



# Spirits at AVMoFA

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*From the depths of Siberia, amidst the wilderness of Tuva, this ancient stone*



*evokes shamanic senses of awe and inspiration before the vast landscape (filled as it is with various spirit-masters and similar 'entities'). Situated in Russia's frontiers to north-western Mongolia, Tuva Republic (a territory the size of modern Greece), is known for its natural reserves and civilizations dating back to 5,000 BC, as well as for a current proliferation of shamanic and Buddhist religions - which were revived after the fall of Soviet socialism. With Tuva's 'post-Soviet hypertrophy of religious expression' (Zorbas 2007; 2013), cultural relics and artefacts, as the column above, have taken on a new lease of life, as re-imagined repositories of renewable energy to be used by shamans themselves in their arduous healing or anti-cursing rituals. Indeed, although it challenges the legally circumscribed contexts of shamanic practice in Tuva, this shamanic re-interpretation of ancient columns is consistent with their meaning - as the latter is revealed in the zoomorphic petroglyphs which decorate our column: as symbolic constellations of life's endless renewal, these artefacts objectify a pattern of thinking which also informed the rituals of the shamans whom I researched in Tuva - either as healers or as catalysts of curse-inflicted misfortune.*

Zorbas, Konstantinos. 2007. Agents of Evil: Curse Accusations and Shamanic Retaliation in Tuva, Siberia. PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge.

Zorbas, Konstantinos. 2013. 'Shirokogoroff's Psychomental Complex as a Context for Analyzing Shamanic Mediations in Medicine and Law'. *International Journal of Shamanistic Research*, vol. 21, pp. 81-102.