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Shamanic Traditions, Rites and Songs Among the Mongolian Buriads: Meeting a Shamaness and her Assistant

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This study endeavors to present the main features of Buriad shamanism practised in Mongolia. Most of the data was collected during the academic year 2004–2005 in Ulaanbaatar with the aid of my two informants, the shamaness Altanceceg and her assistant D. Namsarai, who both reside in Dornod province, Eastern Mongolia. The texts that appear in this article, which are samples from the inexhaustible source of Buriad shamanic poetry and oral tradition, are compared to those published and translated by György Kara and collected by G. Gantogtox and Jawjan Coloo from another Buriad shaman, Čoiǰiliin Ceren. Some details of the Buriad shamanic initiation ritual, the paraphernalia, the sacrificial altar, etc., have been provided by other informants and are compared with those given by Altanceceg and Dawuuǰin Namsarai.

Introduction

Shamanism in Mongolia has attracted the attention of many scholars, both Orientalists and anthropologists. Much fieldwork has been carried out in the country during the last few decades (Dalai 1959; Diószegi 1960; Birtalan 1993, 1996). However, the collected data and the published materials are mostly concerned with the shamanism of the northwestern Mongolian Darxad people. In contrast, the reviving shamanism of the Buriads[1] living in Mongolia is less well known. I would like to emphasize that in the present article I am concerned with the shamanism of the Buriad people living in Mongolia. These Buri-

[1] This ethnic name is usually written as Buryat in English, while the academic transcription of the Mongolian word *буриад* is Buriad.

ads live in the northeastern area of the country and are the descendants of the Russian Buriad immigrants who arrived in this region in the 20th century. In addition to these, approximately 400,000 Buriads live in Russia around Lake Baikal, and other groups of Buriads live in Manchuria. The shamanism of these Russian and Manchurian Buriads is outside the scope of the present study. The aim of this paper is therefore to fill this gap in the study of Mongolian shamanism by making an attempt to provide an overall view of the shamanism of the Buriads who live in Mongolia,[2] including their initiations, paraphernalia and the role of the shaman's assistant. I will also describe a ritual conducted by a Buriad shamaness named Altanceceg and her assistant, Namsarai, whom I met in the course of my fieldwork carried out in the academic years 2004 and 2005.[3] Consequently, a three-hour video recording[4] of the ritual (Balogh 2005b) and an interview with its performers is one of the main sources for this paper, as Altanceceg, and even more so her assistant, Namsarai, proved to be an inexhaustible source on Buriad shamanic traditions and poetry. Their confidence in me enabled me to record several Buriad shaman songs, oaths and other items of folk poetry. Some of these will appear in the present article as samples of this rich shamanic heritage. In the footnotes, I will point out the parallels between them and the invocation texts collected and published by G. Gantogtokh, György Kara and Ĵawjan Tsoloo from the shaman Ceren in 1998.[5]

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[2] For more about Buriads living in Mongolia, see Oyuuntungalag 2004; Shimamura 2002.

[3] Both Altanceceg and Namsarai are members of the Golomt Center of Mongolian Shamans. Although they usually practice shamanism in their homeland, the Dašbalbar district of Dornod province in Eastern Mongolia, I met them in Ulaanbaatar: they were invited by the head of the Center, Šagdariin Süxbat, to record one of their rituals for archival purposes. The video recording was made in Ulaanbaatar in January 2005.

[4] The color pictures published in this article are taken from this video recording, which is why they are of less good quality.

[5] Ceren böö – (?–2005) was the most famous Buriad shaman in Mongolia and the source of information for numerous researchers, including both Mongols and foreigners, see Gantogtokh et al. 1998.

The First Initiation and Oaths of the Buriad Shamans[6]

After suffering from meningitis (*menengee*) at the age of 13, Altanceceg was supposed to get in touch with her spirits and experience her first initiation (*zalaagaa awax*), but she did not. She did so later, in 1981, and by now she has undergone eight initiations.[7] Her first initiation was led by her master's master Namžil, who became a shamaness when she was 15, and who lived to be more than 80 years of age. Namžil is now one of Altanceceg's spirits.. Altanceceg assumes that after her death she will also become a spirit (*ongon*), and might be invoked by her disciples.

She performs various kinds of ritual except for curses (*xaraal žatxa*) and anything else she might consider harmful. As she explained, Buriad shamans have to take 99 oaths[8] (*yürön yühön tangarag*) during their first initiation. These forbid them to cause any kind of harm: it is prohibited to endanger human life (*xünii amind xürexgüi*), to put obstacles in people's way (*xünd saad xiixgüi*) and to quarrel (*xerüül margaan xiixiig xorgilono*), and they have to help all living creatures (*xamag amitnii tusiin tuld yawana*). They must not eat camel meat since they consider it impure (*buzartai*), and for the same reason there are shamans who refuse to sit on a camel cart—indeed, some will not even put their paraphernalia on one. A distinction is made between two kinds of oaths, "hard" and "light." When taking the hard (*xatuu*) oaths the shaman says:

Buruu xazagai duudwal
Buural ereen orgoig butiin xeweg id'eg
Xazagai buruu duudwal
Xairan saixan biyiimin'
Xadiin šuluu deldeg
Xazagai buruu duudaxgüi

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[6] Among the Mongols, regardless of ethnic group, the most usual reasons for becoming a shaman are affliction by some disease, the death of a family member, or a personal tragedy. For more about becoming a shaman, see Banzarov 1955; Diószegi 1961; Badamxatan 1965.

[7] However, her assistant said that she had 12 branches on her headgear, which means she must have had 12 initiations.

[8] For more about shamanic oaths, see Gantogtox 1999; Bum-Očir 2002.

Xan yix garwaliin xadag torgon žoloош
Ug yix garwaliin utaxan torgon žoloош.[9]

If I invoke you in a wrong way may the chaff of the bush
Eat my grayish-spotted head-gear
If I call you improperly, may the rocky stone
Squash my poor body
I won't call you improperly
I am the royal ancestors' silk guide
I am the great ancestors' silk guide.

The light (*zöölön*) version of the oath is far more permissive:

Buruu dutuu xazagai duudaxamn'i
Ug garwal zalruulaarai
Xazagai buruu duudwal
Xaan garwal zalruulaarai.

If I invoked you in a wrong way
Correct me, ancestors
If I invoke you improperly
Correct me, royal ancestors.

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[9] A parallel fragment can be found in shaman Ceren's invocations:

. . . Xazagai buruu duudahan baigaa haamni
Xan garbali zalaruulaarai
Buruu xeltegei duudahan baigaa haamni
Burxan garbali zalaruulaarai . . .

. . . If I called for you in a wrong way
Correct (me, you) mighty ancestors
If I called for you improperly
Correct (me, you) divine ancestors . . . (Translated by György Kara, see Gantogtokh et al. 1998: 98)

Those who take the hard oaths can even die if they make a mistake during a ritual (*xiisen xeregtee diildex*). It can be more dangerous for young shamans, who cannot arm themselves properly.[10]

Initiation Ritual of the Buriad Black Shaman (*Šanar*)[11]

Buriad shamans can be initiated 12 plus one times during their lives. The 12th is named after the two-year-old colt (*daagan šanar*) and, in general, is considered to be the last. The 13th is regarded as an extra initiation and is called *Otxon šanar*, which means "the youngest and the last of all."[12] To our knowledge no special names are given to the preceding initiations. By the first initiation one becomes a shaman and takes the 99 shamanic oaths (*böögei yüren yühen tangarag*). Having more initiations confers more magical power. Stronger shamans meet stronger spirits, and they can be attacked by stronger malevolent spirits as well. With each initiation their paraphernalia become more and more sophisticated in order to give them more protection.[13]

During the first initiation nine birch trees are erected (the number of these trees always increases by a multiple of nine). This group of birch trees is called *derwelge*. In addition to the *derwelge* three bigger birches are planted in the ground with their roots. When these bigger trees are removed their trunks are marked on the south side (*naran tal*) and they are replanted back where they originally grew. They are referred to as the "father tree" (*esege mod*), the "mother tree" (*exe mod*) and the "nest tree" (*üür mod*), and they are connected with a golden and a silver thread (*altan dugui damžilaga müngön dugui müšgilög*).

Before the ritual begins the three big trees are adorned with the furs of five different animals and colorful ribbons. A blue ribbon (*xadag*) is tied to the top of each tree. Then a picture of the Sun and the Moon drawn on

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[10] There are several stories about shamans who were too young or not sufficiently well trained to perform difficult rituals such as saving human life or responding to a curse, and who finally died as a result of their mistake.

[11] The first description of the ritual was given by Rintchen 1961. For more details about *šanar*, see Badma-Oyuu 2001; Balogh 2005a; Gantogtox 1996, 1997; Kümin 2001.

[12] *Otgon*: *otgon xüü* 'the youngest son', *otgon sur* 'the last archery competition of the year' (Kara 1998: 337).

[13] For details see Balogh 2005a.

a piece of textile is put on the branches. The following lines are quotations from shamanic songs related to decorating the initiation trees:

Altan šaraga nartai
Almai buural[14] *hartai.*

[It has a] Golden yellow Sun
and an elderly grey Moon.

Yag sagaan šandaga
Yagaawtar ulaan gur
Xub šar solongo
Xurdan sagaan üyen
xöö xarxan xerem.

A white hare
A pinkish red roebuck
A pale yellow weasel
A swift white ermine (and)
A pitch black squirrel.

These five animals—the hare, the roebuck, the weasel, the ermine and the squirrel—are represented by cutting their shapes from textiles and tying these to the branches with red thread.[15] According to the assistant, it would be better to put the furs of these animals on the branches, but there are places where their furs are hardly available.

The "nest tree" is considered to be the center (literally the "head" or the "brain" in Buriad) of the initiation ritual (*šanariin tarxi, tolgoi*). Namsarai said that this tree is the most important present given to the spirits.

There is another tree, called *serge*, to which the ancestral spirits (*ug garwal, hax'uuha*) can tie their horses. The initiation itself takes place when the shaman climbs the "mother tree" and then falls down.

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[14] *Almai-* 'forgetful', *almai buural-* 'someone touched with grey'.

[15] In the Mongolian shamanic tradition the red thread symbolizes the veins, blood and life in general. When the Buriad shaman heals a sick person, the shaman, the drum, and the sick person are connected with a red thread. After the healing ritual, the sick person has to wear the thread on his or her wrist, usually for three days.

The "mother tree" can be of different heights, but the higher the better. After the initiation ritual all the birch trees are taken away (*xüdöö zalana*) and offered to the spirits, namely to the thirteen Lords of the North (*Ariin arwan gurwan noyid*).[16]

Making an offering to the trees, the shamans say:

Ariin arwan gurwan noyid
Aduunii baruun talda
Anduugüii xüregtii
Mürön dalae xaawal
Taw'aad garxa ongoso
Xangil baisa boowol
Damžaad garxa šata.[17]

Thirteen Lords of the North
Come to the right side of the stud
Without any mistakes.
If rivers and lakes hinder
The rowboat takes you to the other side.
If cliffs and rocks hinder
The ladder puts you through.

Usually there are more shamans to be initiated during the same ritual, though not at the same time. All are students of the same master, and they can undergo different levels of initiation. While one is preparing to climb the tree, the others with the master encourage him or her by shouting and drumming.

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[16] This group of deities is believed to live on the Olihon island of Lake Baikal; for more details on them see Rintchen 1961:123–127.

[17] Collected from Dawuuǰin Namsarai in Ulaanbaatar, January 2005.

Two people, called the "father" and the "mother," play the role of the initiated shaman's parents. They circle around the *derwelge* trees followed by nine children *(yühönšin*).[18]

Three or four days after the ritual people can take and use the birch trees.[19]

Initiation Ritual of the Buriad White Shaman (*Šandruu*)

The white shaman is called *bariaš*, "the one who puts bones right." As Namsarai explained, the *šanar* of the white shaman is called *šandruui*, which means that it is the initiation ritual of white shamans.

Altanceceg is a black and white (*xar sagaaniiye xabsarhan*) shamaness; thus she has undergone white initiations as well. In this ritual *derwelge* birch trees are used in much the same way as for the black initiation, although here the main difference between the black and white rituals is that in the latter a cauldron is set right in the middle and is used for distillation (*šandruu nerexe*).

In the first step they put mutton in the cauldron, pour in koumiss (*airag*) and other liquid dairy products (*airag, sagaa*), place twigs on top of these and finally cover the cauldron with a lid. White and black initiations can be performed at the same time, and sometimes the ritual is called a *šanar-šandruu,* "black and white initiation." The first black initiation is called the "mother initiation" (*ex šanar*), while the first white initiation is the "father initiation" (*eseg šandruu*).

The Assistant

Among the Mongols it is usual that assistants help the shaman during the ritual. The assistant's task is to serve the spirits, to give them what they want. The spirits that possess the shaman's body are regarded as

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[18] As seen in another initiation ritual, led by master shaman Dašbalbar jaarin, video-recorded in the Cenxermandal district of Xentii province, Mongolia. This video recording is very important parallel material for the comparative studies of initiation rituals led by different shaman masters.

[19] Explanations of Altanceceg's initiation ritual by shaman assistant Namsarai, video- and audio-recorded in Ulaanbaatar, January 2005.

special guests, and they should be treated accordingly. If a spirit asks for something which is not available, or is not satisfied with the food or drink offered, it is the assistant who has to apologize. If the spirit invited is someone who lived long ago it can happen that modern vodka or cigarettes do not please him or her. In this case the spirits usually ask for traditional Mongolian *arxi* (spirit made from fermented mare's milk) or a pipe. The assistant may have to explain that nowadays Mongolian people drink bottled vodka and smoke cigarettes (Birtalan 1993: 5).

The assistant also has to interpret and explain the spirits' words because they do not use everyday language but speak in riddles, which are barely comprehensible to the ordinary person. While the shaman places his or her body at the spirit's disposal, the assistant is the one who communicates with them and understands their language. It is clear then that assistants may also play an important role in mediating between the spirits and those attending the ritual. That is why the Buriads call the assistant "interpreter" (*xelmerše, tulmaaš*).

Shamans say that anyone can be an assistant who knows the shamanic traditions well, who knows how to serve the spirits and what to do when they want this or that. The assistants do not suffer from shamanic diseases, nor are they initiated or chosen by the spirits. Thus he or she can be replaced by anyone suitable, even by another shaman. The shaman's assistant is often a member of the family or an acquaintance.

Altanceceg's assistant Namsarai has an extended knowledge of Buriad shamanic traditions. He started to follow shamans at the age of 13 or 14, and now he knows all the Buriad invocations by heart. He has never suffered from any kind of shamanic diseases but his eyesight is poor, just like the Western Mongolian presenters of heroic epics, who know thousands of lines of poetry by heart.

The Paraphernalia

THE WHITE SHAMANIC COSTUME

Altanceceg's white shamanic costume consists of two pieces of clothing. The first is a simple headgear made of textile (*maixabš*) with two eyes represented on it. There is disagreement between shamans and some scholars regarding the two eyes (sometimes a whole face is rep-

resented with ears, nose and mouth). Some scholars think that they are the eyes of the spirit that owns the headgear. Other scholars say that it is more likely that the representation of eyes or the face is a kind of camouflage serving the purpose of deluding malevolent spirits.

The other article is a blue brocade gown (*xüxö xamba nümörgö*) resembling the Mongolian national costume (*mongol deel*). It is usual for shamans to wear the traditional costume during "simple" rituals such as fortune-telling (*mereglex*) or diagnosing the origin of a patient's problem (Khalkha *üjleg*).[20] These rituals do not require the whole shaman armament to be donned, but everyday clothes would not be accepted by the spirits.

Altanceceg's boots are traditional Buriad boots (*gutal*) without any decoration.

Shamanic rituals are divided into two groups by Buriads, and also by Mongols, according to the shaman's instruments. The first are rituals with a drum (*xesetei böölön*), and the second are those without a drum, called "shamanizing on foot" (*yawgan böölön*). The white shamans in general use a bell instead of a drum. Altanceceg's bell is exactly the same as those used by Buddhist monks.

The following invocations refer to the bell:

Dan sagaan xonxo
Dašuulan buuhan
Dalan xeltei xonxo.

A pure white bell
Descended swinging
Seventy-tongued bell.

Ebderxeeye ebrüüldeg
Zadarxaaya zalguuldag
Xugarxaaya xündeg.

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[20] The Mongols usually wear western-style clothes in their everyday life, but they put on their traditional costumes before having a photo taken, or when they observe a celebration. It can be said that the *mongol deel* is becoming an all-purpose casual wear.

Repairs the broken
Mends the torn
Joins the separated.

Erxii soorxoi em šengi
Dol'oowor soorxoi dom šengi.[21]

Like the medicine of those with a holed thumb
Like the remedy of those with a holed forefinger.

Altanceceg has two big mirrors, one for the black ritual, made of copper (*guuli*), and the other for the white ritual, made of brass (*zed*). She wore both at the same time. She also has a white whip (*sagaanii bardag*), which is made of three tamarisk branches collected from three different places or from three different mountains, and its handle is made from the horn of a three-year-old elk. In the invocations it is mentioned as follows:

Gurwan uuliin suxai
Gunan bugiin ewer.[22]

Tamarisk branches of three mountains
Horn of a three-year-old elk.

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[21] Collected from Dawuuǰin Namsarai, Ulaanbaatar, January 2005. In shaman Ceren's invocation "flying the splendor and fate of the sheep" (*xoninoi hülde degdeexe duudlaga*), lines with the same meaning can be found:

. . . emderxeiyiini eblüülehen
handarxayiini zalguulahan
dol'oobor soorxoi domšonornuud
erxei soorxoi emšenernüüd . . .

Healers whose forefingers are holed (sensitive)
medicine-men whose thumbs are holed (sensitive)
repaired what was broken
mended what was torn. (Translated by György Kara, see Gantogtokh et al. 1998:109)

[22] Collected from Dawuuǰin Namsarai, Ulaanbaatar, January 2005.

Eight rattles (*xolbogo*) are fastened to the tamarisk branches as parts of the shaman's armor (*xuyag*). The whip is covered by many colorful pieces of sacrificial ribbon (*xadag*), which are regarded as the clothes of the whip's spirit.

THE BLACK SHAMANIC COSTUME

The black costume has far more articles than the white. The basis of Altanceceg's black headgear (*üüilen amitai*) is a metal crown-shaped helmet (*orgoi*) with 12 (two times six) branches, which are regarded as crows' claws (*xereenii zurgaa-zurgaan sawar*). Many accessories are fastened to the helmet—for example, snakes and lizards made of textiles, silk ribbons, and thin iron rods.

The helmet is covered by silk ribbons and has three times three, altogether nine rattles, one at the front above the forehead, and two hanging on the two branches.

Two snakes (*mogoi*) hang down to the back of the costume from the helmet's left and right sides (Birtalan 1996: page number?), their heads looking upwards. The left snake is female, and is responsible for the fate of women, while the right one is male and responsible for men's fate. In the invocations they are called *xüštei yix mogoinuud* (powerful great snakes). In regard to function, the lizards (*gürwel*) are the same as the snakes; the left lizard is a girl (*basagan*) and the right one is a boy (*xüü*); these, however, hang down the front of the costume. In the invocations they are referred to as *xüren ereen gürwel* (brown-striped lizards).

Silk ribbons (*xadag*) are always found on the different articles of shamans' costumes as presents for their spirits. Their number depends on the shaman's rank, and it increases with each initiation.

Three chains of twisted iron rods (*gezgebš*) hang from Altanceceg's helmet down the back of her costume. Each chain consists of three pairs of twisted rods. They are joined by metal rings with three rattles on each of them. In the invocations they are mentioned in the following way:

Nayin naiman naliiwa[23]
Naiman dawxar xürel müngön garxi.

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[23] The meaning of *naliiwa* remains unknown.

Eighty-eight . . .
Eight layers of bronze and silver rings.

When Altanceceg showed her black costume, first she put on a brownish-red gown on which were many rattles and two wild-boar figures. These give protection against every kind of harm, or curses coming from or sent by grayish dust (*Gajriin bor xürsöör yawuuldag xaraal žatxa*).

Altanceceg's armor consists of two main pieces, the back-armor (*arxaal'*) and the front-armor (*elgebš*). The back-armor is a thin iron slat, approximately 50 cm long, that goes on the back of her costume. It holds the front-armor and has nine branches at each end. Altanceceg has 30 branches altogether (12 on her helmet and 18 on her back-armor). These branches are to indicate the shaman's rank. The maximum number of branches is 42, of which 12 are invisible (*xii arwan xoyor halaa*), given by the 13 Lords of the North. The invocations refer to the back-armament:

Ar biyiig xuyigalsan anxnii ix arxaal'
Arwan tawan tarxitai gürwel mogoinuud.[24]

The first great back-armor, which armored the back-side
Fifteen-headed snakes and lizards.

Chains of twisted iron rods hang down from the back-armor in addition to those suspended from the helmet.

The front-armor is a brownish-red leather vest which has ten rings fastened to it, with three rattles on each. On it are also a metal human heart shape and two bows and arrows.

Namsarai emphasized that Altanceceg's costume was not complete. She did not yet have, for example, the suede coat, and she was going to have a mythical "Garuda" bird (*xan garid šuwuu*) sitting on her right shoulder, and a brown-spotted eagle (*xüren ereen bürged*) sitting on her left shoulder.

The black whip is more sophisticated than the white one. Like the white one, it is made of tamarisk (*huxai)* branches collected from

[24] Collected from Dawuuǰin Namsarai in Ulaanbaatar, January 2005.

three mountains, and the horn of a three-year-old elk, but it has thongs (*šerbüülge*) made of burbot skin. In the invocations the whip is mentioned as follows:

Gurwan uuliin suxai
Gunan bugiin ewer
Gutaar zagahanai arha
Gutaar zagahanai arhiiye gürmöhölž bürhen ezen yix bardag.[25]

Tamarisk branches of three mountains
Horn of a three-year-old elk
Skin of a burbot fish
Lord of the whip made by spinning the skin of a burbot.

A plethora of miniature tools and weapons are fastened to the whip. These are believed to be made by Damdin Dorlig, the protector deity of blacksmiths. The person who forges all these weapons, and all the shaman's accessories, worships Damdin Dorlig and is called *Dorligtoi xün* (a person with Dorlig). Damdin Dorlig is responsible for everything connected with metalwork, machines, techniques, and electricity. Damdin Dorlig's anvil (*düš*) and hammer (*alxa*) are represented on the whip.

Two objects help the shaman to overcome obstacles during his or her journey: a 4 cm long iron ladder on the whip is for climbing rocks and cliffs, and a rowboat of the same size and material, equipped with paddles (*selüür*), is used to cross oceans, lakes and rivers:

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[25] Shaman Ceren's song *Damdin Dorlig hax'uuhanai durdlaga* (Calling for the protecting spirit Damdin Dorlig) mentions a black whip:

. . . gurban goloi huxai
gunan xandagain eber bar'uultai
gutaari zagahanai šerbüügetei . . .

. . . whose handle is made of tamarisk (branches)
of three streams
and made of the horn of a third-year-old elk
and whose thongs are made of the skin of the burbot . . . (Translated by György Kara, see Gantogtokh et al. 1998: 112)

Xangil baisa garwal damžaad garxa šata
Mürön dalai xaawal taw'aad garxa ongoso.[26]

If cliffs and rocks hinder the ladder puts (you) through
If lakes or rivers hinder the rowboat takes (you) to the other side.

The ladder can be used for another purpose as well—namely to transfer sacrifices and offerings to the 13 Lords of the North. There is a key and a lock for opening their door.

The shaman often has to face dangerous enemies such as invisible malevolent spirits (*xii xad uuliin aliban sabdag*), harmful spirits of the dead (*üxöör xaxaar*) and curses emanating from unknown places (*xariin gazarhaa yawuulsan xaraal žatxa*). The shaman either captures them or tries to defeat them with the aid of his or her weapons.

Altanceceg's tools for capturing and restraining ill-willed spirits are the following: a lasso (*salama*) is used to catch the spirits, and then a strap (*argamžaa*) and a stake are used to keep them captive. First the strap has to be tied to the stake, then the shaman binds the harmful spirit with the strap.

For fighting and battling Altanceceg uses a wide range of weapons: an axe (*süxe*), a pickaxe (*balt*), a hatchet (*lantuu*), a pair of scissors (*xaiš*), a bow with an arrow (*num sum*), and a saber (*heleme*). Namsarai quoted the parts of invocations referring to the bow with arrows and the saber:

Xüxe tümör numiiye
Delgelgen bolowo
Xargui xar humiiye
Xolgolgom bolowo.

He took out
His blue iron bow
He pulled out
His black . . . arrow.

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[26] Collected from Dawuuǰin Namsarai in Ulaanbaatar, January 2005.

Dair sagaan helemiiye
Deeree barin xuyigalhan. [27]

He armored himself
Grabbing his white saber.

Two further items—the smoothing iron of Damdin Dorlig *(Damdin dorligoi ilüür*) and a pair of pincers (*xabšig*)—are not for struggling with enemies but serve different purposes. Licking the red-hot smoothing iron is used in divination, while the pincers are useful for picking up red-hot pieces of iron.

The drum (*xese*) is the black shaman's mount, with lots of accessories and decorations on it. Altanceceg's drum is a plain round drum with three times nine rattles attached to it. These rattles are not the same as those on her costume; here they are tiny round pieces of iron strung on three wires. The wires are fastened to the inside wall of the drum's margin. Altanceceg's drum has 27 rattles altogether; however, the part of the invocation that refers to it mentions one more:

Xorin naiman xolbogtoi
Xond'oo haixan duutai
Dai delxii bürxööhen
Daiwan xar xese.

With twenty-eight rattles
With a beautiful sound
A great black drum
That covered the world.[28]

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[27] Collected from Dawuuǰin Namsarai in Ulaanbaatar, January 2005.

[28] In X*esiin ezenei duudlaga* (Invocation of the Lord of the Drum), recounted by shaman Ceren, the following two lines are found:

. . . daida delexeiye bürxööhen la
daiban xara xesiin ezen.

Lord of the Huge Black Drum that covered the world . . . (Translated by György Kara, see Gantogtokh et al. 1998: 124)

The purpose of the rattles is to make a jingling sound when the drum moves. At three points on the drum's outer margin are tied three bunches of colorful ribbons, which are the clothes offered to the spirit of the drum. The drumstick (*toiwuur*) has similar bunches of ribbons tied to its nine iron tongues. The drumstick is regarded as a crocodile with nine tongues, which is why it should be crocodile-shaped, and a crocodile head should be carved on its handle. During a ritual the tongues rattle and mediate information just like the human tongue. It is believed that the spirits of the drum and the drumstick are talking when the shaman beats the drum. A piece of suede or goat skin is covers the drumstick's beating surface (*zöölöbš*) to make it softer.

A "Light" Ritual

There are several types of shamanic ritual, including sacrificial rituals (*taxilga*) where an animal (usually a horse or sheep) is sacrificed for the spirits; initiation rituals; rituals performed to the order of someone who needs help (Khalkha *jasal*); and rituals in which the shaman calls his or her spirits merely in order to keep in touch with them. For the last-mentioned type of ritual Mongolian shamans usually call their spirits three times a month. The Buriad black shamans do it on the 9th, 19th and 29th of the traditional Mongolian calendar. The white ones call their spirits on the 8th, 18th and 28th of each month. The aim of this ritual is to invite the spirits to a party and to offer them food and drink. As Altanceceg's assistant said, "It was not a ritual ordered by someone, the shaman didn't do anything but called her spirits to have a good time together, it was a 'light' ritual (*xüngön böölön*)."

In January 2005 Altanceceg performed a so-called "light" ritual for the head of the Golomt Shaman Center, Šagdariin Süxbat, who asked me to make video recordings. The participants were Altanceceg, Dawuuǰin Namsarai, acting as assistant and interpreter, Altanceceg's husband, who took the role of a secondary assistant, two of Altanceceg's apprentices, and the author of the present article.

Preparations

Before the ritual starts, the first step is to prepare the offerings. Altanceceg put eight copper cups (*cögc*) on a table and filled them with the offerings. She poured milk (*hüü*) into three of them, put sweets in another four and filled one with vodka (*došgin xar dugaraa*). In addition to the eight cups, there were two wicks, although only one of them was lit. The wick is to illuminate the way of the shaman. A bigger cup was filled with a mixture of offerings: milk, sweets, vodka and the yellow fat (*šar tos*) used for the wicks. This was the offering to all spirits (*oron delxiin ürgöl*). Placed on the table behind the cups were a folded piece of silk, a blue sacrificial ribbon and money. Altanceceg referred to the offerings:

Zurxai zurxain taxiltai
Ornoi haixan seržimtei
Oixonii noyidiin šumbalagtai
Xadag torgon meregtei
Ünöö üyiin xorgoi meregtei
Ünöö üyiin müngön meregtei.[29]

The properly counted six offerings
With the fine spirit of the country
With the offerings for the Lords of the Olihon
With silk and ribbon
With brocade of this era
With money of this era.

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[29] Shaman Ceren's invocation "flying the splendor and fate of the sheep" (*xoninoi hülde degdeexe duudlaga*) refers to the offerings in a similar way:

. . . zuun xülte zulatai
zurxai yühen taxiltai
xamba torgon xabšuurgatai
xadag torgon belegtei bi
münöö üyiin müngen beleg . . .

I have the *xadag*-silk gift
With the wick of a hundred legs
With the properly counted nine offerings
With the *xamba*-silk *xabšuurga* . . . (Translated by György Kara, see Gantogtokh et al. 1998: 102)

During the ritual Altanceceg wore her white costume; however, she also played on her drum, which definitely belongs to the black shaman's paraphernalia. Because it was not a difficult, "hard" ritual (*xatuu šanga xereg*) and the invoked spirits were unlikely to be especially dangerous, she did not have to arm herself with all her armaments.

Calling the Spirits

The spirits participating in the ritual can be divided into two groups. The first group are the deities of the Buriad shamanic pantheon, such as Awgaldai and Buxa noyon (one of the 13 Lords of the North). The second group consists of Altanceceg's personal deities, which are the spirits of real people like Namžil, the master of Altanceceg's master, and the 16 to 18-year-old girl. Altanceceg calls her spirits by singing their invocations, while the assistant introduces the scene, the participants in the ritual, and the shaman herself. This introduction is rarely the same, the assistant often extemporizing using key words and sets of expressions. When a spirit appeared Namsarai said:

Ar haixan Mongoloi uužam haixan n'utagta daa
Mongol Böögiin Golomt töw
Tiw delxii böögiin xolboo
Uran haixan ulaaštan' zalbirž
Yireed baina daa.[30]

In the spacious and beautiful land of Outer Mongolia
At the Golomt Shaman Center
The association of the world's shamans
Your talented mediator comes and prays.

It is not usual that foreigners participate in a Mongolian shamanic ritual, so Namsarai had to extemporize during the ritual at which I participated and recorded. He introduced me by saying:

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[30] Collected from Dawuujin Namsarai, Ulaanbaatar, January 2005.

Xariin gazarhaa yirehen
Xünii gazarhaa yirehen
Ündör dawaa dawž
Ürgön golii gatalž
Olon xilii [. . .] tuulž yirehen
Ungar yahatai
Xongor haixan xüwüün.

Someone came from abroad
From other people's land
He has passed high mountain passes
Crossed wide rivers
And many borders
He is a handsome boy of the Hungarian nation.

To another spirit he introduced me using different expressions, emphasizing that I had come from far away:

Ungar n'utaghaa yirehen
Olon goliiye gatalž
Olon uul xadiiye damžiž
Ürgön yix dalai mü [. . .] šilž . . .

He came from Hungary
Crossed many rivers
Climbed high rocks and mountains
Crossed the wide ocean.

Namsarai had to inform the descending spirits about the character of the ritual:

Naimnii nagalga
Yühnei yürgölgö.[31]

This is the swinging of the eighth
Swaying of the ninth.

After the introduction the spirit is offered vodka or milk, depending on the spirit's taste. As the spirits speak in riddles, the assistant has to do the same—he or she should not use everyday words to name the drink or food that is offered. For example, when Namsarai offered the vodka he said: *xatuu xar dugaraa barigtii daa* (take your black and hard drink), and *xatuu xariin deežee barigtii* (take your wild black choice of the drinks); when he offered the milk he said: *dalai hüü barigtii daa* (take your ocean-like milk).

The Spirit of Namžil, an Elderly Shamaness

Shamaness Namžil was the master of Amgalan, Altanceceg's master. She died at the age of 85. When her spirit descended, Altanceceg began to stoop like an old woman and put her drum on her back, then sat down on her sitting pillow. Namsarai offered the sacrifices saying:

Amtan bariž xürtegtii daa
Xadag torgon xabšuulagatai
Altan müngön Šimegtei daa.

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[31] In shaman Ceren's song *Damdin Dorlig hax'uuhanai durdlaga* (Calling for the protecting spirit Damdin Dorlig) the following lines offer a parallel:

. . . amar mende huuxiin tülöö geže
yüheniingee yürgelgeniiyi
namaniigaa naigalganiiyi xeže uradlagiiyi xebeb.

I made (this) call performing the swing of my Nine (fellows)
And the sway of my Eight (fellows)
In order to live safe and sound. (Translated by György Kara, in Gantogtokh et al. 1998: 116)

Take and taste the sweets
(we) have silk and brocade
with gold and silver decoration.

Namsarai then introduced Altanceceg, saying: *Altanseseg xar sagaaniiye xabsarhan šawindni šawi* (Altanceceg, who is a black and white [shamaness], she is the student of your student).

Tümendöö aldartai
Tiw delxiidee suuriatuu daa
Ene haixan aldariiyi
Ataa žütöögüi
Ariun haixnaar irüülž
Tiw delxiidee aldar suuriatai
Tiw delxii böögei xolboo
Altan haixan delxiidee
Suuriatuul sagna . . . bolo daa
Narnai haixan gerelde
Namuu haixan üyödtöö
Xorwoo haixan yürtömsdö
Xosgui haixnaar . . .
Üür biyiini xüröölögtii
Unagan biyiini udirdagtii daa burxašuud.[32]

She is famous among people
She is well known in this world
She has gained this fame
Being free of envy
And being pure
She is famous in this world
The association of the world's shamans
Is becoming more and more famous as well
She is peerless
In the beautiful sunshine
In this tranquil era

[32] Collected from Dawuuǰin Namsarai, Ulaanbaatar, January 2005.

In this beautiful world
Surround her body
Possess her body.

After this Namžil asked something about Altanceceg in a whisper, an utterance that only Namsarai could understand. His answer was *Za olon tümend hain yawana*. As the question is unknown this could have two different meanings. The first would be "She is well accepted by the people," and the second, "She does well for the people." After this Altanceceg stood up and started to beat her drum again.

Then Altanceceg started to jump and shake her costume and drum in order to let Namžil's spirit leave her body.

The Spirit of a Young Girl

Altanceceg said that most of her personal spirits were people who had died young. After Namžil's spirit had left, a 16 or 18-year-old girl's spirit descended and possessed her body. She asked for another headgear, which was simple textile cap (*maixabš*) decorated with traditional Buriad hairgrips. This was a headgear that had been prepared for this spirit because she had been a young girl who used to like wearing nice jewelry and hairgrips.

When she was offered vodka to drink, she refused it and asked for milk. Namsarai referred to her as a child, a young girl (*xüüxed, zaluuxan basagan*) who did not like vodka.

According to Namsarai this girl was an excellent shamaness despite her young age. She was initiated at the age of seven or eight. The circumstances of her death are not clear. It is possible that she died as a result of attempting something too difficult (*xiisen xeregtee diildex*) or because of rivalry (*id'eldee xarwaldaan*).

The Definition of the Ritual

While the spirit is in the shaman's body anyone who has a problem or question can consult it. The spirit gives advice and will say what kind of ritual has to be ordered to solve the problem. During the present ritual no one asked any questions, the spirits possessed the shaman's body

one after the other and they drank their vodka and milk or smoked their cigarettes. Namsarai explained:

Ene bol xesetei böölön bayariin böölön, nagalgiin böölön. Xereg xiižagaam biš xünii xereg biš. Gexdee ene:

Naimandaa nagaž
yüsöndöö yürgöž
Mür müröö tušalsaž
Müngön xooliig gargalsaž
Gar garaa barilsaž
Gans xooliig gargalsaž . . .[33]

Ene züwxön nagalgiin böölön, nargianii böölön züwxön öörinxöö, šawiinxaa ug garwal saxiusiiye bügdiini ene deer xamtatgaad bayarluulžagaa böölön bolloo doo.

This was a ritual with a drum, a celebration, a party. It was not performed to someone's order, it was only the

Swinging of the eighth,
swaying of the ninth
leaning against each other's shoulders
offering silver (and) food
shaking each other's hands
and offering one single food.

It was merely about having fun during the ritual, it was just for the shamaness herself, for the ancestors, her spirits and disciples. It was all about inviting and pleasing these spirits.

Finishing the Ritual

When all the spirits left her body Altanceceg took a break, had a chat with their students and drank some tea. After a few minutes' break she

[33] Collected from Dawuuǰin Namsarai, Ulaanbaatar, January 2005.

started to send her spirits off, but suddenly a new spirit, the owner spirit of the Šiliin bogd[34] mountain, came without being invited and appeared in Altanceceg's body. Namsarai introduced the shamanic center and the participants and offered vodka to the spirit as he had done to the previous spirits. After pleasing the Šiliin bogd spirit, Altanceceg sat down in front of the table and started to sing the following song:

Zurxai zurgaan taxiltai daa
oronoi haixan seržemtei
xadag trogon xabšuulagtai
altan haixan belegtei daa
ünöö üyiin müngön belgee
tawinxan baiž l . . . .
ariin arwan gurwan noyodtoo . . .
xara sagaan seržemtei daa
eneexen haixan ürgöl yum.

Here is the properly counted six offerings
With the fine vodka of this country
With silks and ribbon
With beautiful golden presents
Offering the money of this era
For the thirteen Lords of the North
Black and white vodka
These are my fine offerings.

After this song Altanceceg's husband took the milk, sweets, vodka and the cup with a mixture of them (*oron delxiin ürgöl*) and went outside to offer them all to the spirits. When one offers something to the spirits, one has to sprinkle the cups' contents in a certain direction (for the 13 Lords of the North in a northerly direction) wearing some kind of headgear, whether a cap, a hat or a hood. If no headgear is available, the person making the offering can put his or her hand on the top of his head. The offering process is considered to be a form of commu-

[34] The Šiliin bogd is a sacred mountain in Eastern Mongolia with a great *owoo* called the Golden owoo (*Altan owoo*) on its top. A national sport festival (*Altan owoogiin naadam*) and a sacrificial ritual are held there annually.

nication with the spirits, which is why the one who offers needs some form of protection, albeit less than the shaman who performs a ritual. Namsarai explained the offerings as:

Ornii tengeriin seržem
Oron delxii owoo uuliin seržem
Butiin šineen ideetei
Bulag met undaatai.[35]

Vodka-libation for the earth and the sky (spirits)
vodka-libation for mountain and Owoo-spirits of the world
with a bush-like food
with a spring-like drink.

After offering the sacrifices, Altanceceg started to sing the last song, sending off all the spirits:

Xanatai gerees garagtii
Xad gertee busagtii
Utaatai gerees garagtii
Uul gertee busagtii
Šandandaa morilogtii daa.
Nutagtaa züglögtii
Ogtorgoidoo degdegtii
Oron nutgaa busagtii
Tengerxendee xöörögtii
Telmen gazaraa degdegtii daa.

Please go out from the house which has walls
Please return to your rocky homes
Go out from the smoky house
Return to your mountain homes
Please leave now
Head towards your homelands
Go up to the Sky

[35] Collected from Dawuuǰin Namsarai, Ulaanbaatar, January 2005.

Ascend to the Sky
Go back to your vast lands!

Xad haixan gertee xariildaa
Burxašuud
Xal'uun bulgan xünžildöö
Dogžilgon bolobo
But haixan gertee busiildaa
Burxašuud
Bulgan xal'uun xünžildöö
Dogžilgon bolobo
Degden degden degdegtii
Degden deešee xöörögtii daa
Deešee xöörögtii.[36]

Please return to your rocky homes!
Your weasel-sable blankets are ready.
Return to your bushy homes!
Your sable-weasel blankets are ready.
Please fly up and up!

Conclusions

The study of Mongolian shamanism is mostly based on Darxad materials. The shamanism of the Buriads living in Mongolia is less well known. A large proportion of the material concerning the shaman-

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[36] In the *Xesiin ezenei duudlaga* (Invocation of the Lord of the Drum) by shaman Ceren, the following version of this part is found:

. . . xada gertee xarigti daa
buta gertee busagtii daa
ogtorgoidoo degdegtii daa
oron n'utagaa busagtii daa . . .

. . . return to your rocky home
go back to your bushy home
fly up to your heaven
go back to your native land . . . (Translated by György Kara, see Gantogtokh et al. 1998: 129)

ism of these people originates from a particular shaman, the recently deceased Čoiǰiliin Ceren (Ceren baawai), who lived in the Bayan-Uul district of Dornod province. He was the most important informant for the famous researcher Gantogtox, who has published numerous articles on shaman Ceren's rituals. The shamanic songs, rituals, and paraphernalia of Buriad shamans from other districts of Eastern Mongolia have not been researched as exhaustively as those of the aforementioned shaman. Since there are many more Buriad shamans from Eastern Mongolia, it seems to be necessary to compare one with another.

The present material could form the basis for such a comparison—especially the excerpts of invocations and songs cited by the assistant, Namsarai. Not surprisingly, these lines of poetry are quite similar to those of shaman Ceren; however, the differences are always more interesting to a researcher.

The description of the ritual itself is a unique one in the sense that a full description of this kind of ritual among Mongolian Buriads has not been published yet.

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