

Scenario for Introductory Unit

Kay, a Hmong friend of yours, hears that you are studying shamans in one of your classes. "That's what my family does – but when people talk about Asia they often don't talk about shamans!" She explains that in the Sacramento Hmong neighborhoods where she grew up, many young people no longer want to learn the traditional prayers and often stay away from the rituals that shamans do. (See link to "Between Two Worlds: the Hmong in America" in online schedule). So she, her anthropologist boyfriend, two of her sisters, and a few of their Hmong friends – all of whom want to preserve Hmong traditions into the future – have approached their elders to ask them about trying something new. They have two goals: (1) to strengthen social ties (i.e., the “social web”) in their Hmong neighborhood (and ideally those around them as well), and (2) to inspire children and young adults to reflect deeply about Hmong traditions, and especially the role of Hmong shamans. Their elders as a whole are understandably hesitant, but Kay's great uncle supports these new ideas.

Knowing that you have studied some public shamanic practices that strengthen social ties and get people thinking more deeply, Kay consults you about the two possibilities that she and her friends have come up with (see also links in the online schedule):

1. Kay wants to ask a shaman of their clan to perform a **large ceremony** like the one they do each year for the **New Year** for all families of that clan. But Kay also wants to **invite families of the three other clans** represented in their extended neighborhood, and possibly to include one of those clans' shamans in the ritual. The shamans would stand on wooden benches as they often do before their home altars, channeling the voices of these spirits and receiving instructions. Kay would like the focus to be on honoring not only the guiding spirits of the performing shamans, but also all the powerful spirits that have been guiding the Hmong community since it came to America. (| | possession by Changun)
2. Kay's boyfriend told her about an anthropologist who lived with the Hmong at a refugee camp in Laos, working with residents to create processions and dances to teach them to avoid diseases common their crowded spaces. Kay wants to use this model to hold a **procession and dance circling the space of a neighborhood park or community center**, including a few shamans but also Hmong dressed in celebratory costumes like those created at Ban Vinai, as well as masked figures representing guiding spirits. The center of the space would be reserved for a symbolic object that would absorb all the negative energy of evil spirits, which would then be destroyed at the end. (| | Tsam festival)

When Kay hears from you that these kinds of events share certain features with shamanic practices from Korea and Mongolia, she asks if you might **collaborate with one or more of the above community members to facilitate one or both of these activities**, given that her overall goal is to (1) **strengthens social ties** (i.e., the “social web”) and (2) get **participants to think more deeply** about what shamans do.

(–> see “Homework for Trial Reading Exercises” on back)

Trial Homework for Trial Reading Exercises

(**does NOT count for your final grade**)

1. Divide each assigned historical record paired with the above activities (see links in the online schedule) into roughly equal thirds, and **print out and read** the relevant reading guide QUESTIONS (without terms). **For the video, create a set of notes that documents the narration, words of shamans interviewed, and images shown.**

Then, reading through each source (=notes for the video), locate and draw a box around a 10-25 line section of text from each of those thirds, which helps identify ways that the **practice(s)** associated with the each source **strengthened social ties** (i.e., the “social web”) and **inspired participants to think more deeply** about what shamans do. (These may or may not include one or more of the unidentified passages listed in the reading guide.)

Finally, annotate each boxed text, as follows:

- using a black or blue pen to UNDERLINE (do not highlight!) all words providing information about **actions, objects, locales, times & words (spoken, recited, chanted)** involved in associated practice.
- using a different colored highlighter, MARK (DO NOT UNDERLINE!) all words that provide information about **relationships & roles of participants** involved in the practice, including names of communities and traditions.
- based on your annotations, write 40-60 words under each question posed on the **relevant reading guide page**, without worrying whether you have a complete answer; what you write should **include few unanswered questions**. Then check to see if your annotations and responses relate to or help identify any terms on the following reading guide page.
(10 points x 2)

2. Whether or not you completed all the steps in #1, provide a 300-450 word free-form response to the reading in SacCT . Describe any thoughts, feelings, ideas, images that came up for you during and after viewing/reading whatever part of the historical source you completed.

(5 points x 2)

NOTE: you also earn 5 points x 2 for coming to class and discussing the two historical documents under consideration.