

Analysis of the personality of (neo) shamans

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SUMMARY

The aim of the study was to compare 4 groups of shamans, differing in their ethnicity and place of permanent residence, to identify and describe the main factors that determine their psychological characteristics as carriers of unique and extraordinary abilities, and to compile a psychological portrait of a shaman.

As a methodological material for psychological examination, all respondents were offered a block of techniques, which included the following tests:

- test MPI (Eysenck);
- RTS methodology (solving difficult life situations);
- projective Rorschach test;
- test of Luscher's color preferences;
- modification of the projective method "Non-existent animal";
- operator's questionnaire, filled only by the shaman;
- self-assessment questionnaire of the psychophysiological state during the ritual. The survey involved 49 shamans and 52 people from the control group.

1. A psychological portrait of the shaman has been compiled.

2. Shamans for the most part have a strong stable type of nervous systems.

3. Shamans have well-developed mechanisms for reducing mental voltage.

4. Shamans are characterized by a weakly expressed individuality, stereotype and standard thinking.

5. The level of fantasy among shamans is unexpectedly low.

6. During the process of rituals in the body of the shaman, psychophysiological changes, situationally associated with this type of activity.

Key words: shamans, psychological research, health improvement, traditional medicine, folk medicine, healing, altered states of consciousness.

A socio-psychological study of people who practice shamanic techniques and have the ability to enter an altered state of consciousness is part of an extensive interdisciplinary study conducted by the Center for the Study of Shamanism and Other Traditional Beliefs and Practices

Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology named after N.N. Miklouho-Maclay RAS from 2000 to the present. It took place within the framework of the RGNF project (No. 02-06-00042a, No. 03-0618003e; head of Doctor of Historical Sciences V.I. Kharitonova) in 2002-2004 in Moscow, the republics of Gorny Altai, Tyva, Khakassia and Buryatia [12].

Introduction

Shamanism is a part of the spiritual and material culture of a large number of peoples of the world. For centuries, millennia, shamans have assumed the functions of diviners or healers in the absence of doctors. People use these traditional national healing techniques to this day. Almost all methods of such influence are carried out by special people who have, or are supposed to have, certain unique abilities to perform these types of activities: this is a medicinal practice, clairvoyant searches, etc. [3].

The question arises, why should shamans be studied separately from, for example, psychics, bioenergy therapists or healers? The point is in the nature of the acting factor: the carriers of functions similar to shamans in the "Western" tradition consciously make a choice in favor of this special way of life and activity, they are guided by certain personal preferences and mechanisms. In contrast to them, shamans "are forced" to come to this type of activity. First, they experience a "shamanic disease" developing over time, then they begin to work in this field, often leaving their previous profession, neglecting education and years of accumulated experience in order to preserve their health, and sometimes their lives. This gift is perceived negatively by some people as burdensome and painful. because if they are forced or consciously unable to engage in rituals for some time, then the "shamanic disease" returns, first in a mild form, and then with an increase in intensity. It happens that a newly-minted shaman turns to the Higher powers or to the spirits of ancestors with a request not to reward him with this gift or to take this gift from him.

In addition, if psychics of the "Western tradition" independently choose the type of activity that they consider preferable - diagnostics, healing, predictions, etc., then shamans acquire the properties necessary for their activity in a complex manner, further improving in them only as needed.

The purpose of this study was to study the psychological characteristics of the shaman's personality, as a carrier of extraordinary abilities that are activated in an altered state of consciousness, to determine his current mental state; the transformation of the personality and the emotional sphere introduced by this type of activity into the personality; differentiation of psychopathology and normal functioning of the individual in society - the study of adequate behavioral actions [4, 5, 6 7].

Relevance

Currently, the country has an extremely diverse picture of

the plan for the provision of medical services to the population. We are surrounded by a huge number of revived magic-medical and magic-(religious) -mystical, psychological and psychotherapeutic practices that claim to influence human health and worldview and often operate under the cover of numerous cultural and religious centers. Shamans using traditional national healing techniques provide an opportunity to observe them in a real socio-cultural context. Insufficient knowledge of this phenomenon, the presence of extensive field and archival material [8, 9, 10, 11] makes the research relevant.

The research result is information, containing psychological characteristics of the surveyed, about the presence of identified personal characteristics, behavioral reactions and professional prospects. It is expressed both in the form of individual psychological characteristics provided to each of the subjects, and in a summary-analytical form, including when constructing a typical "portrait of a shaman".

Methodical material

As a methodological material for a psychological examination, all respondents were offered a block of several methods, which included the following tests:

1 - MRI test (Eysenck) revealing individual personality characteristics: personality orientation (extra- and introversion), neuroticism, type of temperament and associated behavioral features;

2 - modification[1] the projective technique "Non-existent animal", which investigates the unconscious mechanisms of correlation and image of a person's drawing;

3 - test of Luscher's color preferences, which makes it possible to determine the psychological aspects of the respondent's current state: the background of mood, general psychological activity, intensity of needs, the incentive force of the motivational sphere and the emotional-volitional components of mental activity and their situational changes, as well as the characteristics of the behavior of individuals in some significant social situations;

4 - the RTS methodology (solving difficult life situations) to determine the level of frustration of the personality, research ways of emotional release and methods of responding to emotionally significant situations, as well as identifying aggressive behavior and the need for achievements;

5 - Rorschach projective test for the diagnosis of individual individual properties and psychological characteristics of a person: selectivity of perception, peculiarities of the course of associative processes, peculiarities of the attitude.

Additionally, only shamans were offered:

- operator's questionnaire for obtaining social information about the respondent, about his "roots" and his debut as a shaman;

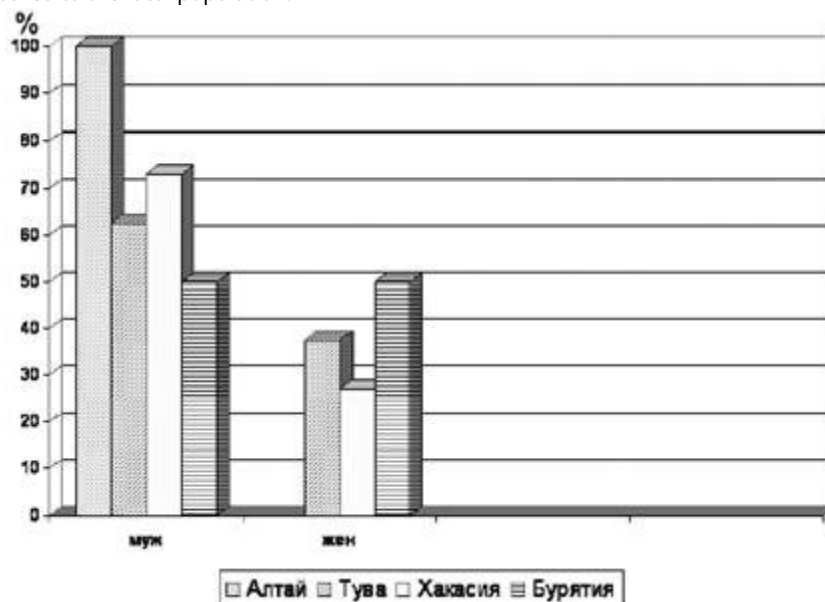
- self-assessment questionnaire of the psychophysical state of the shaman during stay in an altered state of consciousness.

Psychological research results

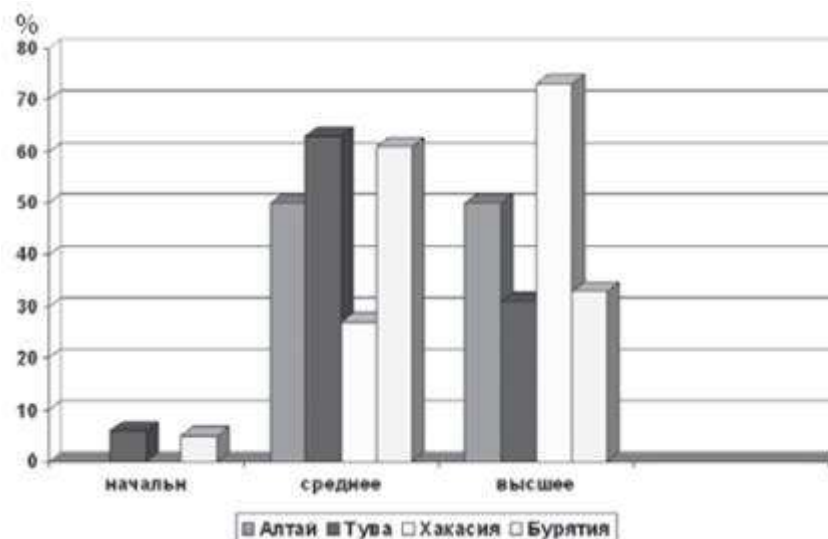
The study involved 49 shamans - 32 men and 18 women - and

51 people made up a control group similar to the experimental one in terms of gender, age and nationality and living in the same regions.

Young people rarely become shamans; this is the prerogative of mostly mature and elderly people. Thus, the majority of the surveyed became shamans at the age of 35, but one woman became a shaman after 75 years. The number of female shamans is less than that of male shamans, and the level of education of shamans is slightly higher than that of male shamans and somewhat lower than that of the representatives of the control group. The level of situational anxiety among shamans is somewhat higher than among shamans and significantly higher than among representatives of the control group. The average level of manifestation of anxiety in them is significantly lower than in both groups. According to the criterion of stability of the nervous system, shamans are closer to the male type, significantly differing from the representatives of their regions: they often have high emotional stability, there are even tendencies to the depletion of the emotional sphere, which is generally a rarity in women. Shaman women have an almost equal number of representatives with both increased and decreased levels of neuroticism. In comparison with shamans, they have a slightly increased neuroticism. However, if we take the population of these regions as a whole, which is generally characterized by increased neuroticism, then we can say that shaman women are approaching the male type, which, in turn, differs significantly from the local residents. That is, in general, shamans are distinguished by more stable types of temperament compared to the local population. However, if we take the population of these regions as a whole, which is generally characterized by increased neuroticism, then we can say that shaman women are approaching the male type, which, in turn, differs significantly from the local residents. That is, in general, shamans are distinguished by more stable types of temperament compared to the local population. However, if we take the population of these regions as a whole, which is generally characterized by increased neuroticism, then we can say that shaman women are approaching the male type, which, in turn, differs significantly from the local residents. That is, in general, shamans are distinguished by more stable types of temperament compared to the local population.

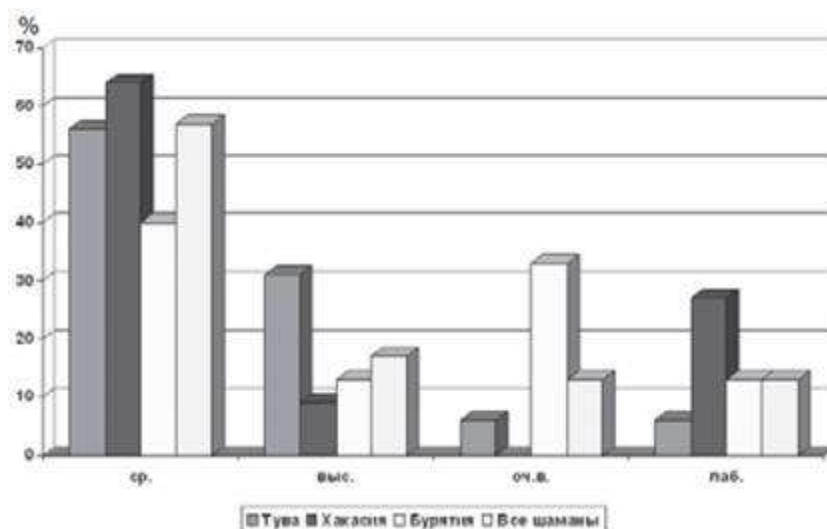


Rice. 1. Distribution of shamans by gender.



Rice. 2. Distribution of shamans by educational basis.

The level of fantasy among most shamans is very low, both on the Rorschach test and on the "Non-existent animal" test. The subjects clearly cannot abstract themselves from the familiar picture of the world. So when working on the test "Non-existent animal" the overwhelming majority of people tried to draw: women - a Cheburashka (which is a typical variant when presenting the test, for example, to children), men - a Unicorn. When imposing restrictions on the image of these creatures, as a rule, followed by a temporary refusal to draw and the bewildered question: "What should I do?" As a result, in the course of the research, already on the spot, we had to change the instruction to a closer one to the subjects on the subject: "To draw a spirit that they encounter in their daily life and during rituals and" shamanic journeys".



Rice. 3. The level of emotional stability. Legend: ср. - average level emotional stability; выс. - a high level of emotional stability; оч.в. - a very high level of emotional stability; лаб. - labile, unstable nervous system.

Shamans during their "journey" go to the world of spirits, meet with ancestors, departed shamans or with animal patrons. To do this, they first, with the help of their own ritual objects, perform actions that introduce their state of altered consciousness, until the images that appear before their inner vision begin to be perceived as real. Shamans see them, hear them, touch them. With a more complete immersion, they are "included" in what is happening, begin to interact with it. Shamans are simultaneously present in two planes: they perceive signals from a real patient and they themselves find and / or lead him on a "shamanic journey". Most often, all shamans have the following sensations:

- psychological: the appearance of images and pictures, smells, sounds, feeling of flight;
- physiological: the appearance of a feeling of heat throughout the body, moisture in the palms, changes in the temperature of the hands, a feeling of warmth in certain parts of the body.

Many shamans note in themselves the feeling of "leaving the body," the appearance in front of or within themselves of an outsider personality (ancestor) or essence (spirit - patron or animal helper), with whom one can communicate both mentally and through speech.

The psychological characteristics of the shaman

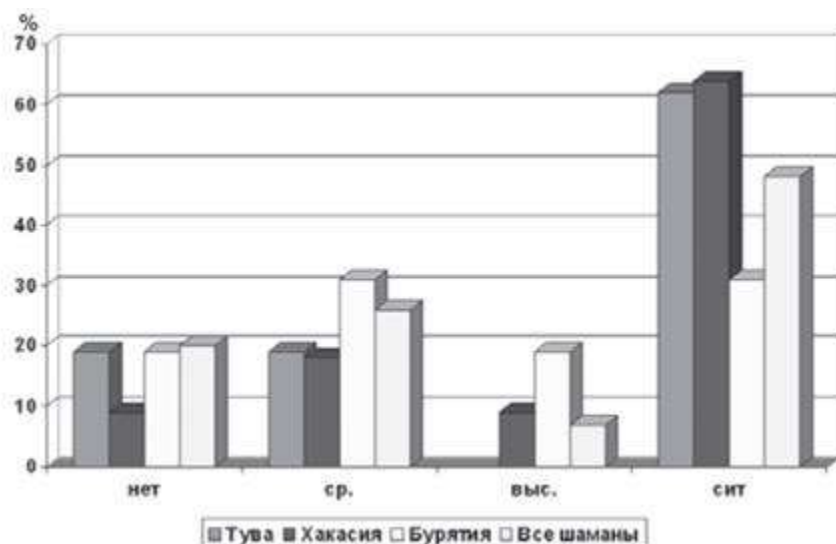
Below is a version of the psychological portrait of the shaman "as a whole", which includes the characteristics inherent in both men and women.

Appearance: constrained tense posture, stinging gestures, unhurried, calibrated movements, low-emotional facial expressions, verbal activity with a didactic bias.

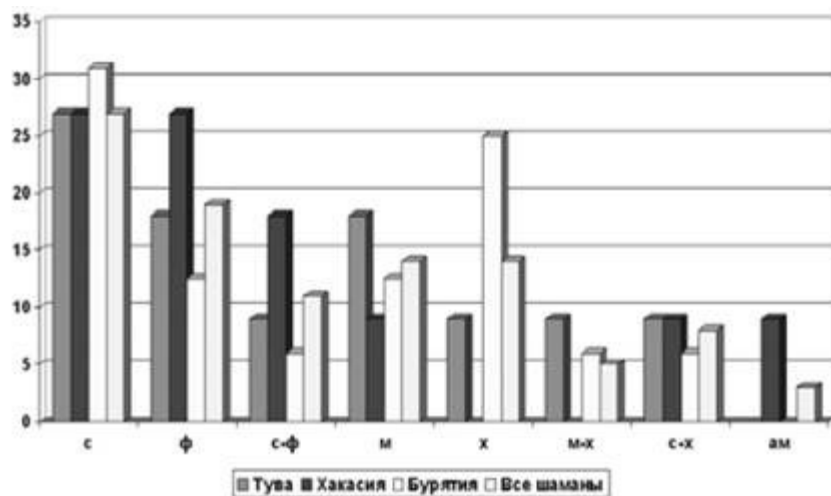
The thinking of shamans is figurative, intuitive, emotionally colored, with a predominance of analytical components. They are attentive to details, but often "because of the trees they do not see the forest", since not all details fall into their field of vision. As a result, they create a holistic, but extremely subjective, their own individual picture of the world. It is like a mosaic based on the details that they isolate from reality. (Another thing is that this "picture of the world" is accepted by their environment practically without objections, or at least without explicitly expressed objections).

Shaman behavior is consistent and predictable. The trend is not only an emphasis on one's individuality, uniqueness, but also an emphasis on one's belonging to a certain group - of course, the chosen and elite. In this regard, they admit "double standards", that is, what is possible for them is often unacceptable to people who do not belong to their circle.

For shamans, the opinion of others about him is very important. They are prone to self-adornment and self-justification, they have highly developed demonstrative behavior. Therefore, in order to gain a positive assessment of themselves, they either take some action (give advice or offer services), or provoke others to express an emotional reaction of approval. They are subjective, and their thoughts and statements are based on traditional values, beliefs, attitudes, stereotypes adopted in a given society. They are too conservative, with poor imagination, inflexible. They are not prone to conflict. Their favorite style is collision avoidance, avoidance. By doing this, they "drive the conflict inside", which leads to an increase in the level of mental stress not only in the subject himself, but also in the people around him. At the same time, they have a strongly developed need to be right and to manage the state of affairs, to decide not only for themselves, but also for other people. Shamans have internal control, that is, they prefer self-control, reacting negatively to real or imagined encroachments on their freedom and their ways of self-expression by society. They are sensitive to the image they have created or around them and negatively - painfully or aggressively - perceive attempts, including imaginary ones, to harm it, tend to self-adornment and self-justification, they have highly developed demonstrative behavior. Naturally, their self-esteem is overestimated. The features of egocentrism are noted. Accordingly, their sense of humor is poorly developed. that is, they prefer self-control, reacting negatively to real or imagined encroachments on their freedom and their ways of self-expression by society. They are sensitive to the image they have created or around them and negatively - painfully or aggressively - perceive attempts, including imaginary ones, to harm it, tend to self-adornment and self-justification, they have highly developed demonstrative behavior. Naturally, their self-esteem is overestimated. The features of egocentrism are noted. Accordingly, their sense of humor is poorly developed. that is, they prefer self-control, reacting negatively to real or imagined encroachments on their freedom and their ways of self-expression by society. They are sensitive to the image they have created or around them and negatively - painfully or aggressively - perceive attempts, including imaginary ones, to harm it, tend to self-adornment and self-justification, they have highly developed demonstrative behavior. Naturally, their self-esteem is overestimated. The features of egocentrism are noted. Accordingly, their sense of humor is poorly developed. are prone to self-adornment and self-justification, they have highly developed demonstrative behavior. Naturally, their self-esteem is overestimated. The features of egocentrism are noted. Accordingly, their sense of humor is poorly developed. are prone to self-adornment and self-justification, they have highly developed demonstrative behavior. Naturally, their self-esteem is overestimated. The features of egocentrism are noted. Accordingly, their sense of humor is poorly developed.



Rice. 4. The level of anxiety. Legend: no - there is no anxiety; Wed - average level of anxiety; h. - high level of anxiety; sieve. - situational anxiety.

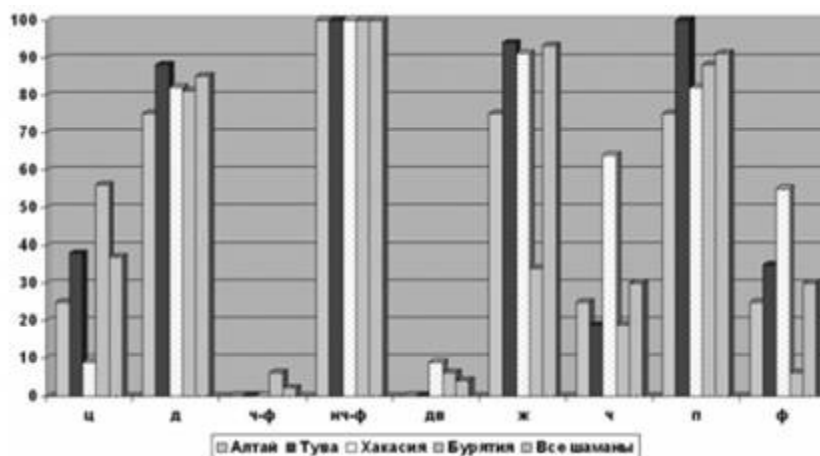


Rice. 5. Distribution of respondents by temperament. Legend: p. -sanguine people; f. - phlegmatic; s-ph. - sanguine people bordering on phlegmatic people; m. - melancholic; NS. - choleric people; m.-kh. - melancholic, borderline with choleric; s.-kh. - sanguine people bordering on choleric people; am. - ambovert (accentuation is not pronounced).

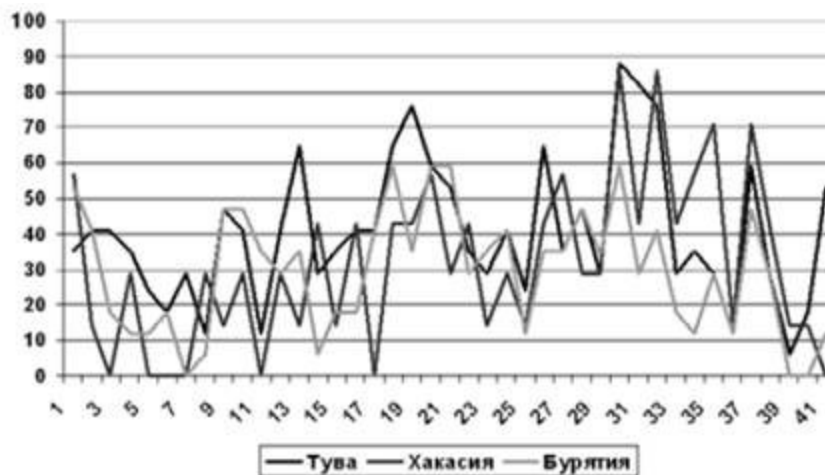
Shamans are active people. Most of what they are planning or being implemented, or at least starting to come true. Reflection is not typical for shamans. Shamans are characterized by "ecological" and at the same time "mythological" thinking, which presupposes the idea of harmony between man, nature, real and ideal worlds, harmonization of the human body and spirit with nature, the microcosm with the macrocosm. For them, the Universe has no division into spiritual and material components, everything is spiritualized. The world is one, and man is not opposed to him, as the only thinking being in the universe, he coexists with him as an equal, not dominant

component.

Shamanic women same way differ from control group, who acted in the study as representatives of the female population of these regions. In the culture of the surveyed regions, as in many eastern countries, the idea of a subordinate position of a woman in relation to men is embedded. If among local women there are theoretically familiar with the ideas of feminism, occupying high positions, succeeding in the field of social and scientific activities, and even surrounded by modern-minded men, then the idea of male priority in society is still strong both in their minds and in society in the whole. Therefore, women quite calmly perceive the fact that in some cases they are relegated to secondary roles. Shamans, on the other hand, in their psychological indicators approach the male type [12].



Rice. 6. Rorschach test. Designations: c. - whole (perception of the spot as a whole); etc. -detail (perception of part of the spot); ch-f. - clear background; low-frequency - fuzzy background; dv. - allocation of the category "movement"; f. - a vision in the spot of the image of an animal; h. - a vision in the spot of the image of a person; p. - a vision in the spot of the image of an object; f. - vision in the spot of a fantasy image.



Rice. 7. Graph reflecting psycho-physiological changes in the body of shamans during the ritual.

conclusions

1. Neither educational level, nor social and social status, nor a person's gender does not matter in deciding whether a person is capable of becoming a shaman, entering a state of altered consciousness and further engaging in shamanic practices. The same results were observed both in people with higher and secondary education, both in people engaged in physical work and those engaged in intellectual activity.

2. Shamans, both men and women, most often have a strong a stable type of the nervous system, can be both extra- and introverted, they have low anxiety with pronounced emotional stress.

3. The analytical style of thinking prevails among shamans. They are capable quickly process large arrays of new information, easily extract the necessary additional information from memory, and this process is often not controlled by consciousness and is non-verbal.

4. Shamans have a good ability to reduce their mental stress, despite the fact that the level of emotional stress in them is increased. Obviously, shamanic practice appears as an independent, not compensatory type of activity.

5. It was revealed that shamans are characterized by low, in comparison with the control group, the level of all types of aggression - aggression towards other persons, outwardly directed (extrapunitive) and aggression directed at oneself (self-aggression), verbal, self-accusing (intrapunitive) behavior and blaming others.

6. Shamans are characterized by a weakly expressed individuality, the presence figurative and verbal stereotypes and standard thinking. The level of fantasy among shamans is low.

7. During the process of rituals in the body of the shaman, psychophysiological changes are situationally associated with this type of activity.

8. According to their psychological characteristics, women-shamans are more close to the psychotypes of men, significantly differing from the female population of their regions.

Conclusion

Due to the intensively growing interest in esotericism and the active accumulation of knowledge in this area, the need for further research on the topic under discussion is beyond doubt, since the presence of people who are able to receive information from the unmanifest world suggests that there are still many blank spots in the field of psychological study of a person. ... The study of their features is one of the most interesting directions in modern experimental psychology.

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[1] The subjects were unable to follow the test instructions: "Draw an animal that does not exist in the world." The answer to the instruction was perplexed questions: "How can you draw something that is not there?" As a result, in the course of the study, they had to change the instructions for a more closely related topic. In its final form, the instruction for shamans looked like this: "Draw the spirit you saw." The test with such an instruction did not cause any difficulties for the respondents.

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