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Part II: The Archetypal Shaman/Hero

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A Jungian Reading of *The Kalevala* 500-1300? Finnish Shamanism ~ The Patriarchal Senex Figure Part II: The Archetypal Shaman/Hero

**Abstract**
Jungian interpretation of the *Kalevala*, focusing on the character of Väinämöinen and his role as Shaman. Part 2 analyzes Väinämöinen's transformation of the land, the felling of the oak, the confrontation with Joukahainen, and the death of Aino.

**Additional Keywords**
Heroes in The Kalevala; Jungian analysis of The Kalevala; The Kalevala—Characters—Väinämöinen; The Kalevala—Jungian analysis; Shamanism in The Kalevala; Sarah Beach
Having crossed the "threshold" from unconscious existence in his mother's womb to the differentiated world, Vainamoinen is in a position to fulfill his calling. As future archetypal shaman/hero he now stands for an awakening consciousness that brings new values and experiences to the personality. The world of light has replaced the long years of darkness, an indication of the ego's giant impulse toward life and activity; libido (psychic energy) cascading forth, erupting into existence. Energy is no longer cloistered, it is being expended externally, shaping his form, shape, and determine a world existence.

Vainamoinen faces a "treeless" land on earth. Such a scene implies sterility, loneliness, isolation, that in no way answers his needs nor fulfills his longing. In contrast with nature, because of his affinity with the elements of air and water previously described, he knows how to use its powers to his advantage. He already understands the myriad sounds he hears, incomprehensible to those who have been severed from the wonders of the so-called inanimate world. Vainamoinen feels connected to the outer external sphere as he does to his inner domain, confident in his abilities and capacities to fend off destructive encounters, such as despair, he acts overtly in coming to terms with his difficulties.

Vainamoinen's first task is to transform the barren scene into fertile land; psychologically to discover the talents that exist unused within the inner being, to discover and develop his potential. He calls upon Samsa ("Spirit of Arable"), a helpful agent, a creative factor to fulfill his needs. A tiny lad, similar to the dwarfs in the Icelandic Eddas. Samsa may be looked upon psychologically, as a sudden impulse or intuition, an unconscious force that leaps into or falls into consciousness when needed (an Einfall), an aspect or expression of a larger idea/form.12 Such spirits or dwarfs like those described in the Nibelungenlied are said to live beneath the earth or in hills and to possess childish characteristics. Samsa fits this definition; he is small and young; he is human, but incompletely developed. On the other hand, dwarfs are known to be industrious and active in whatever their specialties. Samsa sows a crop of trees for Vainamoinen (pines, willows, junipers) that grow densely and quickly.

Forests become thick and lush. One oak in particular grows to such a height that its branches hide the sun. Vainamoinen "reflects" and "ponders" (p. 9). To permit the creative urge to run wild, unchecked, is what such overgrowth implies, is to invite chaos. Such a way would allow creative impulses (the dwarf factor) glimmers, insights, sparks—but never a completed or well thought-out work to inundate the world. To permit this condition to pursue its course, is to invite darkness, the irrational and undifferentiated vision—to encapsulate the universe. It would pave the way for regression, a return to the darkness of the womb. Vainamoinen has spent too many long years in the nigredo phase of existence to allow such a situation to prevail. Sight not blindness, is what he wished. Clarity of vision (consciousness), brings order, orientation, and meaning. Without these factors Vainamoinen's existence can never attain universal/eternal stature. Never can he fulfill his destiny as shaman/poet if he allows darkness to prevail; such penumbras would find him groping about, stumbling in dank, bleak, mephitic realms. Greatness is achieved when experiencing a hieros gamos: a felicitous relationship between the inner and outer domain—the sun/soon principle within the psyche. Only when such harmony reigns can Vainamoinen or any other creative artist succeed in arousing wonderment and dazzling the world with his powers.

A future culture hero, Vainamoinen understands the need for ego-consciousness. As such he realized that the oak tree in question must be cut down—a paradigm of the necessity to shear and shape the primal forces within himself. To evaluate his earthly situation, therefore, is of the utmost urgency. He looks at a world resounding with infinite solemnities, redolent with incredible growth. Although he feels attuned to universal forces, he was "wise" and understood that whatever obliterates consciousness must be eradicated. The oak has to be felled so that insight, emnusa and clarity of vision can develop. Only when he can look outside himself and see the vast expanse before him, will he be able to objectify his situation, thus develop his own identity and discover his own potentials. Like the hierophant who must experience the ordeal of initiation in order to evolve to the next stage of being, so Vainamoinen must test the extent of his powers, his capacities to think and to feel.

Psychologically speaking, the cutting down of the oak would be an intensely meaningful experience to a medieval Finn or Lapp. To allow the tree to blot out the sun would seem a dangerous case: a prelude to the disappearance of that flaming light, an idea that would strike terror in the heart of those who inhabit the far north. Should darkness take over, evil would grow unchecked throughout the land. Wizards with their superior powers would be able to annihilate humankind, pitilessly, and unmercifully. Coldness would envelop the earth; water would congeal, killing the fish, robbing human beings of their sustenance. Solitude would fill the cold lunar light on earth; impersonally still stars would cast their eerie shadows upon a dead planet.

To fell the oak in an area where shamanism/animism are alive and active is also no easy matter. Trees are believed to be inhabited by living spirits and if a tree is not properly cut the wood spirit may be injured and retribution will follow; the wood spirits might refuse to burn; in the earth or more serious evils may await the perpetrator of such a crime. But to fell a tree also has positive implications. Vainamoinen would be able to fashion a drum from its trunk. Drums are extremely important to shamans. When they pound, strike, beat, roll out certain rhythmic sequences, the sound waves envelope them, help them start on their mystical flight to "the Center of the World" or fly through the air in rapidly paced gyrations. As the sorcerities amplify, diminish, and filter through the atmosphere in whole or partial tones, the shaman feels himself empowered to seek out and contact helpful spirits while, at the same time, immobilizing evil demons. Both the tree and the drum iconographically exemplify the shaman's ecstatic sojourn when he opens himself up to the cosmic experience.13 Significant, too, is the fact that the shaman's drum is comparable to the westerner's sword in medieval times: given a name, it is thereby endowed with a personality and a legend. Wood is also used to make bows and arrows which are used not only for hunting but also in the fashioning of musical instruments. A bow is whittled from a tree, then tied from end to end with the gut of an animal, thus is the "singing bow" made. With a single string, Siberian shamans play for long periods of time, the monochord sounds encouraging them to slip into a trance or arousing their spirit sufficiently to begin a spirit/dance. Although sounds emanating from the singing bow seem to focus on but a single note, its multiple tonal shadings lend such
variety that a whole set of emotional values emerges with the sound.\(^\text{14}\)

Still Väinämöinen "ponders" and "reflects" (p. 9). He attempts to assess the situation logically, to put his thoughts in order. For him, felling the oak is like cutting off his limb. He knows that for a life to gain dimension, for a creative work—the poem/song—to take on an existence of its own, deletions of segments, interludes, and images, are salutary to strengthen the personality as well as the work of art as a whole.

Still Väinämöinen hesitates. He speaks out his turmoil: "Maiden mother, you who bore me, Nature spirit, my upbringer!" (p. 9). Once again in his agony he calls forth a helping spirit: "A man comes up from the sea" at this moment; a person rose from the unconscious—"from his unconscious. Like Sampsa, the dwarf, this new Einfall, is only "as tall as a man's thumb," and emerges into concrescence when Väinämöinen was overwhelmed with feelings of desperation. Scintilliae, glimmers of ideas, impulses, undeveloped or unformed in the main, can work effectively as catalyzing agents to trigger mental activity within the conscious sphere. What is noteworthy also, about this dwarf is the fact that "on his shoulders was a copper helmet, copper boots on his feet" (p. 9).

That this new helping force which leaped into consciousness is compared to a finger again calls a digit into play. The finger, which Väinämöinen had used so aggressively and effectively to break out of the birth canal, is now being identified with the dart that will fell the oak. The finger would thus be used to sever, cut, rip, and clear a life force whose roots were buried deeply within the earth: a parallel image to Väinämöinen's first liberation from constriction. That this dwarf wears copper is metaphorically in keeping with the period dramatized in The Kalevala. Metal was believed by primitive peoples to have been beavenement. It was therefore, considered to be a link between the celestial and the terrestrial spheres. Copper, which is known to have been used in toolmaking as far back as 3100 B.C.\(^\text{15}\) was also believed to have medicinal value. It cleaned "ulcers" and protected against cholera. In addition to these virtues, this malleable, ductile, and relatively soft metallic element was considered endowed with other miraculous qualities: when the crude ore is heated, it gives off certain fumes that can turn the smelter's hair green. To the sciences, this reveals the presence of some invisible force or substance, but to primitive peoples, it means the presence of a deity or spirit.\(^\text{16}\) That the dwarf who Väinämöinen called upon to fell the oak wore copper on his head and feet, created an energetic climate favorable for the gnome/king. When a blazing sun shone upon the dwarf's copper accouterments, a dazzling image came into being, not unlike what Jakob Boeseus experienced when the sun's rays blazed on the tin plate—"but that very moment opened him to enlightenment, to a mystic revelation.\(^\text{17}\)

Suddenly Väinämöinen's attention is drawn elsewhere. When he next looks back at the dwarf, this "oddest" person has grown into a giant, his head almost touching the clouds. Psychologically, this titanic force of nature—this superman—implies that what was originally experienced merely as a momentary impulse emerging from the unconscious, has assumed the intensity of a creative drive, has been energized by an inner drive, thus expanding its size and power. Representative of brain rather than brain, this vestige of an archaic heritage symbolizes the gigantic effort made by Väinämöinen to build his new world, his individuality. For the creative artist, it indicates the presence of enormous instinctual power that lies buried within him and that, once tapped, can aid in the fashioning of his life as shaman/poet.

Thus, the copper giant cuts the oak with his axe, piercing through the thick bark and trunk in the same way that an intuitive idea cuts through thought patterns as it struggles fiercely to be consciousized. A paradigm of enlightenment and discernment, the copper giant at his blows at uneven growth, unresolved thinking, uniformed and deformed propagation. To the sun—the rational principle—is to allow unstructuredness to burst within his and that, of unfocused, can aid the fashioning of his life as shaman/poet.

Flames of fire consume the oak tree as it is being felled, a blaze comparable to the "devouring fire" experienced by Isaiah when God brought into existence the creative Word (30:27). A rainbow becomes visible after the tree has fallen, again symbolic of the link between the terrestrial and celestial worlds—a welcoming sign from the world at large. The rainbow's arched beauty uplifts feelings of relatedness and comfort throughout the cold and fog-enclosed surroundings. The sense of isolation that permeates the heavily forested northern region vanishes, replaced by melodious color tones changing their vibrations and sonorities in emissions ranging from highly pitched to velvety low tones—keeping with the vital energy centers so crucial in the cutting ceremony and so important in fostering a climate conducive to the creative act.

Now that the sun shines anew and the earth is warmed and befriended by it, Väinämöinen decides it is time to sow barley and oats. But first the land must be cleared if the earth is to yield its riches; its mood must be just right for the seed ceremony. So, prior to the planting of this vital food, the terrain must be cleansed, filtered, prepared in such a way that ordered and willed insinuation may come to pass. Another cutting ritual is in order. All the trees must be felled, Väinämöinen reasons, he will leave only one behind standing, to be used by his nest in the future as an individual in the new society coming into being. Out of gratitude, the eagle enables Väinämöinen to clear the land. It "struck fire, caused flame to flash" (p. 12). With the help of the wind, the forest was reduced to ash—the pur­ erst of all states.

The eagle, able to fly directly above the clouds and into the sun without being blinded, is identified with the masculine solar spirit: moose, resulting in the conscious act. It is this factor that Väinämöinen has put to use—a sense of approaching Heaven—which decided to clear the forest and create arable fields. In so doing, Väinämöinen has dealt a blow at the dark state of identification with the collective world; in so doing, he is asserting his own identity, deepening his own understanding of himself, his worth, and his future as an individual in the new society coming into being.

Väinämöinen now sows the seeds, scattering them everywhere as far as the eye can see. Never neglecting the religious ritual that accompanies such a creative act, the moment of insinuation is solemn, awe-inspiring. Väinämöinen chants the "Sower's Charm," invoking the "Woman living under the earth," the Great Mother, the "Old ruler of the soil, mistress of the earth" (p. 12). He beseeches the Great Earth Mother to make to him the hedge and plants his planting to be a bane. Uko, the "heavenly father," is also invoked to furnish the proper ingredients, to balance spirit and soul in nature to that each will work in harmony with the other, bringing prosperity throughout the land and to its people, who have now come into being.

The Shadow Archetype:

The Ordeal of Wisdom

The terrain has been cleared; the seeds planted. Väinämöinen has laid the groundwork for his future development as runic bard and shaman. Comparable to the creative process in general, when the mind is cleared and no longer besieged by extraneous and unfocused tensions or wandering thoughts, it can concentrate on the seed/idea, the germinating process, enabling it to take hold and grow. vö strömming, running through the consciousness, disrupting logical thought patterns, halting the creative process itself, Fate, which the Gnostics called helmarrem, may intervene and dismantle what seems steady and solid. Were it not for fate, however, life could become one long period of conformity; unbroken, un­ divided, never allowing for the influx of fresh ideas to catapult into existence. Using a parallel line of reasoning, we may say that unconscious contents force their way into
the existential world, consciousness is momentarily shattered, stasis fragmented.

Vainamoinen’s courage, perseverance, and psychological health are yet again to be tested. Fate calls upon a trickster, an impish youth to arrive on the scene. He may be looked upon as Vainamoinen’s shadow archetype. Rather than considering those traits characteristic in an individual that the conscious personality considers negative and deemed unacceptable, in terms of the whole personality, they are rejected. In Vainamoinen’s case, he projects his shadow on the impish “scrawny Lappish lad” called Joukahainen (p. 14) who now appears.

Unthinking and rash, Joukahainen is described as forever acting on impulse. Despite his parents’ warnings and admonitions, he decides to challenge Vainamoinen’s wisdom and power, to confront the culture hero, future shaman, and wise sage. His sense of frustration and flat; the platitudes with which his verse is replete, are varied striking images, apt and unusual metaphors and metered verse, clever and astute epithets, containing many never again to be revitalized in this form.

Once returned to the prismatic water, Aino is transformed into a fish. When Vainamoinen sees her swimming about in the clear limpid water, he tries to grab her, to pull her out, and make her his own. Each time she eludes his grasp. Remaining true to her anima nature, as an autonomous image in his unconscious, she eludes through his net and floats back into the deep waters where he experiences her as a reality.

Vainamoinen has not yet learned to relate to his anima anymore than he has to his shadow. What Aino represents, generally, is the feminine principle in all humans. Having an untenable, undisciplined and irrational attitude, she adores his masculinity. Vainamoinen recognizes feeling and emotion only in poetry and music, aspects or split-offs of the feminine principle. He has not yet learned how to relate to a real woman. The magic he spurns with his voice and his cant-tele, the power evoked in his words and harmonies, held no charm for the young girl. He needs to learn another sort of magic—nonintellectual—that will allow him to experience woman as flesh and blood. Music and poetry created by and with the mind exist in structured tonalities and colored resonances. These are artificial and do not relate directly to life. What Vainamoinen had offered Aino corresponds to mind and not to heart.

Nor had Vainamoinen’s shadow been integrated into his psyche. Joukahainen was an embodiment of all those lively and impulsive tricksterlike elements that erupt without rhyme or reason into consciousness; he is also reminiscent of a more sinister force, Loki of Nordic mythology, a Luciferian kind of evil spirit, crafty and double-dealing, who makes his presence known, frequently, to disturb, irritate, but also to force awareness, to bring light and lucidity into the events in question. Had Vainamoinen encouraged the Loki in him, his instinctual and anthropoid side of his personality to participate as a functioning force in the whole psyche, it may have been helpful in solving his money and power of its own. He might have transformed what was destructive into an energy-creating positive force. Joukahainen was to remain stunted and unformed. As a result, what he represented in Vainamoinen, was to emerge spasmodically, hurting and bruising those with whom he came into contact.
Although Vainamoinen has defeated Joukahainen and put him to shame, his victory causes him hubris. So much so that his vision becomes clouded and he wrongly believes he has rid himself of Joukahainen forever. He neglected to take the revenge principle into consideration. Once he allows his defenses to drop, he invites trouble. Vainamoinen has not yet reached the stage in his life where it is entitled to serenity. Unguarded, Joukahainen, angered by his defeat, watches Vainamoinen's every move for the right moment to strike back. It happens one afternoon when Vainamoinen is riding his horse through an area of streams and lakes. Joukahainen takes him with his bow and arrow and strikes his enemy down. Vainamoinen falls into the water and is borne off by its currents into the sea.

Vainamoinen now has returned to the element of water, to the liquid and formless realm where he lived for so many centuries of winters and summers. In this regresus ad uterum, which we may interpret as a much-needed period of introversion, Vainamoinen reimmerses himself in the feminine principle, thus undergoing a watering down of uneven and blocked unconscious contents. His views need reworking, expansion in preparation for the world of conflict in store for him. As he experiences the fullness and foam of the nutritive element, he sees an eagle in the sky. It is the same eagle that had nested in the birch tree that Vainamoinen had not cut down. Now it is the eagle's turn to help Vainamoinen: he bears him on his back to shore. The masculine force, represented by the eagle/savior figure, brought the culture hero back to consciousness once more. The combination of the feminine principle (water) and the masculine force (eagle) work together, healing the bruised psyche, restoring equilibrium and balance.

The eagle carries Vainamoinen to Louhi, the mistress of North Farm—a cold and icy region in Finland—where he is well treated. Yet, despite Louhi's kindness, Vainamoinen longs for home. He feels uprooted, alienated, nor can he fathom his own reactions: "I hardly know even myself," he says (p. 40). Why should he feel so strange and out of place at North Farm? Joukahainen's arrow had pierced so deeply, his drowning had caused him such trauma, that the shock waves were still potent factors, still disrupting the course of his existence. He needs to reconnect with his roots, to experience the sustenance of unfamiliar landscape, trees, mountains, and lakes he knew so well.

Louhi promises she will assist in Vainamoinen's homeward journey and will also give his her daughter in marriage, if he will provide her with a Sampo. A magical grinding stone or silt, the Sampo is the equivalent of the Holy Grail in Arthurian legend, that mystical provider of both earthly and spiritual sustenance in this world and of eternal salvation in the next. In psychological terms, it connotes a unitary concept that solidifies an inner experience: it reveals the link existing between the ego and the Self; it transforms the disparate facets in a personality into an integrated whole. The Sampo is an ideal, a panacea, the outcome of a projection which fills an inner need, either on a particular or universal basis. Owing to its supernatural powers, the Sampo—like the alchemist's Philosopher's Stone—brings prosperity and happiness to whoever possesses it.

Vainamoinen agrees to Louhi's plan. He will send Ilmarinen, the smith, to North Farm to forge the Sampo. Only a metal worker of renown can blend, mix, and heat the elements in such a way as to create this mysterious and miraculous alloy.

Footnotes

17. Creation Myths, p. 56.

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