



Siberian Shamanism: The Shanar Ritual of the Buryats

Virlana Tkacz, Sayan Zhambalov, Wanda Phipps



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An intimate account of an ancient shamanic ritual of Siberia

- Illustrated with vivid, full-color photographs throughout
- Details the many preparations and ritual objects as well as the struggles of the shamans to complete the ceremony successfully

Near the radiant blue waters of Lake Baikal, in the lands where Mongolia, Siberia, and China meet, live the Buryats, an indigenous people little known to the Western world. After seventy years of religious persecution by the Soviet government, they can now pursue their traditional spiritual practices, a unique blend of Tibetan Buddhism and shamanism. There are two distinct shamanic paths in the Buryat tradition: Black shamanism, which draws power from the earth, and White shamanism, which draws power from the sky. In the Buryat Aga region, Black and White shamans conduct rituals together, for the Buryats believe that they are the children of the Swan Mother, descendants of heaven who can unite both sides in harmony.

Providing an intimate account of one of the Buryats' most important shamanic rituals, this book documents a complete *Shanar*, the ceremony in which a new shaman first contacts his ancestral spirits and receives his power. Through dozens of full-color photographs, the authors detail the preparations of the sacred grounds, ritual objects, and colorful costumes, including the *orgay*, or shaman's horns, and vividly illustrate the dynamic motions of the shamans as the spirits enter them. Readers experience the intensity of ancient ritual as the initiate struggles through the rites, encountering unexpected resistance from the spirit world, and the elder shamans uncover ancient grievances that must be addressed before the *Shanar* can be completed successfully.

Interwoven with beautiful translations of Buryat ceremonial songs and chants, this unprecedented view of one of the world's oldest shamanic traditions allows readers to witness extraordinary forces at work in a ritual that culminates in a cleansing blessing from the heavens themselves.



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