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ICC Special

# NEO-SHAMANISM—Towards a Culture of Ex-stase

The Appearance of Intensive Expanse in the Digital Realm

Toward a Culture of Ex-stase: The Appearance of Inner Space in Digital Culture

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## WHY NEO-SHAMANISM? WHY NOW? BECAUSE IT'S "REAL"

ITOH Toshiharu(I.T): In this, the last in the series of talk sessions related to the Portable Sacred Grounds—Telepresence World exhibition, I'd like to focus on the topic of "Neo-Shamanism."

Shamanism is, of course, thought to be a certain cultural complex/ accumulation of associations which revolve around the personage of the spiritualist, or medium—something which posits a source of mystery and power which lurks deep in the human psyche. He is known by many names: "shaman," "medicine man," "sorcerer," "magician," and so on. ELIADE's definition positions the shaman as similar to the physician. He is the healer of the afflicted. Like all sorcerers, he is a worker of miracles. And yet, the shaman alone is considered a worthy guide for the soul.

One might imagine that in modern times, with the urgent rationalization of our lifestyles and advances in western science, the practice of shamanism would be endangered. But in fact, shamanism seems merely to be mutating, and migrating to new ground. Especially in the worlds of music and the arts, we're seeing the reach of the shamanism even in the most unlikely places.

NAKAZAWA Shin'ichi wrote in his essay "Telepresence—Telephones, Dreams and Other Spiritualistic Media" [Gôthe's Ears, Kawade Shobo Shinsha] that "the telephone is an extraordinarily mysterious invention, a technical realization of telepresence—telepresence being something which alters human perceptions of time and space—which in the process opens passages to worlds that differ from reality." Before the invention of the telephone, people got their telepresence from the shaman. He would go into a trance, encounter the spirit world, and perform the job of carrier—bringing voices of people in faraway places and other phenomena back to those present. Having posited the shaman as a pioneer of telepresence phenomena before, I would first like to ask Shin'ichi to speak about the potential for this "new shamanism," and his views on the relationship between shamanism and telepresence.

NAKAZAWA Shin'ichi(N.S): The title of this exhibition is "Portable Sacred Grounds." This is a provocative distinction. Sacred grounds are typically not moveable, though they are an anomaly—being in this world, while not necessarily of it. Thus we have the pilgrimage to the sacred ground, the place

where, like in Alice's "Wonderland," things are not quite as they seem. Most sacred grounds are in rough terrain, where geological strata are protruding out from the earth, creating a peculiar atmosphere, as another world suddenly shows its face. The place has magnetism, and as people enter it and interact with it, their perception of distance, and understanding of the world undergoes a certain transformation.

Telepresence is also a phenomenon where things are not quite as they seem. That which should not be here, is. Also, when the telephone was first invented, the interface was shaped not unlike a mouth, through which distant voices would come whispering across the ether, and completing the illusion of the "other." The sense of distance between one person and another, this heretofore immutable separation, was suddenly minimized. It was at once technical and symbolic victory, a new era with a new perceptual realm and a new realm of mystical experience.

In the countryside where I was raised we had a storehouse in which we kept a large taiko drum for ceremonial occasions. I used to love to beat on this drum. After I'd sounded that first wondrous boom, something within my body started to resonate. Then I'd hit it again. And as I'd get going, I only needed to continue playing it for the world around me to seem like it was fading away. I was aware that once you listen to the boom boom booming of the drum, or the clang clang clanging of the European church bells, the human psyche turns inwards. This is why I think that I can understand why people slip into a trance when they see the shaman pounding on the drums, and why such drums are considered a spiritual medium. It's because setting a rhythm to a space, and beating it and making the place jump makes the senses switch over to the psychic interior. And when you do this, strangely enough, the sense of distance vanishes.

A sense of distance isn't something which you enumerate, neither is it a specific physical expanse. It is something which appears inside, from which the intensity is then accumulated. In short, it is an intensive (rather than extensive) expanse, neither distance itself, nor a specific quality or quantity. In the system which is a human being, the visual nerves apprehend the external world, and reconstruct it within the cerebrum, and a sense of distance is born, from which we then extrapolate the means of quantifying volume. And yet in the world of the human interior, the original remains an "intensive expanse." There is no distance or volume, simply a feeling of intensity. It is something extremely abstract,

like a flow within human beings, which has neither the properties of time nor space, just an expanse of something which contains accumulated energy, seeking release.

This tendency was typified in the shaman's art, and those capable of mastering it were able to not only travel more lucidly within their own interior, but at the same time bring the relationship between human beings and geological formations—two seemingly unrelated phenomena—into play. Apparently the shaman becomes able to experience a condition where these two things become one in his interior, feel them there trespassing each other.

Such techniques have been in development since Paleolithic times, but at first, they were pretty rough. The shaman used to have to go to places where there were carbon dioxide vapors leaking into the atmosphere, and breathe them until he got dizzy to go into his trances. (laughs) From there things continued to be refined, and they became able to extract essences of plants and minerals capable of inducing special states of awareness, or learning about the transcendent powers of drum rhythms. People were talking to rocks, becoming one with the flora, things from faraway places were known to appear as though the distance had been transcended. Thus, by the Neolithic period, shamanistic culture was in full flower.

These knowledges were suppressed by most organized religions (the worst of which was Christianity). And the reason for this is that shamanism is not a religion, it is the step before religion. However, pre-religious knowledge managed to sneak through to the present in some rare cultures. The powers of telepresence among the Australian aborigines, for example, is truly splendid. It still exists to some extent among Native American peoples . . . even in Japan we can still find vestiges of it.

So why now? Why neo-shamanism? Not because of some nostalgic impulse nor new-found interest in the occult, but because it is a very real problem. Mathematics, for example, is no longer just about calculating numbers and measuring quantities. It is becoming able to act upon, and develop operations for a new set of issues, and I would posit that these are issues which concern "intensive expanse." It is no longer the classical world of weights and measures, but the slow gradual arrival of methodologies for touching upon the intensive expanse within human beings. We are beginning to see a qualitative shift in the way history perceives magic and sorcery, these massive vestiges of early human culture, that

religions originally proclaimed as "barbaric" and tried to bury away.

And this, of course, means that organized religion, too, needs to metamorphose into something new . . . into a "super-religion," as it were, something which opens human awareness to things beyond what contemporary religion covers. Science and technology need no longer be the object of religion's enmity. Rather the opposite, in that new technologies are opening up these new super-religious spaces. The alpha of pre-religion is meeting the omega of post-religion. This is not a rhetorical convenience, but rather what I believe is happening, somehow strangely being focused towards the millennium.

I.T: In your essay "Telepresence," you point out that with the picturephone we lose the mysterious space of the telephone—that the sense of distance is emphasized in the usurpation of the "intensive expanse" which you just spoke of.

N.S: This is in some ways related to the secret of music as well. I mean, is there any medium/ art form as mysterious and powerful as music? If I was asked to choose between the graphic arts and the musical, I'd keep the latter. And the reason is that it is more primitive. At once both the most primitive and the most futuristic. It is the single form of expression most clearly directed towards human intensive expanse.

## AMBIENT MUSIC AND INTENSIVE EXPANSE

I.T: Last year, I saw a television program featuring HOSONO Haruomi called "Be Still, Sit And Listen Well" [NHK Broadcast Satellite Channel 2, from the "Travelling Our Splendid World" series]. It was a show about visiting a Pueblo [indigenous North American] tribe. As one can infer from its title, it was an inquiry into what it means to listen, or perhaps what it means to travel into "intensive expanse." It was fascinating as a TV program, but when rethought in terms of "Portable Sacred Grounds—Telepresence World," it offers a number of important keys to reading the issues at hand.

For example, Haruomi's travels took him to Chaco Canyon near Santa Fe, the traditional home of the ancestors of the Pueblo Indian nation, the Anasazi people. Brenda LAUFEL [author and pioneering researcher of interface design] explains telepresence technology using the images in the stone carvings left by the Anasazi in this very canyon in a demonstration video she produced. It is yet another

example of telepresence technology being used to understand the sensibilities and memories of ancient peoples. The work of Dutch artists Tjebbe van TILLEN and Fred GALES, «Neo-Shamanism», installed as part of the Portable Sacred Grounds—Telepresence World exhibition, features stones that speak, or rather, sing. This phenomenon of "singing stones" is something that also appears in Haruomi's documentary.

Until recently, I had considered the correct translation of the word "telepresence" into Japanese as "enkaku sonzai," [tele-existence] and yet now I understand that a more appropriate translation might be "enkaku rinzai," [tele-presence] because the issue at hand is the paradox of something that is not apparent to our senses is actually before us. We are connected to something which transcends reality. Just as Haruomi says in his documentary, "I am haunted by a feeling that, despite my years, there is something essential to human nature that is evading me." The ability to experience a trip into intensive expanse, to—through these, in some sense symbolic, songs, drums or stones—experience a connection to this unapparent world, and explore what there is to experience there. I'd firstly like to ask about this experience.

**HOSONO Haruomi(H.H):** Well, most of what I experienced were reconfirmations of what I'd already glimpsed through music. For example, Larry LITTLEBIRD, my teacher in this voyage, asked me, "That sound which comes from within you, is it a good sound, or is it a bad sound?" Most musicians would read that question as "is it an interesting sound

or an uninteresting sound," but I have to believe that at a deeper level there are such things as "good" and "bad" sounds. I've used computers and just about every other electronic instrument as well as many non-electronic instruments at one point or another in my work, but I consider everything I've made to have originated from within me, and consider sounds from this vantage point. And when you look at music like this, it is easy to come to the conclusion that most of the music in our world is just too cluttered. It's just an environment to avoid. So you might say that if it weren't for my experience with the Pueblo Indians at their sacred grounds, this is one thing essential to human nature that might have evaded me.

Another might be related to the fact that since the beginning of 1990s I had been doing mostly ambient music, which was like an ocean of music to me. The people from the younger generations of the pop music world began creating their music from an "oceanic feeling" sensibility from the beginning of the '90s. Ambient was originally associated with a more ecological context, but this was mistaken. Ambient is the musical form with the greatest reach, or periphery of attraction—in short, from the expanses of one's deeper interior. And in making ambient music I came to the realization that it is definitely not an external environment, but rather the internal ambience that has this "oceanic feeling." I don't even think that this is something that is limited to music, even if music is perhaps the easiest way to encounter it. In the middle of the trip a man named Andrew AHSONA said, after beating a drum, "This is the answer to



From «Be There Here», a video produced by Telepresence Research, Inc.

everything." And it's true, music is something that is there at our essence.

**N.S:** What do you personally think of the relationship between music and shamanism?

**H.H:** There are two things. The first is the music which has been mediated. This thing that we print onto CDs and other media and distribute to people. When I make music, I'm having my memories and feelings being printed and distributed—I am "telepresent" in a way, but you can't really call that "shamanism," because, at some level, I'm certainly aware that I'm producing something professionally. And after all, the music isn't going to leave that CD. These imprints, however, are not as perfect as we might imagine. For example, even though a CD may be digitally recorded, the technology is still in an imperfect state, and it's still easy to have noise enter into the process. If you leave this noise in when you're mastering to CD, the finished product will sound defective. Lately, in Japan there are artists who employ this degradation, called the "Onkyo-ha" [acoustic school]. Right now, such noise is spreading. I don't know if you can call their work "shamanism" either, but this first element that I wish to emphasize is the way that this mediated framework is overcome, and destroyed. At first I didn't understand. I thought, "this is just noise." I reacted by denying it.

The other thing is that music "only exists in a specific place." This is something I'm putting more of my energies into now. I make my CDs in the studio, in this medium that anyone can hear anywhere, but on the other hand, I also make music that only exists in a specific place. There is no need to record this music, and anyone is free to forget it, even in the place where it exists.

## THE SHAMAN'S DRUM

**MINATO Chihiro(M.C):** If I might return to the topic of "intensive expanse" for a moment, I think that there are a couple of distinct ways to get there. Perhaps it's better to say "make that transition" . . . for the simple reason that the shaman's art is to some extent contingent upon a certain trance state. ELIADE used word "extase" to refer to the soul leaving the body. Just as demonic "possession" deals with an external presence entering the body, extase (ecstasy) deals with the original presence leaving the body. Now, there are several stages to this process. The first of these is a certain sense of confusion. The second is a

vision of the structure of the path which had confused you. At the end of this path is most likely the sacred grounds, or so speculated Mihaly HOPPAl in his book *Shamanism* (Japanese language edition; Seidosha, 1998). I've read a lot of books on trance states, and they all generally concur on the fact of there being a third and fourth step. Of course, there may be a way to leap directly in . . . .

One of the transitions is to ride a bird into the sky. The myth of the migrating raven is told from Siberia, across Alaska and even in mainland America. So, the ascension is one. Another is the opposite, or descent. At only certain unique places is this possible—particular rocky areas or caves, for example. To my understanding, these are the two great passages: away from, and into the earth. At the entrance to these portals are "singing stones," or as Shin'ichi mentioned at the beginning of this discussion, drums.

If you look at the image of shamanism as it has spread throughout the world, the drum always plays a part. At some point in history the structure of the drum made its appearance, and then, virtually unchanged, spread to all cultures. There are certain similarities to the rhythms used, and listening to them I'm sure that there are common undulations involved. There is a group in Quebec, Canada who make shamans' drums. They are a tribe in northern Quebec called the Montagnard, and there was a documentary made of the unbroken tradition of shamanism alive among them. This film was made between 1970 and 1980, taking a full decade to shoot. They are a people who've foregone the metropolises of Quebec, creating a small community among the cold and harsh conditions of the northern woods. The title of this documentary is "Mémoire battante." In direct translation this means "beating memories," or in a somewhat larger interpretation, "pulsing memories," or "drumming memories." Throughout the entire film, there are scenes of things being rhythmically hit or drummed upon, or conversations about the resulting vibrations created therefrom.

The drum is not seen as just another "musical instrument." When the caribou approach from far away, for example, they are said to be "appearing on the drum." To look at this expression another way, the head of the drum behaves, for them, like a mirror or screen, in computer jargon. They also produce their own special drumsticks, and they speak of something coming down off of the drumstick. At the end of the film, an elder shaman describes his initiation, and the experience he had in this teepee.

From «Be Still, Sit And Listen Well»  
(NHK BS Channel 2, "Traveling Our Splendid  
World" series).



It's a bit of an odd tale: "I went inside of the teepee, and then the shaman entered, and began beating the drum, and as he kept beating it, I began to enter the world of self oblivion. At the same moment, I became aware that, even without his beating on the drum, the teepee was being beaten. As though the entire teepee were vibrating as one with the drum. As I passed through this vibration of the teepee and drum's vibration, I became a shaman." "Now I am an old man. I am no longer able to make the teepee move to this greater power. However, it is in the certainty that we have within us the power to make the teepee vibrate to a greater power that we are shamans." This condition, of being able to make the teepee resonant, is called "la tente battante," and the documentary is essentially about trying to understand exactly what this power, to bring out a teepee's resonance, is. The act of rhythmic pounding is essential to shamanism. That's what I found interesting.

N.S: The rhythmic pounding creates ecstasy.

Ecstasy, as in extase—"stase" being a state of remaining still. Extase means going out, towards the "ex'ternal world. Through leaving, going "ex," one becomes able to draw out innumerable other voices from the world.

I once saw a video documentation of an artist who

wandered Manhattan beating on things with a stick. What I liked about this was, that even in Manhattan of all places, when he started pounding on things it would call to a whole host of other noises. In a normal condition, the sources of these noises would be rocks and concrete, even chairs, all being quiet, withering into this environment. Then, when this artist began beating them, extase appeared from all of them. The human soul just somehow has this kind of structuring. Shamans are usually blacksmiths, right? The blacksmith, pounding the ores from the earth, and the shaman pounding his drum, are one and the same. The drum and metalsmithing, all of these things exist in a cohesive world, which can be called out by this action of rhythmic pounding, and in this moment of expression, extase is breathing.

I'd also like to comment on the teepee in Chihiro's comments. I thought that they were very interesting. The title of this exhibition is "Portable Sacred Grounds," and the teepee is a beautiful example of just such a very portable sacred "ground." Maybe better expressed as a "portable sacred cave."

Another way to say it would be that there are certain conditions which create the shaman, one being he who is born wearing the placenta on his head. This is said to be quite important. To appear wearing your teepee is to become either shaman or hero. Julius CAESAR was said to have been born wearing





his. In Japan, children born like this are said to be "wearing their vestments." Such children are said to be heaven-sent. Placentas themselves are even sold as a talisman. In England, shipmen are said to really value them. They appear often in DICKENS'S stories, or in newspaper advertisements. Shipmen carry placentas for safety on their sea voyages. The reasoning behind this is that the fetus was protected by this placenta/ teepee in crossing the mother's amniotic fluid to safely be born into the world of the living children. In Japan, mendicant priests also wear headwear. Or, there is a ghost who wears a mino-kasa [conical grass hat and coat] that appears in ancient Japanese stories. The point is that when a person covers a part of his body for sacred purposes, that part of his body is said to gain the capability to communicate with the next world. Being made invisible is another function . . . . To my mind, these are all part of the same set of cave and womb issues.

M.C: In the Pyrénées separating France and Spain,

there are caves with wall paintings which go back some 30,000 years. I've been renting a house in the area these past two or three years. One of my neighbors there held a barbecue party a while back and invited me. As someone was taking the meat out of the freezer and putting it onto a plate to take outside and be cooked, there was a sudden cry "No!! Not that one!!" . . . When I asked what the matter was, the woman of the house came over and explained to me that it was a placenta. (laughs) Well, everyone was pretty surprised. "What kind of placenta?" I asked, and she said, "The placenta from when our youngest child was born." When I asked her why she kept the placenta from her pregnancy, and asked, "Are you going to eat it?" she replied that she was going to bury it and grow a tree from it. The tree would then take the nutrition from her child's placenta. The tree would be the child's tree. There were already two trees like it growing there in the yard. This was to be the third, so we were not to have placenta that evening. "This isn't for you!" she told me, but we weren't really that interested in

having it anyway, (laughs) so we quickly returned it to the freezer.

N.S: Usually it would be placed under the threshold to the house, or under the church doorway, or . . .

M.C: Is there a special meaning in that?

N.S: It is valued for its consecrative or magical powers, so it usually has to be placed at a point of passage.

M.C: As Shin'ichi was saying, cave issues often are dealing with returning to the womb, other passageway back into intensive expanse, as it were. One researcher of prehistoric paintings, one of the central personages in the field in France today, Jean CLOTTES did a performance last summer that I witnessed. It was held around the area where the drawings are best preserved in the Istritz caves. He invited a percussionist, and there, in the middle of a cave maybe 10 kilometers long, had him play. There were about 30 of us. It was about half scientific inquiry, half performance.

What he told us was that "The research on the prehistoric caves at Lascaux and Altamira was too focused on the pattern and design, ignoring all but the visual aspects, while the other senses, particularly the sense of hearing was sorely overlooked." According to him, the aural aspects might even be more important than the visual, because nearly all of the locations with paintings were stalactite grottos, and stalactite grottos themselves have the properties of musical instruments. Walking in there is like walking into a large musical instrument. And if that is the case, then what we were seeing was the spot with the best acoustics as the canvas, and paintings actually maps the aural environment there. And that's why he was holding these performances there. In fact, each place within the caves that the drummer performed had completely different tonal qualities, some of them revealing clearly audible overtones undistinguishable in others. And in each place where the incredible overtones were emerging there were petroglyphs, or paintings.

N.S: It is true that the discussion about the caves of the Pyrénées all revolves around the graphical aspects. And the Istritz caves are quite near Lascaux. However, I would say that we might even call those paintings themselves a form of "drumming." Typically described as "through taking a wooden spatula and applying primitive makeup to the recesses of an

"intensive expanse"—rich in creative powers—the act of painting these pictures was in fact an act of extending animal figures into this world," I would assert that they were created in a visual counterpart to the act of drumming. More than attempting to paint these scenes, these wall paintings were drummed into existence, and the prehistoric art specialist was attempting to confront this issue in the most direct way available.

## RESIDING AMONG THE DEAD

I.T: The "vision quest" rite that you performed in "Be Still, Sit And Listen Well" was not in a cave, but in its antithesis, at the top of a mountain. Up before the first morning light, watching this vantage point emerge from darkness into light, was like watching the border crossing between the living and the dead, I'm sure it must have been a place seeped in enormous powers. Could you tell us a little bit about the extase of this experience?

H.H: The town of Santa Fe itself is about 1,500 meters above sea level to begin with, and we climbed up from there, so the mountain that you see in that footage is over 2,000 meters above sea level. The shapes and forms in the surrounding landscapes are truly fascinating. It was certainly unlike any that one could experience in Japan. When you arrive at the top of the "table mountain," you find it an enormous plain, very much like one might imagine heaven to be like. You really think that it would be a perfect place to take a nap on a nice day. It is entirely covered with something like a moss. Walking on it is like floating on air, it really feels good. There are rattlesnakes here and there though, so you do have take some care. (laughs) The point of the whole exercise is to find the highest point in the vicinity, and pray facing the rising sun. And then you have to follow the sun. You're not allowed to wait around. Once the sun has risen you need to then follow that, and then wait around on the mountain for the next perspective. It's as though power really came off of the mountain, and you're trying to stay in the center of its expression.

I.T: It is said that the shaman makes his base in a continuum between the living, the dead and the natural world, not only as a medium between humans and the holy ghost, but also for any number of other forces that come to call from the other side. I'm curious about Shin'ichi's special interest in the Mt. Mitsumori (Yamagata Prefecture, at the edge of



Tsuruoka City) rite, where on the first day of bon [Buddhist All Souls Day] in the old Chinese calendar a multitude of souls assemble. On that day and only that one day in the whole year they bring out the Uba-sama Kureri or "Twisted Old Broad," a strange and portentous wooden sculpture of an elderly woman, and perform the mori kuyo—rite of bon. Then carrying the Twisted Old Broad, the living climb up the mountain to meet a multitude of the dead. I suppose that mountains are especially good paths for commuting dead souls—NAKAZAWA, what do you think?

N.S: The word "mori" [sacred ground or forest] in "mori kuyo" apparently has its linguistic origins in the word "death." In the old days the dead were buried in the forests. These days when we want to go meet the dead we go to the cemetery. That particular All Souls Rite in Yamagata that you mention is interesting. The Twisted Old Broad is like the oarsperson in the river Styx, of course. They have her likeness carved in wood, her torso bare. She's like a big old raisin! (laughs) No, but she's really eerily impressive, expressing incredible female power—the townspeople actually hide her likeness away for the rest of the year. Only during All Souls Day does she make her appearance, and then everybody's working together, carrying her on their backs into the mountains from dusk till dawn. And we follow along. Once we're just about reaching the belly of the mountain, there comes this terrifying moaning sound from up ahead. We carry on until the depths of the forest, until we find the altar for sharing our alms with the dead, and we have a huge rite there. So they do this communion of bon all very literally: the living go where the dead souls come, share the food and spend several hours together.

I was really intrigued by this moaning sound, so I asked a friend from the local community. He said that there are a bunch of kids who set out along a parallel ridge to make a quick buck. They're the ones doing the moaning. They're little urchins, really. Symbols of hell. And these kids are allowed, only this one day each year, to pillage the adults. They've set out before we do. And they ask for money. They even have the right to refuse passage if we don't pay. The kids are roping off parts of the path and waiting for us. Some of them come home with as much as 100 dollars for one night's plunder!!

(laughs)

But this kind of ritual is not limited to Japan—you can find them everywhere in the world. Kids at Christmas

are originally the same thing. Why is it that children receive Christmas presents, do you think? It is because they are the residents of the land of death. Christmas is a ritual for experiencing this phenomenon. In Europe it still carries some of these connotations, I suppose. That's why when DICKENS wrote A Christmas Carol, he had so many apparitions of death visiting Mr. Scrooge. That story is precisely what Christmas was originally all about—a ritual where we are revisited by the dead. The media for these appearances are the children, who carry instruments. The children make a complete ruckus with them, and the dead appear along with this noise.

I.T: You once wrote, "Through bringing back multiple manner of encounters with the dead, the living gain an unparalleled new perspective on what it means to be alive." This seems one new way of apprehending shamanism.

N.S: It could be an issue of memory. We all live with the memories of the dead. We exist together with memory. We are living here now, in this same space, this same place where other souls went before us. This hall is in this corner of Shinjuku—this, right here, was once the haunt of hunters and practitioners of shamanistic religions. The dead are watching us. And to say that they are watching us, is nothing more than a recognition of the fact that we live within a collective memory, a memory which in itself exists to illuminate some meaning about our existence. It is no more definitive than any meaning of any other time. Not any more definitive than the value of any one thing can define the value of all things. Any thing must have been appraised very differently in a different time. And the people who understood that different value were living in a world with just as much integrity as we. We are living completely surrounded by such collective memories. And the fact that we live our life surrounded in their collective memories only points to the fact that we are coexisting with them. This relates very closely to our problems in understanding history. Another thing which is important to state here is that we human beings are extase culture-producing animals. I think that this is really one of humanity's epoch-making subtexts. In many ways, humans are creatures just dying to get outside of themselves. They're always trying to develop new systems for this great escape, in one way or another. Take identities, for example. People form identities to create themselves within. And then the things which sort of

sick out, or leap out of my "identity" attach themselves to others', maybe the things in Chihiro's personality that don't quite fit inside of "himself."

## DISBELIEF IS THE ROOT OF RELIGION

M.C: Listening to HOSONO and NAKAZAWA's comments I kept being brought back to the subject of the soul. The Greeks used the word "pneuma." The French word for tires is "pneu," meaning air, or atmospheric pressure. "Ki" (or Qi; air, energy, life force) in Japanese. The Greeks used this word in much the same way that we use the word "soul." The voice is the application of the air we breathe. Breathing new life into the air we exist on, in fact. Through the voice we express things inside of us, such as our consciousness seeking extase, for example. And it seems to me that our basis, our pneuma, or "air" is in critical condition.

N.S: Pneuma, breath . . . . To perceive something ceaseless without causing it to stop, you must first eliminate the incoherence that you're generating inside of yourself. Then, you've got to have faith. Hunter-gatherer tribes had faith. There was something that they were calling "the gods of the forest," and it kept them alive. It was something that they could really believe in. And this "faith" is the same faith that brings us back to the shamans. This is not the same faith that we find in "the faithful" in organized religion, however. For an example, let's look at the origins of Judaism. The Jews followed Moses into the desert. When Moses was leaving Egypt, he was full of confidence, talking about taking them to the "promised land" where, in Canaan, there would be an abundance of vegetation, fresh water flowing freely, really gorgeous babes . . . . (laughs) You know, he was just full of big promises. Problem was, that leaving Egypt was all good and fine, but all that his people saw in front of them was desert, desert and more desert. And it wasn't too long before they got fed up with his rap. They lost their faith. And just when their faithlessness had reached its peak, Moses pulled a fast one. If they continued on like this, all would be lost. So he hid himself, went into the mountains and stayed there for a couple of fortnight. Now during this period, the Jews' faithlessness was really rampant. And then, just when the faithlessness and godlessness was at its worst, he came back down the mountain carrying stone tablets. "Behold the word of GOD!" He said, and essentially bound everybody into a contract which is valid to this day.

This is not a great example of how to build faith. I mean, he's gotten his people into a position of extreme duress, and then pops a contract on them, right? The resurrection of Christ was another thing—this time Christian, that had to happen to bind "the faithful." The faithful are the ones that build up this system known as "religion," and yet somehow, at its base, it's always disbelief that lays the foundations. The appearance of a fundamental disbelief about the world would just seem to be a key factor in the creation of all religions.

Now, when you're speaking about shamanism, you are also talking about faith. The gods of the forest love the people, and furnish them with presents of wild boar and deer, and other foodstuffs. And that is enough to make the people believe. The Jodo-shin Buddhist sect begins from something that you can actually believe in, so the origins of Japanese religion are different from Judeo-Christian religions in this regard. The faith begins from an expression of faith in existence.

And yet it's taken a bit of a beating during this past century. Peoples steeped in disbelief forwarded their industrial revolution, and this culture of disbelief has usurped us. Now we ourselves are stressed out and uncertain. If we really want to get back to being able to recognize the flow and balance of pneuma or ki, it seems to me that we have to get back to a comprehensive sense of faith in existence. Wouldn't you agree?

H.H: The other day I was told by someone from a Shinto shrine, "You know, I never can explain the existence of god to people's satisfaction." (laughs) Maybe it's true that even they are a bit low on faith,



Talk Session speakers  
HOSONO Haruomi and ITOH Toshiharu.



Talk Session speakers  
MINATO Chihiro and NAKAZAWA Shin'ichi.

or rather even completely absent of it, while on the other hand, musicians all have faith. It doesn't matter if you're working in Techno music or classical. I do feel such faith in all of them. Maybe it's because, in a much narrower meaning of the word, they all believe in music.

## ECOLOGY MEETS TECHNO-SHAMANISM

I.T: The late William BUFFOUGHS, Jr. used to make "shotgun paintings" from shooting at layers of plywood, and when he would assemble what was left of the wood he'd just shot at, he used to say that "the soul of the tree has risen." NAKAZAWA, do you have any ideas about how to apprehend the spirits, or to awaken our intuitive powers so that we might?

NAKAZAWA: Relating my own personal experiences about a personal "awakening," it was a typhoon, the first really powerful typhoon I remember experiencing as a kid. It was a terrifying evening. The next morning the sun's rays were somehow more beautiful, but all of the plants in the garden were bent over and broken. I remember looking at their broken limbs and feeling giddy. I felt the enormous power that the typhoon had expressed here, and something that had been residing in those plants was now manifest all around me. I've heard that Native American peoples have a similar tradition, but natural catastrophes have the power to wake something in us Japanese, too.

Another way to look at it is that there are two speeds which this can happen at. One is that magnolia tree fills out with flower blossoms in the spring, right? As though a hard tree like that couldn't have had them

in the first place, the flowers slowly, slowly appear. That is one manifestation of pneuma. The other is a radical manifestation, when a catastrophe like a typhoon forces the expression of pneuma. Shamanism is perhaps another such violent manifestation.

You know the custom of "punishing the fruit tree." It is an ancient custom, where the peach or chestnut tree is beaten to make it produce fruit. Ordinarily you leave plants alone to bear their fruits according to the natural rhythm of things, but this tradition is a technique for "punishing" the tree, forcing it into labor, as it were.

This is where sorcery and technology are connected, because technology is also a violent way of extraction—taking oil and coal from within the earth, or causing nuclear fusion. Energy is taken from nature in the most violent ways. Technology is inherently violent. From the moment that the first shaman started up a fire and fanned it with his bellows, warning had been given that this would some day lead to nuclear explosions in India and Pakistan. I'm sure that it must have felt just that awesome.

I'm sure that this must be one of technology's chief characteristics. The question is how will the slow growing process of our natural ecology and a brutal process like techno-shamanism find a common ground in the future. Human beings can no longer afford to simply follow their technological prowess, the ability to conquer and remodel nature's poetic process. Our very survival on this planet is contingent on our ability to fuse a "third way," which brings the soul of ecological poiesis and techno-shamanism together.

M.C: The fact that India chose this year, when there is an important festival which happens only once every few years, to make their nuclear tests is especially momentous. It really emphasizes the importance of finding non-violent ways of extracting energy from nature, because we're really at a critical point here.

N.S: Neo-shamanism and HOSONO's music are both symbols of delicate technology—examples of how delicate technology and delicate science are making themselves known recently.

M.C: I'd like to ask HOSONO what he sees as possible directions for delicate science, and delicate art . . .

H.H: Well, one thing is that the number of people using computers to make music has really increased at a terrific pace. Absolutely everybody is doing it these days. When using computers, including, of course, specialized sequencers, you're always reacting to music that you yourself have programmed. It's like you're scanning the subtleties of your interior. An extraordinarily dense and delicate world—at present you're able to divide quarter notes into something like 480 increments, and the ability to further dissect is still increasing. To be able to stop and look at music at that level of detail is really amazing. I guess that being able to create within a palette of 1920th notes is what is most interesting to me right now. Ultra delicate technology.

I.T: There is a text by Tjebbe van TILLEN and Fred GALES about neo-shamanism in the catalog for the Portable Sacred Grounds exhibition which provides an important perspective for thinking about neo-shamanism that dispels the menace and sense of danger often associated with the topic. They point out that myths and fables are valuable resources for understanding oneself and the world, that these archetypes are opportunities for gaining new understandings about ourselves, our value structures, the relationship between our hearts and minds, and our place in the material and spiritual worlds. The question is how to regain our relationship with the invisible grounds of our interior, and our search on this question will perhaps never come to an end.

#### HOSONO Haruomi

Made his professional debut as a musician in 1969. Among the many collaborative arrangements that he has formed since, the Y.M.O. (Yellow Magic Orchestra, with SAKAMOTO Ryuichi and TAKAHASHI Yukihiko) remains his best known. He has also founded the record labels "Non-Standard," "Monad" and "Daisyworld Discs," as well as having fostered the talents of a number of artists including TACHIBANA Hajime, KOSHI Mihar, Pzzicato V and World Standard. Ever since his debut, HOSONO Haruomi's compositions, lyrics and sound production values have continued to set new creative standards, and inspire awe.

#### NAKAZAWA Shin'ichi

Born in 1950. Scholar of religions based in Tokyo. His writings include *Tibet no Mozart* (Mozart of Tibet), *Mori no Baroque* (The Forest's Baroque), *Tetsugaku no Tohoku* (The Tohoku Region of Philosophy), *Jinsui na shizen no zoyo* (The Gift of A Pure Nature) (all Serika Shobo), *Seppen-kyokusen-ron* (Snow Curve Theory) (Seidosha), *Niji no riron* (Rainbow Reason) (Shinchosha), *Hajimari no Lenin* (Lenin at the Beginning) (Iwanami Shoten), *Ongaku no tsutsumashii negai* (Music's Humble Request) (Chikuma Shobo), *Buddha no yume* (Buddha's Dream) (Asahi Shinbunsha), among others.

#### ITOH Toshiharu

Born in 1953. Professor at Tama Art University. Art historian based in Tokyo. His writings include *Jorama-ron* (On Diorama) (Libroport), *Seitai-haikyo-ron* (The Biological Form in Ruins) (Libroport), *Kikai-bijutsu-ron—Mo hitotsu no 20-seiki bijutsu-shi* (On Mechanized Art—Another History of 20th Century Art) (Iwanami Shoten), *Reconfigured Eye* (Editor; ASCII Shuppanyoku), and *Saigo no gaka-tachi* (The Last Painters) (Chikuma Shobo), among others. Mr. ITOH supervised the exhibition, *Portable Sacred Grounds—Telepresence World*.

#### MINATO Chihiro

Born in 1960. Photographer and critic based in Paris. Assistant Professor at Tama Art University since 1995. His writings include *Ezo-ron* (Moving Image Theory) (NHK Shuppan), *Shashin toiu deigigoto* (The Photograph as Incident) (Kawade Shobo Shinsha), *Koku—Sozo to soki no chikara* (Memory—Powers of Creation and Recall) (Kodansha) and *Chushisha no nikki* (Cahier d'un spectateur) (Misuzu Shobo). Mr. MINATO's collaboration with MORIWAKI Hiroyuki, «Garden of Memory», was exhibited at the *Portable Sacred Grounds—Telepresence World* exhibition.