycles go as far as Ning An for marketing trips. Young people often go there to buy clothes and leather goods, and also to pass the New Year. People from outside also often come to the village to peddle various items, including ice cream, tofu, breads, popcorn, fertiliser and cloth. Between the local stores, the markets, trips to town and the peddlers, the people of Yi Lan Gang have regular access to a wide variety of goods. Outside elements intrude on their lives on a daily basis, either through market forces or Communist Party functionaries.

Conclusion

Shirokogoroff concludes that the Manzu clan is isolated and not subject to foreign influence (*ibid.*: 146). By this he seems to mean that the clan organisation of the Manzu is a conservative institution which reflects ancient usage. Thus, the clan is a bastion of Manzu

identity. While it seems unlikely that the Manzu clan was “absolutely isolated” as Shirokogoroff argues, my research confirms that in Yi Lan Gang the clan played the central role in transmitting Manzu customs and identity. Furthermore, the clan was the primary factor in most aspects of social life and therefore would be seen as inviolate and unchanging as long as it was accepted as legitimate. This may be the source of Shirokogoroff’s thinking, for he sees the clan as the only source of unity for the Manzu. However, there is another source of unity which, while closely bound with the clan, operates independently of it. That is Manzu shamanism. While the clan acts to maintain tradition, shamanism is innovative and leads the reinvention of tradition.

Chapter Four: Ceremonial Activities

Shamanism and Ancestor Worship in China

The fact that the Manzu Guan clan, and in fact all active Manzu clans, focus their communal ritual activities on ceremonies honouring the ancestors may create the appearance that the clan rites are equivalent to generalised Chinese ancestor worship. An examination of the Han practice is necessary to clarify this matter. Nelson's work at Sheung Tsuen village in Hong Kong will provide one source of comparison. There the Han keep ancestral tablets to which they make sacrifices in honour of their ancestors. This is the responsibility of senior members of the lineage, and not of priests, shamans or any other ritual specialist. Furthermore, the ancestors to whom they sacrifice are both founding ancestors and more immediate ancestors. In any case, they are all known by name and their history is recorded in the genealogies of the lineage. The practices of the Han are "all focused in some way on the dead forebears of the present members of the lineage" but, "although genealogies seemed to be recorded in meticulous detail, the relations between groups in the village appeared confused in the extreme" (Nelson 1974: 253). By comparison, the Manzu are not concerned in their ritual with the forebears of the present clan members, but with ancestors so distant that some are not even human. Only the shamans know the ancestors' names and they are not recorded in the genealogies.

Nelson also contends that the structure of the lineage is determined by political and economic relations of the people who are living in the village (*ibid.*: 253). In other words, the members of the lineage manipulate their burial practices and lineage records in order to maintain or establish links between families and individuals. If the genealogies were strictly maintained then the putatively close links between members of the lineage would be revealed as quite distant. By placing their dead in areas where the burial pots are easily destroyed by natural forces and allowing gaps to appear in the genealogies the inhabitants of Sheung Tsuen are able to maintain the idea that they are closely related "village brothers" (*ibid.*: 273). Nelson found that the lineage members were actually very vague about their exact kin relationships to one another because this allowed them to behave as close kin, and use close kin terms in cases where the genealogical relationship was quite distant. Exact records were not kept precisely because they were not needed.

The Manzu genealogies as recorded by Shirokogoroff were precise records. These documents were lost or disrupted in many cases, including the Guan clan. They have been reconstructed as best as possible and are strictly maintained for recent generations. Furthermore,

every Guan knows how they are related to other clan members and the proper term of address they should use when speaking to or of them. The relationship that binds them closely together is the membership in the clan and descent from both Niyahana and other much more distant shamanic ancestors. The Han as described by Nelson pare down the ancestral lists through their entombment practices, which involve individual selection of who is entombed (*ibid.*: 274). The Manzu practice in Yi Lan Gang is to entomb all ancestors and as we shall see their names are recorded in the genealogies while they are still children. In both cases genealogy is used to establish relationships that have a functional aspect. The method of achieving this end is really quite different, and the religious aspect is almost completely different. As time goes by the ancestors that are honoured in Han ancestor worship change. For the Manzu, this is not an option.

The ancestors are usually worshipped twice monthly by the Han who have such altars in their homes in Yi Lan Gang. According to Hu (1948: 31), “the souls of the dead derive comfort from the rites rendered to them by their descendants, while hungry ghosts, that is those without offspring, or those forgotten by their descendants, are much to be pitied.” This is also the custom described by Feuchtwang in his study of worship in Taiwan (1974: 108). The Manzu villagers have no such altars, and do not engage in such worship. The shamanic dealings with the ancestors are to enlist their aid, not to benefit the ancestors. The result of Han ancestor worship is to place an obligation to the lineage upon the individual. The result of the dealings with the spirits of distant, sylvan ancestors in Guan clan shamanism is to bring benefits to individual petitioners from within the clan.

Feuchtwang also describes the communal temples typically found in villages in Taiwan, most of which are branches of temples once found in mainland China. By far the majority of the temples in China were destroyed or converted to other uses. Thus, few communities today have local temples at which they may worship. Worship is being revived at the surviving temples that are usually found in towns and cities. Because of this circumstance, it is difficult to make comparisons between Manzu practice and contemporary Han practice anywhere in China. I certainly was not able to find any temples in the Ning Xi district. Yet, this is not surprising since this is an area traditionally inhabited by Manzu who practiced shamanism and did not participate in Han folk religion. The Han who are now their neighbours are relative newcomers who would not have had the opportunity to build many temples before the Japanese occupation of Manchuria.

Feuchtwang suggests that the gods worshipped in the communal rituals and at private altars are “metaphors for the system of authority, the state” (*ibid.*: 127). If anything, as we shall see, the shamanic rite is a signifier for the clan, and in response to the intrusions of the state. Also, among the Han the spirits of the dead must appeal to the gods and the ancestors for salvation, and it is these gods and ancestors who are worshipped publicly, not the immediate ancestors. It is the duty of the living to assist the dead by worshipping gods and ancestors. In the Tale of the Nisan Shamaness (Nowak and Durrant 1977) it is clear that the Manzu conceive of the afterlife quite differently. There is no sense that souls are punished or redeemed, and the gods that exist are immune to the appeals of the living but must be dealt with by shamans who make epic journeys into the netherworld. Presently, the Guan clan shamans do not undertake these journeys, but do intercede with the mythological ancestors. While Guan shamanism has changed, it is not legitimate to conflate it with Han ancestor worship since the practice today (see below) is different and its origins are also quite different.

Another important parallel is the shamanism practised by the Han and other ethnic groups.⁸ I was able to observe instances of Han shamanism in Liaoning province. In these cases, the spirits were traditional inhabitants of heaven, and members of the divine bureaucracy. That is, they are not ancestral or nature spirits but are drawn from Chinese folk religion. The shamans do experience trance and spirit possession, but the focus of their activity is healing, fortune telling or other services. They do not act as servants to a community or clan, but will serve all those who ask and are able to pay. The clan shamans of the Manzu work only for the clan and its members. Potter (1974: 207) indicates that Han shamans also speak with the spirits of the deceased members of families. The Nisan shamaness also undertakes this task. Other shamanic feats are shared in kind by Manzu and Han shamans, such as healing, and protecting children. Obviously, in the instance of the Guan clan, where trance is absent, the protection and healing is accomplished through appeals to the ancestors through prayer, and not through the mastery of spirits. This is a crucial contemporary difference. More generally however, the most striking difference between the shamans of the Han Chinese as described by Potter and the Manzu as found in Shirokogoroff and Nowak and Durrant is that the main function of the Han shaman “is to deter these discontented and dangerous beings⁹ from wreaking their vengeance on the living villagers” (*ibid.*: 231). The task of the Manzu clan shaman, particularly in the case of the Guan

⁸ We must be careful not to confuse the shamanism practised by *nikan* Chinese clans, which is derived from Tungusic shamanism, with the shamanism of Han Chinese who have migrated to *Dongbei* from other parts of China in more recent times, bringing their own shamanism with them.

clan, is to solicit the aid of the ancient sylvan ancestors. There are similarities between these types of shamanism, and I am not attempting to argue that the Manzu variety is unique. Since the main focus of this work is a species of shamanism without trance it is difficult to make comparisons. Potter suggests that the Cantonese shamans provide an outlet for social tensions (*ibid.*: 230), and this is an idea not far distant from Shirokogoroff's ideas about psychomental maintenance of the clan by its shamans. Since, however, my primary concern is with the social role of clan shamans, I will simply acknowledge the possible similarities between Han and Manzu shamanism and move on.

Local Knowledge

In the research conducted in China by some scholars of Manzu shamanism, there are four distinct topics of study: ancient (*fe doro*) shamanism, modern (*ice*) shamanism, northern Manzu shamanism and southern Manzu shamanism. Many of the people conducting this research are Manzu themselves, and even practising shamans in some cases. Further, they are not necessarily influential or even published scholars within China. The priorities that they identify are reflected in Manzu communities, where concerns with tradition and authenticity stimulate an interest in the distinctions between the ancient and the modern, as well as regional variation. While detailed analysis of these thematic categories is largely beyond the scope of this work, it is important to be aware of them as indigenous categories that will be used to assist in understanding the significance of Manzu shamanism.

The above mentioned categories were described for me by local scholars in Ning An. For them, Ning An was the place to study Manzu, for it has many active shamans, extensive retention of social customs, active folk traditions and extant clan-based social organisation. They had thus identified criteria for the legitimisation of Manzu culture. The criteria for shamanism were also carefully conceived. The ancient/modern division is concerned with issues of legitimisation, since the *ice* Manzu are sometimes acknowledged by the *fe doro* Manzu to practice "real" shamanism still. The *fe doro* practice highlights the question of manipulation and external influences that speak directly to the contemporary Manzu's concerns about maintaining identity. The southern style is seen as having been heavily influenced by Korean shamanism and Han Chinese folk religion. In turn, the Han are thought to have adopted many elements of Manzu practice. It is certainly the case that the particulars of shamanism as described by Li for Beizhen

⁹ The ghosts of the villagers, the most unsuccessful of whom become the most malevolent of spirits.

county in Liaoning province, which is southern Manzu, betray many elements of Han folk religion and the Buddhist and Daoist elements which it contains.

The shamanic sacrifices vary greatly among the Manzu. The different clans have their own style and method, and variety also exists between localities within clans. Furthermore, the relative wealth or poverty of the clan affects their ability to make sacrifice and thus the elements of the sacrifice can vary for a branch of a clan depending on external factors. The most important offerings are those made to the ancestors, for the ancestors have become deified. Traditionally, every home had an altar to the ancestors mounted high on the west wall of the house, in the main sleeping chamber. The altar consists usually of a shelf with dishes for offerings and a votive box whose contents vary from family to family. Sometimes it would contain the genealogy, or representations of the ancestors such as figurines, strips of cloth or dolls. It might even include photographs of more recent ancestors. Each clan claims to have originated in one of the valleys on Chang Bai Shan (Ever White Mountain), and the number of offering plates used reflects that number, so that a clan from the second valley would use two dishes, and so forth. There is also variation between Manzu and Han bannermen, but this is not relevant for the purposes of our discussion.

The votive box is not opened except for the purpose of removing the ancestral figures when rites are to be performed in their honour. For the most part, offerings were made to the ancestors on a regular, if not daily, basis. This did not involve elaborate ceremony, and the box remained closed. The Guan clan does not presently conduct such daily sacrifices. During the late Qing, when shamanism was used by the government for social control, and Han Chinese attitudes towards women were being incorporated into Manzu thought, women could not be present when the box was opened. This meant, of course, that women could not practice shamanism. This conception of women as ritually impure was imported into Manzu shamanism from China. However, this is not a simple matter of sinification. As noted, the government used shamanism as a way of regulating Manzu life, especially among the garrisons in China and Manchuria. The relative independence and importance of Manzu women in the decision-making process constituted a social institution that countered the hegemony of the court. As discussed in the previous chapter, Manzu women had, and still may have, their own independent decision-making body in each clan and branch. Further, their influence was given weight by the significant role of women in shamanising. While the men were more strictly brought under control by their obligations under the banner system, the women maintained a degree of

independence that was attractive under a conquest regime, but was problematic under a settled administration.

The altar used for sacrificial rites was also erected in the main chamber of the house. It was usually set up to look as large as possible by extending its length with a paper cover. A large altar was intended to show greater respect for the ancestors. It was flanked by paper cut-outs which included the phrase “Always receive the emperor’s help” and words for happiness, harvest, long life and good fortune. These were pasted on the wall and after the institution of the banner system used paper the same colour as the banner of the clan. It seems likely that this was an innovation that post-dated the conquest and the spread of literacy among the Manzu. They also adopted the character *fu* from the Chinese which, when displayed both right side up and upside down, is a visual pun that means happiness is coming. This was widespread and the Guan of Yi Lan Gang indicated to me that they also did this at one time, but in recent years dropped it from their ritual canon as inauthentic. It seems that there is a striving to determine what is authentic or “real” shamanism in Yi Lan Gang. This issue is discussed below with reference to videotapes of shamanic activities (see chapter five). This may be understood as part of the larger concern with emphasising and maintaining the cultural identity of the members of the Guan clan as Manzu. That is, the idea of an authentic shamanism is tied up with ideas about what it means to be Manzu. If shamanism functions as a trope, then it must be consistent and defined according to well-delineated criteria. As there is a revival of Manzu identity and the Guan are participating in that, they are having to redefine what constitutes their shamanic practise. This is especially so since they lost much of their shamanism over the last one hundred years. Thus, they are compelled by the prominence they give to shamanism to understand it as a “sacred symbol” in the Geertzian sense (1968: 79). The concern with authenticity reveals a central tension in the lives of the Guan clan members as Manzu. They participate in the larger Chinese society, and share many cultural traits with their Han, Korean and Hui neighbours. Yet they seek to identify elements of lifestyle, ancestry and heritage. The Manzu in the village avoid dog meat, and refer to dog leather whips and dog fur hats in daily conversation (all of which are forbidden to an “authentic” Manzu) as symbols of strong feelings or attachments. A man might say that he would rather wear a dog fur hat than do something he finds objectionable. This emphasis on authenticity is a way of polarising relations with the larger Chinese society, in an almost Durkheimian sense. That is, the Manzu have been vilified in the past, and by emphasising what they feel is admirable and proper in their culture (“sacred”), they are turning the tables on the Han and rendering the things that the Han do “profane.”

Ritual Variations

The most important ceremony is the *da ji* or great ritual. Its performance varied in frequency, depending on the wealth of the clan. In most instances it was held every three to five years, but some clans, particularly the imperial and noble clans, held the ceremony every year. I was able to witness the Guan's *da ji* (which they call *gong ji*) in the winter of 1997, the first time that they had held the ceremony in five years. According to some sources, the ceremony was held on the first day of the lunar new year (Li 1990: 165). However, Shirokogoroff writes that the ceremony is held following the completion of the harvest, which is also the custom of the Guan. This seems to have more to do with the availability of goods and funds to pay for the ceremony than anything concerning a strict ritual calendar. Other sources indicate that the ceremony is meant to take place at the beginning of winter (Anonymous 1986: 44).

There are many elements in common throughout the Manzu clans' ritual procedure. The beginning of the process is the proper cleaning of the hall or room dedicated for the ceremony. The altar board and altar table are also cleaned and arranged. The sacrifice of a pig and the division of the pig into 8 parts are essential. Eight is associated with good fortune because in Mandarin the word *ba* (eight) sounds like the word for fortune. Obviously, this is a latter introduction from contact with the Han. The pig is offered on the altar, then slaughtered and cooked. After being offered again, the entire clan consumes the meat and blood sausage.

Another important common element is the offerings placed on the clan's "Victory pole" (also called the goddess pole). This pole is set up outside the gate of the clan compound, traditionally on the left side of the gate (from the interior). According to Manzu tradition, the pole originates in the tool that Nurhaci used to dig up ginseng on Chang Bai Shan when he was a penniless adventurer. He and his closest companions also used their digging sticks as weapons to fight their enemies, and won many victories. During the post-victory celebration, Nurhaci discovered that his companion Wu had thrown away his pole because he thought he did not need it anymore. Nurhaci became angry and said, "You are a useless person without a pole". After this, the raising of the poles began. The food that is offered on the poles is intended to be eaten by the ravens, who are messengers to heaven and saved Nurhaci's life. The pole and yard are first cleaned, and then either a box or some other method is used to raise the viscera of the pig up on the pole. A public meal of rice or millet and meat is held after this. It seems that Nurhaci first erected this pole at Hetu Ala in Xin Ben county, Liaoning province in order to institute a worship of heaven that did not previously exist in Manzu spirituality.

On the third day of the ritual, offerings are made to the goddess, Fotuomama. It is an offering to the Breast Mother for thanksgiving and fertility. It is also intended to protect the people from illness and danger. According to Li, the altar holds a bag that represents the goddess. Inside are 5 different coloured threads wrapped around a miniature archery set (1990: 166). This is in keeping with the coloured cloth used by the Guan, although they do not use an archery set. However, the stress upon the nomadic hunting life of the ancestors that is found among the Manzu in their rites seems to be consistent with the symbolic weapons.

In daily life, the Manzu traditionally conducted minor ceremonies for weddings, births and other happy occasions. During times of misfortune, they reportedly promised offerings to the spirits. They would present the offering only if circumstances improved (Li 1990: 166). Thus, in case of illness, a threatened harvest or other calamity or misfortune, the Manzu were able to bargain with the spirits for a successful resolution. That is, there was not a prescribed set of actions that must be taken, but rather their spirituality was fluid and negotiable. In their daily life, the many Guan clan members make informal offerings on the altars in their homes, or at the clan altar. These consist of a flour cake and a quick bow and prayer. The understanding in this circumstance is that they are maintaining the benevolence of the spirits. The spirits are understood to be likely to change their attitude towards their descendants if they are not treated with the proper respect. This reflects a theory of spiritual life as negotiable and fluid.

Shortly after I arrived in Yi Lan Gang I was fortunate to witness a minor propitiatory ceremony which was undertaken to thank the spirits of the ancestors for their assistance in curing the illness of a clan member. The mechanics of the ceremony were essentially the same as those that take place in the major ceremonies. That is, the core of the event is the offerings to the ancestors and the chanting, drumming and dancing of the shamans.

I have already mentioned that scholars of shamanism were interested in recording the act of shamanism itself. In fact, the emphasis seemed to be on salvage recordation of a disappearing remnant of an archaic custom. The majority of research involves traditional life, and the Manzu past, as noted in chapter two. Thus, when the people of Yi Lan Gang have a researcher in their community, they expect it to be when a ceremony is taking place, and not for extended periods. There was a certain amount of confusion, and certainly surprise indicated, when I first arrived in the community and it was established that I wished to conduct extended fieldwork over a number of months. The fact that a ceremony was intended to take place within the first two weeks of my arrival was mentioned to me by numerous individuals, and I was often asked if I was happy to get to see what I had come for without having made prior arrangements. I found the entire

situation to be perplexing, for I was left with the impression that the importance of shamanism was in the representation of the Manzu as defined by outsiders. It was only later that I learned that the ceremony was supposed to take place the following week, but that they had hurried to mount the production for my benefit since they did not believe I would be staying more than a few days.

Things became more complicated when some members of the clan told me that they did not exactly believe in propitiating the spirits of the ancestors, but rather that they are just honouring their ancestors and remembering their past. I was told that they did not believe that the shamans' souls travelled outside of the body, or even in the spirits at all. Others told me that they did not believe in soul migration, but that the shamans did act as intermediaries between the spirits and the living. Yet others stated that they believed in the spirits and the powers of the shamans, and had in fact been cured by the shamans or had their fortunes improved after making promises to the spirits. Thus, I had two research problems delineated from the outset. First, what is the understanding among the Manzu of shamanism's role in the context of their society? Second, what do the Manzu of Yi Lan Gang believe about shamanism in relation to the manes, the deified souls of the ancestors?¹⁰

In conversation with Guan Jia Lun, Guan Zhong Xing and Guan Hai Shan about shamanism, I was told that they do not hold ceremonies very often and that when they do it is a big social event with people coming from all over. A leading shaman lives in a nearby village (Da Mu Dan) and they decided that I should meet him. This was Guan Fu Zhe, the clan *mokunda*, whom I was to meet shortly.

One night, in the storage room attached to Guan Jun Tai's house, a brief shamanic ceremony was held. Before the event, the numerous shamans resident in the village (six were present that night), their helpers, and sundry hangers on and interested bystanders gathered in the parlour to watch videotapes of shamanic ceremonies. This aspect of the evening will be discussed in detail in chapter 5. Before we watched the tapes, Guan Jia Kai stood up and called for attention. He then made a long introductory speech about me, explaining who I was, where I was from, and where Canada is located. He then explained that unlike other researchers, I proposed to stay in the village for an extended length of time, and that I was interested in

¹⁰ The Guan do not have a specific term for the mythological ancestors that are honoured and negotiated with in their ceremonies. They refer to them as ancestors, but they use the same term for the ancestors recorded in the genealogies, who are not part of the shamanic ritual. In order to avoid confusion, I have used the English word manes to designate the ancestors who are treated with ritualistically, as it is the most succinct translation of the phrase the Guan shamans use to refer to the deified souls of the ancestors.

learning about the contemporary Manzu, not just their ancestors. He then explained that he would be helping me and teaching me about Manzu shamanism. Afterwards, the head party cadre in the village, Qin Yue Tai, made a protracted speech in which he explained how I came to be there, and that I was there with the blessing of the village and district leadership. He admonished those present to co-operate with me and answer all my questions. He carried on in this vein for quite some time, but the majority of those present seemed more interested in the problems they were having with the VCR. Eventually, after several attempts to regain their attention, Qin's speech ground to a halt and he went to see if he could help repair the tape player.

By this point a large crowd, including many teenagers, had gathered and they were all attempting to crowd into the parlour. At the same time Guan Fu Zhe was laying out the various implements and instruments used by the shaman on top of the *kang*. This of course meant there was even less room available for people. Yet everyone remained good-natured throughout, and more than that there was an air of excitement and celebration about the evening. I was introduced to Guan Fu Zhe, who showed me the *cha cher*, or clapping sticks. These provide a rhythmic counterpoint to the drumming, and when struck the musicians beat triplets over a 4/4 beat. At the same time the shaman and other helpers beat the hand drums with a 4/4 beat punctuated by a triplet on the third beat. I was shown the platform drum or *tai gu*, which is used to lay down the basic 4/4 beat. This is the most important instrument because the *tai gu* player is responsible for maintaining the rhythm throughout the performance, and is the horse for the shaman. The hand drum that the shaman uses is not his horse, as one might expect, but rather contributes to the syncopation that establishes the path for the journey, whether musical or ecstatic. But it is the platform drum and the assistant who plays it that are essential to a successful performance. While we waited for the VCR to be repaired in the parlour, one of the clan members used the *tai gu* as a pillow.

The final instrument is the belt of brass cones that the shamans wear around their waist. This is called the *yao ling zi*, which literally means the bell collar, but is also understood as a pun meaning to want or need to listen. This is because the manes are attracted to the beautiful sound of the bells, and *ling* (also second tone) has the additional meaning of exquisite. The shamans must make themselves attractive to the spirits, and the costumes and music are as much a part of the offerings as the food and drink. The cones provide a rhythmic and tonal counterpoint to the other instruments, and emphasise the chanting of the shamans.

After the VCR was repaired, we went next door to a storeroom that doubles as their sacred precinct. When used for this purpose it must be cleaned carefully, and fresh inscriptions

are posted on the wall to rededicate the room. The two altar boards for the clan, with votive boxes and offering dishes, are kept there at all times. The altar boards are raised up on the wall about eight feet, flanking the space for the main altar. The incense burners, boxes containing the ceremonial cloths and banners (representing the ancestors), plus the frame for the screen from which the banners are hung, all rest up on top of the altars when not in use. The main altar sits below, and is a wooden table raised up on a stage. It sits about .5 meters above the stage on four legs. On each side are red paper banners with calligraphy in Chinese characters and Manzu script.

They placed porcelain bowls with burning incense on the high altars (called *fo ye*¹¹). Then they laid out the porcelain and brass cups and decanters on the main altar and then wooden block incense burners. The incense they use is a wild plant that grows locally and which they gather and dry. The incense is called *an chu xiang*. I went up into the hills with Guan Jia Kai in his capacity as shaman's assistant, to gather the plant. When we arrived at the spot where he intended to gather, he was surprised to find that there were very few plants about. He speculated that the reason was that their cattle had been browsing on the shrub. I suggested that they were faced with a conflict, for they value cattle, yet also wish to preserve the plant. He concurred, but then brightened considerably and said that it was not a problem because there is still lots of it growing throughout the hills in the region.

Unlike the full ceremony, not all the shamans present were to perform. In this instance only two of the shamans donned robes and performed. The rest of the shamans acted as assistants and played instruments. Before they started they set up a stage using sacks of grain topped by boards and covered with a voluminous cloth. The two shamans almost forgot to put on their robes, and then suddenly they began when the two shamans faced the altar, knelt and bowed three times (the *kou tou*) and then stood up and began chanting. They then backed away from the altar while they continued to sing and began beating their hand drums. They then danced a full circle around the space in front of the altar and advanced to the altar again. They performed with evident seriousness and concentration that at times seemed almost to indicate strain. The music increased in tempo and built to a crescendo then tapered off again.

At this point the shamans handed off their drums and took up the cups and liquor pots that had been set by. They offered these to the ancestors by pouring out drinks and setting them

¹¹ For this term they use characters identical with those used to designate the Buddha, but the meaning is a Manzu term of respect that may be translated as old grandfather. By extension, *fo ye* refers to the manes. However, it is strong evidence of the influence of Chinese folk religion, as the Manzu have adopted the Chinese term that most closely reflects their sense of the importance of the ancestors.

on the altar. Plates of boiled grain formed into cakes followed these. The shamans performed the kou tou after each offering was made. Then they knelt in front of the altar while the elder shaman chanted a prayer to the ancestors. Later I was able to learn that both the prayer and the chants were intended to praise the ancestors for their past achievements, ask them for guidance and assistance in the future and thank them specifically for their help in protecting the members of the clan from illness. In their songbook the shamans have specific chants dedicated to various crises or problems, such as famine, flood, war, illness and fertility. However, the specifics of the chants are unknown to the shamans because the songs are in Manzu and the Guan no longer speak that language. Or so I was told. It was only much later that I learned that some of the elder shamans do in fact know Manzu. If they are not fluent, they know enough to differentiate the words of the chant and are familiar with the specifics of the chant itself, as in the case of the oldest shaman Guan Jia Lun, and the *mokunda* and head shaman Guan Fu Zhe. Others, such as Guan Yu Lin and the apprentice to the head shaman, Guan Jia Sheng, speak and read Manzu well enough that they understand the chants perfectly well. The implications of this situation will be discussed in the following chapter.

Next, they took up their drums and repeated the sequence of chanting, drumming and dancing described above. This was the entire extent of the ceremony. It was confusing to me because I had only a vague idea of what motivated the performance and at one point was under the impression that they were doing it solely for my benefit and as a demonstration only. Later I discovered that Guan Fu Zhe, whose grandson had been seriously ill, had sponsored it. After another crescendo and tapering off, the rite ended as abruptly as it had begun. We all went inside, after taking a few memorial photographs, to smoke and watch videos of the rites of other Manzu clans.

Another important aspect of this particular event was the audience itself. Aside from the six shamans and five assistants, there were about 30 people present who just watched. Most of them were in their teens or early twenties. Before the ceremony I observed some of them fooling around with the drums and clappers, but this was apparently not considered disrespectful. In fact, the shamans encouraged this familiarity. During the actual rites, the attitude of the spectators seemed to be one of respect and genuine interest. Before the commencement of the performance, most people chatted and joked quietly, but then were quiet and attentive as soon as they began the performance. As soon as the ritual concluded, the entire audience disappeared quickly.

Some scholars I met stated that there is a lot of Han shamanism practised in the north-east, but that it was of a type derived from Manzu shamanism. Whether it is derived from the

Manzu or from Han traditions, the presence of this shamanism raised a number of questions, including the issue of whether shamanism played a different social role among the Manzu than among the Han. A similar social practice can certainly be interpreted variably. The real issue must be whether the shamanism I encountered is focussed on a particular object, the clan, while it is not for the Han. The evidence seems to suggest that this is so. Beyond this, I was informed that Han shamanism today is about divination, healing and talking with spirits. The shamanic epic trance journey is no longer undertaken, and they do not perform heroic feats, such as the mountain of knives or the hot iron shoes. However, this betrayed more about urban Han prejudices than anything else, for not only do Han engage in these activities, but also more directly, the Manzu still do. These experts had very specific ideas about what shamanism entails, and by their judgement the Manzu no longer practice it. This is because they believed that shamanic trance no longer uses the drum and cone belt, and because they understood shamanism now to be primarily concerned with healing and fortune telling.

Professor Fu Yu Guang is a well-known student of shamanism, both within China, and throughout Asia and Europe. I went to see him at the Jilin Institute of Ethnic Studies in Changchun as part of my preparations for my planned fieldwork. He shared with me his own thoughts on the nature of contemporary shamanism, and they offer an interesting counterpoint to the practices of the Guan clan. What he told me is summarised in the next few paragraphs.

According to Professor Fu, shamans exhibit exceptional physical strength. Presently, the only shamans that exist are those attached to a clan. There are no independent shamans. The old court religion had written rules, but these applied only within the palace. Each shaman could and can do as he/she wants.

Fu stated that Manzu shamans have no myths of genesis, only stories about the origins of society and the creation of links with spirits. There are new spirits now as society develops, such as the spirit of the wheel. In wedding ceremonies they now honour the car spirit. There is no word in Manzu for electricity so they can't honour the electric spirit (because of the decline in the population of Manzu speakers). Only the emperor had electricity at the end of the Qing. A leather spirit and then later a silk spirit were established within living memory.

Fu argued that to become a shaman you have to be nominated by the family and then one of the nominees is chosen by the shaman. The candidates can be women or men aged 16 to 26, and may be married or single. The successful candidate must be honest, clever and of sound morals. The young people must read the testaments of shamans in order to prepare for their training. If the clan has lost these writings then they cannot train the shamans. No disabled

persons may become shamans, and the candidate must demonstrate the ability to communicate with the spirits. Scriptures come from the spirits, and if they have lost these, then they just worship at the shrine without understanding.

Fu also discussed the categories of shamans. Most shamans only perform rituals and pray. A special kind of shaman, the spirit catcher, performs healing, spirit projection, and heroic feats, and is very respected. Only a few of this type still remain, and are found in Heilongjiang province. The shaman apprentices to learn the traditions, rituals, songs and techniques of the shaman. Then, the shaman undertakes a spirit quest for 9 days. At the end, the other shamans examine them in public to see if they have succeeded in their quest. If they pass, they must then go on to learn about other things, like agriculture, traditions, history, and stories. They are “the tutors of the nation.” A good shaman is always learning from other shamans, and keeps learning until he dies.

Shamanism in Yi Lan Gang

The shamans of Yi Lan Gang are worried that eventually their traditions will disappear. They want to do whatever they can to counteract this tendency but they do not really know what to do. This is why they want to build a ceremonial hall, to focus the attention of the community and of the clan members living elsewhere on the shamanic traditions. They also try to make sure everybody comes back for the ceremonies. They are quite conscious of what they are trying to accomplish. When they are young, however, they do not have time for worrying about Manzu traditions because they have to earn a living and raise a family.

Some members of the clan who are shamans live in Mu Dan Jiang, Beijing or Harbin and return to Yi Lan Gang for important occasions. They do not actually have shamanic ceremonies very often and when they do it is a major social (*jiaojide*) event with clan members travelling from a great distance to attend. However, when I first arrived in the village and it became clearer to my hosts just what I wanted to accomplish, it became a priority that I should meet with the other shamans.

Of course, the Guan are not easily characterised as cultural conservatives, despite their concerns about their traditions. Innovations such as video cassette players, satellite television and dragline excavators are easily accepted. One of the scholar-shamans I met maintained that studying shamanism without videotape was not a worthwhile undertaking. Yet at the same time many young people undertake to study shamanism. Overall there is a strong emphasis on the importance of traditions and knowledge of Manzu customs, whether they are actually still

practised or not. They take great pride in their knowledge and in their ability to pass on that knowledge to younger individuals.

Guan Fu Zhe first told me that the clan believes in the manes that they honour. He wished to emphasise two points. First, he maintained that most clan members do in fact believe in the existence of the manes, despite what I might be told by others in the village who were constrained by their participation in the Communist Party. He also wanted me to understand that they honour the ancestors when they perform sacrificial rites, but they do not worship them. He said that shamanism is not ancestor worship, but respect that is reciprocated in the help and protection that the manes can provide. Guan Fu Zhe said that all shamans, including the youngest ones, believe in the spirits of the ancestors. They have to believe, he said, because if they do not then their sacrifices are ineffective. Yet, when I interviewed some of the young male shamans, two of them indicated to me that they did not believe in the spirits, but merely practised the rites for the sake of clan unity. However, I was told this during interviews in which my host, Guan Jia Kai, who is also a party cadre, accompanied me. At that point in my research, Guan Jia Kai was still introducing me to people, and my mastery of the local idiom was weak, while Guan Jia Kai was educated and often had to explain what I was saying to other people in the village. When I went back to interview these same two shamans privately, one of them maintained the same attitude towards the manes, while the other said that in fact he really did believe in the spirits, but wanted me to understand that he honoured them and did not worship them. These second interviews took place towards the end of my fieldwork, when my linguistic competence was vastly improved. I decided to recheck this aspect after the performance of the *ji si* (major rite of sacrifice to the ancestors), which had been preceded by an intensive period of preparation, study and training for the shamans. This had included discussion of the role of the ancestors and the proper attitude towards them by the shamans. Thus, shamans find themselves involved in a negotiated understanding of their shamanism that results in varied outcomes.

Another example of this is Guan Jia Kai himself, a man who was considered to “have culture,” to be sophisticated and have well-developed socialist ideals. He expressed his understanding of shamanism as both important to the cohesion of the clan and as a remnant of feudalistic thinking. He seemed conflicted in his loyalties. He told me in private that he had no doubt that the manes were not real, and encouraged me to believe that the Guan clan members do not believe that they exist. When a television news crew from Mu Dan Jiang came to the village to interview both the villagers and me about my research, they asked Guan Jia Kai whether or not he believed in the ancestral spirits. He knew that he would be seen on television by the rest of

the clan members all over the county, and also that as a member of the party he was expected to profess atheism. But finally, he stated that he did believe in the spirits. I did not pursue the matter of this apparent contradiction. It was manifest later that he was deeply involved in organising the ceremonies of the community, and that he represented two separate images of himself in different circumstances.

Guan Fu Zhe explained that the only spirits that the clan shamans of Yi Lan Gang concern themselves with are those of the ancestors. This came up in the context of a conversation about the nature of the manes. He spontaneously volunteered the statement that “we don’t have anything to do with other spirits. We don’t know anything about them. The only spirits we communicate with are the ancestors.” This appeared to be at variance with traditional Manzu shamanism that had dealings with animal spirits and spirits of heaven. It was only later that I discovered that they still have dealings with nature spirits, but they are also defined as ancestors. That is, the manes include the spirits of forest creatures that are classified as ancestors due to their role in the life of the Manzu when they were forest nomads. The idea of what constitutes an ancestor takes on new significance in this context.

Although the shamans and others in the village are generally limited in their direct knowledge of the Manzu to what they have experienced in the Ning Xi district, they tend to generalise to the Manzu as a whole. This is because they understand their cultural identity as not simply members of the Guan clan, or inhabitants of Yi Lan Gang, but as a Manzu identity to which they can speak with authority. Thus when I am relating the shamans’ impressions of Manzu shamanism, I write about the Manzu, not just the clan, because that is the way that the clan shamans relate such information. When the members of the community discuss such topics as ideal cultural characteristics, they also speak in terms of the Manzu. Overall, the clan members in the village do not discuss such matters on a daily basis, but when they do they tend to speak in general terms.

Each shaman that I was able to spend a significant amount of time with at some point took pains to explain to me that the Manzu shamans are not *wu pe*, which translates as witch or sorcerer. On four separate occasions this was explained, and that the Manzu never had such people in the past. The Manzu practised nature worship in the past, but this has evolved into honouring the ancestors. The Qian Long emperor issued standardised rites that emphasised the deification of the ancestors and discouraged the trance performance. Nevertheless, this latter aspect had been retained to a degree, right up until before the Japanese invaded. The shamans of Yi Lan Gang knew that other clans still practised the trance, and I was told later by one retired

shaman that he and some of the elder Guan shamans did once enter into a trance while dancing and drumming, but had given it up. Of course today the ancestors are not worshipped, but rather honoured and propitiated. The distinction is an important one to the shamans, as was the denial of sorcery. They acknowledge that past shamans had remarkable powers, but this was not sorcery because it came from the ancestors and was only used for good purposes. Furthermore, most *wu pe* are said to be swindlers who have no real powers, or if they do will only use them to cheat people.

During the Japanese occupation, the colonial government forbade gatherings of more than a few people. In addition, the Manzu clans were impoverished by the occupation and thus were unable to sponsor lavish and complex rituals such as the *ji si*. Then, after the withdrawal of the Japanese the Communist regime brought education and propaganda to raise the socialist consciousness of the Manzu. This undermined their belief in an already weakened institution. Finally, the Cultural Revolution had a devastating effect upon the shamans themselves, and the entire shamanic complex. Yet many still believe either in shamanism or in the tradition of shamanism as a defining characteristic of their ethnicity. They are impelled by a desire to memorialise the ancestors (*ji zu xian*). Ultimately, their ceremonies are intended as a sacrifice to Nurhaci and his devoted followers, including the ancestor of the Guan clan. By so doing, they are remembering themselves. The trance is not necessary to the achievement of this end.

The ceremonies they hold are to celebrate the benevolence of the ancestors at times of marriages, births of sons, bumper harvests, success at work and so on. They can also be held to celebrate the good health of children and elders. Or they may be held to ask for any of these things. There is no fixed calendar for these types of ceremonies. Rather, an individual can sponsor them at any time. Permission of the head of the clan must be sought before sponsoring such an event. Today, he may not refuse permission, whereas in the past he might have. When the entire clan comes together to sponsor a *ji si* they call this a *gong ji*. The date and purpose are in theory decided by the *mokunda*. In reality, he consults with his deputies and the shamans, who in turn canvas the community for enthusiasm and willingness to contribute. This is different from the situation prior to the Japanese occupation. At that time the *mokunda* still had great power over the clan.

Guan shamans are go-betweeners for the people and the ancestors. They ask for aid in times of drought, illness or other troubles, or to bless a journey or support and inspire their leaders. People cannot individually communicate with the ancestors, but only through the shamans. I was told that they are necessary to protect the ancestors from the living by filtering

out all the nonsense. If the people could talk directly to the ancestors then they would do it all the time, and continually pester them with petty requests and complaints. On a more practical level, the Guan today believe that the ancestors have to be spoken to in Manzu, and as most members of the clan do not speak it, they need the shamans to speak for them. Each prayer, chant or song they use has a specific purpose or theme. Even the young shamans whose understanding is limited are able to communicate with the ancestors through the medium of song because they know the set purpose of the chant or song they use. It is the intention and the method that are important. The Guan shamans today do not concern themselves with the individual power of the shaman as they do with the power of their words to influence the manes for the benefit of the community of which the manes are an active part.

In the past the shamans were chosen when they showed signs of shamanic illness, from which they recovered on their own (by mastering a spirit). They also administered a test of those who through shamanic sickness or other signs indicated a possible suitability for apprenticing as a shaman. It is important to note that even with the successful mastering of a spirit, the candidate was not necessarily selected. Character and reliability were considered. The shamans also administered a test in which they secluded the candidate in a tent in which they burned large amounts of incense. If the candidate had a striking reaction this was a supernatural sign of their suitability. The reaction was characterised by euphoria, exhilaration and disorientation. This method is still used today and the present shamans describe it as like being drunk. The ancestors have selected them and actually touched them so that they must become shamans. This event, which is called the *xun xiang* is still used by the Guan today, although the process is slightly different. The leading shamans and clan elders select potential candidates and interview them to determine if they are interested and suitable. If they are suitable then they undergo the *xun xiang* to see if they are acceptable to the ancestors. The elder shamans recruited a group of apprentices in 1992. They were all seated in a circle inside a tent and smoked with incense for about 10 minutes. Then, when they emerged from the tent those selected by the ancestors were formerly accepted as apprentice shamans.

In March 1997 Guan Jia Kai and I went to Guan Jia Lun's to see the genealogies. We discussed the *qiao pu* (recopying ceremony), which involves displaying the scrolls for the whole clan to examine. This is supposed to be done in the sacred precincts or ceremonial hall. Guan Jia Lun, who is responsible for taking care of the *jia pu*, raised the issue of constructing a building dedicated strictly to the *jia ji*. The hall they use now is privately owned and is actually someone's storage facility for seeds, feed, surplus harvest, equipment, etc. It is used for all kinds of events,

such as weddings, funerals, and whatever needs people have. Guan Jia Lun was quite agitated about the issue. My sense is that they genuinely feel a need for it, which means that they invest a great deal of importance in these two pillars of their culture — the *ji si* and the *jia pu*.

But they are worried that eventually their traditions will disappear and they are all concerned about this and want to do whatever they can to counteract this tendency. But they do not really know what to do. This is why they try to make sure that everybody comes back for the ceremonies. They are quite conscious of what they are trying to accomplish. When they are young, I was told, they do not have time for worrying about “Manzu traditions,” because they have to earn a living and raise a family. When they are old and retired they can spend more time on studying and researching their history and culture and making an effort to pass it on.

On March 25th, I was invited to visit with Guan Yun Tai, who was acknowledged as the expert on shamanic dress and decoration. He acted as the tailor for the clan. He explained that it is necessary for the elder members of the clan to make the costumes that the shamans wear, as an indication of respect for the ancestors. Later, when he was gone one of the younger people would be required to take over as tailor. The clothing that the shamans wear when they are performing their rites consists of a colourful shirt and a dark skirt decorated with two distinctive *zhuang shi pin* (ornaments): the *yuan-zi gou* (fringe hook), and *qun-zi bian* (the trim along the hem of the skirt). These decorations are considered to be unique to the Manzu, and the Guan state that they are not used by other peoples, even their Tungusic cousins. These ornaments can be used on any item of Manzu clothing or furniture, but are not as frequently employed as in the past. They do not wear any sort of head gear, as many other contemporary Manzu and Tungusic shamans still do, and as was done in the past by Guan shamans. The head gear was lost early in the turmoil surrounding the 1946-1949 Civil War.

The clan also prepares special foods and drinks to offer to the manes. The first crop widely grown in Dongbei by the predecessors of the Manzu was millet or *xiao mi*. Therefore, the clan shamans make a point of offering *huang jiu*, grain alcohol made from millet, along with the more commonly available *bai jiu*. They also offer millet cakes, rice cakes and pig to the ancestors. The offering of incense is also very important. This is because it attracts the ancestors and creates a more pleasing environment for them, which is a central objective of the *ji si*.

Guan Jun Tai is an aged and experienced shaman, well respected within the clan, due to his age but also to his fierce commitment to the clan and the ideals of Manzu ethnicity. He feels that shamanism is most of all a clan oriented institution. They want everyone in the clan to come

back because if they do not then they will forget who they are. But honouring the ancestors is also very important.

He told me that they actually have a number of different sacrificial rites that they should perform but they cannot do them all because it would involve too much trouble and expense. The individual responsibility system, the memory of impoverishment dating back to the Boxer rebellion, and the pressure to cast off feudal remnants and adopt socialist thought all make it difficult to motivate people to contribute. Otherwise they would be mounting ceremonies to honour important leaders, holding the *Ba Bu Shen* (the shorter ceremony) and many others. Guan Jun Tai believes that the ancestors are not spirits but nevertheless do exist as entities that are worthy of respect. This may seem like a curious distinction to make, but in fact it is motivated by fifty years of anti-religious propaganda. The Guan have been told by the state that they should not believe in spirits because this is feudalistic and primitive. Therefore, they do not believe in spirits, but they still believe in the ancestors, who are able to help people, give them good luck and hopefully assist them when they are ill or have problems. In this discussion he drew a deliberate distinction from the understanding of the ancestors in Chinese folk religion. He argued that the Han Chinese believe that the ancestors participate in a heavenly hierarchy, and that they are only a few of innumerable spirits that can aid or hinder mortals. The Manzu, by contrast, believe only in ancestors that exist in a realm beyond the living, but act in concert with the living. Some of these ancestors are in fact animal ancestors – not nature spirits, but rather the forest ancestors of the formally nomadic and hunting Manzu. This idea is an extension of the totems or power animals of the clans. All of these ancestors are able to help people, give them good luck and support them when they are ill or have problems.

He was aware that the Fu and Xu clans also conduct shamanic ceremonies in the vicinity. Each clan has a large population in one village and that is where they have ceremonies. They use basically the same methods, although the content of the ceremonial songs is different. Guan Jun Tai has never seen any of the rites of the other clans in person. He would like to go to see them, but has never had the opportunity. Part of the reason for this is that he has never met any shamans from other clans. However, this is not typical, for many of the shamans in the area, particularly the scholar shamans, have a wide network of shamans with whom they associate. The Guan of Yi Lan Gang and environs are somewhat isolated, and yet many of the shamans and shamans assistants in the village have met with other shamans. Guan Fu Zhe in particular has made an effort to discuss technique with non-clan shamans, and attend and study their ceremonies. In addition, at least twice in the recent past that Guan Jun Tai could remember,

shamans from other clans have been present during the *gong ji* of the Guan clan. Guan Jun Tai, like all of the shamans in Yi Lan Gang, had seen many videotapes of other shamans. He said that he found them interesting as history, but did not think that they were relevant to the role of shamanism in his clan.

Young Shamans

I was fortunate to meet and get to know a young shaman named Guan Zhao Ming. His generation (Zhao) stood in relation to Guan Jia Kai, my host, as a grandson. He was 31 years old, was married to a Han woman named Zhu Jing Lian, and had one son. His best friend, Guan Feng, also lived with him, and they worked their land together. I helped them on occasion with their work, and was judged a poor hand at best.

Guan Zhao Ming had graduated from junior high school, and this education, along with his dedication to family and work and also his outgoing demeanour, made him an ideal candidate for apprenticing as a shaman. He wished to perform properly as a shaman, as in all other aspects of his life. He was always embarrassed to discuss shamanism with me because he knew so little about it. He felt that at this time in his life, shamanism was basically best understood as obedience to his elders and the ancestors. He was a shaman only to do as he was instructed and help to keep the traditions alive. He did not mean that shamanism was beyond his concern, for he told me that it was a matter of interest to the entire clan. Yet, he felt that the religious or spiritual aspects of shamanism were best left to the elders to consider. When he was older and knew and understood more, he said, he might feel comfortable discussing these things.

When I discussed the different elements of the rites with him, he often was not certain about their significance. He was not really clear about why they offered liquor, grain and meat to the spirits, because he did not really believe that the spirits came to the *ji si* when the shamans invited them. In fact, he was not convinced that the spirits existed at all, and was unclear about the nature of the spirits and the Victory Pole:

I'm not sure why we use the pole, or what we do. I've only seen the ceremony once so I don't know much. I forget. Is Fotuomama a friend of Nurhaci's from the mountain? I forget. The old shamans know those things and I have to study it more.

For him, the ceremonies were important as a way of reuniting the members of the clan:

To be Guan is important, and that is why I am a shaman. And it is important to me to be a member of the clan because I am a shaman. I studied shamanism because it is important to our clan. It was something I chose because I wanted to and I like it.

I think everybody appreciates the shamans. Everybody comes out to the ceremonies and they do not have to. They decide this on their own. And they always come and are very happy and excited. The ceremony is very *renao* [convivial, buzzing with excitement; literally “hot and noisy”].

In this discussion Guan Zhao Ming indicates the dual nature of his activities as a shaman. The shamans are important and necessary, but this is so because the clan is important, and the shamans provide authentic experience for the clan. The people participate because they choose to, just as they choose to believe that being Guan is important. But when they come to the rites, they are happy and excited, so that there is pleasure in being a part of the clan rites. Guan Zhao Ming is a shaman because it is important for the clan, but he also has come to enjoy what he is doing, and this reinforces its value for him.

The female shaman I came to know best was Xue Ping, the wife of Guan Zhao Bin. Obviously, she was not born a member of the Guan clan, and in fact is ethnically a Han. However, when she talked about the clan and about the Manzu, she always referred to herself as a member, and talked about “us”. Her decision to redefine herself as a Manzu led her to the decision to attempt to become a shaman. She told me that, “Because we are a minority, I felt that it was important to maintain our ceremonies and keep our traditions alive.” She maintained that there are no differences between male and female shamans. This was an issue about which she became quite agitated when I raised it. She told me that in modern China men and women are equal in all things. I spoke to her about the past when many of the shamans were women and were renowned as healers who travelled and shamanised for all sorts of people, not just their clans. She was unaware of this history, but she told me that in their training and in their practice they do everything that the men do and do it in concert with them. The only difference she could see was that the leading shamans made all the decisions and they are all men. In the future, Xue suggested that the women would have more influence, although a woman could never be the *mokunda*. But, she said, that really did not worry her. Her concern was that her children should know about both the clan’s and Manzu history and be brought up as Manzu. Xue and her husband discussed this question before they got married, and even though it was an arranged marriage it was understood that they would only marry if they agreed on the ethnicity of their children.

She was invited to study shamanism by the clan *mokunda*, when the clan shamans realised that they had no young shamans. She was considered to be qualified because she is educated, well behaved, respectful and an upstanding member of the community. Her formal

apprenticeship lasted only five days. It was preceded by the incense test described above, which is administered to all potential shamans. The shamans here are distributed through the five living generations. This is a deliberate strategy employed to ensure that their shamanism does not die out with the death of the elder shamans. Therefore, they have adjusted their approach to apprenticeship to allow young people to more readily accept and participate in the complex.

After the *xun xiang*, the training began with the study of the Manzu language in order to allow the apprentices to study the songs, prayers and chants. How much the apprentices learn beyond the minimum necessary for their training is a matter of individual choice. Some shamans have chosen to study the language more intensively, and work with two of the older shamans to improve their facility. The next step was to learn how to use the free-standing drum (*tai gu*). In-depth training involved studying the stages of the ceremony, the drumming and dancing technique, the words of the songs, the use of the other instruments, the protocol of the ceremonies, the preparation of the food and how to properly offer the incense and food and drinks. They do not practice the method at other times outside of this special period because the ancestors would not approve of this. Whenever a ceremony is held, the apprentice shamans are always closely supervised and perform their portion of the rites in tandem with one of the experienced shamans. The only thing that the apprentices may do to practice is to sing the songs they have learned on their own in order to help memorise them.

The system of allowing non-Manzu women to become shamans is a reform instituted relatively recently by the present *mokunda* and his deputies. This reform is not necessarily the practice of Manzu clans in general, or even of other clans in the vicinity. The nearby branch of the Fu clan follows this practice, but the Xu do not. This reform is justified by the Guan through recourse to history. They point out that the Manzu were traditionally able to incorporate individuals from other ethnic groups into their ethnicity. They reason that there is no significant difference between that and the present circumstance. Since women were shamans in the past, it is only reasonable that they should be now, even though there was an interval when the emperors discouraged shamanesses.¹² That suppression is not compatible with modern China or with Manzu traditions. Finally, in the past when a Manzu woman married outside her clan, she took the name of the clan of her husband, and effectively became a member of his clan. Although now they do not change names, the idea that they are still equivalent members of the clan is still extant. Previously, a woman who shamanised was not usually a clan shaman, but dealt primarily

¹² An important suggestion is that the female shamans of the past were independent and powerful, whereas today they are incorporated into the clan structure and are not threatening.

with nature spirits, since she most likely learned to shamanise before marriage and thus had access to neither her own clan spirits nor those of her husband's clan. Today, the situation is not entirely consistent with the past, but the Guan shamans de-emphasise this inconsistency and focus upon the pragmatic.

Planning the *Gong Ji*

In March 1997, Guan Jia Kai told me that Guan Fu Zhe expected that they might have the *gong ji* in the coming winter. Apparently the crops had been bountiful in recent years and it looked like another good year ahead. A few weeks later I had a meeting with Guan Jia Kai, Guan Hai Shan and Guan Yu Lin to discuss the plan for holding the *ji si*. They had already contacted Guan Fu Zhe and he had given them the go ahead to begin organising. These four individuals were to be responsible for planning and organising the event. We began the first stage by discussing the timing and extent of the rites. I was concerned about the date because I knew that I did not have enough money to last until the New Year, and the other question was whether I could contribute enough toward the cost to afford the full *gong ji*. The situation was interesting because the clan had not held a full *gong ji* in about five years, and so the pressure to do so was great. Despite the optimism of the *mokunda* earlier in the year, the leadership had found that many of the clan members were not eager to make a contribution to the cost of holding the ceremony. Although the average cost per household would have been about ¥100, this was about one-third of the monthly income for the most prosperous. In reality, many could not afford this amount while others would have been obligated to contribute a great deal more to make up the balance. There was a degree of uneasiness within the clan about the problem of financing the *ji si*.

In reality, this was only the first step in the negotiations, and nothing would be settled, nor was it expected that it would be settled. I did not realise this at the time, and so I was anxious about how I was handling the situation. They wanted to know if I wanted to sponsor a complete *ji si*, or just a *bebe shen*. I wanted to avoid influencing their ritual as much as possible, and so insisted that it be up to them to decide. I stated baldly that I wished to minimise my affect upon their village, but they responded that I was a guest and a friend, and that I should not feel that way. It was evident that they were as concerned to maintain my engagement as I was to maintain my distance. They were working very hard to get at how much I was willing to spend. This was demonstrated in the conversation, for they kept asking how much I was willing to spend while I was asking how much the full rite would cost. I said that at most I would contribute ¥2000

(\$325). I wanted to know if this was enough to do the entire ritual, but there was confusion because I wanted to find out how much it would cost while they wanted to find out how much I was willing to spend and then decide what they could do. There was a sense of trying to outmanoeuvre each other and get the other to commit first.

As it turned out, the four of them were also trying to figure out how much they could get out of the village Communist cadre. And they were also factoring in a small fee for themselves for organising the event. After we discussed these matters, they suddenly decided that they wanted to go to talk to Qin Yu Cai (the cadre) about the matter. They did not tell me why and they did not invite me to accompany them. Later Guan came back, and it was evident that they had had a few celebratory drinks. This was presumably part of the planning process. They had discussed matters with Qin for two and a half hours, drinking steadily throughout. The result was that the village cadres had agreed to contribute partially to the cost of staging the *gong ji*.

This seemed a startling development to me. Guan Jia Kai anticipated my surprise and provided an explanation. In 1992 the village was designated a Manzu village. This means that the village has an obligation to assist the Manzu, and specifically the Guan clan, who make a special contribution to the village. The village receives special privileges and funding because it is the seat of the Guan clan. Therefore the village leadership can call upon the municipal Minorities Affairs Committee for funds to assist in the staging of a complete ceremony. According to Guan Jia Kai, they had managed to get Qin to suggest that they ought to hold a full *gong ji* with two boars, and that if necessary the village would solicit funds for that purpose.

The next day Guan Jia Kai and I travelled to Da Mu Dan to see Guan Fu Zhe to gain his approval for holding the ceremony. He was very receptive, but wary. We did not discuss any details, but talked about the dates, my contribution, and what had transpired with Qin the night before. Guan Fu Zhe said that my help was quite welcome and that he hoped too that they could hold the full ceremony. They decided that they needed to consult further with Guan Yu Lin, so we returned to Yi Lan Gang. Guan Yu Lin was very considered in his approach. He expressed neither enthusiasm nor reservations, but pondered our words without comment. They reiterated the points that had been discussed over the previous days: who could come, when they should have it, the practicalities of putting up guests, whether they should hold a full *gong ji*, and the role that the village cadres would play.

Finally, Guan Yu Lin interceded to insist that if they held the *gong ji*, it was to be done properly and include all eight parts:

1. wash grain/press rice (day one);

2. make cake/*da gao* (day one);
3. morning ceremony/*shang wu ji* (day two);
4. afternoon ceremony/*xia wu ji* (day two);
5. *bei deng ji* (day two);
6. sky ceremony/*ji tian* (day three);
7. change locks/*huan suo* (day three);
8. tree spirit ceremony/*ji shen shu* (day three).

Before Guan Fu Zhe left they agreed that Guan Hai Shan, Guan Yu Lin, Guan Jia Kai, Guan Zhong Xin and Qin Yu Cai should meet that evening to discuss the details and begin the planning. Most of the practical planning was carried out in meetings involving these individuals, to which I was usually not invited. It was not that I was deliberately excluded. Rather, they considered these details to be too pedestrian and boring. They usually had the meetings while I was out doing other research, and I would not find out about them until after the fact. I believe that this has something to do with their understanding of folk research conducted by Chinese scholars, who in their experience did not concentrate on the process or the social dimension. I had to ask repeatedly to be allowed to observe these meetings. Invariably, I would attend one, and then they would not let me know about the next one.

In one of the first meetings they dealt with the final decision about whether or not to hold the ceremony. In the course of the discussion, they put forward arguments, and settled upon a number of points as their justification. These were necessary to involve the clan and solicit whatever contributions they could from the households. They also wanted to justify the use of public funds, and promote the event among distant clan members, thereby promoting their participation. The first point was that the clan is obligated to have the ceremony twice every five years. They should have the *bebe shen* after three years, and the *gong ji* at the five year mark. Thus, it was time for the *gong ji*. The fact that the Minorities Affairs Committee's funds were available gave them added impetus. The village had benefited in the purchase of equipment with an interest-free loan from the committee, and so the village leadership wished to express their appreciation to the clan by soliciting funds. They also argued that it was important to hold the ceremony while their international friend, who wished to learn about them and share the Guan's culture with the outside world, was present. Finally, they felt that by staging this ceremony and inviting guests from outside the clan (that is, leadership from the municipality) they would benefit the clan and village in the long run. Thus they marshalled the rhetorical arguments necessary to justify the staging of the ritual.

Guan Yu Lin says that the reason that they do not use the shamanism that masters the spirits is that shamanism is not about superstition. Besides that, when people need help now they use medicines, or machines or science. Shamanism is really, and always has been, about telling the ancestors about important things that happen and celebrating these things. Originally, the shamanic trance was mainly celebratory, and not about power. So it does not matter whether they choose shamans through shamanic illness or another method. This is why it is irrelevant that Guan Fu Zhe's grandson (Guan Ying Tao) had shamanic sickness. His suitability as a shaman still depends more on other factors. Although Guan Fu Zhe declared that his grandson's illness (which was treated as meningitis by the physicians in Ning An) was evidence of shamanic tendencies, the boy still had to be accepted by the other shamans as a candidate for shamanic training and initiated by the cloth and incense method like all the others. He could not begin his studies until the initiation was complete, but now he is accepted as an apprentice.

Guan Fu Zhe told Guan Ying Tao that he was a shaman, but Guan Ying Tao still decided on his own whether he wanted to apprentice or not. This is in stark contrast to all of the elder shamans, who were identified because they exhibited signs of shamanic sickness and were told by their parents that they should apprentice as shamans. They had no choice in the matter, for they were only children of seven or eight years old when it happened. Today, the shamans decide on their own as adults.

Guan Fu Zhe was trying to reassert the primacy of the old method of selecting shamans, but met with resistance from the other shamans, particularly Guan Yu Lin. The latter keeps a written version of the meanings of the different aspects of the ceremony which he compiled himself. This combines with his facility in written and spoken Manzu, along with his grave demeanour, to lend him an extensive degree of authority in disputes of this nature. He has successfully converted the authority of the shaman in an oral tradition to the authority of the scholar in a written tradition. This is also the case with the other shaman/scholars I met, such as Fu Cha Ren of Ning An and the internationally prominent Fu Yu Guang of the Jilin Institute of Ethnic Studies.

Just prior to the *ji si*, a large meeting was held to go over the schedule. All the shamans and most of the assistants for the clan were in attendance. In total there were 17 men and 5 women there. When I came in I could sense a certain electric anticipation in the air. The meeting consisted of Guan Jia Kai distributing the schedule and going over it. Occasionally, he would single someone out and admonish him or her for not paying attention, which was an uncommon assertion of authority. The nature of the event gave him the authority to discipline that would not

normally exist among the members of the community. Guan dwelt at some length upon the fact that Song De Yin, a scholar from the Mu Dan Jiang Normal College, would be attending. Therefore, it was very important that they all do a good job of presenting the ceremony.¹³ He also emphasised the importance of this opportunity for the younger shamans to learn how to properly perform a full *gong ji*. Then they arranged training sessions and practice sessions for the junior shamans to be held over the next few days at Guan Yun Tai's and Guan Jun Tai's. All that was left was for everyone to make sure that his or her costumes were ready and in order. The meeting broke up and the shamans began working on their costumes and comparing the decorative elements, sewing strips of royal blue cloth onto the pants and reinforcing the buttons on their shirts.

The Ceremonial Round

For any ceremony the shamans must provide *mi jiu*, *bai jiu*, clean water, loaves of millet cakes (*bebe* in Manzu). Millet is not widely planted today, so they often must use rice straw for the *jie gar* and *nian mi* (glutinous rice) for the cakes and other offerings. Just as there are specific songs for certain purposes, so there are a number of different types of cakes to be used depending on the requests made of the manes. These cakes are used according to the purpose of the ceremony. Thus one ceremony will only use one kind of cake. Today the Guan clan shamans use the following types:

1. small thrown and steamed cakes made from millet (Mandarin: *sao gao*; Manzu: *fushehen efen*): to be triumphant, to have a good journey; to have peace, to get rich or to be promoted;
2. large cakes made by hammering on a board with heavy mallets (Mandarin: *da gao*; Manzu: *tuime efen*): for family peace and security, health for all family members, and a good harvest;
3. steamed millet kernels (Mandarin: *huang mi zheng fan*; Manzu: *lala buda*): to prevent disastrous accidents, promise rewards to the ancestors and restore order out of chaos (previously used as the offering on family altars in private homes);
4. perilla seed sheets (Mandarin: *suzi ye*; Manzu: *apudah efen*): to make the family prosperous, to ensure that their property is well stored and protected;
5. boiled, bean paste filled, millet balls (Mandarin: *shui tuan de bebe*; Manzu: *tou huoli efen*): to promise rewards to ancestors if children are ill;
6. Boiled millet balls (Mandarin: *tai shi ma bebe*; Manzu: *taishima efen*): these are only used for apprenticeship training, and not for real rituals. They contain no filling.

¹³ As it happened, a number of academics made flying visits to attend the ceremony.

7. Millet cakes mixed with cooked beans (Mandarin: *dou mian juan bebe*; Manzu: *jiapulala efen*): this is also used during the apprenticeship period, for sacrifices made to ask for help from the manes by the apprentices.

The public ceremony requires every family in the clan to contribute to defraying the cost, especially the purchase of the pigs. Since everyone in Yi Lan Gang is poor, they can only afford the ceremony every three to five years. If they kill a pig they make a sacrifice to the “pig spirits” and do the appropriate ceremony, but if they use only cakes, they appeal only to the “cake spirits” and perform the suitable rite. It took me some time to understand this after it was first explained to me. I was finally brought to understand that just as the cakes are for specific purposes, so the sacrifice of the pig has a specific purpose. The spirits that are appealed to each time a certain cake is used to achieve a different goal are not necessarily the same as those which are propitiated with a different cake. Just so, a pig sacrifice appeals to the most powerful of the manes and is the most important of all the rites, for its purpose is to benefit and protect the entire clan for the next five years. The pig spirits (*zhu shen*) are the most primal of all the manes, and exclusively include the ancestral power animals, along with (according to some) Nurhaci and other founders of the Manzu power. The *bebe shen* (cake spirits) are more recently identified manes of human origin. Only the pig sacrifice is considered to be a *gong ji* (communal sacrifice), while all others are identified as *jia ji* (family sacrifice).

The *jia ji* is what a private individual can usually afford if they want to sponsor a ceremony. They are relatively rare today because no homes have their own altar. Because their homes are much smaller now, they do not feel they have room for an altar. If they want to use the clan altars this increases the cost. The *jia ji* can be expensive and today most of the families are still too poor to afford them. Also, due to the influence of socialist education, people’s ideas about these things have changed. The impacts of the Cultural Revolution and other upheavals have also eroded the interest of many families in this sort of activity.

Only the *gong ji* uses a ceremony called the *bei deng ji* (hide from light ceremony). This ceremony remembers the past when the Manzu lived in dark caves, or dug underground pits along riverbanks and gullies. Another reason given for this aspect of the ceremony is that Nurhaci once hid underground and was helped to dig his hiding place by seven moles sent by Fotuomama. Some assert that this sacrifice is particularly directed towards Fotuomama, as well as for the individuals attending to honour their parents. Presently, most of the young people tend to believe more in the former, historical explanation of the story than in the latter spiritual aspect involving Fotuomama. However, the reason for turning out the lights is more complicated than

either of these two explanations. According to the leading shamans of the Guan clan, the darkness is also intended to hide the activities of the shamans during this rite. It is for this reason also that it is not permissible to videotape the *bei deng ji*. I was also told that in the past it was during this ceremony that the shaman experienced the most profound and extended trance. Usually, the *bei deng ji* takes over an hour, during which the room is plunged in total darkness and the shamans produce an intense and compelling drum beat.

A *jia ji* takes one day, while a *gong ji* takes 3 days. On the first day of the ceremony, in the late morning (after 10 a.m.), they take a bundle of millet straw (*jie gar*) about .5 meters long with the circumference of a baseball, and wrap it in red string. To the bottom is attached a 60 mm by 3-5 mm strip of red cloth. This is called the *biao shi* and is hung outside of the home where the ceremony is being held. For a *jia ji* it is always hung outside the house of the sponsoring family, while for the *gong ji* it is hung outside of the family compound which contains the sacred precincts of the clan. If the sponsor's home is too small, he can borrow another person's, and then the *biao shi* is hung outside that location.

After the *biao shi* is hung, people wearing hats made of dog leather, or other items of dog fur or leather, or bearing whips, may not enter. This is because a dog once saved Nurhaci's life, and the Manzu thus revere dogs greatly. Whips are seen as disrespectful because of the imputation that they might be used to whip human beings. Also, widows may not come into the sacred hall, unless they are elderly widows whose children are all adults. This is because the young widow may potentially remarry, and thus she would become part of another clan. The same stricture applies to young unmarried women who have had their menarche. In fact, neither of these restrictions on women is enforced at all during any of the *ji si*, even though it is announced at the beginning of the rite, as are the restrictions on clothing and whips. However, the prohibition of whips and dog products is taken very seriously. In addition, people wearing mourning clothes may not enter the hall. Once people have entered, they are expected to behave in a solemn and respectful fashion. This is not invariably enforced either, for while people are waiting they will gossip and joke. But if a sacrifice is being performed, the onlookers are expected to be quite sober.

In the evening they start washing the millet. The women of the clan do this usually, and other people come to watch. This is a very festive event, and while they are washing the millet in a large vat of water, they dance around it, along with the onlookers. The day before the *ji si* begins the clan members play with the instruments and joke and laugh. But the ancestors' pennants are still in the votive boxes so it does not disturb or insult them. They will carry on until

12 a.m., but at the first stroke of midnight, all people who are not shamans must stop dancing. Up until that point, everyone can dance, except unmarried women who will be leaving the clan. This is strictly enforced. This dancing is a Guan clan tradition, but as far as I know it is not common to all the Manzu clans, though some others also practice it. It appears to be a form of “purposeless play” (Cage 1961) not intended to get order from chaos or teach them how to create, but simply to awaken the clan members to their role in the upcoming rites as the audience that will experience the meaning of their cultural identity.

In the late morning they have a ceremony involving 6 ancestors from the south altar.¹⁴ Strips of coloured cloth that are hung on a wooden frame set up on the central dais represent these ancestors. The strips or banners are also called *fo ye*, but as this may confuse the reader I will refer to them as banners. They are from north to south white, gold, green, red, yellow, and blue. These banners resemble gonfalons, as they are about 70 cm. long and 15 cm. wide, with the top half coloured and the lower half grey, and are hung from the cross piece of the frame. The wooden frame is about 1.2 meters high and 2.3 meters wide, with two legs and top and bottom crossbeams. The top beam terminates in dragonheads at either end, and is covered with an orange broadcloth that provides a backdrop for the ancestors. The Guan say that these colours resemble the clothing worn in ancestral times, and that they will please and attract the ancestors. When the banners are laid out on the crosspiece this is the *qing fo ye* (invitation to the ancestors). The ones who do this are young shamans referred to as *qing nian* (*qing* is to invite and *nian* indicates youth). The colourful cloths attract the attention of the manes that then come to reside in the cloths. The cloths are considered to be the *fo ye* themselves, but it is not considered that the manes reside in the cloths except when they are summoned by the shamans. The work of shamanising is still to master the spirits, even in the form practised by the Guan.

The next step is the placing of offerings, or *bai gang*. Two altars are erected on the dais. On the south side is a small square table on which, it is said, are placed offerings to Fotuomama and to one’s own parents. On the north side is a long rectangular table, which holds the bowls, cups and incense burners for the six ancestors. This is in keeping with Manzu hospitality, for guests would be placed on the *kang* on the north side. They always offer Fotuomama two cakes, while the ancestors get one. This is because of the great esteem in which Nurhaci held her. The shamans first offer the bowls of food, and these are followed by shots (*zong*) of liquor. The odd numbered ancestors get *mi jiu* while the even numbered ancestors get *bai jiu*.

¹⁴ The altar boards are mounted on the west wall of the building, one to the left (south) and one to the right (north).

During this whole period, there is no music and no one should be talking except the elders who give instructions to the younger adults who make the offerings. This is to make sure that they learn the proper method. The *qing nian* and the ones who make the offerings must still be inducted shamans, although they are inexperienced.

The third step is to offer the incense, which the Guan call *an chu xiang* (*an chu* means incense in Manzu, while *xiang* means the same in Mandarin). Three burners are set out on the large altar only. This is not incense that may be purchased. Every year, on the seventh day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, a shaman, clan leader or person sponsoring a ceremony goes up into the hills to collect the plant used for incense. It is then put up to dry in a private location hidden from the sun. It is important that it dry by itself, without the intercession of the sun's rays. The plant used is called by the Guan *dazi xiang*, and is commonly known as *yingshanhong* (azalea).

When the shamans want to use the incense they crush it into powder, then separate out the chaff using a mesh screen. They then place horseshoe shaped strips of incense on the incense burners (Manzu: *xiang pielie*. Mandarin: *xiang lu*). At the order "*miao xiang*" from the head shaman, the young shamans place the three burners on the main altar. The horseshoe shape has no particular meaning, but is only intended to ensure that there is enough incense to keep burning until the end of the ceremony.

At this point all the people in the hall kneel and *kou tou*¹⁵ to the altars and the shamans recite a prayer to the ancestors in Manzu. Two shamans pronounce the prayers: one, usually the elder shaman, for the large altar; and the younger shaman then speaks the prayer before the altar of Fotuomama. This is a preliminary prayer and is part of the invitation to the ancestors. The content is always the same and is essentially as follows:

We have chosen a propitious¹⁶ day; we have provided many things; we have prepared these things because we hope the ancestors can use them. We earnestly hope that you will allow those named Guan to have good health, food to eat, clothes to wear, that you will not allow us to become ill, that everyone has peace.

¹⁵ The kow-tow is the usual English phrase for the stylised bowing used by the Manzu. There are actually three different styles, the *ketou*, the *kou tou* and the *koushou*. All three phrases translate directly as "knock head". In fact, the *ketou* today involves touching your head to the ground only once and is only used at a funeral. The *kou tou* is used to refer to touching your head to the ground three times, and is the standard practice. The *koushou* is also called the *san bai jiu kou* (three ceremonious nine times kow-tow) and as that name implies involves touching the ground nine times. It is never used by the Guan of Yi Lan Gang.

¹⁶ They choose the day by consulting a shamans calendar book that tells them which days are propitious. Yet, they also always have the ceremony on a weekend for convenience.

After the prayer, all the people *kou tou* at the command of the head shaman. Then the young shamans put away the banners and everything is finished for the morning. The shamans and the other members of the clan retire and take a meal and a rest. The shamans, and sometimes other clan members, consume the cakes and the liquor that have been offered once this stage of the rite is completed.

In the distant past, the incense burners were presented resting upon the blade of a knife, and then set upon the altar. The knife that was used was an ancestral weapon that was used by the companion of Nurhaci. Thus, the knife cannot be replaced or duplicated. The Guan clan took it when they moved down to Jilin. When the Guan of Yi Lan Gang were separated from that division and moved back to the Ning An, the knife stayed in Jilin. They lost touch with the Guan in Jilin during the Japanese occupation, and so it has been over 70 years since they have had contact. It is probably now possible for the Guan to reconnect, but it is a very difficult thing for poor, relatively isolated peasants with no memories of their distant relatives to re-establish a link. This is yet another example of the disruption of shamanism for the clan.

How do the clan members respond to the loss of knowledge regarding their shamanic traditions and methods? For the common people, much is unclear because the shamans do not like to tell them the meaning of everything. As for the shamans today, they are not certain about the meaning of everything simply because they confuse things or do not remember. The loss of facility in the Manzu language, the social disruptions of the past 100 odd years, and the political upheavals before and after the Second World War have all taken their toll. Since today the ceremonies are relatively infrequent and the apprenticeship period is so short, the transmission of ideas had become somewhat problematic. As the rites of the clans were disrupted by external factors for so many years, even the eldest members of the community have not seen many ceremonies performed, especially the full *gong ji*. They are in the midst of a process of reconstructing their traditions much more explicit than the idea of reinventing or negotiating the meaning and significance. They are engaged in these latter two processes as well, but they are also trying to resurrect their traditions as if it were a building, razed to the ground, which they must reconstruct. Yet they have only seen the building briefly, and at a distance, the blueprints are incomplete, and they are not in agreement over the function of the structure or who might reside there.

The afternoon ceremony celebrates the manes of the north *fo ye*. The south altar represents the supporters and companions of Nurhaci, while the north altar represents the

imperial clan of Nurhaci, the Aisin Gioro.¹⁷ Out of the votive box on the north altar board are brought the *suolun tiao* (Mandarin: *si tiao*), or silk strips. These consist of nine groups of strips of coloured cloth, using the same colours as those from the south altar. Each strip is 30 cm. long and about 6 cm. wide. Ten offerings of cakes are made, one to Fotuomama (with two cakes as before) and one for each of the *suolun tiao* placed on the main altar. Nine shots of liquor are also set out on the main altar, but the side altar does not receive any. Again, the odd numbered manes receive *mi jiu*, while the even numbered are given *bai jiu*. These are followed by the presentation of three incense burners in the same style as described above.

Everything about the afternoon ceremony proceeds identically, except in terms of the number and type of manes. However, the prayer that is recited at the appropriate point in the ceremony is specific to the situation that has prompted the staging of the *jia ji*. After the prayer is finished the shamans perform the *tiao shen* (spirit dance). After that has been completed the young shamans put the cloths away and dismantle the frame, which is also stored on the altar board. This is the conclusion of the *bebe shen*. If they are performing the *gong ji*, then they must perform the *zhu shen*. This means that all those involved will stay up all night for the *ji si* continues.

At two or three o'clock in the afternoon they have to catch a black boar. This pig must be gelded, because it is what the shamans teach that the sylvan Manzu ate by preference. If they offered the manes an ungelded boar, this would be disrespectful and they would not participate in the ceremony. The boar must be black, to recreate the colour of the animals that they hunted in the forests. However, it can be difficult to find a black boar in these times, and very expensive. Therefore, it is acceptable to paint the boar black. It is important that a thorough job of disguising the animal's true pigment is done. It does make a bit of a mess when they scrape the bristles from the slaughtered animal. Also, as Guan Jia Kai once pointed out, it had better not rain.

The boar's front legs are tied together and it is placed on the ground at the south end of the main altar, with its head facing to the west. In fact, as I observed in both photographs and videos and as an eyewitness, they are fairly casual about where and how it is placed. The animal is very large and is distressed and struggling when they move it, so it is not necessarily placed exactly in the prescribed position. At this point a pair of shamans, one young, one old, and preferably male and female, perform the *tiao huo zhu shen* (pig spirit capture dance). This is

¹⁷ Which is not to say that these are the ancestral spirits. The manes are separate, but the offerings are made to honour and promote the imperial cult, as well as to propitiate the spirits.

danced in a circle around the boar, with hand drums and a chant to welcome the ancestors. Another pair of shamans usually follows them, if there is enough time. The complete dance usually takes about 30 minutes, but sometimes longer.

Before all this, the young shamans have set up the frame and displayed the *suolun tiao* from the north altar. The audience *kou tou*, the shamans offer cakes and liquor, and the ancestors are invited and prayed to, just as before. Then the pig is captured, presented and the dance performed. After the dance, the shamans remove their ceremonial clothing, preparatory to the butchering of the boar. This is for two reasons. First, they simply wish to avoid soiling their costumes. Second, the costumes are intended to be attractive to the ancestors. As they are present during the butchering process, whether the costumes are actually stained or not, the shamans would bring the association with slaughter back into the rites if they did not change clothing. The shamans stress that they must be attractive to the ancestors. Anything that is redolent of cruelty (such as whips or butchery) is not attractive. It is for this reason that the shamans designate a lay member of the clan as the ceremonial butcher (*na guo*). The *na guo* is never a shaman, and may not act as a shaman's helper or participate in any other aspect of the ceremony. We may express this as an attempt to limit the intrusion of the sacred upon the profane. For the clan, it is simply a matter of maintaining good relations with a very important section of their community.

The boar is placed on a low table with its body parallel to the dais and its feet facing north. One of the older shamans pours cold *bai jiu* into the pig's ear. When the pig shakes his ear to get the liquor out, the Guan understand it to mean that the ancestors agree to the sacrifice and wish to eat the meat. This is called the *ling sheng* (live bell). Some other clans explain its significance as offering the liquor to the spirits by spraying it into the air. The *na guo* must use his left hand to hold the knife (assuming he is right-handed), stands behind the boar and stabs it directly in the middle of the throat.

A number of basins have been prepared, and when the blood drains from the animal, it is set aside in these containers to be used to make blood sausage, once the animal has been butchered and the intestines removed. The *na guo* catches the blood, and passes it over to other men (not the shamans or their assistants) who will be responsible for producing the sausage. Once the animal has died, and all the blood has drained away, the shamans take charge of the sacrifice once again. They take the carcass outside and place it in a very large wooden trough filled with boiling hot water. This is to scald off the bristles, which are then scraped away. Shamans and their helpers all help to accomplish this task, and it is completed very quickly.

The carcass is removed to the sacred precinct, eviscerated and cut up into eleven pieces. This is done to provide the usual division of the sacrifice: two pieces for Fotuomama and the rest for the nine manes of the north altar. The meat is taken to the kitchen of the family compound being used, and cooked in boiling water. Meanwhile, the viscera has been cleaned and prepared by lay members. The intestines are stuffed with blood, and the sausage is boiled in the vats after all the meat has been cooked, along with the organ meats. At this point, the meat is stacked up on the main altar, rearranged in the shape of the animal, with the blood sausage and organs draped over top. The young shamans arrange the sacrifice, and also place the three incense burners and nine shots of liquor on top of the pig.

Once it is dark enough to see the stars, the shamans continue with the sacrifice. The shamans and other clan members gather in the hall or outside in the courtyard as the time draws near. There is a great deal of anticipation and joking, as the men and women smoke cigarettes and discuss what will happen next. This is the time when the intensity of the event begins to be felt, and those who have been absent previously are present. Not only local people, but many who have made the journey from other communities and other municipalities have all arrived by now. The young shamans take some teasing from their peers, but the elder shamans are busy overseeing last minute preparations or locked into quiet discussion among themselves.

When it is time to begin, the offertory process described above is repeated once again. After the invitation and prayers, the shamans perform a chant asking for general blessings and prosperity. Then, the leading shaman and one of the young shamans take up their hand drums and dance, accompanied by the other instruments played by their assistants. They dance backward away from the altars, and then forward to their starting point. They then dance side by side in a circle, moving clockwise, drumming and swaying their hips rhythmically (to activate the 48 cones of the *yao ling zer*). After completing a circuit and dancing backward and forward again, the shamans trade off with another pair, while the music keeps on playing. They take turns dancing until 11 p.m., always dancing in pairs, and only completing one circuit at a time. By the time they finish each shaman has completed a number of circuits and they are both exhausted and exhilarated. Everyone present kneels, the lead shaman reads a prayer from the shamanic prayer book appropriate to whatever special concerns they wish to address, and all *kou tou*. Everyone stands up and the young shamans put away all but one of the ancestors. Only the shamans know who the ancestors are, and only shamans know why this one ancestor stands alone. Nevertheless, the ancestor must stay out for the performance of the *bei deng ji*. As noted above, the ceremony supposedly honours Fotuomama and the parents of those attending.

However, this ancestor is also singled out for the honour, and while I do not know who or what it represents, I was told that it was not Fotuomama, who of course has her own altar.

Before the *bei deng ji* begins all of the children are sent home. This is because they cannot be trusted to sit still and be quiet for the length of the ceremony. All the others who wish to stay - and many have gone home to bed by this point - must be still and quiet throughout. Curtains are put up to cover the windows and doors. This is done with great care and is attended to and checked by the senior shamans. They put three fresh lines of incense, along with two *mi jiu* and one *bai jiu* on top of the boar. The young shamans place these in a reverential manner, with an invitation to the ancestors, just as in all previous sections of the rite. For this part of the ceremony, a small lantern is lit. Once they finish the invitation and offering, all present sit on the floor, and the final light is extinguished when the leading shaman shouts "*bei deng!*" Two shamans rest the *yao ling zer* on their laps, and beat them against their knees. Two others ring hand bells, and one of the shaman's helpers plays the large drum. They do not use the hand drums for this ceremony. All of the shamans chant the special *bei deng ji ger*, the meaning of which is secret and may not be described even generally. They play and sing for an hour straight.

When the leading shaman judges that the proper time has expired, he gives the order for the lights to be lit (or turned on). All chanting and playing cease immediately. To be brief, the meat is distributed among the clan members and guests and all assembled eat meat and snacks and vegetables, and drink copious amounts of *bai jiu*. These are the only occasions when women are free to drink abundantly, although none that I observed actually did.¹⁸ The feast continues until dawn, and it is perfectly acceptable to get drunk, but not to fight. Many of those who skipped the *bei deng ji* return for the celebration, including children, if their parents wish. If clan elders of importance or considerable prestige are unable to attend, others will take food to them. It is important to try to consume all the meat. If they are unable, the *na guo* must dispose of it by throwing it into the river, along with the bones and the offal. By dawn the last few stragglers have made their way to bed, and the rites are finished for the time being.

After the strain of the sacrifices and the *bei deng ji*, the feast is characterised as a necessary release by the Guan shamans. The intensity of the performance builds throughout the day, and by the time the lights go out some of the shamans have become intensely focussed, although they do not trance. They become increasingly difficult to talk to, and their attention is

¹⁸ But then I did, so I probably do not really know. I asked about it afterward, and was told that they do not really drink much even in these instances. However, I cannot offer clear eyewitness testimony. On the other hand, I feel that I made a positive impression on the men with whom I ate and drank, which improved my rapport. Besides that I had a good time.

completely focussed on the *gong ji*. Whether any of them go into a trance or not during the *bei deng ji* is impossible to ascertain. I was unable to learn much about the ceremony, and the lay members provided no insights.

The next day the clan members gather in the yard of the compound where the rites have been held, for the *ji tian*. The shamans have prepared the Victory Pole (Manzu: *sumu ganr*; in Mandarin it is called the *shen ganr* or spirit pole) and the paraphernalia required before dawn that day. All the items required, knives, a spoon, a straw whisk, are placed in a sieve. They have a large platter and a bundle of straw to hand, three watermelon size rocks, fuel and an immense cooking pot. They also have made a tripod with three wooden poles, which is covered with a new, clean blanket. This is intended to represent the tents that the nomadic ancestors lived in. The stones are arranged to create a tripod to support the cooking pot, and kindling is placed beneath it. The shamans have also prepared a new Victory Pole, which is only used for the ceremony and no other purpose.

The ceremony usually begins some time after sunrise. The strains of the previous evening meant that in fact it did not begin until late in the morning. Inside the hall, the elder shaman leads everyone in a *kou tou* to the ancestors, but there is no prayer said. The young shamans bring another castrated boar that is placed on a platform set up in the courtyard to which all have retired. The pig is laid out facing west and slaughtered, as before, by the *na guo*. The blood is caught in a bowl, and the tip of the pole is dipped in the blood. The pig is skinned and divided into 18 pieces (the people of Yi Lan Gang say that it is for Nurhaci and his 8 companions — one and eight: 18¹⁹) and the viscera are removed and cleaned. A portion of the internal organs and some of the meat are boiled together in the pot. The straw bundle is wrapped around the pole, and the cooked meats are inserted into the bundle. The bundle is traditionally tied on with a strip of the bladder, a strip of the gall bladder, and the tail. However, at the *ji tian* I witnessed they used three lengths of red yarn.

The pole is erected, traditionally in a stone or brick base. The Guan have lost this, and now use a table, tying the pole to one of the legs and using the table as the altar. The reason for not constructing a new base seemed somewhat confused. I was told that they intended to build a permanent ritual hall, with a permanent base for the pole. Therefore there was no need for making a base that would only be temporary. Other shamans told me they were not well organised, but that they should build a base. I believe that the fundamental debate was about whether they would construct a ritual hall or not.

The skin of the pig is laid out on the ground in front of the altar table, and the meat is placed on top of the skin. The *kou tou* is performed, led by the head shaman. On the table they place one incense burner and one bowl of non-glutinous millet (*xiao mi*) cake. Three glasses of water are also offered. These are all offerings to the sky spirit, and not to the manes. Then the *na guo* cuts the pig up into many small pieces, the size depending on the number of people attending. They pick up the skin, which is loaded with meat, and transfer the meat into the sieve. They rinse the hairs off the meat chunks, and place them in the pot of boiling water. *Xiao mi* is also added to the pot, and salt is added for flavour. Then everyone present joins in the repast, using twigs for chopsticks, and sharing cups and lids to substitute for bowls. Again, this is intended to recapitulate the nomadic conditions. It is for this reason also, that they are not allowed to wear hats during the *ji tian*, no matter how cold it is. This is to emulate the *piao han* and hardiness of the ancestors.

The *ji tian* is an offering to heaven, but the purpose is disputed. Since the shamans only deal with ancestral spirits, they are not supposed to make offerings to other spirits. Thus, some Guan shamans explain its purpose as helping to ensure that the people go up to heaven when they die, and not to hell. Other shamans say that this is not a Manzu idea, but that it is imported from the Han Chinese. These shamans acknowledge that the spirits of heaven can help them, but state that these spirits are a form of manes as well. Similar ideas surround the *ji shen shu* (tree spirit rite). Some say that the tree spirit offering is necessary because when you die, the soul must climb a tree before changing into a raven and ascending to heaven. The offering is to petition the assistance of the tree. Other shamans acknowledge this possibility, but told me that they believed that it was because of the connection with the ancestral life in the forest that they made offerings to the tree spirits, just as the ancestors had done. Some of the young shamans did not believe either supposition was correct, but maintained that the purpose was to remind people of their past, and of the importance of nature to society. This seemed to be a reflection of an incipient environmentalism, which would have had more of an impact upon younger people, who are generally better educated than their elders.

After this, they begin the *ji shen shu*. They take a table and the Victory Pole out to the clan's spirit tree. In Yi Lan Gang, they have reserved one large old tree on the outskirts of the village to act as the spirit tree. They set the table under this tree as an altar and set out three cups of *bai jiu* upon it. Then they put millet and meat up in the forks of the tree and hang white paper (the colour of celebration for the Manzu) from the branches. I was told that white is the colour of

¹⁹ But 18 is also a number associated with good fortune in Chinese folk religion.

the clothing that the Manzu wore when hunting in the winter. By this point in the *ji si* there are few people still participating. Most go home to rest after the exhilaration of the *ji tian* and the heavy meal. All of the shamans were present, and the shamanic helpers, plus a few other clan members, mostly local people, as the visitors have gone off to visit with their close relatives. Finally, the group moves down to the river and without any apparent ceremony one of the shaman's assistants climbs down the riverbank and throws the Victory Pole into the river. Then the people return to their homes. It is not the custom to discuss the events of the previous days after they have taken place. Anything that needs to be discussed should have been discussed beforehand. I knew this, but hoped that if I waited several days people would be willing to answer my questions about the specifics of what had taken place.

While the laity were willing to talk about their thoughts of what they had witnessed, they were reluctant to discuss the actual events, and constantly referred me to the shamans. The shamans and their assistants were willing to discuss shamanism in general, but refused to discuss anything about the *ji si*. If I asked a question referring to something I had seen or heard, I was told, politely, that it was not the custom to discuss it. Perhaps I should have pressed the issue, but I was reluctant to risk angering my teachers and hosts. It may well be that I need to return to Yi Lan Gang in the future. I found that the shamans were willing to discuss past *ji si*, so perhaps they will be more forthcoming with the passage of time. Unfortunately, two weeks after the ceremony I was forced by nummular constraints to quit the field. That is, I had barely enough money to buy a ticket to Harbin. There, I got a cash advance on my credit card, and telephoned Canadian Pacific to book my seat home. I took the train to Shenyang where I freeloaded off a friend while hunting for a black-market train ticket to Beijing. I managed to arrive in time to make my flight, with just enough money to pay my departure tax and donated the equivalent of one American dollar to the Red Cross. It was time to go home.

Dissenting Opinions

The only shaman in the village who is fluent in spoken and written Manzu is Guan Yu Lin. He is also acknowledged as the expert in all aspects of ritual and spirituality. He comports himself with a remarkable and palpable dignity and gravitas that seems completely natural to him. During my second period of fieldwork in the village, after having spent six months in Yi Lan Gang during the first trip, he finally consented to discuss shamanism with me. This was in the fall of 1997. I had by this point interviewed a number of shamans and their assistants, along with other members of the clan. I had spoken with Guan Yu Lin about other aspects of village

life and history, and often at some length. However, he became reticent about shamanism whenever I brought up the subject. Finally, he told Guan Jia Kai that I was to come to see him shortly before the *gong ji*.

Guan Yu Lin had decided to talk to me about the Manzu and their spirituality. He told me that the Manzu are *wujin*, Manzu for forest. Not that they were simply people of the forest, but that they were forest, for they are intimately connected with the spirits of the forest. This, he said, is the real reason for the strong connection with the trees, and not because their spirits climb trees to get to heaven. The tree needs to be a very ancient tree, the oldest in the district and thus presumably a survivor of the ancient forests that once covered the region. The idea of going to heaven or hell is strictly a Han idea, and has no place in what he termed real shamanism. The Manzu do have a concept of three levels in the universe, but these do not correspond with Han concepts. He felt that these foreign elements originally came from Korean ideas about the netherworld, which he referred to as *youming jiao*. For the Manzu, the netherworld is not a place to which the souls of the dead are consigned, while they await redemption by their living relatives. Nor is it a place for purification before reincarnation. Rather, it is a place where one of the three souls resides after death. The living may journey here to communicate with the manes and with other powerful spirits, including the spirits of nature and Fotuomama. Or the shamans may bring the spirits forth. This is the place where Nurhaci and his companions reside, not in heaven. The upper world is simply the abode of other spirits, some benevolent, some malicious, most ambivalent unless petitioned or aroused. There is a cycle of reincarnation for one of the three souls, while the third part merely passes out of existence.

There was much in what Guan Yu Lin told me that was familiar from other descriptions of shamanism. He told me that he had learned some of what he knows from elder shamans. He also stated that he had read about shamanism in the works of Chinese researchers, and had integrated that with what he knew to create a more complete picture of the truth about their practices. He knew that different people had told me different things, and he wanted to correct the mistakes that people had made. He asked me to describe what I had learned and pointed out the errors that he perceived as I read from my notes.

Guan Yu Lin explained that the offerings on Fotuomama's table are to all the past Manzu people of every clan that is or has been. Fotuomama represents the general honouring of all ancestors, as opposed to the specific ancestors honoured on the other table. Fotuomama, while identified as an individual in the legends about Nurhaci, is in fact the collective manes who supported Nurhaci and all the Manzu throughout their history. Fotuomama is the ancestors

before the time of Nurhaci, and even farther back to the time before the Manzu existed. Fotuomama was claimed as an associate of Nurhaci by the Aisin Gioro clan as a part of their strategy to establish an imperial cult. Through legislation, they imposed this interpretation upon the clans.

He also said that all of the coloured banners, both the set of six and the set of nine, represent specific ancestors, predating Nurhaci and his companions. They are ancient beyond knowing, and some of them are in fact ancestral animals. All of the banners have individual names, which are known to the shamans alone. They may not tell these names to other members of the clan, and certainly not to outsiders, even if they are shamans from other Manzu clans.

They collect the incense on the seventh day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar. The significance of this date, according to Guan Yu Lin, is that it is the day in the Manzu calendar for honouring the spirits of the departed. This is a day when ghosts are found travelling throughout the earthly realm and so it is very respectful to collect it on this day. They dry it in the shadow because if they dry it in the sun it does not have any fragrance. Although it is a beige colour by the time the process of converting the plant into incense is complete, it is originally green. The spirits observe this and are pleased because green is an aesthetically appealing colour.

The *bei deng ji* is actually a ceremony to honour the ancestral mothers. That is, it is a memorial to the women who have given birth and thus continued the Guan clan. The ceremony remembers the birthing process, although it is not a metaphorical rebirth. However, the ceremony does symbolise a regeneration of the community. As such, it is the most powerful and important of the elements of the *gong ji*. Guan Yu Lin stated that he did not experience trance, but he believed that in the past the shamans of the clan were most likely to go into a trance during the *bei deng ji*.

By contrast, the renowned shaman of the Fu clan, who lives in Ning An, Fu Cha Ren, spoke somewhat differently of the *bei deng ji*. Fu is widely known not only for his shamanising but also for his research into the nature and origins of the Manzu rituals. He said that the *bei deng ji* is to honour and remember the manes. However, the ceremony has changed so that now it is used to ask the manes for protection from disorder or calamity. The shamans ask the ancestral spirits particularly to protect the clan members' health and to assist them in their labours. In the original form, the darkness is necessary because the spirits they are invoking are originally spirits of the north, from whence the Manzu originally came. For these spirits, light of any kind is dangerous, and they are afraid of it. Thus they will not come when called upon by the shamans except in darkness. This is because the abode of the spirits in the north has long periods of

darkness in the winter, when the ceremonies are held. Though the shamans may not trance during the ceremony, they are still calling down the spirits and in a sense mastering them because they gain their assistance and protection.

Fu argued that the interpretation that the rite is a memorial to the mothers is an innovation of the Qing dynasty and specifically the Aisin Gioro imperial clan (the Gold clan). The spirits that come are actually the common spirits of the northern forest. Two forest spirits in particular are the male *nadan weilu* and the female *narhun xian chu*. They represent the men and women of the old Manzu way. When they were nomadic hunters, they would have big feasts to celebrate their successes, and everyone would be very happy, dance, sing and drink a great deal. Then the men and women would pair up and go off into the woods to have sex. Afterward, they would come back to the camp and be recognised as a couple.

Fu stated that the ceremony is also to remember the Pole Star, which the Manzu used as a guide when they lived in the northern forests. The study of astronomy was once very important to the shamans, but now they do not study it because of restrictions that were imposed during the Qing dynasty. Fu tended to emphasise a great deal the changes brought about by the imperial government in Manzu shamanism during the Qing dynasty.

Fu agreed that some of the coloured cloths that represent the manes are in fact the animal spirits that were worshipped by the ancestors. Others are definitely human. While he would not name the human spirits, he revealed that the animal spirits of his clan are the tiger, hawk, wild pig, snake and deer. The Fu clan only have five and seven sets of manes, rather than the six and nine of the Guan. Fu Cha Ren explained that all the clans had different numbers of spirits that they worked with and honoured. However, he claimed that the animal spirits that he named are common to all the Manzu clans, for these are the spirits that may come and enter the body of the shaman to be mastered in a trance.

While the Qian Long emperor forbade the spirit mastering rites, they still exist, but only in the *da shen* (great spirit) rites. There is no spirit mastery in the *zu xian* (ancestor) rites. This is consistent with the situation as I found it among the Guan. Fu also explained that the *zu xian* has seven parts, four of which are still practised and three of which are extinct outside of his clan. The four extant parts are the *wu qian*, *wu hou*, *beideng*, and *ji tian*. The *huan suo*, *ji ma*, and *ji xing* he claimed were only practised by the Fu. However, the *huan suo* is practised by the Guan. The *shu shen* is a separate rite that Fu claimed is extinct, even among his own clan. Yet I witnessed the very rite among the Guan. Thus, there is a tendency to define the clan's legitimacy

and authenticity through shamanism and the denial of those same characteristics to other clans to bolster the native clan's sense of unity.

The issue of who is concerned with shamanism is still unclear because Fu agreed that young people today do not believe in it like they used to but traditionally it was a matter for everyone. Yet, it is not something the people could do on their own: "Before, everybody believed and respected the shamans, but now how can there be respect when people do not believe?"

Fu Cha Ren stated that what his and the Guan clan do today is not real shamanism. He was talking about the *tiao da shen* practised by some Han today. He maintained that the methods they are using are essentially Manzu methods, and that it is the element of spirit direction that makes it shamanism. What the Fu clan does is simply a way of maintaining a link with the past and with the ancestors. "Real" shamanism, as practised during the Qing dynasty, consisted of three parts:

1. *linghun futi* (spirit possession);
2. *wu ge* (ritual dance and song);
3. *shen ming* (spirit names - the ability to identify and name spirits. By naming them, the shaman could contact and work with them, but not control them).

Fu believes that the people who practice these three skills today, whether they are Manzu or not, are closer to the nature of traditional shamanism than what the Fu and Guan practice today. When you see people climbing knives, or being possessed for a long time, and/or taking a long time to recover, that is probably fake. Real *linghun futi* lasts for a brief time, perhaps five minutes, and the shaman recovers quickly. The spirit comes, identifies the illness or answers the question, and goes immediately. This was real shamanism, but Fu ended by saying that the most important aspect of their religion has always been the connection with the manes. I later raised these matters with Guan Yu Lin. He said that their ritual is about telling the ancestors of marriages, births and other significant events. It is important to tell them these things for the future of the prosperity of the clan. These make up much of the content of the prayers that the shamans offer. Today, he said, they do not believe in *linghun futi*, and feel that there is no worth in concerning themselves with it. "Real" shamanism involves spirit direction or mastery, but their belief is focussed strictly upon the ancestors. They do not feel a lack or a deficiency in their practices. They are perfectly aware that shamanism has changed, and that it is due to the decisions of the Qian Long emperor, the interference of the Japanese, and the repression under the People's Republic. Yet, they have retained what is for them the core of their belief system throughout these times.

Chapter Five: The Process of Identity Maintenance

Why does the Guan clan of Yi Lan Gang continue to practice what they refer to as shamanism? What is the motivation behind this activity, and what do they understand that they are doing while they are doing it? In order to address these questions, it is necessary to return to the ceremonial activities described to consider what else took place while the Guan were planning and carrying out their rites. Some of the meaning of shamanism for the clan should be revealed in the behaviour surrounding seminal events.

By examining behaviour engaged in by the shamans and their assistants, their attitude towards *saman jiao* is indicated. When this information is combined with observation of the lay participants, a picture of contemporary Manzu shamanism in Yi Lan Gang can be built up and subjected to analysis. The elements of the shamanic ritual itself must also be considered closely to determine what sort of symbolic meaning the celebrants and others invest in the various aspects of the ritual. Particularly relevant to understanding the meanings of the ritual are the various innovations and interpretations applied by shamans from the Guan clan and other clans. An additional important expression of cultural and ethnic identity is the genealogy that is kept by the clan. This added dimension of the clan's cohesiveness helps to further explicate the maintenance of identity within the clan. Finally, by placing these elements within the context of modern China, we can understand the role of shamanism for the contemporary Manzu of Yi Lan Gang village.

In chapter four, a generalised and idealised description of the Guan clan's *ji si* was presented. In this chapter a closer examination of the ritual described in chapter four will be undertaken, to highlight the behaviour that takes place around the ritual. The object is to describe what the Guan understand about their ritual, and how they interpret their shamanism. Some aspects of the ritual that were not outlined in the previous chapter will be described and analysed here. Close attention will be paid to the attitude of the members of the clan, and how they relate their shamanism to the larger social context of China.

Preparations for the Ritual

The shamans and assistants were concerned about keeping things clean and running smoothly throughout the three days of the ceremony. People were constantly sweeping out the room, sweeping off the altar or testing the drums. The two brothers, Guan Jia Sheng (the shaman who was preparing to take over as head shaman) and Guan Jia Bin, were especially busy and even anxious at times to make sure that everything was organised and that everyone knew what

they were supposed to do and was in their place. Yet at the same time no one ever lost their temper in my presence, and I never saw signs of impatience. While at times people ignored the imprecations of the brothers, or Qin's attempts at speech making, it was never done in an insulting way. People just failed to respond, and Qin and the Guan brothers seemed to quickly realise that they were out of bounds and either step back or make a joke out of it.

The mallets the shamans used for kneading the dough to make the cakes are an illustrative example. Several individuals at various times tested the mallets to make sure that the handles would not come off when they were being swung. One individual would test a mallet, and then some one else would inspect the same mallet within moments of the first test. Often two or more of them would examine a mallet and discuss it together. There appeared to be no criticism implied regarding the ability of the first person to determine the reliability of the instruments. Rather, this activity was about their desire to participate and contribute. These smaller exercises helped build a sense of camaraderie and mutual concern for the main objectives.

Throughout the duration of the *ji si* they were constantly sweeping the floors. They gave the hall a particularly good cleaning prior to the commencement of the events, which was necessary since the hall was actually a storage room for one of the clan households. This was a symbolic act in itself, for the shamans were demonstrating their commitment. They did not pay close attention to the walls, and just prior to the beginning of the ceremonies realised that there were three swallows nests at the juncture of the ceiling and the wall. This caused a stir of interest, as they feel that swallows are *ji xiang* (auspicious), and they decided to leave the nests in place. I asked if this was a Manzu idea, or if it was typical of shamanism, and was told that it was a common Chinese idea, and not originally Manzu. I had known this before I asked, but I was hoping to understand the process whereby the Manzu adapt their shamanism. I do not think that this represents such an instance, for while they were incorporating Chinese folk religion into their own worldview, it was not being treated as an element of shamanism. As in the past, the shamans as ritual specialists formulate an ideology independent of the community. This does not mean that they are separate, but rather they are autonomous because they are reflexive about their beliefs. They recognise that shamanism is made up of certain elements which reflect a particular sense of the world, the Manzu and their place in the world. That is, their identity relies upon certain ideas, and these are the core ideas of their shamanism. The members of their clan may take up other beliefs and practices in their quotidian existence, but their existential

conception relies upon certain consistently held beliefs that are expressed through their shamanism.

They had a last meeting of the elders of the community at Guan Jia Kai's on the morning that the ritual was to commence. Guan Hai Shan told everyone not to drink at lunch, or between one o'clock and five o'clock. Earlier, they had agreed to start at 5 p.m. They had originally planned to start much earlier, but they disagreed because some of the elders, particularly Guan Jia Sheng, were worried that those coming from outside the village would not be able to make it in time for the first ritual. He became quite angry and threatened to leave. Guan Jia Kai's wife intervened to calm him down and convinced him to stay. After this they compromised on the start time of five in the afternoon. Guan Jia Sheng was preparing himself for the role of leading shaman, but he and his brother are both somewhat clownish by nature. They are the most voluble, the most emotional, of the men in the village. They are often drunk, and as such they are often crossing lines and breaking down social barriers within the community. They are something of a lightning rod for tensions within the clan, and when there is a conflict, one of them will say or do something outlandish in order to distract people and allow them to back down. Because of this, Guan Jia Sheng has a difficult time gaining the respect he thinks is owed to him as the heir to Guan Yu Lin. Yet, he is most suitable for the role of shaman, because his energetic and outrageous character epitomise the ideals of a Manzu bannerman. He should be plainspoken and honest, brave, agile and fierce, a man of simple tastes and straightforward ideas. Most of all, he should be certain about his ideals and passionate about upholding them. In Yi Lan Gang the Manzu ideal is that of the reliable, stalwart yeoman, not the subtle courtier.

The hand drums were also objects of particular interest to most of the people gathered for the ceremonies. Individual shamans and shamans' assistants were constantly picking up the drums and testing them, checking the quality of the sound and feeling them to see if they were getting too cold. The oldest drums that they have are said to be over two hundred years old. The other drums dated from various periods, including some that the local shamans have tried to make recently. However, the new drums are unusable because they warp out of shape. This is because none of the present shamans know the proper technique for making drums. They are experimenting with them to try to recapture the method, based on the partial information they have regarding the manufacturing technique. Throughout the ceremonies, they were rotating drums in and out of the hall as they became cold and lost their tone. As with sweeping the hall and testing the mallets, the particular attention paid to the drums is a manifestation of the

assiduousness of the villagers. They are constantly demonstrating their dedication through their close attention to detail.

After the morning meeting of the elder clansmen, the shamans and their helpers all gathered to discuss the rota of performers and make revisions based on the preparedness of the junior shamans. They discussed who remembered the chants and elements of each ritual, and who knew the stages and the steps of each stage of the rite. People were also forthcoming and honest about what they did not know, or at least doubts that they had about their reliability. There was no shame in this and they expressed their reservations in a straightforward and simple manner, as befits the villagers' ideal of a Manzu. This was to their individual benefit and to the benefit of the clan. The shamans matched the experienced and confident with the inexperienced and hesitant. There was no differentiation of roles based on sex, except that a female shaman had to hang a bag containing the names of those who had been born since the last *ji si* from the altar because women give birth.

The process was constrained somewhat by outside factors. This is indicative of the adaptation to modern circumstances, because they were waiting for the videographers to arrive before raising the *biao zhi*. The *biao zhi* are the red banners that are hung outside of the entrance of the village, and also outside the family compound that contains the ritual hall, to warn visitors that a ceremony is in progress and that they should not enter if they do not belong. The *biao zhi* were made by Guan Jun Tai himself, in whose compound the rituals took place. This is important because the responsibility for this traditionally falls upon the head of the family. Guan Jun Tai emphasised the point with me because he wanted me to understand that he was serious about his charge and that the Guan clan is traditional in its approach.

The *biao zhi* was raised first at Guan Jun Tai's and then at Qin Yu Cai's. These elements marked the beginning of the *ji si* and the transformation of the village from a secular space to a sacred precinct. The villagers, both Manzu and others, gathered outside the home of Guan Jun Tai to witness the ceremony, and then the people paraded to the home of Qin Yu Cai, whose home is close to the road leading into the village. As they walked over, many other people, especially children, joined the procession, and the event took on a festive aspect.

Qin Yu Cai's house was chosen for a number of reasons. Normally, the house of the *mokunda* would have been used, but since he lives in another village, this was not appropriate. Since Qin is the village leader, most people coming to the village would go to his house first and so would be more likely to see the *biao zhi*. This was especially the case since his house is located near the only approach to the village. Notices were also posted on Qin's gate, in both

written Manzu and Chinese characters, informing visitors that a Manzu ritual was taking place in the village and asking people to see the village leader (Qin) before entering the village. This was done to give face to Qin, as the top Communist cadre in Yi Lan Gang, but was also a practical recognition of the changed circumstances in the community. What was formerly a Manzu locale now operated in the light of other ethnic groups and the political power of the Han in particular. Much of the former power of the *mokunda* now rests in the hands of the village leader, and the placement of the *biao zhi* was tacit recognition of this.

After the *biao zhi* were raised, it was time for the preparation of the millet. Once again, the videographers, who had not yet eaten their mid-day meal, influenced the pace of events. A meal was prepared for them, and they were given time to eat and rest before the *da gao* began. As noted, the male and female shamans are equal, and in the discussions and meetings the good-natured joking between the shamans cut across sex lines. For the preparation of the millet, only the male shamans actually wielded the mallets used to pound the seeds into flour. The female shamans, by contrast, made the flour into cakes without any participation by the males. Neither of these tasks was beyond the physical or mental ability of male or female shamans. When I asked Guan Jia Kai about this he said that this was the traditional way, although of course they did not believe in the old values which subordinated women. I was reminded of conversations that I had had with other villagers, both Manzu and Han, in which the husbands stated that women should be obedient to men, only to be corrected by their wives and reminded that such an attitude is incompatible with modern socialist values. Although I have stated that the male and female shamans are equal, and was told this by shamans of both sexes, there is a differentiation reflecting ideas of traditional usage.

The shamans always carry out the ceremony in male/female pairs in order to create an attractive appearance for the ancestors. There is no significance attached to the actual place in which the different sexes stand. The shamanism of the Guan does face a conflict. It serves to reinforce the ethnic identity of the Manzu and provide an “authentic” experience of a traditional way of life. At the same time these traditions are not always compatible with the values and ideals of the larger society, such as de-emphasising gender difference. In theory the very fact of ethnic identity is not amenable to the development of socialist consciousness. Even as small an act as the making of millet cakes becomes charged with symbolic meaning through the tools used (hand made wooden mallets reminiscent of the forest), the type of grain (millet as a traditional food), the type of cakes produced (understood as unique to the Manzu) and the ultimate purpose of the cakes as an offering to the ancestors. The cakes are placed in eighteen

separate bowls for each part of the sacrifice, plus three smaller bowls to be used for the offerings to Fotuomama. The cakes are never simply cakes, but are consecrated as offerings from the outset.

Import also lies in the mock dancing of the laypeople that takes place after the making of the cakes. All those who wish to, including outsiders, may take up the drum and wear the shaman's belt, and dance in the shamanic style while the others beat the platform drum and other instruments. Elders, adults, juveniles and children, male and female, take part in the play. Some express reluctance but allow themselves to be convinced. Some are hesitant and embarrassed while others are quite accomplished and take their turns very seriously. The embarrassment of some is due to their perception of shamanism as old-fashioned. Some members of the clan expressed to me that they were not particularly interested in the *ji si* or any other aspects of shamanism. Yet, some of these same individuals came to the *da gao* and allowed themselves to be cajoled into taking a turn with the drum. Others did not participate at all. This was more the case with those living outside the village. There was not as much pressure on them to participate. But even within the village not every clan member contributed to or participated in the ceremonies. I only noted two people from the village who did not participate, although there may have been others. Of these two, my neighbour Guan Lin Tai stated baldly that he thought it was all nonsense and a waste of time. I believe that this attitude was not common, but many in the community did doubt the spiritual aspects of the ritual. Rather, they were more interested in shamanism as a symbol of Manzu identity and a unifying factor within the clan. As stated in chapter four, I believe that this activity allows the audience to begin to feel that they are involved in the ritual process. It awakens their involvement, although it does not act as a specific signifier.

The *Ji Si* as Ritual Performance

Every element of the *ji si* was carried out with discussion beforehand and then following Guan Yu Lin's commands. In addition, it was all written down so that the younger shamans could rehearse it in their minds and get it right. Guan Jia Sheng acted as the officiant throughout, but only proceeded at Guan Yu Lin's command. He hesitated frequently and was prompted by Guan Yu Lin. A songbook was discreetly laid out on the altar, and the old shamans advised the young shamans during their chanting and offered a critique of their performance after they were finished.

Guan Fu Zhe, as the *mokunda*, gave the order to begin the *ji si* and it was his responsibility throughout the three days to enforce order and quiet. He also instructed people

when and how to koutou, and told them how many times to do it. It takes some time for the process of koutouing to become comfortable and familiar to the people, and so during the first day Guan Fu Zhe spent a lot of time getting after people. For instance, when the incense was being offered many of the laypeople present were talking or fooling about, while some of the young shamans chatted nervously. Initially, the incense burners were placed on the stage and lit. Then they were lifted up by the shamans and waved in a clockwise direction before being placed on the altar. During the invocation, the third incense burner for the main altar went out and one of the shamanesses intervened to light it while the chant continued. To do so, she was forced to step between the officiant and the altar. After the invocation was finished, the drums started up a beat, and three different shamans came forward to place the burners on the altar. Two of the shamans described the circle in a counter-clockwise direction and had to be corrected. For the second invocation at the end of the ceremony, Guan Fu Zhe yelled at everyone to koutou and to be quiet. This time, even the children complied, and the youngest watched the adults closely in order to imitate the koutou properly. Afterward, the young children were laughing and smiling at each other. Even though they did not fully understand, the children appeared to be absorbing something from the events that they witnessed.

As the *ji si* progressed, more and more people turned out to watch. This was a good thing from the perspective of the clan leaders. One consequence of this was that the *mokunda* spent more time telling people to be quiet. There was a persistent problem getting people to behave respectfully. It is not that they were continually misbehaving. Rather, they were quiet for a while but then forgot themselves and had to be reminded. Individual audience members tended to pay more attention when their friends or relatives were performing. Then they became excited and talked about the performance they were witnessing. This was somewhat disruptive, and if it got out of hand then Guan Fu Zhe intervened. Yet, he allowed it to go on for some time if he could. The older shamans recognise that the clan members are more interested when people they are close to socially are performing. The experience of witnessing the *ji si* is more meaningful because there are people from all of the age cohorts participating actively, not just watching the elders perform an arcane and outdated ritual. It is a vital event and the young laypersons can identify with their peers who are also shamans. This may lead to a greater appreciation of the shamanic rite, and thereby reinforce the sense of their Manzu identity.

This is a process involving not just the reinvention (i.e. redefining what the traditions are) of tradition but the recreation (i.e. attempting to rebuild tradition based on what is remembered of the past) of tradition – hence the hesitancy, the coaching and consultation and the general

business. They recognise the importance and the tenuous nature of what they are doing and this affects their performance. Thus, Guan Fu Zhe and Guan Yu Lin extended the portion of the rite during which the pig is dedicated to the ancestors in order to give more of the younger shamans the opportunity to participate and practice. Guan Fu Zhe kept a close eye on the time, but they also carefully built up the drama of the event by allowing the less practised shamans to go first, while the more accomplished performers danced and sang at the end of the dedication. The slaughter of the pig, when it came, was contrived to be the climactic moment of this element of the *ji si*. All the clowning, whispering and gossip ended when the moment arrived, and the audience was breathless and awed. While it may seem as if the shamanism of the Guan clan has lost many elements of the traditional form, they still understand well how to lead the audience and create a powerful experience.

During the rest period, while the pig was cleaned and prepared to be placed on the altar, they watched a video of the last time they had the *ji si*. The *bei deng ji* has already been discussed. What happens immediately after this element is completed is of interest in its own right. The banners, frame, and altar for Fotuomama are completely broken down and put away. The incense burners, bells (used only for the *bei deng ji*) and other instruments and utensils are also taken away and cleaned and stored for the night. After everything had been cleared away, Guan Jia Bin (acting as a shaman's assistant) set out a pair of chopsticks and a bowl of soy sauce on the altar table. Then, he cut a piece of meat from the pig and offered it to the *mokunda*, Guan Fu Zhe.

Writing Ethnicity

Qin Yu Cai's eldest son, whose mother is Manzu, is considered by the government and his neighbours to be Han. His mother said it is because he cannot speak Manzu and because his father is Han. This statement seemed odd since most Manzu cannot speak Manzu and the fact of Han paternity does not prevent others from proclaiming their Manzu identity. Then young Qin said that he could be Han or Manzu, and that it did not matter if his mother or father was Han or Manzu. People are free to decide this on their own. They may identify their own ethnicity and officially designate a choice. However, for him his patrilineal ethnicity was the paramount deciding factor. He also felt that being Han would be more advantageous in the long run because it would make it easier for him to gain advancement if he were not identified as a minority. This is consistent with the governments expressed desire to advance socialist thinking among ethnic groups. Ethnic identity is an expression at odds with the extinction of class barriers. However,

many other Manzu expressed the advantages of minority status, in terms of exceptional privileges, extra funding, special schools and relaxation of the one child policy.

I inspected the burial sites of the Guan clan to determine if they showed evidence of Han influence. First, it should be noted that there is a prohibition against burials in the district, and they are required to cremate their dead. Thus, the oldest burial I found was from 1990. This certainly has a direct effect upon their customs. However, I also noticed that for the extant burials they clearly followed *fengshui* prescriptions, by being on a hillside, oriented towards the south and facing water. Yet, they were heavily overgrown, which they should not have been if they were cleaned up for the Manzu Qing Ming Jie, which is held around July 15th. I had noted that the tombs were cleaned at the beginning of April, around the time of the Han Qing Ming Jie. It is clear that in this regard the Han heavily influences the Manzu. Being Manzu or Han is not always clearly delineated as a choice or in terms of behaviour. Yet, the Manzu look to certain concepts and behaviours as indicators of their identity.

The Guan rewrite themselves when they come together for the *ji si* or to write the *jia pu*. *Qiao pu* means to transcribe the genealogy. This is done every 5 to 10 years. It was last carried out on December 16, 1995. However, this was merely an addition to the *jia pu*. The present genealogy was originally completed on January 20, 1991. When the next generation of children comes along, their names are added to the genealogy, which is why they wait five or more years. It is entirely recopied only according to need, as the present working copy becomes damaged, worn, illegible or crowded.

Eventually, I was told by my host that the clan leaders had decided that I was to be shown the clan's genealogy, or *jia pu*. That morning Guan Jia Kai accompanied me over to Guan Jia Lun's home, where the *jia pu* is kept. He had it hidden in a secret location, and we waited in the parlour while he went to fetch it. He returned with a red, wooden box about the size of a briefcase that was wrapped in thick plastic. The colour red was used because it signifies good fortune in China, although originally not for the Manzu, for whom white was the happiest colour. Inside the box, the genealogy is kept wrapped in yellow cloth, representing the banner in which the Guan were enrolled.

The genealogy itself is folded heavy paper, which folds outwards and is about four feet from top to bottom. It is not a bound book, but a long and broad sheet that displays the branching of the clan like a poster. This allows the entire genealogy to be beheld at one time when it is displayed for viewing by the clan. The record is in tree form, beginning with Niyahana and leading down and out to the most recent generations. They attach more paper to the bottom of the

sheet when they update the record. It is an impressive document, carefully written by the best calligrapher in the clan. It is treated with reverence, and is somehow awe-inspiring. As you unfold it, more of the genealogy is revealed, so that the first page merely states that it is the *jia pu* of the Guan. The text is in written Manzu (properly called Manwen), and was done by Guan Yu Lin. It starts by explaining that the Guan originally came from Jing Bo Lake, and then moved to the valleys around Chang Bai Shan. Finally, they settled in their present location, which was once known as Ninguta and is now called Ning An.

All the males of one generation use the same given name so when people meet they know how they stand in relation to each other. When the clan meets to recopy or add to the genealogy (*qiao pu*) they decide on the new names for future generations. Although they recopy the entire genealogy every five to ten years, they keep the old copies and store them separately. The *mokunda* keeps the obsolete copies at his home. During the time of the Japanese, the genealogies were not kept up properly, and part of the records was lost. The Guan traditionally would dispose of old genealogies by throwing them in a sacred river, such as the Hurka, Amur or Sungari, or taking them up into the mountains. After the Japanese period the clan leaders decided to keep the old copies in case they should be visited with another catastrophe. Their wisdom was revealed during the Cultural Revolution, when the clan was able to give the Red Guards an outdated copy, and retained the most accurate records.

They set the new generation names three generations ahead. These generation names are chosen from a list that was generated by the leaders of the clan at the beginning of the imperial period, in consultation with the emperor. Since the Yi Lan Gang branch is now cut off from the rest of the clan, they have no way to generate new names for the list. However, the original list contained thirty names, and they have used eighteen of them so far, meaning that they still have twelve generations to go, or over two hundred years. As the generation names are chosen, they are added to a list that is kept on the left side of the record. The history of the clan is also included in this section. The rest of the *pu shu* (the actual document) contains the *jia pu* (the genealogy). This contains the record of the relations of descent of the clan members.

The Manzu script (Manwen) was not invented until 1599, and so, the Guan state, they were not able to keep genealogies before that time. In fact, the Manzu did use Chinese characters prior to this, but this knowledge was not widespread. Manwen is much easier to learn than Chinese, being a syllabary based on Mongol script, but modified to reflect the spoken Manzu language. Literacy became much more widespread after its introduction. The official promotion of the genealogies and the veneration of the ancestors were facilitated by this innovation.

The Guan genealogy is extensive, containing names of men and women born into the clan (or married into it) and dating back to the late 16th or early 17th century. However, there are some extensive gaps between the beginning of the *jia pu* and the more recent dates. This is perhaps due to various disruptions throughout the last 150 years. It is only beginning in the ninth generation that there is complete genealogical information. For the first eight generations you only get a few ancestors noted. Of course, it is possible that further information was never available for the earlier periods, but the Guan believe that this information was lost.

What they do still have from the ancient times are notations about the different branches of the clan from whom they diverged early in the imperial period and with whom they no longer have contact. It seems likely that if they had this information that they would have had more genealogical information for their clan as well. On the other hand, one wonders why they were able to preserve this information but not greater details about their direct ancestors. These notations are historical in nature, rather than genealogical. They describe when the branches divided and why, and indicate where they were sent or resided. They do not know who the descendants of the other branches were after they separated and the Ninguta branch left Jilin. This occurred during the third generation and so we may conclude that they came north at that time.

The *pu shu* is a beautiful document containing impressive calligraphy. It is obviously produced with great care and concern for the preservation of the heritage of the clan. It is strong evidence of the focus on the ancestral connection and the pride that the Guan take in their history. It may be seen as evidence of a primordial aspect to the clan members' conception of their identity. However, this is probably a recent development, since they have been more flexible about ethnic identity. As they develop their ethnicity in response to the state, they are becoming more primordial in their understanding. As we were examining *pu shu*, word spread that it was on display, and by the time I finished my examination the room was crowded with onlookers engaged in animated discussion about both my interest in the *jia pu* and the history of the clan.

The *pu shu* also contains a summary of the history of the clan. This is included in the book so that the children will know their own history. It reads as follows:

The Manzu used to be known as the Sushen. Now we are called the Manzu. We are also one of fifty-six Chinese nationalities. We have a long-standing history. The Manzu have lived in Dongbei over 1000 years. They have worked prosperously here. Before that time, our ancestors still lived here. During the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties, the Sushen lived here. The history books all agree on

this. Why are we called Guerjiashi? Because in the past we lived in Gulidian. Gulidian is near Puyanshui.²⁰

After 1420, our ancestors moved south from Gulidian to Chang Bai Shan in Jilin. They were living there in 1601, when Nurhaci declared formation of the Jin Zhou²¹, then after the Manzhou Ji.²² At this time we were members of the *lan* banner.²³ In the sixth year of the Shunzhi reign,²⁴ the emperor commanded that the Guan should be stationed at Ninguta. But we lived in Jiaoluo Wuzi [near to Ning An]. During the fifteenth year of the Kangxi emperor, a clan leader named Bahai was stationed in Jilin, with a large portion of the clan. The ones who remained behind are the Guan of Yi Lan Gang. We were transferred to the Yellow banner.

One use of the *jia pu* and associated *pu shu* is to respect and honour the ancestors, and to remember the history of the Manzu and the Guan. This is strongly associated with Confucian ideals of filial piety. Guan Song Tai told me that filial piety is still very important to the Manzu. This is why it is important to maintain traditions and hold the *jia ji*. The *jia pu* extends beyond this to a sense of identity through participation in distinctive events. The Guan feel that the role of their genealogical traditions is to bring everybody in the clan together for the *qiao pu*, so that they all know each other, and maintain their ties. Furthermore, in this way they know in what relations they stand to each other and this allows them to maintain proper behaviour. In many ways, the *pu shu* helps them to remember who they are. Part of the desire to construct a ceremonial hall comes from the need to have a proper place to display, study and write the *pu shu*.

One of the main concerns expressed by the leading shamans in Yi Lan Gang is recruiting new shamans in the younger generations. The shamans are distributed through five generations. This way, they hope to prevent their traditions from dying out any time soon. The five generations are those associated with five separate generation names. It is not necessarily a question of age, for there can be quite a disparity of ages within generational grouping. At present, the youngest generation name that has been recruited is Zuo. If this is treated as ego, or *ziji*, then the previous generation, with the name Zhao, is called *fomu*. Prior to that generation are the *yeye* (grandfathers), who share the name Tai. Jia is the name of the *zeng zu* generation that

²⁰ Or Jing Bo Hu in Mandarin, it is a lake located near the border with Jilin, and was formerly a part of Jilin province. The site of Gulidian was located on the north side of the lake.

²¹ This is the latter Jin dynasty, which became the Qing Empire.

²² This is the Manchu (now Manzu) nationality.

²³ Blue, with dragons.

²⁴ This is the reign name of the first Qing emperor to rule China.

includes my host and mentor, Guan Jia Kai, who is 66. It also includes the keeper of the *pu shu*, Guan Jia Lun, who is 84.

The great-great-grandfathers, or *gao zu*, are the Ji. I met few of them, but Guan Ji Zhe is now 80, and while old and deaf, maintained a remarkable clarity of mind. He well remembered the ecstatic performances of shamans when he was a youth. He alerted me to the crucial difference between the *tiao jia shen*, dances held to honour spirits that did not involve trance, and the *tiao da shen*, which are the trance inducing dances no longer performed in Yi Lan Gang.

Guan Yu Lin, the most erudite and committed of the clan shamans, does not have a generation name. His parents did not want him to have one because they felt it was an outmoded custom. Nor does Guan Fu Zhe, the *mokunda*. The generational division names are not mandatory. Today, as in the past, some parents choose to use them, and some do not. There is no great pressure to use them. It is entirely dependent upon the attitude of the parents. Presently, forty two per cent of the men in the clan have generation names. There is no marked difference between the generations. Even those born during the Cultural Revolution mainly avoided the sort of patriotic slogan/names that were commonly given to children at that time.

The process of collectivisation and the Cultural Revolution were supposed to replace the co-operative clan connections with work teams and production brigades. There was a deliberate attempt to undermine the influence of the clan and dismantle people's reliance upon it. This succeeded to a degree, and now there is something of a void, for the members of the clan may not turn first to the clan for assistance and are sometimes as reluctant to give assistance to fellow clan members as they might be to anyone else in the village. Sometimes, it is mainly through immediate family connections and affinal relations that co-operative work is carried out.

Ritual Innovation

The clan leaders are attempting to reassert the importance of the clan. To do this they are turning to the traditional rites of the shamanic complex to establish in the minds of the young in particular that they are inextricably tied to the clan and the ancestors of the clan. In this regard the leaders are not simply following in the way of the ancestors, but are being innovative in their approach in a number of ways. First, as already noted, they are actively recruiting from among the younger generations for both shamans and shamans' assistants. They have disposed of the demand upon the apprentices to display signs of shamanic sickness or other evidence that they are chosen shamans.

In the rites themselves, they do their best to encourage the attendance of all members of the clan. They have compiled a reference book that contains the address and phone number of every clan member whose whereabouts they know, throughout China. In addition, they have appointed wardens in the larger cities who are required to keep track of clan members who live in their area and are supposed to encourage people to return to Yi Lan Gang for important ceremonial occasions. The clan expended a great deal of effort to bring the clan home for the *jia ji*. They met with modest success, but were satisfied with the turnout.

There was an absence of exactitude in enforcing some of the restrictions on who might attend. Young widows were allowed in the hope that they would bring their children, and the age of some of the children who were allowed to attend the *bei deng ji* was remarkably low. The question of the role of women who marry into the clan has been resolved in a fashion that encourages both these women and their offspring to feel Manzu. On the other hand, while the children of a Manzu woman and her non-Manzu husband are recognised as Manzu by the government, the clan still regards them as non-Manzu. They would be tolerated at clan ceremonies, but would never be considered eligible to become shamans.

Spontaneous dancing and playing of the shamans' instruments traditionally accompanies the cake making. This has been expanded by the Guan clan to become an event unto itself. It is expected and encouraged that anyone present will take advantage of the opportunity to don the shaman's belt and take up the drum and drumstick. Rather than playing in this manner while preparing the cakes, they wait until the cake making is complete and then set up the platform drum and take turns dancing and playing. The younger shamans supervise and direct the lay members in their dancing, encouraging them to imitate the steps followed by the shamans as closely as possible. Some of the people were embarrassed but others were quite good at it and concentrated on mimicking the shamanic style exactly. Some expressed reluctance but allowed themselves to be convinced, while the children were induced particularly. The play continued for over an hour, and all that were present and wished to participate had the opportunity. People began to drift off as the hour grew late, and the event ended without any formal acknowledgement.

This event provides an opportunity to start off the *ji si* for the lay members, while the shamans are involved in their own preparations. I gathered also that this kind of play contributed to the creation of an atmosphere of conviviality and joy. It is difficult to describe the anthropology of fun, but it seemed that the purpose of the communal cake making, the dancing

and the feasts was to have fun. What is the point of having fun? It must be to make the event that much more memorable and meaningful for all the participants.

These elements – playing and feasting – have been recorded for the *Manzu ji si* since from the end of the Qing Empire (see Anonymous 1986, Li 1990 and Shirokogoroff 1935). In the past, they were lesser aspects incorporated into other elements of the ceremony. The reinforcement of the significance of the event through the appeal of these elements has been strengthened in modern times. The pressures of social change, the physical separation of the clan, and the activities of the state (both undermining ethnic identity and recognising and defining ethnic groups) have affected the judgement of the shamans in considering how much to emphasise these events.

The feast after the sacrifice of the first pig was not a stand-up affair held within the ritual hall with a few side dishes, as was described to me as traditional by Guan Jia Kai. In reality, it was a seated banquet with the clan members eating in shifts, and a special room set-aside for clan leaders, guests and dignitaries. I was included in this privileged group. It was unfortunate in a way, because I was cut off from the goings on in the main hall, where the regular clan members were gathered with their recently returned relatives for a reunion. I did make an effort to move among the crowds, but it was difficult as I had social obligations to fulfil, and was rather caught up in the rounds of speeches and toast-making until, as noted in the previous chapter, I was so drunk that I was barely able to navigate a return to my home. Fortunately, aside from a sharp headache and general lethargy, *baijiu* hangovers are remarkably benign.

As in most other things, Guan Jia Kai guided me through these events. It is not my purpose in this work to paint a portrait of this gentle man in any detail. That his existence was filled with potential oppositions is evident: school principle and shaman's assistant; Communist Party cadre and clan leader; farmer and scholar. If these were not contradictions, then they were carefully balanced opposites that could and did at times slip out of balance as an excess of one role or another developed. Nevertheless, he was skilful in his ability to move among these various roles. He was also skilful in his ability to direct me in the ways he hoped to see me move. He wished above all else to see the Manzu and particularly the Guan clan flourish and prosper. The image that he wanted me to convey to the outside world is that of a vibrant and confident people, who are not afraid of the future. I think that is a reasonable image.

The banquet involved many dishes besides the prescribed pork and pickled vegetables. In fact, they served Manzu specialities like sour cabbage soup and three flavoured vegetables, along with nuts and other snacks, bread and rice, and delicately sauced fishes. The banquet was an

opportunity for the clan members to come together and share their resources, to welcome home their absent sons and daughter, and to create an event which was impressed on the memories of the participants, not only through the sights and sounds of the *ji si*, but also through the flavours and odours of the banquet, and the joy of the reunion. All of these elements helped to create an experience that fulfilled the explicit requirements of the clan for being truly Manzu.

Changing the Locks

As noted in chapter four, the Guan of Yi Lan Gang have retained an element of the *ji si* known as *huan suo*, or changing the locks. Between the slaughter of the second pig and the ritual during which it was consumed outside (see chapter four), a ritual was performed that symbolised the importance of the children to the future of the clan. This is called the *huan suo* because the children will be the guardians of the clan. This rite recognises the children as the heirs of the future and asks the ancestors to protect them.

Before the actual ritual, the young shamans prepare a box of coloured strips of paper and a large cutting from a tree. The box was stored in the hall, and when it was being brought in the man carrying it dropped it and the contents were scattered across the floor. The reaction of those in the room was very good-natured. Rather than expressing anger or indignation, everyone present laughed, including the culprit. Those present included senior shamans and clan leaders. Despite this, the ceremony itself was quite important. This incident merely served to illustrate the communal nature of the events, which were for the people of the clan living and dead. It was inappropriate to exclude anyone through censure or anger, and these minor incidents were taken in stride, rather than treated as blasphemous or disrespectful.

The *huan suo* took place while the pig was being prepared for the offering and subsequent consumption. The rite was not as heavily attended as the other ceremonies. I inquired about this and was told by Guan Jia Kai that this portion was something that the clan was reviving, although it had not been performed at previous *ji si* for many years. However, they felt that it was important because it emphasised the importance and role of the younger generations. Fu was partly correct in claiming that the *huan suo* is no longer held, for the Guan had ceased to use it. He maintained that the original purpose of the *huan suo* was to call upon Fotuomama to protect the children from death after someone within the clan had died. The Guan were using it to protect the children and the future of the clan. This seems to represent a subtle shift in the understanding of the nature of the rite, which may be explained in terms of the entire focus of the Guan shamanism upon identity and “authentic” ritual elements and behaviour. This is not a

radical departure, however, for the identity aspect of shamanism is not new. Rather, it is now more prominent than in the past.

In the *huan suo*, only the altar for Fotuomama is used. The offering does not include liquor, but only incense and cakes. A whole cooked fish was also offered. This is the only part of the entire *ji si* that used a fish. I was told that the fish was emblematic of the ancestral life as well, for the Manzu often caught fish. Why it was used at this particular juncture, and only this one, was never explained to me in a satisfactory manner. I suspect that there was no clear reason for the fish still known to the Guan. They did offer the idea that it was because fish symbolise good fortune, but this is a Han Chinese concept, and almost certainly is not the original reason for the presence of fish in this ritual.

The items were offered after those assembled had koutoued, and then the presiding shaman made a prayer. In this case, there was only one shaman officiating, Guan Yu Lin. He informed me afterward that the reason for this was that the elders were passing on their duties to the new generation. After the prayer, two pre-school boys were brought forward. They were told to kneel in front of the altar. To their left the cutting had been set up with many coloured ribbons of the same colours as the ancestors' banners hung from the branches. Guan Yu Lin took two lengths of white string and tied one end of each to the right wrists of the children and the other to the branches of the tree. The children were asked their names, where they live and what they do. Then they were asked what clan they belong to. One boy answered by saying Guan, but the other boy, who was somewhat older, gave the name Guerjiashi, which is a transliteration of the name of the clan into Mandarin. Both boys were wide-eyed and overawed throughout the event, and the audience was quiet and serious for the short duration of the rite. At this point, Guan Yu Lin and the two boys koutoued toward the altar and then Guan Yun Lin untied their wrists.

As soon as the string was removed from the children's arms, the people in the audience, both young and old, rushed forward and grabbed the fish and cakes from the altar and ribbons from the branches. There was a complete free-for-all, with people bumping into each other and pushing slightly to get within reach of the ribbons. The reason for this was simply that they wanted the ribbons and food for good luck. Again, there was no objection by the shamans or the elders, and in fact the few who were there seemed to enjoy themselves and some even took part in the rush. However, it was mostly young adults and children who joined in. Eventually I learned that they had been encouraged in advance to take the sacrifices at the end of the ceremony. They were being given the opportunity once again to feel more connected with events, although in these instances they were not directly involved in the ritual. It is certainly true

that the shaman represents the community in the rituals that they perform. Shamanism is also for the community to come together and achieve their own sense of identity and power directly, and not just through surrogates. Many aspects of the *ji si* promote this aspect.

'Real' Shamanism

Through the *ji si* and the *jia pu* the Guan clan finds ways to emphasise the importance of the clan to its membership. They are deliberately and consciously setting out to enable their people to identify themselves as part of a worthy and attractive heritage. What are the consequences of this manipulation for the clan's shamanism? It seems evident that the practice of shamanism within the clan is subservient to the needs of the clan. Shamanism does not transcend the importance of the clan, rather the existence of the clan is paramount and the shamanism, which serves the clan, cannot exist without the clan. This is consistent with much of what we know about shamanism. Kendall's (1996) description of the adaptability of Korean shamanism demonstrates that East Asian shamans are able to adapt to suit the times. The question this raises is whether the shamans are changing in an essential fashion or are merely altering superficial elements.

Considering Shirokogoroff's description of the social role of shamans will help to address these issues. He argues that the shaman is central to the existence of the clan:

Apart from shamanism the Manchu clan organisation cannot exist and, being up to the present time unreplaced by any other philosophical and religious system, it protects the clan from final decomposition. Thus, the clan organisation has not only its genetic basis in shamanism, but shamanism also serves as a support for the social organisation (1973: 154).

The matter of replacement by other systems of religion or philosophy is especially germane, for as I have already suggested, the present regime has not replaced clan organisation with socialist organisation, and the ideals of Communism, while successful where compatible with traditional mores, have largely failed to take root. Since Communism as anything more than a system of cronyism has been abandoned in China, the Manzu in Yi Lan Gang at least have added reason to maintain their clan organisation, since it provides a sense of identity and helps to regulate social life in the absence of state sanctioned social control.

The Manzu early on identified and understood the function of the clan, and named it, along with its subelements (*aiman, hala, gargan, and mokun*). The idea of the clan was clearly understood and had meaning as a source of identity beyond the military/administrative aspects

associated with the Qing Empire (Shirokogoroff 1982: 99). The shamans themselves assume a special position within the clan organisation, and they must be recognised in their role as shamans by the clan (*ibid.*: 274). The shamans cannot exist without the support of the clan, unless they become peripatetic professional *amban saman*, who lack credibility among the laity and lose personal influence (*ibid.*: 374). It is the *bogun saman*, the clan shaman who manages relations with the ancestors who are intimately connected with the clan system. In many clans, the *bogun saman* takes on the role of the great shaman and becomes a master of spirits (*ibid.*: 217-218). Shirokogoroff also tells us that the shaman acts as a clan safety valve, and that their function is the regulation of psychomental complexes, and the treatment of individual and mass psychosis, not the treatment of diseases or physical ailments. Finally, Shirokogoroff argues that,

Shamans are observers, collectors of facts which they analyse The adjustment of new cultural elements to the existing complex is a real creative work continuously carried out by “good” shamans The acquiring and transmitting of knowledge is a function of “good” shamans, who naturally must have broader knowledge in general than the average Tungus In fact, most shamans are always interested in acquiring new knowledge. . . . (*ibid.*: 375).

The shamanic quest is a quest for knowledge. However, the shamans do operate within a social context that puts immediate demands upon the individual practitioners. There is no such thing as non-applied shamanism, for the quest is always driven by the social responsibility of the shamans. The shamans are stimulated by their vocation to seek understanding and to innovate in the face of change. In the past, this meant naming and identifying spirits. Today, it means finding ways to organise the rituals of the shamanic complex to allow them to involve as many members of the clan and community as possible in order to maintain the cohesion of the clan.

Nevertheless, the presence or absence of trance is a profound change. Trance should not be characterised as epiphenomenal, for it was the most important instrument used by Manzu shamans in their investigations. Today, however, many shamans do not use trance at all, while others use it only to a much more limited extent. There has been a paradigm shift in methodology. The contemporary shaman pays more attention to social phenomena. The vicissitudes of life in China have meant that the shamans have had to find ways to maintain their practice and the existence of the clan in the face of conflict and opposition. One way that they have done this is to seek knowledge of how to manipulate social relations in order to enhance the vitality of the clan. The concept of connections and relations has become more important as the outside world has intruded upon the clan. The question of *guan xi* and how to manipulate it is now the concern of the shaman. This is not inconsistent with the traditional role of the shaman as

master or mistress of spirits. The shaman still has the role of connecting with external forces that can adversely or beneficially affect the clan. What is different is the function of shamanism as being more directly concerned with mediating the affects of the mundane, rather than the spiritual.

Shirokogoroff also noted that the shamans traditionally had great influence over the people, both consciously and unconsciously. This is especially so when the shaman is acting as the “safety valve” for the clan in the presence of a crowd, and “[h]e not only has great influence over members of his clan but also sometimes over people outside his clan” (Shirokogoroff 1923: 247-248). The influential role of the shamans, in leading the community in the maintenance of its identity and in dealing with and influencing external agents, is well-established by precedent. Furthermore, it is consistent with the traditional activities and influence of the shamans as described by Shirokogoroff for a period eighty years ago. There has at the very least been a persistent growth in the influence of the shamans and maintenance of their role up to the present time. The role of the shamans has waxed as well, on average, so that today they are able to function as natural leaders of the clan to an extent not seen in the past. Whereas in the past they were marginal and identified by outlandish behaviour (still the case among more traditional shamans as described in Balzer 1987), today they are recruited *en masse*, exhibit only minimal signs of their vocation in most cases, and function primarily as conveyers of a cultural tradition which is seen as central to the Manzu identity. Compare this with past attempts to control shamans by the Qing, the Japanese and the Communists. Nowak and Durrant (1977: 118) explain the epic tale of the Nisan shamaness as an attempt to reconcile shamanism with the controlling forces of the community. Ultimately, the shamaness is forced to recognise that her activities are inconsistent with the demands of society, and gives them up. Today, shamans co-operate with the Communists and in some cases are party members themselves.

The shamans of the clan Guan do not trance. It is hard to avoid the question of whether they practice shamanism or not. As noted in previous chapters, the shamans themselves have told me that what they do is not “real” shamanism. What they mean by this is that they are not practising *tiao da shen* (dancing the spirit) and experiencing *linghun futi* (possessing a spirit). This does not mean that they do not consider themselves to be shamans or that they are not faithful to the traditions of their ancestors. They are certain that what they are doing is valid and apposite. As they believe that the shamans’ primary purpose is to serve the people and ancestors, the shamans of the Guan clan are certain that they are carrying out the most important functions of their role properly.

Another question that arises is the matter of who within the clan is directing this manipulation of their shamanism. As noted by Shirokogoroff, traditionally shamans had a great deal of influence through their activities. Now the leaders and shamans of the clan are the same individuals. As they function only as *bogun saman* they are directly concerned with communicating between the lay members of the clan and their manes. The leadership role fulfilled by these individuals operates in three spheres. They are shamans and their assistants, they are traditional leaders (*mokunda* and his deputies) and they are village administrators and Communist Party members. The female shamans in the clan do not hold positions in the other spheres. They seem to have influence in other ways that require future investigation.

There is an integration of responsibility by the leaders of the Guan clan. This has the result that the status of the shamans is enhanced by their additional roles, and vice versa. The influence of the shamans is increased by their other roles, which they were able to take on in part because they were already seen as leaders in the community due to their shamanic vocation. Not all of the village cadres are shamans, or Manzu for that matter. The leading cadre is Han Chinese. This is typical of Chinese minority villages, because the government considers the Han to be more advanced than most minorities. Of course, a substantial portion of the population in Yi Lan Gang is neither Guan nor Manzu at all. Yet, the village is an officially designated Manzu village. For the Guan, this means that their freedom of action is significantly constrained. In addition, they have learned the lessons of the persecutions and upheavals of the past. Clearly, for the Guan, the survival of the clan depends on their ability to mitigate external threats and alleviate the consequences of challenges to the integrity of the clan which are posed by their social context. They have taken on these roles in order to marshal all the resources possible to benefit their clan, as well as the entire village.

Coping with Opposition

Considering the contemporary influence of the shamans, it may appear that the Manzu are experiencing a revitalisation movement. The differences between the Manzu's maintenance of ethnic identity and typical revitalisation movements are fairly distinct (see Aoyagi 1978, Davenport and Coker 1967, Laracy 1983). Revitalisation movements usually have a recognised leader who could be considered a founder and prophet. Manzu shamans of the Guan clan do not operate individually, but as part of a group leadership, and they are not acting as prophets bringing a new revelation. Revitalisation movements tend to arise in opposition to a colonial power. Shamanism certainly arose long before the fall of the Qing Empire and the eventual

intrusion of the Han or the Communist regime. While it does function to oppose acculturation, this is consistent with long-standing functions of shamanism and is not a novel aspect.

Revitalisation movements come to serve as vehicles for addressing grievances against colonial powers in a collective manner. In the present circumstance the shamans are helping their clan to mediate against the affects of sinification. However, this is part of an historic process of the negotiation of relations between the Han and various Tungus groups, recently manifesting themselves as Manzu. Unlike a revitalisation movement, shamanism as it is conducted today takes place in the presence of outsiders and foreigners, and does not operate in secret. In a sense, the shamans faced opposition from Communist missionaries and were subject to detention during the Cultural Revolution and other periods, and shamanism has incorporated elements of Chinese folk religion and Buddhism. However, shamanism arose in very different circumstances and rather than prophesying the end of the present world or the overthrow of the dominant power, the shamans work to find an accommodation with the government. Shamanism has not become a social movement or a force in the political life of the people.

The more pertinent issue that must be addressed is whether there is external opposition to the process of identity maintenance. As Susan Blum writes, "When one says 'minority', Han think 'costume and festival'" (1992: 271). Views of minorities by the Han tend to emphasise extreme positive and negative characteristics. They tend to idealise and romanticise the aesthetic. At the same time there is a tendency to exaggerate or ridicule the more dangerous or disparaged dimensions of minority cultures. The image of minorities is contested in China and is complicated by myths about various selves and others. The government uses minorities to create a clear-cut primordial other that contrasts with the ideal Chinese national identity (Blum 1992: 268). There is concurrently a counter-hegemonic discourse in place that is carried out by the various official and unofficial minorities.

Relations with ethnic minorities have frequently played a significant role in China's history (Gladney 1994; Pye 1975), and various contemporary factors ensure that ethnic groups remain engaged with the government in the negotiation of their identity and China's. Modern communications technology has raised the stakes in the contest over ethnic identity. Official and unofficial versions of minority culture compete for attention and prominence in minority communities. By using the media to present competing representations of the Manzu minority, the government and the Manzu attempt to control the negotiation of identity.

Due to the place of minorities on the political frontier, with ethnic brethren in neighbouring states, and the issue of ethnic or regional separatism throughout the country

gaining in prominence, the government's efforts to control the formation of ethnic identity and use ethnicity to further its own agenda has increased in urgency. The state's ultimate goal is the sinification of the minorities which is expressed as raising their socialist consciousness and advancing their technological development with the aid of their helpful elder brothers, the Han. This project has a higher priority in China than in the past because the normalisation of China's relations with the West means, "ethnic and cultural differences within China have become more salient" (Gladney 1994: 171). That is, these differences are more noticeable as China's government opens the nation to the West, loosens restrictions on its people and ceases to represent China as having a single face.

The application of semiotic theory to ethnographic problems helps to demonstrate the importance of signs or tropes in the invention and reinvention of ethnic identity (see Bentley 1987, Clifford 1988, Galaty 1982, and Landsman 1985). By emphasising that identity is also constituted through symbols, and not just as a by-product of materialistic concerns, we can come to understand how groups of people attempt to manipulate the politics of identity in modern China. While this semiotic approach has been criticised for ignoring material factors, in the case of the Manzu of north-east China it is possible to discern the subtle interplay of pragmatic and symbolic actions in the struggle for control of identity through the use of visual media. The rural Manzu use the media to promote a certain view of themselves which is opposed actively by the government, which uses the same media to represent the same social phenomenon with a significantly different interpretation.

Han, ethnic Koreans and Hui (Muslim Chinese) are considered by the Chinese government to be modern or modernising. All others are regarded as culturally and economically backward, or pre-modern. Official Chinese ethnography uses Morgan's typology of savagery, barbarism and civilisation as the cornerstone of ethnology and the archaeology of the Chinese Neolithic. This is due in part to the reliance upon Stalin's formula for defining an ethnic group, which is in turn derived from Marx's reliance upon evolutionary theorists like Morgan, Tyler and Frazer.

This dual usage of typology applied to both Neolithic peoples and modern minorities identifies contemporary peoples with cultures from 4 millennia ago and emphatically distinguishes them from their categorically more advanced Han neighbours. Obviously this is a hierarchy, and in keeping with China's feudal foundations and patriarchy. But it is a spatial and temporal hierarchy, as well as social. The Han are the advanced core, while minorities exist at the geographical, social and technological periphery. This supposedly scientific approach to

culture functions identically to Confucian moralism by exoticising and primitivising the cultural other and thus absolves proponents of socialism of moral culpability by proposing a natural order of culture. By applying cultural materialist rationales, the government is able to appeal to the folk understandings of the Chinese people without being guilty of feudalistic (i.e. Confucian) thinking themselves. Thus, they remain morally correct by continuing to follow the path of socialist thinking. This is important because all political programmes in China are still justified in terms of socialist ideology (the “socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics” being a notorious example of such doublethink).

The official criteria used to classify nationalities in China are those outlined in Stalin's definition of a nation:

A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of people, based upon the common possession of four principle attributes, namely: a common language, a common territory, a common economic life, and a common psychological makeup manifesting itself in common special features of national culture. (Stalin 1953: 349).

Leaving aside the many evident problems with the Stalinist criteria, it is sufficient to note that in China they are applied in an uneven and arbitrary (almost capricious) fashion. For example the Naxi of south-west China are treated as an ethnic group by the government but by self-identification are separate and refer to each other as two distinct groups, the Naxi and the Musuo. In the case of the Naxi/Musuo, they inhabit contiguous but distinct territories. They speak mutually unintelligible languages which Chinese linguists refer to as dialects. Their economic activity is virtually identical with other local ethnic groups, although in a Marxian sense of relations of production the Naxi and Musuo are radically different, with the former patrilineal in which major property is controlled and inherited by men, while the latter enjoy matrilineal descent and inheritance. Only the Musuo traditionally had a slave class.

In lumping together different groups what are claimed to be ethnological classifications are really legitimations of folk categories or pre-Liberation Confucian scholarship. This facilitates the use of minorities as a primordial other, as mentioned above. It is in the interest of the government to perpetuate stereotypes through the various media, while professing the need to “thoroughly extirpate residual feelings of Han chauvinism” (Minorities Institute 1985: 54). Apparently, most of the problems are a result of the “havoc wrought by Lin Biao, Jiang Qing and their followers,” and are being dealt with by “stepping up ideological work among the Han, [and] pushing forward economic and cultural development in the minority areas” (*ibid.*: 56). That is,

the best way to deal with Han chauvinism and popular images of minorities as licentious, dirty and violent is to get them to be more like the Han, and less licentious, dirty and violent. Ethnographic research tends to be directed by state sanctioned ideology.

The motivation for stereotyping minorities is twofold: to create a model for the population to disparage and rise above, and to morally justify the assimilative practices of the State. The Han are neither culturally nor politically unified themselves, and thus it is useful to the “great purpose of unification” to emphasise the difference between the Han and the minorities (see Duara 1993; Siu 1993; Townsend 1992). And, since the minorities are “backward” and “primitive,” it is that much more important that the Han provide unified leadership. The two motivations are linked. In fact, the whole problem of Han nationalism and the process of ethnic identification are inextricably bound together in the thinking of the government. The issue of Chinese nationalism has been linked with ethnicity for some time: resisting foreign invaders (Tibetan, Uighur) and conquerors (Mongol, Manzu), and convincing geographically dispersed and linguistically diverse groups that they are all in fact Han Chinese (see Anderson 1983; Blake 1981) has meant that much thought and energy has been devoted to the problem. The Communist Party has inherited this way of thinking about minorities, and the idea that minorities are threatening and must be controlled has an inertial force that seemingly transcends political ideals and worldly realities. In other words, the ingrained prejudice against minorities underlies and distorts the application of a Marxian dialectic to the analysis of the problem by Communist Party ideologues.

There is another aspect of the role of the state that should not be ignored. Using the Stalinist criteria referred to above the state designates certain groups as minorities and excludes others. Gladney suggests that “the interaction between ethnic and national identity has led to the invention of some identities, the resurgence of others, and the loss of many” (1998: 48). The Chinese government has a great deal of influence through its socio-economic activities. The government gives special privileges to some groups and assists and supports these groups that they recognise in maintaining their cultural identity. This may or may not mean that an ethnic group survives in China, but it certainly facilitates the development of cultural identity as ethnic identity and eases the process of defining an ethnic group by social actors. This crucial role of the state needs to be recognised. The state is not only a representative of the cultural other, but plays an active, even positive role in defining ideas about Manzu identity. However, they may not be in accord with ideas that the Manzu develop about their identity.

Competing Discourses on Manzu Ethnicity

Culture may be understood as that which is signified through discourse in a concrete and publicly accessible fashion (Urban 1991). The Chinese government attempts to use the metonym

of Manzu folk culture to manipulate the Manzu conception of their own ethnicity while at the same time presenting an acceptable version of the Manzu to the Han majority. In this way they intend to permit the Manzu an identity of their own only in response to the colonising/dominant other (see Carpenter 1974: 94). This response is very much like one employed by MGM Studios in California and discussed by Carpenter (*ibid.*: 81). An African designer who went to work for MGM was told to design costumes, sets, music, language and dance that were to look “African” without being attributable to any particular African culture. The resulting films were so convincing that the Africans who saw them modified their art to fit the images projected on screen (*ibid.*: 81). This is the goal of the Chinese government with respect to a national culture. The corollary is to represent a feminised and exoticised Manzu culture²⁵ that is diminished to the point where it lacks value or meaning for the Manzu themselves. As Carpenter writes, “We use media to destroy cultures, but we first use media to create a false record of what we are about to destroy” (*ibid.*: 102).

Undertaking a comparative analysis of the videotaped programmes produced by the Chinese government and the underground videos circulated by the Manzu provides a clearer understanding of the manner in which the contest over Manzu identity is played out in modern China. Using content analysis techniques as a model, points of comparison can be identified in both types of video, and then subjected to a critique.

The exoticisation of the Manzu is illustrated in a government documentary film about a Manzu autonomous county, Xin Ben, in Liaoning province. It is typical of the sort of programming depicting minorities in China. The media uses language referring to the “warm and flirtatious expressions”²⁶ of Chinese minorities who are presented engaged in folk dancing or absorbed in benefiting from instruction from benevolent Han elder brothers and sisters. The Manzu readily view this type of programming, thanks to the penetration of television to even the most remote parts of north-east China. Their cultural life is reduced to costumes and pageantry, and this emphasises Manzu traditions as they existed at court during the late Qing dynasty.

In the documentary in question, which was first broadcast in 1993, a group of putative Manzu explores the natural and historic sites around the county. The men are dressed in the costumes of Qing bureaucrats while the women wear the dress typical of the Qing court. The

²⁵ Or at least we may say folkways. Generally, minorities are not acknowledged as having culture (*wenhua*) but rather have *fengsu*, which may be translated as folk customs or social customs. Meanwhile, Han culture is often referred to with the very term (*wenhua*) denied the minorities. There is an implication of legitimacy and hierarchy contained in these contrasting terms.

first portion of the programme is concerned with the history of the area, especially since it was the site of an early capital of Nurhaci, the founder of the Manzu power in East Asia.

The action then moves to the presentation of various supposed folk dances of the Manzu. While some of these dances are drawn from Beijing Opera, which was highly popular with the Manzu in Beijing during the Qing dynasty, they are not at all typical of the Manzu of Xin Ben, either historically or in the present. In all of the dances presented, the performers are females, and an official from the county told me that none of them are actually Manzu. One of the dances takes place outside of the tomb complex of Yong-ling, burial site of Nurhaci's ancestors. As a sacred site, this is an entirely inappropriate locale for any kind of dance. It appears at first that the site was chosen simply to showcase an architectural highlight of the county. A closer analysis indicates deeper motivations. The site was not traditionally used for entertainment, and has been venerated by the Manzu for many centuries. However, beginning with its desecration by the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution (who used the Aisin Gioro imperial clan's spirit tree there for firewood), there has been a tendency to diminish the importance of the site in various ways. It is now promoted as a tourist attraction and the association of the site with officially sanctioned folk life furthers the aims of the government to reduce Manzu ethnicity to little more than an attraction. The dancing is in accord with the popular street dancing discussed in chapter one. The representation of the Manzu suits the ideas that are held about them in popular culture more than it does the definition that the Manzu in Yi Lan Gang have of themselves.

There is a counter-discourse to the image of the Manzu that is popularly constructed. Videotapes of the performances of clan shamans are representative of the image that the Manzu are creating of themselves. Shamanism is not illegal in China for the minorities but it is not legal for the Han Chinese to practice shamanism, and for that reason among others you do not see documentary programming showing real shamanising in the popular media. Since the Manzu have supposedly given up shamanism it was unlikely that the Manzu would be documented performing ceremonies that officially no longer take place, even though they are technically free to do so. Yet, as ever in China, it is always possible to get things done through the back door. On my last trip I sponsored a thanksgiving ceremony and also helped to pay for a video crew to tape the events. The crew members were moonlighting from their jobs at the state owned television station. This is indicative of the lax attitude at present towards religious activity, as is the fact that the village party cadre helped organised the videotape I sponsored. If this seems

²⁶ Actual wording from a billboard which greeted arrivals at Haikou airport in Hainan province. The billboard depicted a rather corpulent and bearded foreigner, complete with video camera, next to a costumed minority woman.

contradictory, it appears so because it is. The Communist Party system is rife with contradictions that may bring change, but in the meantime can be exploited by the enterprising.

These sorts of tapes are widespread throughout the Northeast. The first time I saw one was in the home of a friend who is part Manzu and lives in the city of Shenyang. The tape was being circulated throughout the substantial urban Manzu community, and while these city folks referred to the ceremonies and trance as superstition, there was also an element of ethnic pride. I was told that the shamans were really *piao han*, or brave and agile, quick and fierce, which is the essence of being Manzu.

Following Weber's (1986: 11) approach to content analysis in comparing the two types of tapes, particular attention is paid to variations in both narrative form and narrative focus. Weber achieves this through theme coding applied by element. Usually, this is applied to semantic elements in a subject/verb/object form (*ibid.*: 22). This model can be reworked and applied to elements of visual content in order to focus attention upon content categories that highlight contrasts in the objectives of two producers. That is, in formulating the analysis the goal is to demonstrate that the content of categories common to both texts are different in a way that reveals variant agendas. In this instance, the agendas of the government and the clans are at variance from each other. The categories examined should not represent the Manzu in ways that compliment each other. Rather, in order to support the hypothesis that the government is attempting to manipulate Manzu identity, the categories of interest should represent the Manzu in a directly contrasting manner.

In this case, a number of categories common to both tapes have been identified, and their content (e.g. sex: male or female) is compared to determine how these elements are manipulated as signs intended to convey an analogical message about the nature of Manzu ethnicity. If my hypothesis is correct (that the government attempts to influence Manzu identity through the medium of videotapes while the clans work to strengthen it through the same medium), then the various elements examined should all show evidence of the agenda of the producers (government or clans). There should be consistency of message within the tapes examined. One would also expect to find that the tapes do not show evidence of an identical agenda for the two producing agents.

The government documentary includes a stylised rendition of a shamanic ceremony, and the costumes and movements are intended to mimic a shaman in a trance, but in a non-threatening and entertaining fashion. While the narrator tells us that the dance is a recreation of shamanic ceremonies, there is no opportunity for the audience to compare what they are seeing

with the real thing. Therefore, with the “shamans” represented by young women in revealing costumes who dance to music played on traditional Han instruments, rather than Manzu drums, clappers and tambourines, the idea of shamanism is represented as devoid of spiritual meaning. The narrator of the video informs the viewer that shamanism is “already a part of history”, that is to say it is not a part of the life of the modern Manzu. Yet, the costumes and even the makeup do recreate in a debased fashion the manner in which the Manzu shamans make themselves beautiful to honour the spirits with whom they interact. Even the cones suspended from the belts of the dancers mimic those that comprise a crucial part of the costume of an actual shaman. There is an attempt made to achieve a degree of verisimilitude that will allow the target audience to believe that what they are seeing is traditional. However, the dance takes place outside of the context of a living Manzu community, and cannot be taken seriously by the Manzu who view it.

Most striking is the fact that the dancers are all female. This creates a less threatening image, thus perhaps combating Han chauvinism, and at the same time feminises the other, and thus diminishes their significance in patriarchal China. This also flies in the face of reality, for the contemporary Manzu shamans are predominantly male, and almost exclusively so in the older generations. The dance performed in the government production is not energetic and *piao han*, but rather is balletic and stylised. The dancing takes place out of doors, and on a riverbank. There is no indication of habitation anywhere nearby. This removes the dancing from any sort of meaningful social context, disconnecting it from the vibrancy of life in the clan villages. It also contributes to the image of the Manzu folk culture as exotic, by placing it outside and in the wild. In the clan tapes, the shamans are found performing in the courtyard of a traditional Manzu style house, and inside the ritual hall. They are thus placed within a context that surrounds them with familiar implements of peasant life that would be familiar not only to the Manzu but to almost any Chinese citizen. Even though the shamanic performance is energetic and impressive, it is not rendered unfamiliar.

The documentary contains a number of dances. All of these are very brief. The longest is three minutes and the average length is just over two minutes. The “shamanic” dance is actually one minute and forty-three seconds in duration. By comparison, the videotapes of the clan shamanism are very long, often following one shaman through a performance of truly epic proportions. A number of separate elements of the ritual (those described in chapters three and four) are documented. These two approaches create very different impressions of the intensity and significance of the performance. A viewer of the latter performance has the time to form a powerful impression of the shaman, his audience and the *piao han* nature of the performance.

The former performance gives the viewer a fleeting impression of something insignificant and slightly silly.

The costumes of the clan shamans are elaborate, and include polished bronze mirrors and other iron or bronze costume elements. The costumes are reputed to be so heavy that an ordinary person could not stand up in them. The costumes usually include a heavy and unwieldy head-dress that resembles antlers and may be hung with numerous coloured scarves. This costume sets the shaman apart from the other members of the community and makes him or her more attractive to the spirits. In the Xin Ben county documentary the costumes of the dancers are light, tight and revealing. No head-dress of any sort is present as this would not be attractive to the target audience of Han Chinese. As for the other target group, the Manzu themselves, the chief objective is to show the Manzu as not *piao han*, but as insubstantial and docile.

In many of the clan tapes, the preparations undertaken by the shamans are all shown. That is, we see the shaman getting into their costume and going through the minor propitiation of the spirits that proceeds the trance performance. This is another way in which greater context is provided for the ritual. In addition, we are able to hear the chanting and prayers of the shamans. It is obvious that the performance is purposive and not simply for entertainment. Even though much of what is said is in Manzu, and thus not understood by the audience, the chanting still provides a context. For the documentary, the only context is the voice over narration that explains that the dances are based on extinct traditions and are performed for entertainment only. We do not learn anything about the dancers or their community's reaction to the performance. We do not get to see the dancers before or after they dance. They appear on the screen briefly, and then are gone.

What we do see in the documentary is eight female dancers, all young and pretty, dancing in a row on the riverbank. As noted, they perform a number of different dances. The women, in matching costumes, will perform one dance, and then there is a cut and the women reappear in a different costume and perform a different dance. The narrator explains the meaning of each dance. Usually it is only a brief description (e.g. this is a traditional wedding dance; this is a traditional harvest dance). In the clan tapes the focus is on one or sometimes two shamans, who perform individually and are followed throughout the ritual as they koutou, pray, make offerings and chant, and go into trance. The former performance creates an impression of a fragment without any extended meaning, while the shamanic performance is holistic. There is no narration of any kind in the latter tapes. The camera is pointed at the shaman and whatever sound is

available is recorded. There is almost no editing of the tapes, other than to stop taping and start taping again later.

The fact that the language used in the clan ceremonies is still Manzu, while the narration, lyrics and subtitles of the documentary video are all Mandarin is problematic. The use of Manzu gives the performance an air of legitimacy for the audience because the language is essential to communication with the spirits. Yet at the same time, 99% of the participants present do not understand the exact words, including many of the shamans. The all-Mandarin tape, by contrast, is more readily understood. However, much of the underground tapes' content relies not on dialogue or narration but on the images presented. This is a crucial insight, for as noted below, the shamanic performance's appeal is mainly on a visual level. In all the elements considered (gender, style, music, instruments, language, context and audience [see below]) there is a striking contrast in the representations of Manzu shamanism and Manzu culture in general.

Manzu to whom I showed a copy of the official video were dismissive of its content. The reaction I most commonly noted was not of scorn or anger, but rather of indifference. I was told that, "This is just for visitors," or that, "This is Manzu, but not from the North-east. It must be from Beijing." When I pointed out that it was putatively from a county in the North-east, I was told that it still was not real Manzu, but something else, although what that something else was remained unclear.

What purpose do these sorts of videotapes serve? It seems to rest upon the determination of the government to expunge ethnicity and ethnic nationalism from the state, replacing it with an all-encompassing Chinese nationalism. While drawing minorities into the socio-political and economic sphere of the Han, they act to replace their ethnic signifiers with new symbols that can be easily shared with other Chinese and that reduce ethnicity to a performance which is trotted out once in a while to maintain the illusion of a separate identity. However, "one cannot generally define the individual meanings of each unit in an analogic system by looking them up in a dictionary. Nor can one be nearly so precise about how they must be combined to make sense" (Forsdale 1981: 161). In other words, the systematic approach of the Chinese government is not guaranteed success due to the complex way in which signs are enacted and interpreted by both the encoders and the decoders. The Chinese government wants to create an insubstantial ethnic identity that will mollify the minorities, allowing the minority cadres who represent the state to point to "folk customs" as evidence that their minority rights are being respected.

Analogic information is understood intellectually and emotionally, with the use of multiple senses. The true shamanic performance, as with many other elements of ethnicity, is art,

and “art is analogous to states of feeling that we experience in our lives” (*ibid.*: 167). Analogies work partly because they have an appeal to the audience on a rhythmic level. Synchrony is important to the function of metaphor because signals of synchrony are important to our sense of well-being and connectedness (*ibid.*: 175). In viewing a video, one picks up on the same subtle signals as those experienced by the audience. If there is no audience, then the sense of synchrony is diminished, for one senses both the synchrony and the audience’s response. Just as powerful can be the viewers’ sense of a lack of synchrony, or even worse, a lack of synchrony with the audience. This is why the government propaganda cannot have an audience included in the action, because it would undermine the effect of the new analogy. But the power of the media also lies in its pervasiveness, such that it can replace traditional rhythms. The object of the government programme is to eradicate the old rhythms, and replace them with the rhythms of Chinese popular music. Yet, the underground videos can counteract this insistence upon change with an equally pervasive reinforcement of long-established synchronous tropes.

Shamanism, Lies and Videotape

One night, in the village of Yi Lan Gang in Heilongjiang province, I witnessed a private thanksgiving ceremony sponsored by a family whose son had recovered from an illness. After the rather brief performance, we retired to the home of one of the shamans’ assistants. Many more people who had not attended the ceremony joined us until the house was completely packed out. A VCR was produced and I was told that we were going to watch videos of performance. This was near the beginning of my first stint of fieldwork in the village and I was not conversant in the local idiom at the time. I was initially under the impression that it was a tape of their shamans.

Attempts to play the tapes were unsuccessful and again I was confused by the conversation going on around me. People came and went and eventually a young man returned with tools. They opened up the VCR and ran it while discussing what was wrong. A lot of people offered advice and prodded at parts of the machine with dust flying about and getting into the machine. I was convinced that if it did not work before it certainly would not now. They kept trying different electrical leads and then the same young man left, only to return with a spool of twine. He tied a length of string into a loop, replaced a pulley and restored function to the machine. I was suitably impressed although no one else seemed to think much of it.

I was surprised to find that the tapes were actually of other shamans in other villages performing ceremonies both similar to and dissimilar from the one I had just witnessed. Based on

tapes that I viewed (both in Yi Lan Gang and in Ning An with the shaman Fu Cha Ren) the most important differences I identified are as follows:

- 1) the use of trance by clan shamans;
- 2) the presence or absence of costume elements, in particular the shaman's headgear;
- 3) rules of the sacrifice, including which hand is used to slaughter the pig and whether a genuinely pure black animal must be used;
- 4) other items of shamanic paraphernalia.

In terms of the totemic ancestors and the colours that represent them, the association of the black boar with the nomadic hunting life in the boreal forest and many other elements, the ceremonies are essentially the same, especially in entreating the support of various spirits. But it is in the social role of these public ceremonies that the similarities are most evident. The ceremonies act as a tool for the constant reinvention of the Manzu identity in the light of competing ideologies. In this case, the underground tapes act as a counterweight to the image propagated by the state.

The audience took advantage of the opportunity to compare their ceremonies with those of other clans. They were particularly interested in the differences, and discussed them at length. While the lack of trance in the Guan clans own ceremony struck me as significant, the Guan shamans did not treat it as such. They noted it, and even talked about how they had once practised trance. All agreed that the performances they witnessed on the tapes were "real shamanism," yet many also stated that they did not necessarily believe that the shamans were really controlling spirits. What was explained to me by the elder shamans was that it was real because it was "really Manzu style," in dress and form but most of all in attitude. That is, it was genuinely *piao han*. The comments I heard most frequently were things like, "That is the real shamanism" or, "That is really Manzu style." Most of the conversation centred around the shamans technique, and whether his movements were correct, or his singing powerful.

Shamanism functions as a metonym that stands for the whole of Manzu culture. It does not seem to matter if there are differences as significant as the presence or absence of trance. The people of Yi Lan Gang told me that what they saw on the tapes was "real shamanism," and even more real than their own version. I had similar experiences with videos in other villages, and sometimes the tapes were about traditional Manzu hunters and falconers, who are also *piao han*, and even rarer today than shamans. The selection of the metonym is clearly crucial, since from it the Manzu perceive the unknown remainder of reality. Metonyms are powerful conveyors of reality because they work as arbitrary signs of reality. Much of Manzu life is indistinguishable

from that of their Hui, Han or ethnic Korean neighbours. Many villages lack shamans entirely, while few villages are involved in reindeer herding, ginseng harvesting, or pearl gathering, all traditional Manzu economic activities. Yet among these people the popular images are of just these activities, and screenings of underground tapes are always greeted enthusiastically. The actual showing of these tapes is not particularly secretive, and how underground these tapes are is debatable. Perhaps we can say that they circulate just below the surface.

The question of metonym is important because it forces us to ask why one trope is affective and appealing while another is at best dismissed or at worst violently rejected and drives the viewer in the opposite direction from that intended by the creator of the images viewed. What allows certain signs to signify in an overarching fashion in this case has as much to do with the signed as it does the signifier. While the research as presented begs the question of whether videotapes and television broadcasts in fact constitute the same medium, an answer to the question of why one use of the medium is more effective than another is suggested here. The elements of the sign can, as Lévi-Strauss writes, “translate even the finer shades of the whole range of sense experience” (1975: 14). When properly chosen, signs “speak” to the signified as music, and when poorly chosen, are out of synchrony with the audience.

Peirce, in a classic outline of semiotics, identifies three types of signs and three types of temporality. For “icons,” the sign and the represented object (or signifier and signified) are linked by their formal resemblance, and the “icon” is oriented towards the past because the sign has meaning without the actual presence of the object represented. Another category of sign that relies upon propinquity for its meaning is grounded in the present, and Peirce terms this an “index.” Finally, Peirce uses the term “symbol” to refer to that type of sign which signifies an object only if a further signifying action endows that representation with a link. Consequently, symbols are associated with the future since “the being of a symbol consists in the real fact that something surely will be experienced if certain conditions are satisfied” (Peirce 1931-35, 4: 447). The insight that Peirce brings to the study of signs is that while all classes of signs function to bear culturally endowed meaning, the class chosen indicates what the relation is between the spatial and the temporal aspects of the sign. The temporal aspect indicates what the object of the spatial operation might be. This in turn is indicative of the relationship between the encoder and the decoder, and helps us to understand the efficacy of the sign.

Considering the present example, the signs transmitted by the Chinese government are icons and indexes, but not symbols. This is because the government uses the media to code historical consciousness and their pervasive presence gives them the power to determine the

significance of historic events by controlling the evidence and information available to the public. They not only control the evidence, but the very discourse itself is shaped for ideological purposes that are inherent in the information provided. The concern with history means that the information is oriented towards the past and represents an ideological interpretation of the past, and functions as an icon. The past is restricted to the Qing court and the imperial heritage. Thus, the analogy of Manzu “folk customs” is a relic of the past and not relevant to the future. This is why shamanism is officially presented as having been shaped by the decrees of the Qianlong emperor, when in fact the dynamic shamanic tradition of the *Dongbei* Manzu transcends the court shamanism. At the same time that these signs function as icons, they code an essentially Marxist ideology constructed with the purpose of promoting an immediate agenda. That is, they are anchored in present experience and present discourse as indices. The discourse reflects the external socialist and nationalist agenda of the Chinese government, as noted above, and the action is all oriented towards the contemporary interpretation of folk culture, rather than traditional understandings.

The most significant contrast is in the function of the signs as symbols. For the Manzu, the information encoded in the videos of shamanic action do more than merely represent the past. This is because the shamanic metonym is not only a sign that records and classifies events as history, but also an actionable trope that is present in social life and interpreted by social actors. They are guideposts to the future and the past. This is why they are efficacious in comparison to the signs presented by the government. The Guan Manzu can discuss the differences between them as an indication of the way that they have changed while still maintaining a sense of being Manzu. While a pervasive medium can be used to displace traditional ideology, it can only succeed if it is able to present a credible alternative. Because the government propaganda concentrates on diminishing the importance of traditional Manzu culture, rather than replacing it with something more attractive, it is not a powerful metonym. The Manzu in Yi Lan Gang, despite what official ideology dictates, are in fact modern and advanced enough in, not socialist consciousness, but self-consciousness that they can absorb the effects of a modernising China without losing their traditions.

The categories examined within the elements of interest meet the requirements of convergent and discriminant validity. There are consistent contrasts between the image that the government wishes to project upon the Manzu and that which the Manzu themselves are constructing, both generally through the videotapes and specifically through the discourse in Yi Lan Gang. The agents steadily contest the elements that they manipulate as tropes for a Manzu

identity. None of the elements examined support the idea that the villagers and the Chinese government agree upon the nature of ethnicity or the Manzu identity.

The villagers have access to two competing images of themselves. One is as a harmless and exotic feudal remnant that wants modernisation and underlines the unified nature of the Han people. The other image is of a brave and fierce people with distinctive and ideologically significant traditions that illustrate who they really are. Both images are created and recreated through the normal ideological process of signification. Both are made possible by sophisticated technology and the occasional bit of string. The question is one of currency. Can the Guan maintain the use of these signs that reinforce the myths and values of their culture in the face of the power of the State? At this point the control exercised by the state appears to have been relaxed. Thus the villagers have the opportunity to use frequently in communication (among themselves, with other Manzu and with the ethnic others) these signs and thus establish their ethnic identity. These appear to be the key elements in the signification of Manzu identity: the ability to find common elements despite the obvious differences, and to identify tropes that signify effectively as icons of the past and symbols of the future.

The negotiation of the fluid Chinese identity is maintained by tensions in the public sphere. Since China is a multinational empire, these tensions are predictable. The Manzu that I encountered are attempting to negotiate their identity on terms that are not entirely dictated by the government. They are engaged in a dialogue in which their own voices are becoming progressively louder. However, they are in competition with the empire that they ironically helped to create and within which the modern State seems intent upon fixing them. The realisation that signs operate in competition with other signs, and in harmony with still others, is helpful in explaining how it is that many of the Manzu, who in many ways have been acculturated to the Han Chinese culture, still maintain a strong sense of separate identity and are able to integrate shamanic practice into the modern sense of what it means to be Manzu.

The villagers contest the nature of their identity with external actors and at the same time attempt to work with outside forces to protect their ethnicity. That is to say, they are engaged in a dialogue involving constant negotiation of their ability to control the meaning of being Manzu. The shamans and other members of the community are conscious of the process they are engaged in, and of the fact that they are manipulating their shamanic complex to accomplish certain ends. The function of shamanism is not to maintain ethnicity, or to cure psychomental dysfunction, or to allow the practitioner to gain access to esoteric knowledge. It involves all of these things, but it cannot be understood simply in those terms. Shamanism is a complex that is

acted upon for different purposes by different actors, in response to circumstances and agendas that are themselves subject to change. Naturally, shamanism has changed in many regards. But the suggestion that it is somehow not shamanism because it does not involve trance, or some other element, is mistaken. As has been noted, what the Manzu mean by real shamanism is not that it involves trance, but that it is *piao han*, and thus powerfully emblematic of Manzunes. The ecstatic trance is an accomplishment of the brave and agile, but so is the training of a hunting bird. To be *piao han* is not the exclusive domain of the shaman. Rather, shamanism is a subset of a larger domain of ethnicity that for the Manzu is understood in explicit terms.

That the Guan and other Manzu recognise that the shamanism that they practice has changed provides an important insight to the understanding of shamanism in Yi Lan Gang. Shamanism, whatever it may once have been manifested as, has retained its centrality. What is important about shamanism for the community may have changed significantly, but not in every aspect. The integrity of the clan, which is central to the members' sense of belonging and sense of place, is still maintained through shamanic activity.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Cultivating Guan Xi

At the same time that the Guan struggle to counteract opposition to the retention of their ethnic identity, they attempt to manipulate individuals and circumstances to help protect their clan. When they held the *ji si*, the Guan leadership made a point of inviting a number of outsiders. The Guan use these occasions to exert influence on the powerful in the district. A number of academics attended, from Mu Dan Jiang and Harbin. Additionally, representatives of the local media were invited to attend and even record certain elements of the ritual. Finally, members of the local municipal government (from Ning Xi) were invited to attend as guests of the village and the clan. These included members of the Bureau of Cultural Affairs, the Public Security Bureau and the Minority Affairs Committee. Both the clan and the village purposefully invited them. As guests of the village, the cadres who attended were not exposing themselves to criticism for supporting an outmoded feudal remnant. At the same time, the clan was able to act as host, and therefore develop *ganqing* (sentiment) and *renqing* (human feelings/favour) with these highly influential guests.

The reason for inviting academics and the media was essentially to expand the network of *guan xi* developed by the clan leaders for the clan and the village. The hope was to create a favourable impression so that they would be represented in a positive fashion to other outsiders, and to store up favour with potentially influential people for future use. These guests all have their own agendas, whether cadres, academics or the media. The reality of China today is the all-pervasive influence of the state. Quite by accident I was able to make the acquaintance of journalists from Mudanjiang who later came down to Yi Lan Gang for the *ji si*. They explained to me at one point that everything that they wrote was closely edited before it was published. This was no surprise, but beyond that they were sent to report on the ceremony only because of my presence there. I did not see the significance of this beyond assuming that they were doing a human interest story about a foreign researcher in the district. They went on to explain that the main theme of their story was to be the opportunities for foreign investment in the Ning Xi district. That there was greater interest in the region was demonstrated by my presence. The two reporters were quite forthcoming in admitting that the story was written in advance and they were just gathering details. This incident illustrated the changing priorities of the regime in China. But it also demonstrates the extent of control and level of interference. This power is used to actively intervene in the creation of the cultural identity of the minorities in China.

These occasions also provide an opportunity for the Guan to display their ethnicity in a public forum, thus asserting their identity and demonstrating the vitality of their traditions. It appears that the clan leadership is developing confidence in the durability of the reforms of the last twenty years and now feel free to indulge in very public displays of their ethnic affiliations. Another reason for inviting all of these friends and strangers is to help the clan demonstrate that they are authentic in their status as a minority group and thus entitled to the special privileges and considerations they receive. These include preferential placement in schools, relaxed family planning guidelines and funding for special projects. Finally, the presence of government officials and party members demonstrates to the members of the clan that their status as Manzu is not a detriment to their prospects. Children of mixed parentage, Manzu and Han, who must choose their ethnic designation, are encouraged to choose Manzu when they see that this identity is accepted and even approved of by representatives of the state. Finally, the Guan leaders who are also party cadres are clearly cultivating connections for their own individual purposes.

The shamans who are cultivating *guan xi* are functioning in a manner very similar to their traditional activities. There are parallels between treating with the ancestors and gaining their support and developing feelings of sentiment between people that lead to *guan xi*. The key in both cases is establishing a connection and manipulating or mastering the relationship. Feasting is the primary mechanism in both cases, and in both cases there is not simply an expectation of immediate return, although this is possible, but also or perhaps solely an interest in developing a strong sense of connectedness which may be described as empathy or fraternal feeling.

Creating Manzuness

The clan members are engaged in the production of ethnic identity, which they conceive of as fluid, based upon fixed or agreed upon elements of cultural identity. The constructions of ethnicity and social organisation are both ongoing and complementary processes. The shamans and other villagers engage in the negotiation of ethnic identity within a larger social and political context, while cultural identity drawn from the clan and enacted in various ways is used as a method of engaging that identity. The interesting element in China is that the state is also deliberately and consciously engaged with the identities of the numerous ethnic groups. The process is not only circumstantial, and it is not reducible to a situation of manipulation by social actors who take on an identity. There is another social actor, the state, which promulgates policies based on an explicit agenda that are intended to construct the identity of ethnic groups. Ethnic identity is produced through participation, and is not just dependent upon descent or

interpretation. Participation allows the shamans to be creative about who they are. Acting upon identity allows the members of the clan to be reflexive and to conceive of themselves actively. I do not believe that the Guan are actually developing the analysis I am presenting, but they are aware of the role of the state and while they present a primordial conception of their identity, they are also aware that at a certain level – the ethnic group – identity is contested.

The idea of participation returns us to the idea of meaning within the metaphor discussed in chapter two. The attempt to generate emic categories must be carried out in a consistent fashion. The focus has to be upon the concerns that preoccupy the social actors. Questions of trance, or whether Guan shamanism is a product of past interference by the imperial court, were not considered in detail. Following Turner's (1989) approach, the focus of research was the attempt to understand all aspects of the phenomenon as potential expressions of the underlying social theory of the Manzu. Shamanism was placed within the larger context of social life as understood by the Manzu, and analysed based upon Manzu conceptions. By sharing their insights about the social significance of their shamanism with me, the Guan helped me to see the larger analytical picture that could be melded with Western concepts of ethnicity to create a syncretic understanding of shamanism.

Shamanism, without trance, remains central to the Guan clan of Yi Lan Gang because the shamanic rites are used to reinforce the sense of identity by demonstrating in various ways the core elements of the idealised Manzu character. Being a shaman engages one in the struggle to understand what it means to be a Manzu. The shamans are encouraged by their vocation to be clan leaders and examine closely the nature of the clan identity. The end result is that they construct Manzu ethnicity through the rituals and indeed reinvent it in response to changing circumstances. But while they are engaged with identity they are also aware of the dialogic and relational aspects of the construction of identity. Even if they are not clear about what the elements of their cultural identity are, they do behave in a manner that demonstrates that they understand the immediacy of the contest that they engage in. Victor Turner describes how the Ndembu struggle over control of the *mukunda* and the assignment of the roles associated with it (1967). Yet, despite the rivalry this entails, the rite itself will and does come off. The participants are able to separate the aspects of the ritual so that the one does not endanger the other. This is also true of the shamans and clan leaders in Yi Lan Gang. The demonstration of fierceness and other virtues does not really have much to do with using the event of the *ji si* to improve the situation of the clan in some way. At the same time there is an intersection, for in attempting to create a relationship with the representatives of the state the clan leaders do find that they must

respond to the state's explicit aims regarding minority ethnic groups. These aims are antithetical to what the Manzu in the village believe must be included in their national character. There is a paradox here, and it is irresolvable. The best that can be done is to achieve a balancing act, wait for more change and hope that it is change in the right direction.

In chapter two, shamanism was described as unpredictable, risky and creative. The shamans are individuals, with their own ideas and abilities. Shamanism is unpredictable because it depends on individuals. As we have seen, the shamans of Yi Lan Gang disagree about the meaning of the symbols that they represent to the clan. They disagree about whether the spirits of the ancestors have real power, or what their nature is, or whether they even exist. Some of the shamans are grave, some are irrepressible, and others are callow. Their priorities and understandings differ, and not least because some are male and some female, some young and some old, some more educated than others, some born Manzu and some born Han. Thus, the nature of what it means to be Manzu, which they help immensely to create, is represented differently as they present themselves. As they respond as individuals to changing circumstances, so the nature of Manzu ethnicity re-emerges. The recreation of the Manzu identity is unpredictable. However, because it is epitomised in the ritual, variously interpreted by both the audience and the shamans, there exists a consistently agreed upon canon of ideas that are the quintessence of Manzuness. These are the symbols that are acted upon by individuals. They are shared symbols that can be acted upon in concert and in opposition to both the ethnic other (primarily Han) and the political other (the government).

I have suggested in previous chapters that the Manzu throughout their history have been involved in an ongoing process of redefining themselves as an ethnic group. Through the incorporation of ethnic otherness, and the response to external cultural influences, the Manzu have constantly shed old identities and emerged with new ones. The latest change has been from Manchu to Manzu. This is the process that they are engaged in right now. One of the leading groups in these ongoing changes is the shamans. This was understood well by the Qianlong emperor, who attempted to curb their influence not because he feared spiritual or political opposition, but because he knew that his attempts to redefine the meaning of Manzuness would be undermined by the countervailing influence of the shamans. It is reasonable for the Manzu to expect their shamans to take the leading role in the present situation of fluctuating ethnicity. The symbols employed in shamanic practice help shamans and others to define themselves.

Shamanism as practice has a variety of meanings for the shamans and for the laity. The shamans themselves, even within the Guan clan, do not agree entirely on what shamanism is.

The young shamans have yet to formulate a complete picture of shamanism. They do not simply regurgitate what they have been told by one elder or another, but are sometimes uncertain about what they are ready to accept. This protracted series of negotiations, among shamans and others, results in more than the construction of cultural identity at scheduled events. The various actors reinvent Manzunes according to their own experiences and interpretations of ritual and external events. The practice of shamanism is not the Manzu identity but it is a highly productive test ground out of which the Manzu identity in Yi Lan Gang emerges.

Often, the ideas of shamanism conflict with the ideas of Communism, and the shamans are actively attempting to resolve this contradiction. As noted, the resolution for some of the older shamans is to accept that there is a contradiction that cannot be resolved readily. They work to find an accommodation and have achieved some success in gaining the support of the local government. This addresses the question of the mediative aspects of shamanism. If Lommel (1967) and others are correct, then the shaman is concerned with mediating between order and chaos. The Guan clan shamans are neither able to resolve every contradiction, nor impose order on all situations. However, they have made the transition from resolving spiritual conflicts to dealing with worldly ones, as the general focus in this case has shifted to the mundane. The shaman understands the situation or social context, and leads the community in its response. As noted by Shirokogoroff, shamans are leaders within the community *par excellence*. The shamans may determine that the best way to respond to the threat to the clan is through strengthening the clan identity.

In the case of Yi Lan Gang, the shamans do indeed attempt to find a way to work with the surrounding community. They manage at times to co-opt the local or district leadership, as in establishing the village as a Manzu community, and even gain their active support and co-operation, as they did when they convinced the village cadre to help sponsor the *ji si*. The shamans support the clan in three distinct ways. First, they help to bring meaning to the cosmos, producing order out of chaos, by helping the clan members to retain an identity that makes sense while the pace of change accelerates around them. Second, they represent the corporate group to the government (a potentially dangerous external entity) and gain its co-operation and support. Third, at times they actively present information or symbols that oppose the idea of the Manzu promoted by the government and by the dominant other with which they interact on a quotidian basis. The Han Chinese society that surrounds the Manzu has a long-standing history of opposition to the Manzu, and as was discussed in the previous chapters, the general attitude towards minorities, both officially and socially has been consistently unfavourable. Presently,

there is both conflict and co-operation with the government, and the shamans must be able to deal with both possibilities.

The fact that the Manzu rely to such a degree upon their shamans is risky. If the shamans cease to exist, then one of the most important pillars of the clan will be removed. The Guan recognise this, and so have made an effort to incorporate the mothers who could potentially be the thin edge of the wedge of Han acculturation more thoroughly into the clan and the Manzu identity by recreating them as shamans, in a way that is new and unexpected. The elders have also made an effort to spread the shamanism through the generations by recruiting from all the age grades and working closely with the inexperienced shamans to improve their technique and their knowledge. These examples represent a conscious effort on the part of the leaders of the clan. But the risk they face is that these new shamans will not involve themselves deeply enough in the shamanism to become a force in the maintenance of the clan. By making shamanism more democratic, more easily accessed, they risk losing the powerful influence that the shamans have on the community. The power they have comes from their exceptional ability to present a convincing construct to the audience. Will the new shamans, doubtful and inexperienced, be able to carry on? The elders are gambling that the answer is yes.

The shamanism that the Guan practice is creative in adapting to changing circumstances and in maintaining the unity of the clan. The very process of spreading the shamanism through the generations is a highly creative response to the pressures brought to bear on their shamanism and their clan over the last one hundred years. The shamans of the Guan clan create a ceremonial experience for the clan members to strengthen their identity as Manzu. This activity has become more, not less, important as direct intervention by the state has waned in the era of economic reform. Every time the shamans perform a ritual, they are involved in a creative act. The fact that they have performed the ritual before, once or many times, does not lessen the creative nature of the act, because it is always performed for an audience, or rather two audiences. The first audience is the ancestors, who must be appealed to and satisfied if their help is to be secured. The second audience is the living clan members, who also have expectations. These expectations are not as explicit as those of the ancestors are understood to be. Nevertheless, they constitute an equally important focus for the shamans. They expect to see a demonstration of something powerful, regardless of whether it involves spirits or not. The laity must be moved by what they experience in order for it to create an impression upon them. They are also expecting to learn something about themselves. They are conscious of the didactic nature of the shamanic performance, and understand that the relationship with the ancestors is what makes them special.

They are more than just Chinese, for they are the scions of a distinguished Manzu clan. But they are there to be reminded of what the identity of the clan represents - the character of the Manzu.

At the same time the ritual is creative in the sense that they are re-establishing what it means to be Manzu. They are creating the Guan and Manzu identity over again in light of the issues that they face at the time of the performance. The shamans must be sensitive to the situation within the clan, and the pressures from outside the clan. The shamans are aware that the attitude towards shamanism has changed, and that belief in the manes has weakened. They know that many of the members of the clan now live in other communities, often far away, and that these people are especially vulnerable to losing interest in their Manzu identity. They pay specific attention to distant members, and make an effort to incite them to return to the village for ritual performances.

If Not Trance, Then What?

Townsley states that, “Yaminihua shamanism cannot be defined by a clearly constituted discourse of beliefs, *symbols*, or meanings. It is not a system of knowledge of facts known, but rather an ensemble of techniques for knowing” (*op. cit.*: 452; italics added). I have indicated in my discussion that in this case shamanism is precisely a signifier of identity (although I do not mean to suggest that it is only that). Nevertheless, I do not feel that I have diverged significantly from what Townsley suggests because shamanism as a symbol is the function of shamanism, yet shamanism is more than merely functional. It operates through specialised techniques that prepare or train the practitioners for responding to exigencies and discovering solutions to the problems encountered by the community. The clan shamans grow in experience, confidence and knowledge over time. They become better at being shamans who are responsive to change and are able to present shamanism as an actionable trope central to the constitution of a Manzu identity. The shamans are not merely some sort of therapists (*pace* Shirokogoroff) for they do not conduct their activities simply to alleviate social problems or ameliorate the condition of the clan. However, the search for knowledge and the understanding of what it means to be Manzu are developed within the social context of the clan Guan. When this process is identified as dialogic, it means the shamans respond to the community in the application of the ritual, and the community understands its ethnic identity partially in terms proposed by the shamans. But it also means that the shamans in their private discussions and reflections are responding to the situation in which they find themselves, and are seeking knowledge in categories that are partially defined by external elements (the laity of the clan, the literature on shamanism and Manzu history that

they read, and the larger Chinese socio-political context) including a state that wishes to actively define identity.

One aspect of shamanism is to create and control the arena of thought. This is not necessarily carried out in the public sphere. To this day, the shamans of Yi Lan Gang retain secret knowledge, and share this knowledge with the apprentices only in private. The knowledge of the meaning of the chants and prayers is never fully revealed to the community, and the extent of the ability of the shamans to read and understand the written and spoken Man language is deliberately obscured by the shamans. The purpose of their ceremonies, and the strategies that shamans employ to gain leverage over outsiders, are developed in private discussions among the *mokunda*, his deputies, the shamans and their assistants.

What seems to have taken place in Yi Lan Gang is that the shamans have used their creative abilities to recreate the nature of what it means to be Manzu. Their responsibility is to understand that which occurs around them. They must play close attention to the world, in which they live, and actively consider the consequences for their clan of what they encounter. They are still engaged with the cosmos in a process of discovery. The comparison between the spiritual universe and the various levels that it entails with the mundane concerns of the clan may seem specious. However, the shamans remain occupied with the pursuit of knowledge in the service of their clan. The comparison being made is not really between the otherworldly and the mundane, but rather it is a comparison of the function of the shamans demarcated by the presence or absence of trance activity. The shamans still seek to gain insights of a more general nature, and they do tend to be the most sophisticated inhabitants of the village. The result of this is that they are able to adjust the ritual presentation to make it more attractive to the laity (e.g. by expanding the feast, reintroducing the *huan suo* or extending the millet-pounding dance). Trance is a significant indicator of the change that has taken place, but its absence should not lead us to conclude that the practice of the Guan clan is somehow not shamanism.

The clan leaders are attempting to strengthen the role of the clan through the most appropriate medium at their disposal: shamanic ritual. Thus, even though the spiritual aspect of shamanism is insecure in the minds of some, and trance is no longer practised, shamanism as an expression of identity retains its relevance. The ancestors are *piao han*, and they expect the rituals and the shamans to be so as well. They specifically look for bravery and agility in the dancing and singing of the shamans. This is also why the slaughter of the pigs is absolutely central to the performance. It is not simply to hark back to the nomadic times, but to demonstrate that the spirit of those times still lives in the contemporary Manzu. Identification with the

ancestors must take an active form that the clan members can readily access, and this is the accomplishment of the shamans.

No one who is a part of the clan in the village ever refers to it by the name Guan. They just say we or they, and it is expected that their interlocutor will understand the reference. There is strength in the identification with the clan, even today. Despite the weakening of the clan over the past decades, the identity remains. Throughout this work I have referred to both the clan and the Manzu ethnic group as the identity of the Guan. Just as the clan cannot exist without the shaman, so the Manzu cannot exist without the clan. To be Manzu means to be a member of a clan – traceable through the genealogy, with ancestors whose memory is cherished and whose substance is emulated. The two identities are inextricably tied together, and both depend on the shamans for their explanation and confirmation.

The Manzu are aware that they are engaged in a struggle over their existence as an ethnic group. They are neither dupes nor victims. In responding to this threat, they turn to shamanism. Now it is about identity, more than it is about spiritual power derived from knowledge. Nevertheless, the shamans still have the power to affect and benefit their community. It is the responsibility of the clan shamans to explain how and why they are Manzu. The shamans through the rituals that they carry out teach the heritage and character of the Manzu. The shaman is not the living embodiment of Manzuness, rather the rituals themselves are an enactment of it.

The struggle is complicated by the problem that the Manzu do not necessarily themselves believe in the existence or the power of the ancestral spirits. The shamans are faced with the question of how to make their shamanism effective as a tool for reinforcing the clan identity. The method they employ is to emphasise the characteristics of the ancestors as both admirable and present in the living Manzu. The ritual as the embodiment of the ancestors does not require trance for two reasons. First, the living audience may not believe in the power of the spirits to enter the shamans during trance. Second, the shamans today are not the living embodiment of the ancestors through spirit mastery. Rather, they are the exemplars of the idealised traits of the Manzu national character, which are drawn from the knowledge of the ancestors that the shamans bear. It is the character of the ancestors that is venerated today, not only the ancestors themselves. The shamans teach that character, demonstrate it, and provide an opportunity for the laity to participate in it. This is how the Manzu maintain the relevance of shamanism and the influence of the shamans. And this is why trance is no longer necessary.

Many attempts have been made to categorise or characterise shamanism, whether externally imposed (arctic hysteria, group hypnosis, ecstatic trance, real shamanism) or internally

generated (*fe doro*, *ice*, northern Manzu, southern Manzu, 'real' shamanism). Reviewing the literature, as noted in chapter two, indicated that the many approaches to the understanding of shamanism usually have merit and can make a contribution to our understanding of the shamanic complex as a whole. While it seems evident that none of the attempts to explain shamanism (either in terms of what it is or what it is for) have been entirely successful, the very complexity of the phenomenon requires that the various approaches to the shamanic complex be considered. The majority of the works examined and my own research indicated that the rituals are the key to understanding that shamanism is engaged with social life in a creative, dialogic fashion. The emphasis that is placed in Yi Lan Gang upon the ritual performance confirms this understanding. Shamans are profoundly important contributors to the creation of ethnic identity and social life.

We do not know what it was like to attend a *ji si* one hundred years ago. Shirokogoroff's descriptions do not pay attention to details such as how often they swept out the ritual hall, or how free people were to criticise the behaviour of others. It is difficult to say whether or not the way in which Manzu identity was affirmed then is the same as now. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the Manzu children in 1900, while the Qing Empire still survived, were surrounded with evidence of their ethnicity at all times and that the symbolic resonance of the *ji si* was immediately evident to them. Today, the symbols that are employed are not necessarily comprehended by the laity. They require demonstration, reiteration and explanation by the shamans in order to be certain that the message gets across to the audience. This accounts for the highly demonstrative behaviour of the shamans and assistants described in chapter five, and for the emphasis placed on lay participation whenever possible.

One of the most striking aspects of the *ji si* of the Guan clan was the overall lack of solemnity involved. There was a festive atmosphere throughout the three days of the ritual. The ceremony presented a positive aspect of Manzu identity, and provided entertainment for the clan members. This is no small thing. The electronic age has come to Yi Lan Gang, with videotapes and satellite television. The competition from the government for the attention of the clan members is intense. The appeal of the shamanic practice is that it is entertaining and festive, but also provides an emotional release, a sense of identity and a sense of security. These appealing aspects at present outweigh the appeal of the electronic media for the loyalty of the clan members. Whether or not this can last is impossible to determine at present. However, this appeal presents an opportunity to teach the values of the clan through the demonstrative behaviour of the shamans and assistants throughout the ceremony, both during the actual rites and the surrounding activities. The assiduousness, frankness and fierceness of the shamans are

all demonstrated through symbolic actions that are constantly repeated over the course of the three days.

The idealised characteristics of Manzu identity are not always compatible with the values of modern China. In fact, the very desire to hang onto their ethnic identity is typically characterised as feudalistic or bourgeois. The idea of being fierce is especially problematic, since it unacceptable in the light of the Manzu's past history as conquerors of China. Despite this, the experience of life in Yi Lan Gang shows that these values are still maintained and actively promoted. The Manzu are offered an alternative set of values and characteristics, but by and large they reject them in favour of tradition.

On the cloths hung beside the altars used in the *ji si* it says in the written Manzu language “*sabingga*,” which means propitious or auspicious, on one side, and “*huturi*,” which means good fortune, on the other side. This is also written in Chinese characters, for the benefit of the majority of the clan members. The Chinese characters that are equivalent to these words are traditionally displayed on the ancestral altars of Han Chinese families. Yet, these are considered to be traditionally Manzu in Yi Lan Gang. I cannot suggest what the origin of these writings may be, or who influenced whom. Nor does it particularly matter, to the Guan. They are perfectly aware of this overlap in traditions, along with many others. These do not represent contradictions, for the Manzu feel that they know what it means to be Manzu. The shamans remain focussed on the clan that they serve, and without which they cannot exist.

The leaders of the Guan clan, and other Manzu clans as well, have decided that they must actively promote their ethnic identity. They know that much of what was distinctive about their ethnicity has passed into history. Yet, they believe deeply that they are *piao han*, and that this is what they must be to survive. The essentials of bravery, fierceness, agility and quickness are powerfully expressed for the Manzu within the shamanic rituals that honour the characteristics of the ancestors. Through their genealogy they establish their sense of connectedness, their *guan xi*. The shamanic performance is a powerful trope that allows the members of the clan to focus upon their own idealised nature and provides an image of what they should be. The shamanic quest, not to gain power but knowledge in service of the clan, continues.

To this point, the shamans seem to be succeeding in their quest, and the Guan clan may even be enjoying a renaissance. Yet the forces arrayed against them are powerful and pervasive. The Manzu do not present a unified front in the face of adversity. Many have concluded that they are finished, that their decline is terminal. Still they persist, and in quick and agile fashion adapt to the circumstances they confront. They create themselves again.

Appendix 1

Reigns of the Latter Jin/Qing Dynasts

Nurhaci	leader of the Jianzhou khan of the Jin (reign: Tianming)	1582-1618 1618-1626
Hong Taiji	khan of the Jin (reign: Tiancong) emperor of the Qing (reign: Chongde)	1627-1635 1636-1643
Fulin	(reign: Shunzhi)	1644-1661
Xuanye	(reign: Kangxi)	1662-1722
Yinzhen	(reign: Yongzheng)	1723-1735
Hongli	(reign: Qianlong)	1736-1795
Yongyan	(reign: Jiaging)	1796-1820
Minning	(reign: Daoguang)	1821-1850
Yizhu	(reign: Xianfeng)	1851-1861
Zaichun	(reign: Tongzhi)	1862-1874
Zaitian	(reign: Guangxu)	1875-1908
Puyi	(reign: Xuantong) president of Manchukuo emperor of Manchukuo (reign: Kangde)	1909-1912 1932-1934 1934-1945

Appendix 2

Dynasties of China

<u>Xia</u>	1990-1557 B.C.
Shang	1557-1050 B.C.
Zhou	1050-221 B.C.
Spring and Autumn	722-481 B.C.
Warring States	481-221 B.C.
Qin	221-207 B.C.
Former Han	206 B.C.-A.D. 9
Xin	9-23
Latter Han	25-220
Three Kingdoms	220-280
Western Jin	280-316
North & South Empires	317-588
Sui	589-617
Tang	617-907
Five Dynasties	907-960
Song	960-1279
Liao (Khitan Mongol)	907-1119
Jin (Jurchen)	1115-1234
Yuan (Mongol)	1279-1368
Ming	1368-1644
Qing	1644-1911
Republic of China	1911-present
People's Republic of China	1949-present

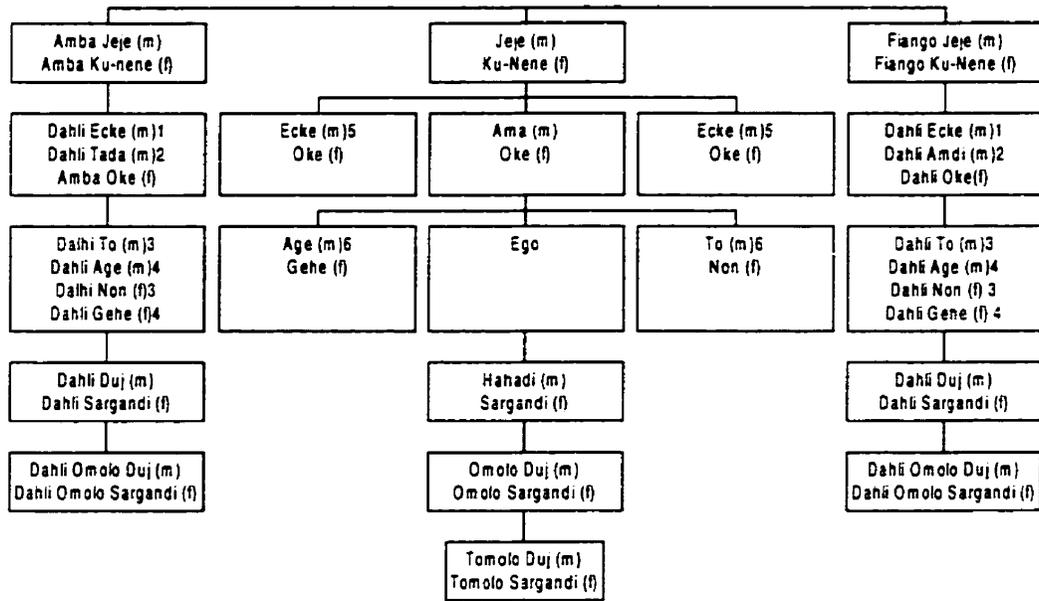
Appendix 3

Appendix 3

Idealised Kinship Chart: Ego's Clan

Terms given are used today in Yi Lan Gang Manzu Village.

Senior kin are always to the left; junior kin are always to the right.



1. If younger than ego's father.
2. If older than ego's father.
3. If older than ego.
4. If younger than ego.
5. Ego addresses their children as siblings with the term eskundi.
6. Ego addresses their children as his/her own children.

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