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***SPIRITUALISM WITHIN RELIGIOUS PLURALISM: SOCIAL ISSUES  
OF URBAN SHAMANISM IN TASHKENT***

**Abstract:** Since Uzbekistan gained its independence, the overall attitude towards religion has greatly changed. Within the framework of law, religious organizations have been granted free and open activity in the society. Uzbekistan is a secular state, the religious way of life and thinking lives in harmony with that of the secular in the country. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On freedom of faith and religious organizations” of 1998 secures the right of the public to profess any religion individually or in group, to observe religious customs and rites, and to offer pilgrimages to holy sites. Most of the population of Uzbekistan follows the Sunni Islam. Aside from that, there are representatives of more than 15 religious confessions in the country: Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and others. All of them act for the sake of the prosperity of the Homeland, the consolidation of national independence, as well as the promotion of political and social stability. The processes of globalization has since then increased the income of new spiritual ideas and created a synthesis between native forms of indigenous healing as well as new samples from the culturally and regionally diverse population of CIS countries and the world in a whole. This article aims to contribute to the discussions on social issues and its 'contents' in light of the urbanization processes in Tashkent. The main argument is that social actions within urban shamanism maintain the everyday spiritual needs in the community. The analysis focuses specifically on practices of solving problems related to family, marital, financial, and effect issues. It shows how these practices help people and modify the context of Tashkent.

The aim of this paper is to outline the current situation of urban shamanism in Tashkent. It examines the relationship between spiritual specialists and society, the phenomenon of urban shamanism and the emergence of spiritual business in Tashkent. The study is partly based on a 2

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year-long fieldwork in Uzbekistan (2011–2012). During this time, the author came into contact with spiritual practitioners, healers, had interviews with their clienteles, and attended a number of rituals that they conducted. The field study was conducted at a time when these practices had already “grown”, i.e. they had recruited a vast number of members and attracted enough clients to operate, but still had not reached the stage of economic prosperity.

**Keywords:** *Urban shamanism, religion, spiritual practices, spiritual specialists, healers, Tashkent, Uzbekistan*

Social action in urban shamanism is a process of receiving an experience through overcoming conflict and daily problems. These actions occur in the society, which divides values, views and has common worldviews. During the field research in Tashkent, it became obvious that social action in urban shamanism could be reasoned with the malfunctioning of social relations which can't be solved by usual means. This is followed by asking for the help of urban shaman, for finding a solution of the problem. It can be done through reintegration and returning to status quo or acknowledging the existence of a crisis and the modification of social bonds. In both cases there is symbolic (metaphorical) reflection, where actors illustrate their unity in the form of social action via an urban shaman as a performer of a rite. In its turn, evaluation of ritual effectiveness in social action happens with consideration of symbols in a primary values system, infiltrated into human consciousness during the entire lifetime within local communities, therefore reflecting coherence and clear integration with the social system.

This survey was based on an ethno-sociological approach such as questionnaires and interviews.<sup>1</sup> Research covered 293 individuals from seven different city districts – Bektemir, Mirzo-Ulugbek, Unus-Abad, Chilanzar, Almazar, Shayhontohur, Uchtepa and the Tashkent suburban areas of Yangiul and Keles. Special developed 5 questionnaires types were used (Form of Ethnological Research – FER): as following – FER01 – 149 individuals; FER02 – 52 individuals; FER03 – 22 individuals; FER04 and FER05 – 70 individuals. Questionnaires were composed of blocks of questions – perception of urban shamanism, gender, age, duration of contact with healers, faith factor, social defragmentation, type of problems, social status of clienteles etc. with a total of 50 questions. Also a special questionnaire form was worked out– SFER03 developed for practicing urban healers -this had 43 questions. The survey covered people

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<sup>1</sup> The author's field research, materials and survey were carried out as part of the PhD program at the Department of Archeology and Ethnology at National University of Uzbekistan. Tashkent, 2011.

within the 20 – 70 years old range. The social structure of the participants-respondents was diverse, including farmers, industry workers, office workers, businessmen, high educated staff in institutes and colleges.

### **General Information**

Uzbekistan is situated in Central Asia, north of Turkmenistan, south of Kazakhstan. Its area is slightly larger than California. It borders Afghanistan 137 km, Kazakhstan 2,203 km, Kyrgyzstan 1,099 km, Tajikistan 1,161 km, and Turkmenistan 1,621 km. Uzbekistan is a landlocked country although it includes the southern portion of the Aral Sea and along with Liechtenstein, it is one of the only two double landlocked countries in the world with mostly mid latitude desert, long, hot summers, mild winters; semiarid grassland in the east.

### **Historical Overview**

Uzbekistan occupies the heart of Central Asia, the area historically known as Turkestan. Some of the earliest known inhabitants of this region were Indo-Iranians, who are thought to have migrated to the region around the second millennium B.C. By the 4th century B.C., after the campaigns of Alexander the Great, the trade along the Silk Road increased, and the area emerged as an important trading center; cultural contacts intensified, and a variety of religions flourished. After the Arab campaigns of the 7th and 8th centuries, Islam replaced Buddhism as the dominant religion, and by the 10th century the area had become an important center in the Muslim world. The Mongols, led by Genghis Khan, invaded the area in the 13th century and caused great destruction. During this time, migrations of nomadic Turks from the northern steppe areas increased. In the late 14th century the tribal prince Timur (Tamerlane) created a vast empire with Samarkand as its capital, but the political stability he established crumbled after his death. In the early 1500s, Shaibani Khan led a major invasion by the Uzbek tribes from the north. From this time on, the Uzbeks dominated the political life of central Turkestan. Three independent khanates, centered in Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand, dominated Turkestan between the 16th and the 19th century.<sup>2</sup>

Russia conquered the territory of present-day Uzbekistan in the late 19th century. Tashkent became the administrative center of Turkestan, and a colonial relationship was established. Cotton began to supplant other crops. The resistance

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<sup>2</sup> “The World Factbook 2013-14. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013,” accessed July 12, 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>.

to the Red Army after the Bolshevik Revolution was eventually suppressed and a socialist republic was established in 1924. During the Soviet era, intensive production of “white gold” (cotton) and grain led to overuse of agrochemicals and the depletion of water supplies, which harmed the land and left the Aral Sea and certain rivers half dry. Independent since 1991, the country seeks to gradually lessen its dependence on the cotton monoculture by diversifying agricultural production while developing its mineral and petroleum reserves and increasing its manufacturing base.

### Ethnic Groups and Religions

From September 1991 to July 1993 the Republic of Uzbekistan was officially recognized by 160 states. On March 2, 1992 Uzbekistan joined the United Nations Organizations as an equal member, and joined the Helsinki process by signing the Final Act of the Summit for Security and Cooperation. The total population is 28,661,637 (July 2013 est.). Literacy: age 15 and over can read and write, compared with to the literacy of the total population - 99.3%. Urban population is 36% of the total population (2010). The rate of urbanization is 1.4% of the annual rate of change (2010-15 est.).<sup>3</sup>

Table 1. Ethnic groups represented in Uzbekistan (1996 est.):

Uzbek	Russian	Tajik	Kazakh	Karakalpak	Tatar	Other
80%	5.5%	5%	3%	2.5%	1.5%	2.5%

Table 2. Languages:

Uzbek (official)	Russian	Tajik	Other
74.3%	14.2%	4.4%	7.1%

Table 3. Religions:

Muslim (mostly Sunni)	Eastern Orthodox	Other
88%	9%	3.0%

The Republic of Uzbekistan is a secular state, where representatives of different religions and professions co-exist peacefully. Up to date 2225 religious organizations of 16 confessions are registered in Uzbekistan. So various in

<sup>3</sup> “The Governmental portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan © 2001—2013,” accessed July 12, 2013, <http://www.gov.uz/en/>.

structure, the ethnic picture of Uzbekistan shows that the country is tolerant to religious issues and different confessions peacefully get along with each other here. The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan guarantees freedom of conscience for everybody. According to the Constitution everyone has the right to profess any religion or profess none (Article 31 of the Constitution).

The prevalent religion of Uzbekistan is the Islam of Sunni sect, professed by 93 per cent of the population, except for 1 per cent of Muslim-Shiah who live in the territory of Bukhara and Samarkand.

It is important to mention that, Uzbekistan had an ancient tradition of sufism as a mystic and ascetic belief and practice in Islam. This appeared first in the West of the Islamic world (Egypt, Syria, Iraq) under the influence of eastern Christian monasticism at the turn of the VIII and IX centuries. By the X century having separated from asceticism, Sufism became an independent and progressive for its time religious philosophical-moral sect within Islam spreading widely over the whole Islamic world in the vast Arab Caliphate from Egypt to Spain in the West to Eastern Turkestan in the East, including Iran and Central Asia.

Central Asian Sufism in particular was formed under the influence of the local forms of Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Nestorianism and other eastern Iranian and religious sects of Mawarannahr that existed in pre-Islamic Central Asia. At the beginning of the XII century three large orders formed in Central Asia – the Kubrawiyya (in Khorezm), the Kadyriyachapter (in Fergana) and the Turkic fraternity of Yassawiyya founded on the basis of Yusuf al-Hamadani's teachings by AkhmadYassawy in Turkestan (the south of Kazakhstan). Various Sufi unions – tariqah were leading a fight for greater impact on believers, which sometimes took a desperate form. A lot of Sufi monuments and mansions have been preserved in Uzbekistan up until today: the memorial complex of Bakhaudhin Nakshbandi in Bukhara suburb, the Khoja Akhrar Mosque and Tomb, Gur Emir Mausoleum, Ruhabad Mausoleum and others in Samarkand, the Sheikh Zainutdinbobo Mausoleum, referred to the Sukhravardiya Order in Tashkent; also the Shaikhantaur Mausoleum and Mausoleum of Kaffal Shashi in the capital. The Zangiata Mausoleum in the suburbs. Furthermore several female Sufi mansions where women could only join were established in Central Asia. The Kiz Bibi complex was the most prominent among them. All these places are holy for Sufis and possess healthfulness. People from far off countries are coming there to find healing and wisdom.

The next dominant religion according to the number of believers is Christianity: Orthodoxy (4%), and Catholicism (3%), In 2011 Uzbekistan will celebrate the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Russian Orthodox Church in Middle Asia. It is easy to count that Orthodoxy came here in 1871 together with joining of these lands to the Russian Empire and the establishment of Tashkent and Turkistan

eparches. The church under the Tashkent hospital was established the same year. Today it turned into the most beautiful Cathedrals of the Holy Dormition – the main church of the Tashkent eparch. The majority of believers come here, although there are more churches in Tashkent (for example, the church of Alexander Nevskiy at the Botkin cemetery, the church of patriarch Ermogen, the church of the great prince Vladimir). There are some beautiful and ancient churches in other cities of Uzbekistan – in Samarkand (Cathedral of Saint Aleksey), in Kokand (The Church of the Kazan icon of the Mother of God) etc. Also, the convent of Saint Nikola is opened in Tashkent (this is the first opened convent in Middle Asia) and the Tashkent theological seminary.

The Catholic confession is not so large in Uzbekistan. But the church (kostel) of Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ existed in Tashkent almost for a century, which is also the beautiful sightseeing of the city.

The history of kostel begins in 1912, when its construction was started. The underlying reason for it was the growth of the catholic believers. As far back as the end of XIX century, during the military campaign of the General Kaufman on annexing Asian lands to Russia, settlers arrived, mainly comprised of military forces and exiled people, which included Germans, Lithuanians, Poles, Czechs and others. By 1917, the Soviet government reorganized the territory of the union, the church was turned into a storehouse, and later into a dormitory. Only in 1992 was the building of kostel handed over to the catholic parish of Tashkent. Sunday Masses are held there ever since.

Churches of other significant confessions in Uzbekistan include the Armenian Apostolic church and the Jewish synagogues. Speaking of synagogues, it should be noted that the Judaism of Bukharian Jews – some only part of Jews, living in the territory of Middle Asia (especially in Bukhara, hence the origin of the name). Jewish community in Bukhara is mentioned in sources of the XIII century. There, Jews lived in separate neighborhoods and engaged in weaving and dyeing crafts, and also in trade. Afterwards, Bukharian Jews began to settle in large numbers in Samarkand, Kokand, Andijan. For centuries they could preserve their language, religion and traditions. Today, the number of Bukharian Jews in cities of Uzbekistan has decreased greatly, as many left for Israel, America, Australia, Canada. Only two synagogues of Bukharian Jews remain in Bukhara, two – in Samarkand and one in Tashkent, which fell into ruin and will soon be replaced by a new one, the construction still being in progress.<sup>4</sup>

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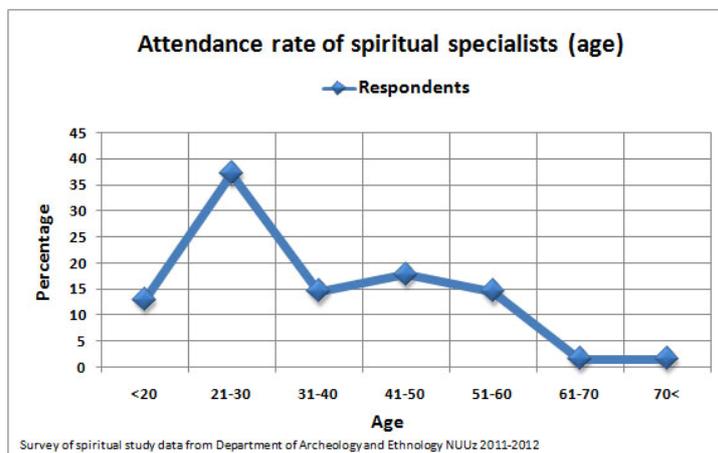
<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Table 4. Religious organizations registered on November 1, 2001 (Committee of Religious affairs of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan)

#	Religious organisation	Total	Centers	Religious organizations	Educational institutions	Monasteries	Location
1	Islam	1857	2	1844	11		Tashkent-city, Karakalpakstan, all areas
2	Russian Orthodox Church	32	1	28	1	2	Tashkent-city, Andizhan, Bukhara, Dzhizak, Fergana, Kashkadarya, Navoi, Samarkand, Surkhandarya, Syrdarya, Tashkent areas
3	Roman Catholic Church	3	1	2			Tashkent-city, Fergana, Samarkand areas
4	Evangelical Christian Baptist Church	23	1	22			Tashkent-city, Bukhara, Dzhizak, Fergana, Khorezm, Navoi, Namangan, Samarkand, Tashkent areas
5	Full Gospel Church	22	1	20	1		Tashkent-city, Andizhan, Bukhara, Fergana, Khorezm, Navoi, Samarkand, Syrdarya
6	Seventh-day Christian Adventist church	10		10			Tashkent-city, Bukhara, Fergana, Navoi, Samarkand, Tashkent areas
7	Evangelical Lutheran Church	4		4			Tashkent-city, Fergana, Samarkand, Tashkent areas
8	New Apostolic Church	4		4			Tashkent-city, Bukhara, Navoi, Samarkand areas
9	"Jehovah's Witnesses" Church	2		2			Fergana, Tashkent areas
10	Armenian Apostolic Church	1		1			Samarkand area
11	Christian Church "Voice of God"	1		1			Navoi area
12	Korean Protestant churches	58		58			Tashkent-city, Bukhara, Dzhizak, Fergana, Kashkadarya, Namangan, Samarkand, Surkhandarya, Syrdarya, Tashkent areas
13	Communities of Bahai	7		7			Tashkent-city, Bukhara, Dzhizak, Kashkadarya, , Samarkand, Tashkent areas
14	Jewish religious communities	8		8			Tashkent-city, Bukhara, Samarkand areas
15	Society for Krishna Consciousness	2		2			Tashkent-city, Samarkand area
16	Bible Society of Uzbekistan	1	1				Tashkent-city
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2034</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>	

### Challenges of Big City and Urban Shamanism

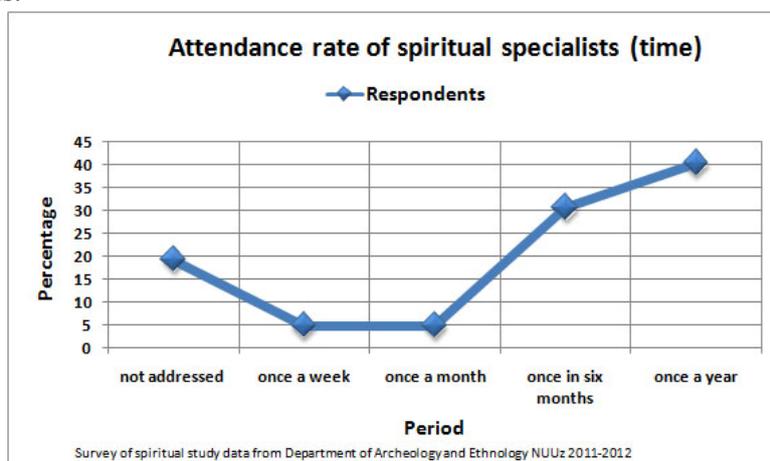
Urban shamanism in Tashkent is characterized first of all by addressing to supernatural realm which reflected in healing practices. According to the survey data the process of replacement healing with natural means (e.g. herbs) into supernatural means (e.g. spells, prayers) was sought after. That process in fact lies within the mentality of oriental society, particularly the one in Central Asia, which is defined by interlacing the empirical experience in medicine and hygiene with religious and mystical views, as the source of the problem is regarded as divine punishment for sins, or evil eye, and curse.<sup>5</sup> Comparative analysis of practices among urban and rural shamans illustrates prevalence of using amulets, spells, prayers and dealing with problems caused by supernatural powers in contrast to rural ones, which deal mainly with physiological problems caused by natural reasons (e.g. headaches). For instance, people who visited these spiritual specialists told when interviewed that if someone has problems with his/her partner, the urban shaman would give them an enchanted object to put in the partner's wardrobe in order to change the situation. Another example is the widespread use of ordering talismans or amulets for "opening the way" of fortune and welfare as a whole. The same technique is used in love issues for preparing love-potions or even in dealing with cases of depression and irritability that happen often in urban areas.<sup>6</sup>



<sup>5</sup> M. El-Islam, S.I. Abu-Dagga, "Lay explanations of symptoms of mental ill health in Kuwait," *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 38 (1992): 150-6.

<sup>6</sup> P.T. Саттаров, "Элементы шаманского целительства в традиционной культуре," *Мозийдан Садо* 3, no. 39 (2008): 8-11; Саттаров, "К вопросу о шаманском целительстве в традиционной культуре," *Общественные науки Узбекистана* 3-4, no. 98-100 (2009): 98-100.

Researches support several basic similarities and differences in healing practices among urban and rural shamans; differences in praxis lay in the heterogeneity of the present day community's life conditions<sup>7</sup>. In the centre of the observed process also lay a number of profound factors such as individualization and acculturation which become more obvious in large cities than rural areas. Anthropologists recognize that urban shamanism fulfils the function of social adaptation, which determines actions aimed at solving conflicts or crisis like situations.<sup>8</sup>



For the urban society, it is typical to illustrate a tendency for significant social transformation in the process of acculturation. People who moved from rural areas to the city were influenced by the urban society and perceive their way of life on a certain level, thus getting involved into global processes. During that process, borders between old and new, internal and external are vanishing and that happens with cultural traditions as well; some of the customs get forgotten and some of them undergo transformations<sup>9</sup>.

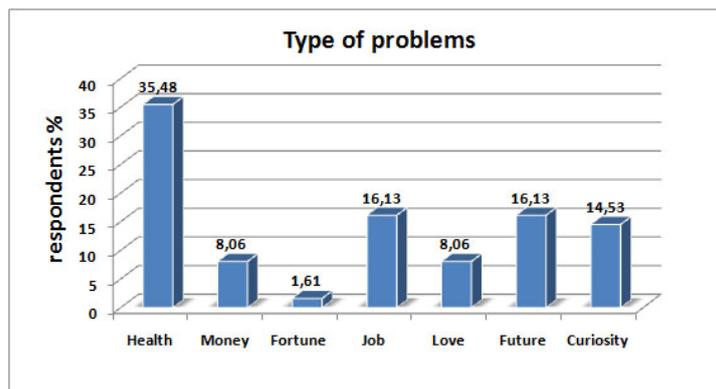
One of the reasons influencing an increase in the activity of urban shamanism in Tashkent is the transition from big patriarchal families to small

<sup>7</sup> S. Krippner, "The epistemology and technologies of shamanic states of consciousness," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 7 (2000): 93-118; Larry R. Decker, "Combat Trauma: Treatment from a Mystical/Spiritual Perspective," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* Vol. 47, Issue 1 (January 2007): 30-53; Alean Al-Krenawi, "Explanations of Mental Health Symptoms by the Bedouin-Arabs of the Negev," *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* Vol. 45, Issue 1 (Spring 1999): 56.

<sup>8</sup> Саггаров, "Тема шаманизма в западноевропейской и американской историографии," *Ўзбекистон тарихи* 1 (2010): 54-61.

<sup>9</sup> Саггаров, "Адаптация традиционного целительства к условиям урбанизма," *Ўзбекистон тарихи* 1 (2012): 80-88.

families among young people<sup>10</sup>. During the last decade, the number of small families rapidly increased, therefore increasing proportion of marital relations in the list of problems spiritual specialists deal with. According to the survey data, in most cases women make up for the majority of their clients, who seek to eliminate the source of troubles by supernatural means or take advice to overcome the crisis. In the XX<sup>th</sup> century, the main expression of female identity was the stay at home wife status and since 1980-1990s it started to change<sup>11</sup>. Employment and financial independence led to achieving another identity - as breadwinner, which in its turn led to a conflict with traditional Uzbek families and later to an increased divorce rate. Thus, individualism or diffidence, social fragmentation makes the majority of women to address their problems to shamans. On the other hand, the increasing gap in the level of education and income affects numerous problems and diffidence. In this case, faith and relations are the stepping stones of motivational power in the constant flow of city life, fulfilling a positive function, providing stability and reinforcement for the vicissitudes of life.<sup>12</sup>



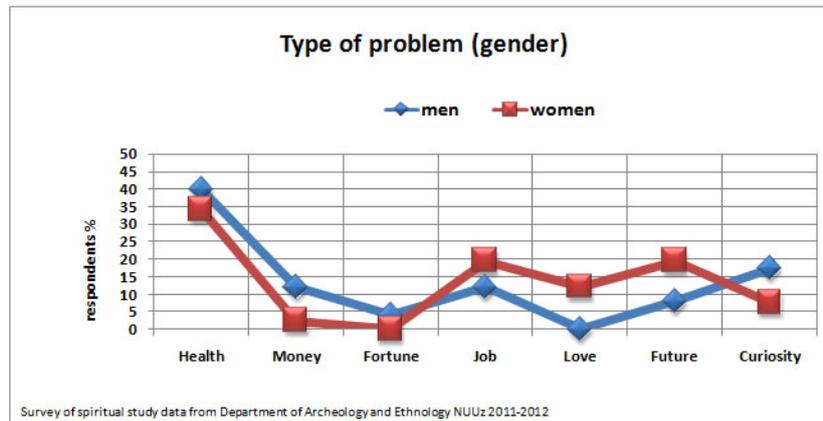
Observations illustrate a correlation in the conflict between traditional and progressive, which leads to an increase of personal and social problems which in turn lead to the need of addressing urban spiritualists. Standard medicine can deal with physical and emotional problems; however sometimes it can't manage the alterations of life conceptions and values occurring in large urban areas. Thus, in

<sup>10</sup> И. Джаббаров, *Узбеки* (Ташкент, 2007), 153-166.

<sup>11</sup> З.Х. Арифханова, Г.Ш. Зунунова, *Обрядово-ритуальная жизнь узбеков Ташкента в условиях независимости* (Ташкент, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> W.W. Meissner, "The Phenomenology of Religious Psychopathology," *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic. Boston Psychoanalytic Institute, MA* Issue 55(3) (Summer 1991): 281 – 298.; Brian M. du Toit, "Modern Folk Medicine in South Africa," *South African Journal of Ethnology* Issue 21(4) (December 1998): 142 – 52.

the last decades, a new trend started taking place in modern medicine : integration between specific patterns of alternative medicine and general medicine.<sup>13</sup>



Antagonisms between the personal and collective, modern and traditional affect people in large cities which reflects in conflicts with the cultural fixed notion. These conflicts mostly make up for the practices of urban shamans. On the other hand, widespread migration of rural youth to Tashkent and the continuing process of urbanization lead to initial alienation and in consequence to establishing a contact with a spiritual specialist. Such process leads to the weakening of family bonds and values as well as to increasing the numbers of urban shamans' clients seeking spiritual or supernatural help. Predominantly, these practices are carried out by women, however there are also men who provide spiritual assistance, although the traditional religious society blames such activity. From the women's point of view, it is profitable, suitable and legitimate to be a spiritual healer, as most of them work non prestigious poorly paid jobs. People who provide such assistance usually have secondary or higher education and are between 30 – 50 years old. They speak both Uzbek (official) and Russian (the official language in Tashkent) and are able to find a common language with traditionalists as well as with progressives. Their marital status can be described as widow/widower/divorced or remarried. Thus, urban shamanism is privately acknowledged and makes profit, even if society passively condemns it.

<sup>13</sup> L.K. Suryani, G.D. Jensen, *Trance and possession in Bali: A window on western multiple personality, possession disorder, and suicide* (Singapore, 1993); C.E. Vontress, "Traditional healing in Africa. Implication for cross-cultural counseling," *Journal of Counseling and Development* (1991): 70, 242 – 49; Philip J. Leaf, Martha Livingston Bruce, "Gender Differences in the Use of Mental Health-Related Services: A Re-Examination," *Journal Of Health & Social Behavior* 28, No. 2 (1987): 171-83.

**Traditional and holistic**

Permanent change in a culture, accompanied with historical upheavals represents an important context for urban shamans. In the conditions of the new post-soviet society challenges such as market economy reanimated the phenomenon of urban shamanism, as it addresses to deep-laid values and subjects shared by the individual and the community. In the multicultural urban layout, people face a creative transformation and a hybridization of mass culture, as well as forming superficial bonds with tradition and cultural values<sup>14</sup> Now, globalization has accelerated the process of cultural confrontation, challenges and changes which the population of Tashkent faces. The contemporary world presents new situations where tradition's coherence and its in-depth connection with culture and worldview are roughly tested. Symbols rooted in cultural traditions of many societies have become available for everyone in the course of globalization. The effectiveness of urban shamanism depends on the shared cultural consciousness whose qualitative characteristics can vary from individual to individual, from the ethnic, physiological, social and spiritual point of view. It can provoke acute contradictions for people living at the turn of different cultures.

Today there is a necessity for finding new schemes of understanding possible effectiveness of cultural models in urban shamanism. The intensity of the new stage means that individuals don't possess the same level of enculturation through childhood, when they produce intensive, effective associations<sup>6</sup>; in terms, the community doesn't possess the same level of coherence. Thus, the members of the community may not have a developed experience and unconscious knowledge giving meaning to symbols and an associated effect to a positive expectation.

Meanwhile, looking for tradition in the form of urban shamanism may strengthen the ethnic cultural identity as well as having a value meaning for those who are in a transitional state between cultural worlds and ambivalent in the existence of the old and new order. People are striving to accept new values and approaches in relation to their health, and the reason of searching and accepting all "new and best" that is part of consumerism; in addition, the reason might be in dissatisfaction of present day state institutes leading to the idealization of "traditional" and "holistic" that possibly can restore the lost values of harmony and community. In traditional community, urban shamans are part of smaller communities and their effectiveness is given by neighbors and relatives. When they distance themselves from local communities or cultural systems in urban systems, social methods of authority regulation and urban shaman practices are displaced with market dynamic.

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<sup>14</sup> Арифханова, Зунунова, Обрядово-ритуальная жизнь узбеков Ташкента.

According to the nature of social conflicts, in time of crisis, people tend to synthesize single elements of behavior from their traditional existing system with evenly changing reality to satisfy the specific social situations they collide with. Individual actions, performed by people according to their own motives and interests, are a reflection of macro processes within social systems, or the society as a whole. By analyzing social problems, urban shamanism deals with Tashkent needs of attention to social processes and analysis of structures and systems constructed for their stability. An important issue in that process encountered gradual social changes during last 20 years in terms of repeating and changing social formations. It can be referred to the Manchester school principles when a “conflict” and its settlement supports the stability of society through the destruction and then reconstruction of the bonds among the members of a community.

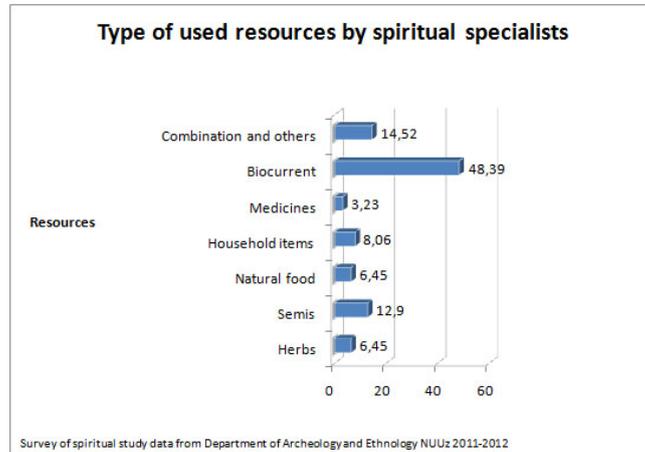
### **Individual culture**

The spectrum of problems referred by the population to urban shamans with supernatural abilities are various :health, financial welfare, family, future. Our research illustrates that financial and love issues made up 8.06%, however the “Fortune” only accounted for – 1.61%. Other answers were more popular among clients. For instance, 35.48% of the interviewed indicated that health matters was important. The second place finds problems related to the workplace and future predicting both with 16.13% correspondently. Finally only 14.53% of the interviewed chose to address urban shamans just out of curiosity. According to these factors, the way of life and outlook of the present city population are preserved elements of pre-religious development, as well as mythological etiology of present day problems<sup>15</sup> that define human nature, consciousness, the way of life etc. They are meaningful motivational forces for the city’s population, if we consider the paradigm – faith provides positive function, bringing stability and reinforcement when facing with the vicissitudes of fate and life.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Джаббаров, *Узбеки*, 153-66.

<sup>16</sup> Meissner, “The Phenomenology of Religious Psychopathology,” 281 – 298.



It is important to notice that adepts of urban shamanism in Tashkent have their own individuality, urbanism, and distance from nature; influence of religion, science, psychology; access to information about other cultures. During the research in Tashkent, it was defined that part of the city's population asking for urban shamans to heal them and recover their relatives who suffer from diseases, or daily problems brought about by evil spirits and big eye effect.<sup>17</sup> According to local sources, urban shamans can heal and foresee the future, cast a spell and protect from evil. Sometimes they use their abilities to find lost objects or "foresee" crimes in order identify the criminals. Recent anthropology researches<sup>18</sup> approved for urban shamanism a function of social adaptation<sup>19</sup> that aimed to solve unfavorable

<sup>17</sup> Joao Ricardo Faria, "The Economics of Witchcraft and the Big Eye Effect," *Kyklos* Vol. 51 Issue 4 (1998): 537-46, accessed July 12, 2013, <http://ideas.repec.org/a/bla/kyklos/v51y1998i4p537-46.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Krippner, "The epistemology and technologies of shamanic states of consciousness," 93-118; Decker, "Combat Trauma: Treatment from a Mystical/Spiritual Perspective," 30-53; Yisrael Rich, Rachel Gali Cinamon, "Conceptions Of Spirituality Among Israeli Arab And Jewish Late Adolescents," *Journal Of Humanistic Psychology* Vol. 47, No. 1 (2007): 7-29; Karl Ericson, "Preventing Mental Illness: Some Personal Discoveries," *Journal Of Humanistic Psychology* Vol. 26, No. 1 (1986): 61; Jeffrey S Nevid, James Morrison, "Attitudes Towards Mental Illness: The Construction Of The Libertarian Mental Health Ideology Scale," *Journal Of Humanistic Psychology* Vol. 20, No. 2 (1980): 71; Mordechai Rotenberg, "Alienating-individualism and Reciprocal-individualism: A Cross-Cultural Conceptualization," *Journal Of Humanistic Psychology* Vol. 17, No. 3 (1977): 3; James Morrison, "A Reappraisal of Mental Health Education: A Humanistic Approach," *Journal Of Humanistic Psychology* Vol. 19, No. 4 (1979): 43; Alean Al-Krenawi, John R. Graham, "Gender and Biomedical/Traditional Mental Health Utilization Among the Bedouin-Arabs of the Negev," *Culture, Medicine & Psychiatry* Vol. 23, No. 2 (1999): 219-243.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Krenawi, Graham, "Gender and Biomedical/Traditional Mental Health Utilization Among the Bedouin-Arabs of the Negev," 56.

or conflicted situations. One of the potential answers is that the practice of urban shamanism can be organized individually without congregation, fact which was proved when the ethno sociological survey was conducted in Tashkent. One should note that such practices in the city are viable, as they don't tie people to each other and gather them into a group; it leaves to individuals to their self anonymity while "negotiating" with supernatural beings.

Otherwise, urban shamanism culture is individual, and should be understood through symbols. For instance, we can trace it up to the ancient history of the Central Asian region. Practices of urban shamans in Tashkent illustrate a synthesis of religious traditions with pre-Islamic elements<sup>20</sup>. Cultural traditions and customs have been forming during thousands of years and, in their formation, they have adopted cultural and religious values from different eras, while displaying a constant synthesis of traditions and syncretism of the phenomenon<sup>21</sup>. In explaining the existence of urban shamanism there is some interpretation in recent researches, for example in the socio-economical processes, when individuals can reach some level of authority and influence<sup>22</sup> or get legitimized in their community<sup>23</sup>, or as reaction of social fragmented groups to unknown processes of globalization<sup>24</sup> that make them suffer while others prosper<sup>25</sup>.

Elements of urban shamanism practices can be defined as rituals or praxis conducted in order to come to some concrete solutions or transform the supernatural realm; however, such activities occurred in response to specific situations which appeared as crisis or conflicts. It is known that in cases of social, economical or individual crisis, people tend to address traditional means of rehabilitation from their cultural past.<sup>26</sup>

By comparing these factors, we can observe that factors as love – 8,06%, money 8,06% account for a minimum share in their popularity among the surveyed group, although the smallest percentage was attributed to fortune – 1,61%. On the

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<sup>20</sup> Джаббаров, *Узбеки*, 153-166; Джаббаров, *Общественный прогресс, быти религия*. (Ташкент, 1973), 37; Р.М. Мустафина, "Бытовой ислам в Казахстане," in *В сб. Обычаи и обряды казахов в прошлом и настоящем* (Алматы: НИЦ Гылым, 2001) 32.

<sup>21</sup> Арифханова, Зунунова, *Обрядово-ритуальная жизнь узбеков Ташкента*, 24.

<sup>22</sup> I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession* (London: Routledge, 1998).

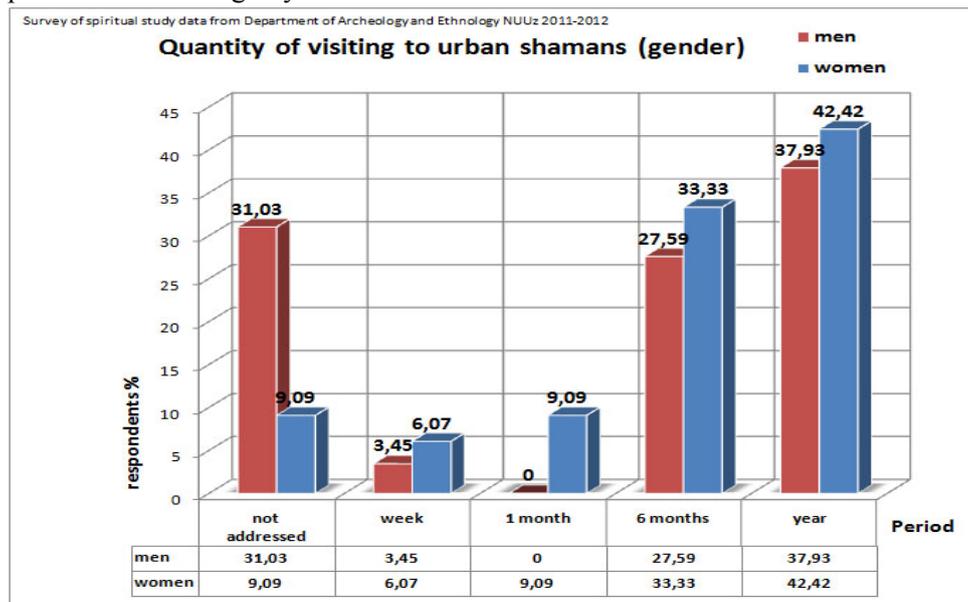
<sup>23</sup> I. Beller-Hann, "Rivalry and Solidarity among Uyghur Healers in Kazakhstan," 3 (2001): 73-98; Galina Lindquist, "The Culture of Charisma: Wielding Legitimacy in Contemporary Russian Healing," *Anthropology Today* Vol. 17, No. 2 (2001): 3.

<sup>24</sup> Jean Comaroff, John L. Comaroff, "Occult economies and the violence of abstraction: Notes from the South African postcolony," *American Ethnologist* Vol. 26, No. 2 (1999): 279-303.

<sup>25</sup> Саттаров, "Тема шаманизма в западноевропейской и американской историографии," 54-61.

<sup>26</sup> Brian M. DU Toit, "Modern Folk Medicine in South Africa," 142 – 52.

other hand, the most pressing issue was health – 35,48%, and job, fortune – for 16,13% correspondently. Curiosity accounted for 14,53% of the respondents. Furthermore, both graphic curves in the gender dimension illustrate considerable divergence in job and curiosity for women– 20% and 12% in comparison with men 20% and 8% correspondently. It is interesting that love and fortune issues show gender opposite divergence, for example for the men who participated in the survey, love issues don't represent a cause of visiting an urban shaman, while for the women it is a significant matter and on the other hand, when it comes to fortune, women are not interested, while 5% of the men are. It is worth mentioning that urban shamans use for physiological disorders a method which is very similar to psychotherapy or psychoanalysis. In both cases, the goal is to transfer internal unconscious conflicts into the sphere of conscious thinking, because they were suppressed by other psychic forces, or these processes are not of a psychic nature but a physiological one. The conflicts disappear because such knowledge makes this possible for the experience. This is final goal of an urban shaman's spells and praxis inside the big city.



There are also elements of hypnotic affection carried out on people in urban shamanism praxis in Tashkent that identifies the manifestation in their faith. For instance, one of our female respondents told us about her starting a career as a spiritual specialist: "...although I didn't know many prayers or any spells, I decided to try it. Once I had a séance with my client and I asked her to tie in a bungle red handkerchief in her pocket. She followed my request, without hesitation". Another example of evil eye as an imposed influence is presented in

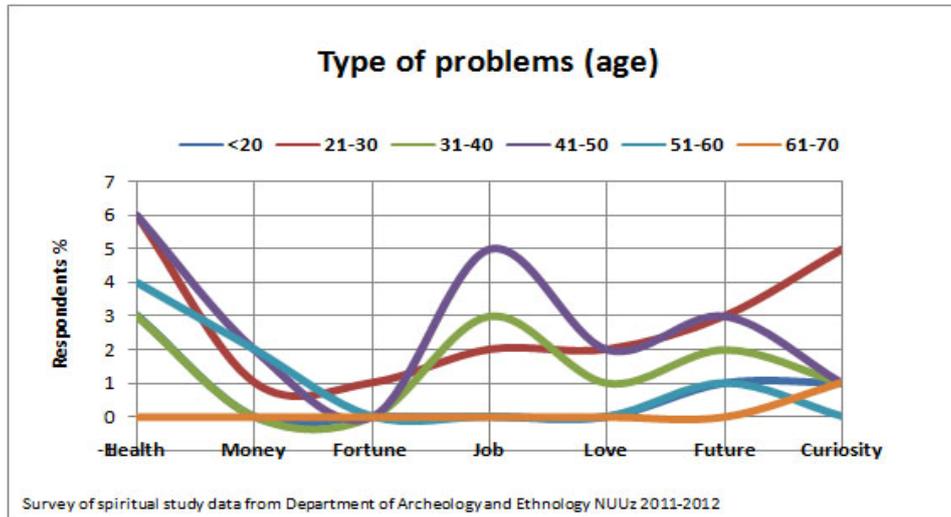
the urban witchcraft praxis. There are various types of such praxis where people were affected by evil eye or curses. Psycho-specialists describe this condition as taking place when a disease has a psycho-somatic origin, caused by the awareness of being cursed or put under the evil eye curse; however, that definition can be described by a person, who, in spite of being physically healthy, becomes aware of the probability being cursed with evil eye at any moment, the curse being imposed by enemies<sup>27</sup>.

One episode illustrates the case of casting a curse on a person in the urban area. A young lady brought to an urban healer her old mother in law who had problem with her eyes. The old woman had a daughter who practiced black magic, and it influenced all her close family relatives. After a couple of meetings, the healer felt herself very bad and was taken to a hospital. The healer told to the old woman not to come any more as her daughter's black magic was very strong. So we can observe in this example the fact that an illness origination from knowing and expectation the impact of a negative "energy" i.e. black magic or envy. According to the surveyed data, an evil eye curse can be cast upon person by envious people, who suffer from their problems and transfer their suffering to successful people. Such connection creates a negative effect in the relationships between people and it manifests itself in the form of instantly repeated psychosomatic disorders. Upon seeing this envious people will repeat the action thus establishing a vicious circle.

It is worth to note that many of the respondents generally consider witchcraft – evil and harmful magic– as one of the major reasons of evil eye and curse origination. However, in many cases, the source of evil was in the circle of close family relatives, as show by the data in the survey. For instance, one of the persons in the survey, Rachima, told us that a cursed person or object can also transmit a negative effect to people they communicate with (for example, to husband or wife, to children, friends and so on). The person affected by witchcraft becomes nervous and depressed or can be a carrier of evil. Such views are shared by a number of people, according to whom that evil eye or envy in most cases comes from their own families, close relatives or friends and rarely indeed from strangers. Thus, the reason for envy can be rooted not in person's richness but in his/her success or well-being.

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<sup>27</sup> Walter Bradford Cannon, "Voodoo Death," *American Journal Of Public Health* Vol. 92, no. 10 (2002): 1593- 6; E.E. Griffith, P. Ruiz, "Cultural factors in the training of psychiatric residents in an Hispanic urban community," *Psychiatric Quarterly* Vol. 49, no. 1 (1977): 29–37.



If we sum up the survey indicators for the respondents of age, it is clear that the problem of health is very important for all age groups. It is to be noted that the second place in youth group is held by curiosity, while in middle age group it goes to job problems. The third place in both groups is taken by the will to foresee the future; however, the aged group (51 years and older) is not interested in clairvoyance and they choose to focus on more important issues, such as health and money. Graphics illustrate that although 40 % of the respondents visit urban shamans no less than once during year. On the other hand, 9.6 % – visit a shaman no less than once in a week or month and 30.65 % – from couple of months to half a year. Only 19.35 % of the respondents never got in touch with a shaman.

There were similar research studies which tried to investigate the interconnection between intended witchcraft and the origin of illnesses. For example, by comparing the survey data in gender dimension, we can see following situation. 40 % of men consider that health problems are an important reason to visit urban healers for and 20 % do it because of curiosity, while women perceive it more serious with only 8 % seeing shamans out of curiosity and 35 % because of health problems. The money issue force men to address spiritual specialists four times more than women do – 12 % and 3 % correspondently.

## Conclusion

Representatives of different religions have been living in harmony in Uzbekistan; however, the processes of globalization and urbanization, individualization and acculturation, the transition from an extended to a small family, all this defined a new image for urban shamanism in Tashkent. The urban shaman is different from the rural one and the distinction comes from the environment, age, level of education, traditional or progressive way of thinking and marital status. Moreover, spiritual specialists in the city have large numbers of clients, of various social levels and ages and at the same time make profit of it. On the base of illustrated taxonomy, we can conclude that the surveyed group was inclined to see the cause of their problems predominantly in the supernatural field, however they limit this to the context of human actions (i.e. evil eye, witchcraft, or envy – human factor) taking into consideration that supernatural influence is provoked first of all with human actions and not otherwise.

Life crisis and disappointment in life caused by a loss of faith and the deep urban socializing environments can seriously influence an internal conflict, depression and following social fragmentation and alienation. The way urban shamans practice requests a mutual belief in the healer's supernatural power and the successful outcome; in the same way, the clinician specialists work in hospitals<sup>28</sup>. Thus, we can conclude that the supporting factors for sustaining urban shamanism in Tashkent are firstly the fact that the local population has a profound faith in people with supernatural abilities. In addition, faith sometimes was the only thing that could help people to overcome the problems in life. The faith issue is a rather serious element, or even a key factor indicated by previous conducted ethno-sociological research in Tashkent.<sup>29</sup>

Secondly, most illnesses would probably disappear in time, and addressing them to urban shamans just adds influence to shamans. Thirdly, methods and herbs urban shamans use rather effectively in treating illnesses and diseases. In medicine,

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<sup>28</sup> Andrew J. Weaver, Kevin J. Flannelly, "The Role of Religion/Spirituality for Cancer Patients and Their Caregivers," *Southern Medical Journal* Vol. 97, no. 12 (1997): 1210 – 14; Al-Krenawi, Graham, "Social work and traditional healing rituals among the Bedouin of the Negev, Israel," *International Social Work* Vol. 39, No. 2 /1996): 177-188.

<sup>29</sup> Саттаров, "Элементы шаманского целительства в традиционной культуре," 8-11. Саттаров, "К вопросу о шаманском целительстве в традиционной культуре," 98-100; Саттаров, "Тема шаманизма в западноевропейской и американской историографии," 54-61; Саттаров, "К проблеме существования традиционного целительства в современном обществе," in *IX Конгресс этнографов и антропологов России: Тезисы докладов*. Петрозаводск, 4–8 июля 2011 г. / Редкол.: В.А. Тишков и др. (Петрозаводск: Карельский научный центр РАН, 2011), 373-4; Саттаров, "Адаптация традиционного целительства к условиям урбанизма," 80-88.

there are well known cases of successful herbs used for treating illnesses (Johnson 2003:20-32). True human faith in healing is really what can help the recovery process. This scientific principle is known as a social somatic factor. There are people among our sources in Tashkent who have abilities to use their bio potential for healing illnesses<sup>30</sup>

Consequently, it can be considered that aiding factors for urban shamanism existence are religious-mysticism worldview of local communities, who traditionally treat the cause of many events in life as having a magical or supernatural origin (for example, the conception of witchcraft, big eye effect and curse integrated in the comprehension of the nature of an illnesses). In this case, choice is characterized by a dynamics towards the reconfiguration of social norms through an alternative communication and role interaction. The choice itself reflects the stress between individual autonomy and society in an alternative view, which, tied with scale social dilemmas in industrial urban communities in Tashkent and cultural worldviews of local communities, regard supernatural forces existing in the human world. Practices based on traditional cultural models, on one hand provide interrelation with spiritual identity and cultural tradition of urban community; on the other hand counter cultural view and practice are a rudimentary manifestation of social and private needs that urban residents are faced with. Thus, urban shamanism represents a phenomenon developed in Uzbekistan quite recently and it illustrates the symbiosis of the local cultural traditions within the globalization and urbanization processes.

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<sup>30</sup> Bio potential (bioelectric potential) – common characteristics of charge interrelation placed in living tissue, for instance in different brain zones, cells, and other structures. Measurements illustrate bioelectric activity and character of metabolic processes. Nowadays science and medical diagnose use bio-potential for receiving information about a

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condition and functionality of different organs, that has for a long time been practiced in shamanism.

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