

Appendix:
The Poetic Vision of Setuuma,
Guajiro Shaman

Michel Perrin

The shaman can, at will, link this world to the otherworld, a world peopled by gods and their emissaries, with whom he communicates through visions, dreams, and spirits.

He can be the ally of the beings who control nature, or he can be the artful dodger who outwits them. He can even be the brave warrior who combats them. He propels his spirits in search of souls. He lives the myths of his people and meets their heroes; he weaves their heroes and myths into metaphors. He is present where art takes root.

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Setuuma Pūshaina was a renowned Guajiro shaman.¹ In token of its esteem and veneration of him, his community addressed him by the title *chii pūlashi*, "possessor of sacred powers," a term used to designate "authentic shamans." Hoping to gain his confidence at our first meeting, I told him all I knew about shamanism and what I hoped to learn from him: how he had begun as a shaman, what his method of healing was, and the highlights of his career.

He spoke for a long time, passionate and intimate, in a flood of words. When speaking of himself he would say either "he" or "we" because, in his position as shaman, he was other than himself; no longer "a single person," the shaman uses words dictated to him by his auxiliary spirits:

1. The Guajiro people live in extreme northern South America, on territory located in parts of both Colombia and Venezuela. The following text is an excerpt from a long history of a shaman's life that was compiled by the author in 1973 and published in *Les Practiciens du rêve* (Perrin, 1992). This work brings to light the ultimate harmony of the many aspects of shamanic life: vocation, initiation, drug use, the third sex, communication with the otherworld, the cost of the cure, etc.

Walapiin paala eesü kaliina, shi'ira kaliina.
Süpülajatiü süsirairaka tia...
Shiasa'a süchikeje tia, cholosü na'in, atunkeshi.
Awoatsü nüki, aisi wanee kasa nain.
Naapiinaka tawako nümiin, naapiin lapiinru...

Shiasa, julum! ouktushi patajatashi.
Keraain ishooi, jakütiiru
Aju'unüsü yüi spishua'a sütuma piaachikat.
Akümajüinasü na'in, shiasa'a eemiin osoire na'in...
Eittaantsü yüi niwaralu'u, minüsu lapiinrua.
Shuu! Shuu...! Aju'unushi nia.
Nüsiraka: chion! chichion! atüttüsü tüü...
Ouutshija nia.

Yaa chaya ja'rai ka'i süttiin nü'niinchin.
Eirajüshi kalio'u, eirajüshi aipa'a,
Shia jo'o tia atüjüliashi jo'o na-in cha iipiinaa,
atüjüliashi chi süntükikat süchiira sükuaitpa tüü wanülüükat...

Nünain kachuwalain aainjinüsü nikuaipta,
ya kanüle'eru'u, ayatsü wayuwin shia,
ayatsü wayuwin saashajaan nümaa,
Naapajüin ka tia, naapajüin, nüsiraka'aka,
— Ma pütuman, müinjakalaja ma ki'ikat antiüsü saa'in...

Jaraisü washeyuukana,
nüma Juyakai, nüma Kashikai nüma Ka'ikai...
Wattashi, kakuashi ma'in müsü werüin...
Ka chii wanülüü anashikai...
— Aa, ounechi jo'o taya, terajainjatka sa'in, müshi.
Nirajainjatka sa'in chejeeruü tüü ayuuisükat spüla ouktajatiin.
Nirajaan chejee ouktiikat,
eere mouichon mmakat spüla sülatiün chamüin chaya...
— Seechi jool'u'u nümataalaka eepa nuuyantaain chejeechikai.
Ouyantashi joolu'u!
Nüintiraka chii wa'inchonkai chaya eejere nümaniije Lapii.
Jere ouktaka nüü lapii ya nia.
Nüsiirüliin tüü wa'inkat atunkaleeshi waya.
Nümaane lapii asütünüsü nuulia.
Nütuma wanülüü nüman'ana Lapii.
Nütaainaka nulu'u müsüka wanee saru'unachon.
Ni'itain sulu'u nütiinahu'u.
Naatainchi simiün, nüsiirüliin.
Nojotsü jimatiin wa'in, shiiria nüsiitiin ni'unüin cha wattamiin.

Appendix

*Pi'riin waakatüiin waanaikü watunkiin:
mayashi nünttirüin wanüliü niaya — Chu!
Eetatsü süwaralu'u, pataatalatasü sa'in.
Anaaleesia saa'in, jutataleesia...*

In the beginning, in his dream, there was a sound.
It was like a cock's cry.
It was the sound of the shaman's rattle.
Then came chest pains, and he wanted to sleep.
His head hurt, his body was sore, in the dream
he was offered tobacco, which he seized.

One day, hulum! He fell down as if dead.
Everything was now ready.
A shaman woman spit tobacco juice on him.
She restored his soul, he came to his senses.
He put some tobacco in his mouth, as the dream demanded.
He spit some of the juice out: shuu! shouuu!
He shook the rattle: chion! chichion!...
He was almost a shaman now.

For five days he locked himself up, no one saw him.
At noon and midnight he chanted and shook the rattle.
His soul was at practice, up there in the sky,
learning the words and the phrases,
the names and the forms of the sickness...

Now he is a shaman.
The spirits are inside him as if they were people.
They speak in the chant of the rattle.
The shaman makes it ring, he listens to what it says.
— "Do this: and on this day he will be healed!" he hears it!

We have five spirits.
They work with the Rain and Moon and Sun.
They travel far, as rapidly as the look of...
One of them is quite excellent.
— "I'm off to seek the little soul," he says.
He's off to see the sufferer's soul, the one who's to die.
He gazes there, where the dead are found,
where the earth narrows and the dead pass...
— "His soul will be there soon," he says upon returning.
"It has already done its about-face!"
The soul has returned from the place where the Dream resides.
Because it's the Dream that kills us.

Michel Perrin

The Dream corrals our soul as we sleep,
He takes it prisoner.
Then our spirit takes the soul from it.
The spirit puts it in a little cloth bag,
He puts the bag under his arm.
He takes good care of it, keeps constant watch.
Since the soul is not tranquil
it wants to return from where it came, far off.

When we sleep, you know, our mouths are open,
it's then that our soul comes and: chou!
he returns the sufferer's soul through his mouth.
And once more the heart stirs....²

Translated from the French by Thomas Epstein.

2. This text in its entirety can be found, in both French and Guajiro, in the doctoral dissertation *La Pensée Mythique en actes*, Université Paris V, 1987.