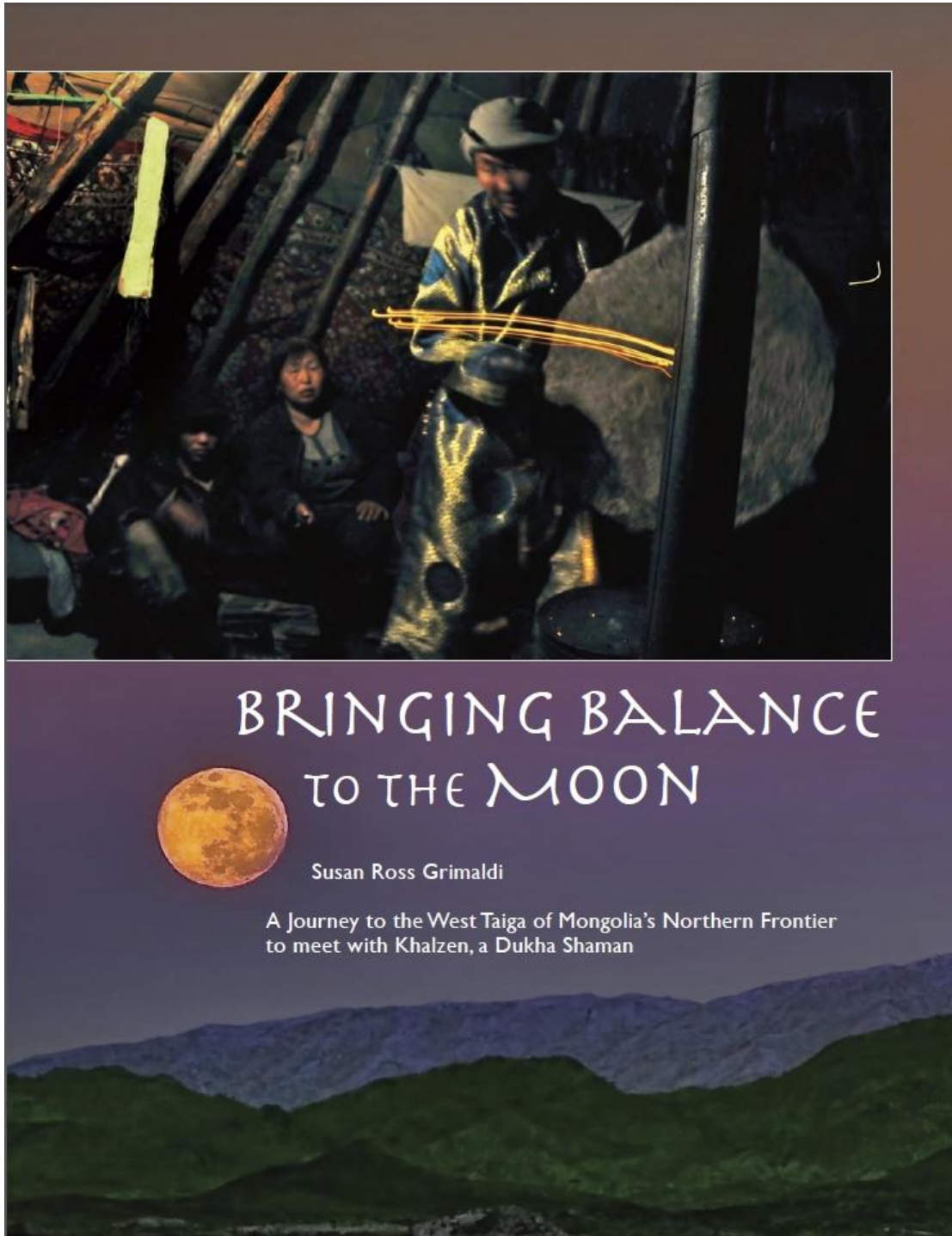


Bringing Balance to the Moon...



There are now less than three hundred Dukha remaining in the world, comprised of 44 families, living in the East and West Taigas, of the most northern province of Mongolia. The Dukha people are among the last nomadic, animal-dependent, self-subsistent cultures in the world.

The Dukha live in small family groups and migrate over an area of approximately 25,000 square kilometers (6 million acres). Life for the people is simple and hard, they live year around in un-insulated canvas tipis, with no running water, or plumbing. The temperature in winter can drop to a dangerous - 50°C (-58°F). Their very existence, lifestyle and traditions are in imminent danger of extinction.

Each family owns reindeer that are milked daily, and this milk provides the main component of their diet. The herds roam freely, grazing during the day, but they are staked out at night, within the encampment, to help protect them from wolves.

Reindeer are also ridden, and used as pack animals during the people's nomadic moves - which occur between four to six times each year. Reindeer are the essential mode of transport in these high mountain taigas, as the area has no roads, and the climate and terrain are so harsh that only the reindeer and the special Taiga

horses can survive the rigours of this northern region. The reindeer carry riders and all of the household items, tents, and personal belongings. They also carry large, heavy loads of firewood, fuel necessary for life in these harsh lands.

The Dukha currently face many challenges as they struggle to maintain their ancestral lifestyle in an ever-changing world.

Several major factors threaten their survival today: strict national hunting laws and expensive permits have resulted in making it illegal and difficult for the Dukha to hunt for game animals - which are necessary for their survival; traditional knowledge of herbal medicine has been almost forgotten; the recent emergence of gold mining in the West Taiga has introduced a criminal element to the area, which has disrupted the Dukha traditional ways; there is a growing need for money to buy commodities such as flour and school supplies; and the opportunity for education in recent years has led many towards other pursuits, reducing the numbers of herders in the taiga.

The survival of this ancient nomadic culture really does hang in the balance, although their knowledge of sustainability is perhaps one of the great treasures of humanity. We could learn so

much from the Dukha people and integrate their earth-friendly, indigenous knowledge and wisdom of sustainability, into our own communities.

#### JOURNEY TO THE TAIGA

On July 1st, 2012, John R. Lawrence Jr., and I flew from Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia, to the most northern airport in Mongolia near the town of Murun. This would serve as our jumping off point for the taiga.

We gathered up our final fresh provisions of food, propane for our camp stove and many large jerry cans of fuel for our four wheel drive vehicle. We would be driving north, off-road, on meandering tracks, heading to Tsagaannuur - a small settlement within a very sparsely populated area, near the most northern part of Mongolia, close to the Russian border. There we would meet our guides and horses to complete the trip.

Then we would pack our gear onto the horses and head off in search of the nearly invisible, small bands of nomadic reindeer herders, camped somewhere further to the north.

During the 14-hour, grueling drive to Tsagaannuur, we saw herds of grazing animals in open grasslands: sheep, camels, cattle, yak and horses with their new foals. In the grass they were grazing on, I

*Opposite page:*  
the shaman  
Khalzen smudges  
his drum with a  
twig of burning  
juniper

*Below:* a Dukha  
boy rides  
a reindeer in  
the Taiga



*Reindeer are the essential mode of transport in these high mountain Taigas, as the area has no roads, and the climate and terrain are so harsh that only the reindeer and the special Taiga horses can survive the rigours of this northern region*



**Herders with  
their reindeer**

counted a hundred varieties of wild flowers. We could see the majestic Sayan Mountain Range looming ahead as we made our way northward, over very rough terrain.

In Tsagaannuur we met our horse guide, Baynaa, along with his young nephew, Shirjee, who would help with the horses. With them was Eenee, who would serve as our translator and cook.

We loaded up our three packhorses, making a total of eight horses in all, and began our trek into the remote West Taiga.

We made good time as we set out, passing an old abandoned Soviet era encampment, called 'Yellow Thief Stealing', but as the trail grew steeper it became rockier, strewn with huge boulders, between which we had to carefully pick our way. Eventually we arrived above the tree line, and in the scene before us, only short, hardy plants and lichen grew.



It began to get very cold; a strong wind arose, blowing steadily at about 30 knots, with gusts of higher speed. It also began to rain icy pellets. We pushed on in this fierce, wet, cold wind as we crossed the local highest point, which is called Haisi Lhuadev's Pass, at around 2,750 metres (9,000 feet). Then, in this gale, driving rain and sleet we succeeded in setting up two mountain tents in which to take shelter for the night.

The next day we began our descent. We walked out of the clouds that had engulfed us, leading our horses over a dangerous, expansive, rock and scree field. When we were finally able to mount our horses and ride onward, we plodded through a quagmire of deep mud, which is the result of a warming weather trend that is melting the permafrost.

After many hours of riding we could see urtz (Mongolian tipis) in a valley, and we spotted the people's reindeer, grazing along the valley's sides. We passed three more tiny settlements before reaching our final destination.

The Dukha family we were staying with prepared an urtz for our use. Water for this family flowed from the mountains, down a steep bank, where it formed a small natural pond. John and I were sitting outside our urtz on the

edge of this pond when Khalzen, a Dukha shaman, walked toward us.

He told us that as he approached us for the first time, he felt something emanating from the small bushes close by. He said that he'd had a strange feeling in his body as he got closer to me - that there was something in me that he was feeling. As we talked, and I shared about myself, he deduced that it was because I am a descendent of Native American medicine people. When he heard this, he proclaimed: "You have already inherited from your grandmother, so now you can heal, you can heal people. You have the same kind of visionary ability that your (Choctaw) grandmother used to have."

He disclosed to us that he had got 'a knowing' that we would be coming to his camp before we came.

**CONVERSATION WITH KHALZEN**

The next day we visited Khalzen in his urtz. When we sat with him, he offered us reindeer meat to eat, which we cut right off the leg bone with our knives. Our slab of meat and bone had been plucked directly from a large wok of boiling broth; it was deliciously sweet and tender with a rich, full flavor. No spices or seasonings were used.

Whilst still raw, most of the reindeer meat had been cut into thin strips and hung over a cord strung above our heads. There were several

*Each family owns reindeer that are milked daily, and this milk provides the main component of their diet. The herds roam freely, grazing during the day, but they are staked out at night, within the encampment, to help protect them from wolves*







Photo: © John R. Lawrence, Jr

of these long lines of hanging, drying meat, and we were told that some households brushed the strips of meat with a dusting of flour, which aids the drying process and helps protect the meat from flies too.

While eating we asked Khalzen how he had become a shaman.

"When I was two years old I got sick. I became unconscious, my eyes rolled back and I swallowed my tongue. My head had a seizure. I fell down and I felt like I was choking. I fainted.

"I had been sick for one year when my parents turned to the shaman, and this shaman helped me to recover. He told my parents that I was going to be a shaman.

"When I turned three years old my grandmother took care of me because my parents could not, and when I was a mature adult - at the age of 30 - I became unconscious again.

"In the middle of the night, when I was sleeping, I just ran away and I went to different places. I ran for ten days.

"At that time, the old shamans, who are my ancestors, began to speak to me. Then, a famous shaman, with the name of Ghoste<sup>1</sup>, helped me to stop all this running away in the middle of the night. I told Ghoste that I was hearing drums and he told me that what I was hearing was the sound of the drum of the shaman who had healed me when I was two years old".

Khalzen's grandfather on his mother's side had been a powerful shaman, and we wondered if that grandfather had taught Khalzen to be a shaman, but Khalzen told us:

"The shaman never learns from a teacher, they learn from spirits, by themselves. As for my grandfather, he only told me things. It was not like a real lesson, he didn't teach, he just talked."

Khalzen then told us that if a shaman knew that there was going to be harm somewhere in the world caused by extreme weather - such as a flood or a hurricane - the shamans would work to try to avert

that disaster; try to prevent it from happening and warn people to move.

Khalzen told us that a crow has the ongot<sup>2</sup> spirit and it warns him when something bad could happen, and then he will try to prevent it. When he sees the crows he knows what will happen, he prays and makes offerings of milk to try to prevent something bad from happening. He said, "Normally I cannot do that alone, all shamans should do this together."

We asked him about chanting, and he told us that his chanting is in the Tuvan language (not in Mongolian, which is a different language).

Historically, the ancestors of these nomadic reindeer herders were known as Tannu Uriankhai, or Tuvan, and they lived in Tuva, a neighbouring part of Siberia, now part of Russia.

During the beginning of the Soviet Era, Stalin ordered the execution of all shamans and their families, including those of the reindeer herders, who were living in Tuva. Seeking safety, many families

Above: the shaman Khalzen with his ritual costume and drum

Note the four ongon figures on his cloth ongon/altar on the wall of the urtz on the left of the photo



Opposite Page -  
top: a Dukha  
woman smudges  
with a burning  
juniper twig  
Bottom: a guest  
enters a urtz

fled Tuva and headed southeast, crossing the Mongolian border with their reindeer herds. The band we were visiting descended from these Tuvans, and they are now called the Dukha or the Tsaatan.

We asked Khalzen for more information about his chants. Is a chant a gift from spirit? Is it new each time - inspired in the moment? We asked if there were different chants for each ritual? What were the words for the chants, and how did the words and chants come - how did he know what to say in chant?

He explained, that a chant is like talking, like singing, like singing poetry. His ongot spirit tells him what he's going to say, and what it tells him is always different.

He told us that he couldn't tell us the words of any of the chants, because he has to be in a shamanic state of consciousness while he chants, and then the chant comes in that moment, directly from the spirits.

He did offer us an example though, recounting a ceremony in which he had chanted. He told us that a person had lost his horses and had come to him saying, "I want to know where my horses are; can you help me find my thirty horses?"

So, Khalzen chanted the words given to him by the ongot spirits, in

order to help him find the man's horses, and in the chant was their exact location, so Khalzen knew where the horses were, where they could be found, and they were found exactly as the chant given by the ongot had said. The shamanic chant contained the answer to the problem.

We asked Khalzen to tell us more about healing. We asked him how healing happens? Does he request help from the ongot spirit for the healing of the patient, or does he do the healing himself? What were his healing techniques?"

He told us that his method was to call upon his ongot spirit, and the spirit would tell him how to cure people. The ongot told him what a specific person needed in order to cure their illness.

It is through the shaman that the ongot spirit cures the people, works on healing their symptoms, by what Khalzen called 're-pairation, repairing, or re-balancing'.

Khalzen told us that he also used plant medicine in his healings, and makes a special drink for the patient. He explained further, telling us that what he needed to do first was rid the patient of their bad energy. After three days when he has removed this bad energy through shamanic rituals, he makes this drink.

If that person has some pain, he told us that he might recommend that the patient go to the mountain in the early morning, because in the morning, on our Earth, change is happening, and as all healing implies change, the morning is the best time to go.

Khalzen told us that while they are on the mountain, the patient is asked to pray to the Earth, asking the Earth to help their health. The Earth helps to cure their illnesses.

We asked Khalzen if he ever sees a person who has lost the fullness of their soul. We were wondering if a soul could be fixed after it has been damaged.

He replied to our question, telling us: "Most of the people who turn to me for help, come because of loss of soul. The person looks like they are alive, they can speak and talk, they seem alive, but that person's soul can be already lost. If they go like that for a long time, they will die. That person can turn to a shaman, and try to get their soul back into their body".

He told us, when trying to get a person's soul back into their body, he performs a shamanic ceremony. He needs to communicate with the spirits, and then, using the power or energy of the spirits, the person's soul goes back into their body.

He continued: "Mainly what I do is get rid of the bad intrusive energy, repair the soul and bring it to wholeness. What I call 're-pairment' or 're-balancement' is the same as what you call soul retrieval. Re-pairment should be done on even days, not odd days." It is important to note that the Dukha go by a lunar calendar, not our regular Western calendar.

We asked Khalzen if he ever had a situation where a deceased person's spirit had stayed in this world and not gone on. We asked if instead they remained, and become attached to a living person?

He said that he had met that kind of situation, commenting, "[the dead person's spirit] is not in the person, but it's attached to them."

He elaborated: "It could be attached to them through clothing, but it's not inside them, but instead riding on their back and weighing them down."

"It creates differences in their behaviour. Making them different

Below: a Dukha  
family in the  
door of their  
urtz



from how they are normally, like, making them crave alcohol when they wouldn't necessarily be craving it. This is because that deceased soul wants the alcohol.

"It's out of balance. It's better for the deceased person to move on, as it can make people sick. It usually happens if a person's soul was left somewhere, like on clothes or other kind of personal possessions. If, when a person dies, they leave everything, and their soul goes, trying to find peace, we think that this person is good. If someone is dead, and their soul remains, we think that this person could be bad."

We inquired if he did healings for the soul of the person who stayed behind after dying, to help them move on after they're dead?"

He replied that for de-possession healing he sends away the soul of the deceased person, attempts to attract the deceased soul into some of their old clothing, and his ongot spirit will tell the dead person where it can find those clothes.

After the dead person's soul has been attracted to these clothes, he puts them outside on the mountain, then he will find some juniper to burn, and he will then follow the directions of his ongot spirits, and do whatever his spirit helpers tell him to do. He always gets instructions, for example, in the process of putting the bundle outside, he may blow on the blouse or the shirt, and place the collar in one certain direction. The ongot guides all those things, he told us: "This is making the road for the soul that's going to leave the alive person's body."

He said that he does not do this kind of healing in the light, but will do it in the evening, after the stars have come out, and continue while it is dark.

During our interview with Khalzen, he spoke with us about his concern that the Moon is disturbed. We wondered about this, and about what could cause the disturbance, what could be done to fix it.

He explained that all of the discarded junk in space, parts of rockets and satellites, were making a disruption in the Moon's energy. He told us that he does ceremonial

work to help the Moon, and because we were interested in this, we asked him if he would do this ceremony with us present.

#### **BIG PROBLEMS FOR THE MOON**

Khalzen said that he would perform a ceremony for us in a few days at the right phase of the Moon, because shamans do the ritual according to the Moon. This tradition has lasted for hundreds of years, and he wanted to keep to this tradition, explaining: "Shamans can't do anything without knowing the Moon and Stars, and without knowing herbs and plants."

"The Moon and the Sun have lost their balance, the Sun and the Moon's energy is unbalanced. People have made the Moon dirty; satellites and spaceships affect the Moon's energy, some has been lost. The rays of the Sun and Moon are dying."

"At night the flowers get some nutrition from the Moon. Then, in the morning when the Sun appears, they get food from the Sun. Now, these flowers are turning yellow, a not-nice colour of yellow. This means that the Sun and Moon's balance has been lost."

He repeated again; "The Moon's rays are dying."

He continued talking to us, telling us that the problem he feels





*Dukha drums have nine bumps around the outside, wooden blocks, which are evenly placed between the drum frame and the skin. Khalzen told us that these offer protection by bringing strength for the shaman while drumming. We were told that the nine blocks make the drum firm, and serve as a reflection of the power of the Earth*

most strongly about is the condition of the water, because the water level in lakes has gone down a lot.

"The level of the lakes and rivers is lower, and is decreasing. This is because of wrong treatment done by people. Mining on our earth has resulted in the Moon having a problem, and the mining is also making a problem for the ground.

Underground and on the top of the ground, there's digging, digging, digging. I am concerned for nature, but it will survive."

"Maybe prayers will help. Everyone's efforts are needed, yours and mine. Everybody's efforts are important. In my country the shamans are doing their shamanic ritual for the Moon, so, if in your place you are doing it too, if we all do it together, it will help, because one shaman can't do this all alone. It takes all of us, the whole world.

"If all of the shamans, wherever they are living, call upon the power or spirits that are local to that place, and work together to cover the whole world, all of the land, then probably nature will survive."

#### **CEREMONY FOR THE MOON**

We arrived at Khalzen's urtz for the ceremony at about eleven at night, when it was dark enough for us to see the stars, but when the actual ceremony would begin was up to Spirit and the shaman, as there were hours of preliminary preparations and talk before the ceremony began.

We heard drumming. The urtz resounded with the soft drumbeats as the drum was swirled over the flaming wood stove, being tested for its skin's tightness from time to time. We were told the shaman needed to be with the fire and the drum



because they are linked together.

Khalzen showed us his drum, and told us that Dukha drums have nine bumps around the outside, wooden blocks, which are evenly placed between the drum frame and the skin. He told us that these offer protection by bringing strength for the shaman while drumming.

We were told that the nine blocks make the drum firm, and serve as a reflection of the power of the Earth.

Khalzen said that for the shamans a drum can also be a means of transport; "We ride on the drum. Our drum is not loud all of the time, only when we do the shamanic ritual do we need to heat the drum and make it alive, it is then we make it alive, so at that time it gets loud. During the usual times the drum's rawhide remains soft."

He told us, "When the stars are in the sky, and when the spirits want to do the ceremony, at that time the drum makes a sound, makes a noise by itself, on its own. It speaks."

By now, the fire had been built up hotter, and it was flaming up through the top of the metal cook stove. These flames licked the drum, warming the hide as it was ceremonially twirled in and above the flames.

Khalzen addressed my partner John, telling him; "The tobacco is only for you John. This smoking tobacco is dedicated only for John. You can finish it, and then there is no need for more. Now, John is smoking, so the spirits and John are both smoking. This is an offering of smoke, and John and the spirits are smoking with each other. It's like a communication."

Then we were instructed on how to place the offerings we had brought upon the altar, and we placed fermented, horse-milk alcohol and candy there as shown.

Then we were told, "Now you can pray and whisper your wishes for whatever you want."

*Right: a Tuvan shaman holds a drum with nine resonator bumps similar to, but smaller than, Dukha drums*

We were then shown how to hold a cup of vodka in a special way. We were told; "You can hold it like this, and then before you drink, you should do this." Khalzen demonstrated, by flicking the vodka with the fourth finger of the right hand, making a sprinkle as an offering to the spirit of this place, and also to our own spirit helpers.

Rich, creamy reindeer milk was also tossed upon the altar using a special, hand-carved, wooden spoon, adding to the offerings.

It was well after midnight by then and we were wondering when the ceremony would begin.

The purpose of the ceremony was for the Moon and the Earth to return to balance and we were told that Khalzen was waiting for the spirits to let him know when it was time to start.

Then, all of a sudden, he began to take his costume and a bundle of cloth strips out of a bag. The bundle of white cotton cloth strips represented the many requests that people had made for healings, we were told. We learned that the larger this bundle is, the higher the status of the shaman. We understood that this was evidence of the community's trust in the ability of a particular shaman and that it indicated the shaman's level of experience and success.

Khalzen told us; "In the next ten, twenty or thirty years, I am going to have a reindeer skin costume. At that time, all the women will sew the costume. My female relatives will sew it, but also other women here will make it, every woman, including the female children, such as my daughter.

"When they sew it, it will be in the spirit's house. All the women in this area will sew it. During the sewing of the costume, there will be one adviser, and that person can distribute the tasks and tell all of the women who should sew this one and who should sew that one."

Then he said, "During this ceremony, everyone will hear some different sounds or noises," and turning to me he added; "You might see your grandmother; in the old times she was a shaman."

John and I were told that during the ceremony our main focus was to think about the Moon, and then, also, we could think about our own

lives, our private and personal wishes and requests to the spirits.

He said that he is carrying a drum, it's like the reins on a riding reindeer; for the shaman, the reindeer is the spirit's transportation. The ongot spirit tells the shaman, that the reindeer will be their transport.

After knowing which reindeer the ongot spirit has chosen, Khalzen said; "Then we tie something

around that reindeer's neck. It's a sign to show which reindeer is the shaman's spirit transportation. We whisper a shamanic incantation so that the reindeer becomes the shamanic transport."

Khalzen was then ready to start the ceremony - mount his spirit reindeer - and as he did so he began chanting in Tuvan.

We were each asked to tie a strip of white cloth onto the bundle

*Below: the shaman Khalzen with his ritual costume and drum*

Photo: © John R. Lawrence, Jr





*The Moon and the Sun  
have lost their balance,  
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energy is unbalanced.  
People have made the  
Moon dirty, satellites and  
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Sun and Moon are dying*

were the only light allowed during the ceremony.

Khalzen cried out that he was going to need all of his shaman ancestors, his great grandparents, and all of his grandfathers. He added that they will control him, so he didn't know when the ceremony would be over - it could last for the whole night.

The wild drumming lasted for hours as Khalzen chanted and swirled. Reindeer milk was flung all around us.

During the ceremony the shaman's drummer was tossed many times onto a cloth. Close attention was paid as to how the beater fell. If the beater fell facing upward, this was considered to be a good sign and the requests of the person, for whom the beater had been thrown, would be granted.

If the beater fell with the backside facing up, the person called out, "Turigt", and returned the beater to the shaman by placing it back into his hand, being careful not to touch him. This otherwise placement of the fallen beater signaled that a healing was required, and that person hunched over as the shaman did a 're-pairment' healing using a whip of cloth called a *manjig*.

A *manjig* is comprised of twelve, long, colourful cloths, which are stuffed with wool. They are seen as snakes, have a red cloth head with eyes and a forked tongue. The shaman whipped the person across their back and flicked off the bad intrusive energy.

During proceedings, vodka, tea and reindeer milk were drunk from tiny cups as they skirted along,

of cloth strips. This had already been tied onto his back, and we were told that the cloths we added would hold our prayers as he carried them on his journey.

It was hard to see what we were doing, as there was only one candle, and we could barely see in the darkness. This one candle and the light of the fire

balanced on the beaten drumhead. It was important not to touch the cup with our hands.

The drumming was dramatic, but at one point in the ceremony Khalzen stopped drumming and began to walk slowly around in a circle growing. We could feel that a bear spirit had entered him.

At times Khalzen knelt down and drank from a cup, and the ceremony would ebb, and then build to another crescendo afterwards.

At one point, Khalzen fell down backwards, tipping over the hot stove. His assistants caught him, but he had knocked the stove over, and one man acted quickly - using the sleeves of his traditional long deel coat as gloves - set the hot stove upright again, along with most of its glowing coals, while others used logs as tongs to pick up the remaining glowing coals. His assistants worked together to try to move the stove a little further out of his way; the chimney - which had become disconnected in the commotion - was shoved back into the top of the stove.

#### COMING DOWN TO EARTH

The ceremony went on until dawn, then Khalzen began coming down. The drumming finally stopped and the chanting became slower and softer. The intense energy was dropping as he re-entered the middle world and ordinary reality. Personally, I had a raw, spent feeling.

His assistants lit juniper as a smudge and began pulling the shaman's middle finger to help him come back into his body properly.

Khalzen's chanting grew silent, and we heard him ask for his belt and shaman's costume to be removed. Eventually the urtz was silent, and people brought him a pipe and tobacco. The ceremony had finished.

After a while, Khalzen began to talk about the ceremony. He said, "The ceremony's main goal was for saving the world. This was a ceremony specifically for the Moon. Now it's almost day, the Moon and stars have already passed, and, now soon, the Sun will rise."

We were told that the spirits had received our requests and that all was good. "Don't worry about anything," Khalzen added, "Your goal, the reason why you are here and your journey, will be good."

Before we left the urtz he wanted to know, "Did you hear any animal sounds during the ceremony?" We told him that we had heard a bear.

Khalzen told me, "Your grandmother was very powerful, a very strong shaman and now her land is occupied by others."

He wanted to know where my ancestors were born. I told him, "They were born in Indian Territory, a place now called Oklahoma, which translates from the Choctaw language as 'red people.'"

The shaman said, "In that place, there is one kind of bird that has a white feather. You know, a white feather? In the spring, that bird makes a beautiful sound. Do you know what bird that is?"

I tried to remember the name. "A Scissor-Tail Flycatcher", I said.

He said, "You should have the feather from that bird on your head when you do shamanic rituals."

I agreed.

He went on to say, "That bird makes a really beautiful sound."

He said, "At the beginning of the humans, I think in your tribe they used to speak by trying to imitate that bird's sound."

Khalzen spoke again. "At your ancestor's original place, there is one big river. That river consists of many small rivers or streams, but that place is now already destroyed and has become a different place. You should give some offerings to that place, like milk or candy, some kind of an offering, so you can do a shamanic ceremony there."

Khalzen said, "Where John lives (in Seattle), there is the big mountain (Mt. Rainier) and then on the big mountain, there is the big eagle."

Khalzen spoke then of the ceremony, "I called my spirits, all of my grandparents from my mother's and my father's side. I even called the Tuvan spirits."

He said, "I travelled to your country without a visa." We laughed. "Please, don't tell anybody I went in without the visa".

It was so cold that we were shivering. It was about four-thirty in the morning, and there was the first hint of a sunrise glow.

The energy at this Dukha shaman ceremony was wild and intense. There was a feeling of being on edge somehow, and of wanting to do things right. We were



left with a sense that our efforts really do matter.

We felt inspired to share this ceremony and spread this understanding, so shamans around the world will join together and focus on cleaning up the messes of humanity.

John and I arrived back at our urtz as dawn was approaching. We both looked blanched and in shock. John and I talked about what had happened, about the ceremony, and wondered in what way the Moon could possibly be better.

Is the large amount of debris from space launches, all circling the Earth, creating a serious risk by distorting the relationship between celestial bodies? Might this debris have real effects on life here on earth?

We are living in a world whose very existence is sustained by the unity of everything. These fundamental relationships abound as a great Mystery. We can be conscious and hold intention, keeping in mind that the world is more complex than we can imagine, therefore we must not presume to know what should be the best outcome for such a ceremony. John and I broadened

our trust in the ability of the Earth and the Moon to heal and regain balance and harmony.

Khalzen was emphatic that the efforts of one person, no matter how powerful, could never accomplish changes for these major aspects of nature all on their own. We must be willing to work in consort, unified. We need to collaborate in order to effect change on this level.

Khalzen requested that we encourage shamans from around the world to work together to help bring the Moon and the Earth back into balance, and so we decided that we would share these experiences and encourage other shamans throughout the world to pay attention to the condition of the Moon, and join together asking for help to heal these disturbances.

Khalzen said, "Every shaman, wherever they are living, there is power there; there is living spirit power there, in that place, on that land. If all shamans, who are spread all over the world and cover all of the land, perform this ceremony, then nature could probably survive.

It's so exciting to know that we can all be brothers and sisters as shamans, male and female, all of us around the world can do something about saving our natural world."

Susan Ross Grimaldi M.Ed. was born into the Choctaw Nation, and is a highly respected, internationally-renowned, Native American, working as a shaman. At the age of seven she had rheumatic fever and flew out of this world, where she was healed and taught. When she returned she was no longer sick and from that time on, she fell into a visionary state easily and had "knowing."

She has undertaken considerable fieldwork, researching shamanism in various cultures, and this has been ground breaking and pivotal for catalysing the re-emergence of shamanism in China. Her dedication to cultural preservation has led her to the Amazon basin in Brazil, and to the most remote northern taigas of Mongolia, where she filmed the shamanic traditions of the nomadic reindeer herders. She is, at their request, sharing this knowledge with others throughout the world. Susan is based in Montpelier, Vermont, USA  
[www.susangrimaldi.com](http://www.susangrimaldi.com)

#### NOTES

1: Ghosts passed into spirit in August 2013.

2: An ongot spirit is a spirit helper, sometimes in the form of an animal, sometimes in the form of an ancestor.

Above: the author and John R. Lawrence Jr. stand beside an impressive ovoo spirit shrine and offering place in Northern Mongolia





## *Practitioner Profile....* **Susan Ross Grimaldi**

LOCATION: VERMONT, USA.  
[www.susangrimaldi.com](http://www.susangrimaldi.com)

### ***Where did you first meet shamanism?***

When I was seven years old I had rheumatic fever, and I flew out of this world on the wing of an airplane. I met

ancestors who taught me and healed me. From that moment, I was different. I fell into trance easily and had visions and knowing. This visionary ability combined with my love for my grandmother. She had painful arthritis and I wanted to alleviate her pain, then I began my practice.

### ***Which teachers and teachings have influenced you the most?***

I have learned the most from the thousands of clients who have given me the gift of their trust, and the opportunity to participate in their healing journeys. I have learned by paying attention to the understanding that comes by working with guidance from direct revelation. I appreciate the encouragement and opportunities provided by my grandmothers, Michael Harner, Sandra Ingerman, Ailo Gaup, Ai-Churek, Siqingua, Wo Jufen, Khalzen, Saintsetseg, Ganbat, and Ipupiara.

### ***What makes your heart sing?***

I can hear my soul's song most clearly when I'm conducting a healing ceremony. I feel the ringing of my soul singing, in a perpetual sustaining beauty, as I step into a state of grace, performing the guided perfection of that person's soul mending.

### ***What is the most bizarre situation that you have found yourself in on your shamanic path***

I was invited by a Chinese University to serve as a consultant for reintegrating shamanism back into contemporary Chinese society. I was preparing to demonstrate a shamanic ritual that would air on prime time television news, when I was asked not to do anything real. They wanted me to fake it!

### ***Where on earth do you feel most at home?***

I live in a small village in rural Vermont along the bank of the Great Brook. I enjoy the peace and beauty of this sweet setting.

### ***What do you do for fun?***

I enjoy being with my family, being in nature, swimming, canoeing and custom building drums for people. I am passionate about painting with pastels. I like travelling to remote locations and meeting indigenous shamans.

### ***What is your favourite food?***

I like potlucks, where friends come together and share local foods prepared with love.

### ***What music do you like?***

My favourite CD is 'Tuvan Shamanic Healing' by Ai-Churek ([www.shamanism.org](http://www.shamanism.org)). It creates spontaneous healing and promotes deep restorative sleep. I am also very fond of 'Siqingua Ceremonial Chanting', ([www.susangrimaldi.com](http://www.susangrimaldi.com)) for gathering empowerment.

### ***Best book and film?***

I prefer ethnographic documentary films. My favourites are, 'Forest of Bliss', 'Dead Birds', and 'Sweet Grass'. I have a copy of Carl Jung's, 'Red Book', and continue to be fascinated by his artwork, especially the mandalas.

### ***What message to your 12-year-old self would you give?***

Love yourself, no matter what happens. Remember to be grateful. Listen to your heart, follow your passions, develop your gifts, believe in yourself, and show up. Learn from your mistakes and grow with more understanding. Forgive yourself and when possible repair damage. Know that growing up is forever. If you continue to try to be kind, clear, and open to change, while protecting your essential body and soul, you should find fulfillment.

### ***A wish for the future?***

I wish for less violence and more caring.