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A method that helps living beings: How the Mongols created “shamanism”

KARÉNINA KOLLMAR-PAULENZ, Bern University, Switzerland

Summary: The spread of Tibetan Buddhism to the Mongolian regions in the late 16th century did not only result in often violent confrontations between Buddhist monks and indigenous religious specialists, the male and female shamans, but also instigated a reification process of local practices and concepts into a discursively created “teaching of the shamans” (Mong. *böge-ner-ün šasin*). By exploring the discursive formations and configurations of this second-order taxonomical notion in the Mongolian intellectual traditions, the paper argues for a “co-equality” of Western and Non-Western epistemic cultures. The emergence of “shamanism” as a homogenous religious system has to be examined as part of the Mongolian epistemic cultures that developed a rich analytical terminology of their own that today forms part of the Mongolian intellectual heritage.

Introduction¹

In a recent article the Norwegian social anthropologist Håkan Rydving argues that it is time to abandon the terms “shaman” and “shamanism” in scholarly research, except where they are used as self-descriptions (Rydving 2011, p. 8). According to him, they have lost the usefulness they once had as comparative terms not only because of their vagueness but also because they are, in the words of Claude Lévi-Strauss, “une unité artificielle, qui existe seulement dans la pensée de l’ethnologue, et à quoi rien de spécifique ne correspond au dehors” (quoted after Rydving 2011, p. 3). Moreover, in recent years the genealogy of 18th and 19th century European shamanism-discourse has been thoroughly reconstructed (Flaherty 1992, Stuckrad 2003, Znamenski 2007). This genealogy, however, has been written without the inclusion of Non-Western intellectual discourses on the term and the concept, thus once more producing an “intellectual map of the world” (Coronil 2002, p. 179) that denies Non-Western cultures their own intellectual traditions. This paper aims to engage with the Mongolian epistemic cultures and their modes of conceptualising the religious field. Taking a closer look at Mongolian discourse formations from the 17th century onwards, I want to draw attention to modes of categorising “shamans” and “shamanism” in the cultures where the thus defined religious specialists form a part of the religious field.

1) Portions of this paper are based on Kollmar-Paulenz 2012.

The setting of the scene

The *böge*, the male ritual practitioners, and the *iduyan/ udayan*, their female counterparts, have both been attested in Mongolian societies since the 13th century. In the following study, I translate both terms with the English word “shaman”. The only extant Mongolian narrative-historiographical source of the 13th century is the *Mongyol-un niyuča tobčiyān* (Rachewiltz 2004). There are as well the European travel reports of the Franciscan friars Johannes de Plano Carpini (Plano Carpini 1997) and Wilhelm de Rubruk (Jackson 2009). These early sources affirm the important religious and socio-political status of shamans both in the Mongolian Empire and the later Yuan Empire (Endicott-West 1999). In his *Ystoria Mongalorum* (“History of the Mongols”) de Plano Carpini talks about the *incantatores*, “sorcerers”, who establish contact with the world of the spirits (Plano Carpini 1997, p. 51). Probably for the first time in a European language, he describes the *ongyod* and the ritual practices connected to them in detail (ibid. p. 47). The shamans’ activities and social position from the fall of the Mongolian Yuan dynasty in China in 1368 up to the second half of the 16th century are, however, not known to us, due to the lack of Mongolian sources of the time. The male and female shamans appear again on the scene with the advent of Tibetan Buddhism in the Mongolian regions. In 1578 the most powerful Mongolian ruler of the time, the Altan Qayan of the Tümed Mongols, instigated a meeting with the head of the newly established dGe lugs pa school of Tibetan Buddhism, bSod nams rgya mtsho, at the temple of Čabčiyal at Lake Kokonor. This meeting had been skilfully brought about through the persuasion of Tibetan monks whom the ruler had met a few years earlier. The meeting of the Mongol ruler and the Tibetan monk triggered the complete taking over of Tibetan Buddhism by the Mongols in a time span of not much more than forty years, a process that was only slowed down in the adjacent regions of what is now Buryat Mongolia. The local rulers in 16th and 17th century Mongolia issued laws that prohibited shamanizing and the practices connected with it. These practices included the worship of the *ongyod*, the spiritual helpers of the male and female shamans,² and blood sacrifices.³

2) For a Mongolian explanation of the origin of the *ongyod* see *Ongyot qara sakiyusun teüke sudur bicig*, 18th c., fol. 1r-10v. A translation of the relevant passages is given by Heissig 1953, pp. 503–506.

3) Sayang Sečen, *Erdeni-yin tobci*, fol. 77r15–18, in Haenisch 1955.

Since the early 17th century Buddhist religious texts, historical chronicles and biographies, have mentioned the shamans and shamanesses as the adversaries of the Buddhist monks.⁴ From the descriptions of these sources we can draw some conclusions about the social position of the male and female shamans at the end of the 16th century. They seem to have been close to the political elites of the time, as the *Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur*, the biography of the Altan Qayan of the Tümed Mongols, composed around the year 1607, asserts (*Erdeni tunumal*, fol. 35r17–22):

- 4) This study is based on the following Mongolian and Tibetan sources: *Manghol un niuca tobcañ* (1228/1240, see Haenisch 1962), *Arban buyantu nom-un čayan teüke* (16th century, see Heissig 1959); *Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur* (around 1607, see Anonymus); *Erdeni-yin tobči* (1662) by Sayang sečen (see Haenisch 1955); *Qad-un ündüsün quriyangyui altan tobči* (mid-17th century, see Bawden 1955); *Altan tobči* (1655) by Lubsandanjin (see Mostaert – Cleaves 1952); *Asarayči neretü-yin teüke* (1677) by Byamba erke Dayičing (Bayan-a 1984); *Boйда neyiči toyin dalai mañjusryi-yin domoy-i todorqai-a geyigülügi čindamani erike kemegdekü* (1739) by Prajñasagara; *Tadayadu mongyol-un törö-yin jasaqu yabudal-un yamun-un engke amuyulang-un üy-e-dü* 1693 on-du keblegsen, *dotor-a* 1629 on-ača eki-legged uday-a daray-a qayad-un üy-e-dü jarlaysan čayaja-du-i jasamjilaysan mongyol-un čayajan-u bičig (after 1694); *Altan kürdün mingyan gegesütü bičig* (1739) by Siregetü guosi dharma (see Heissig 1958); *Bolor toli* (1834–1837) by Jimbadorji (see Heissig 1962); *Erdeni-yin erike* (1835) by Isibaldan (see Heissig 1961); *Bolor erike* (1774/75) by Rasipungsuy (see Mostaert – Cleaves 1959); *Ongyod qara sakiyusun teüke sudur bičig* (18th century); various colophons of the manuscript *Ganjur* preserved in St. Petersburg and the printed *Beijing-Ganjur*; the colophon of *Siluyun budayun üye onoqui neretü sudur*, translated by Toyin guosi and not extant in the *Ganjur* collections; various fragments of ritual texts and a fragment of the tale of the *Güsü-lama* (around 1600); *Dag yig mkhas pa'i 'byung gnas/Merged yarqu-yin oron neretü toytayaysan dayiy* (1741/42); *Degedü šasin erdeni ber mongyol oron-i tügegül-ügen uy-i üjegülügsen irayu kelen-ü kürkirel neretü*; the biographies of the *Jeptsundamba Qutuytus* (text published by Bawden 1961); *Gong gsal zhal lce bcu gsum gyi dong pa'i gzhung* by the Altan Qayan; *bKa' yang dag pa'i tshad ma las mdo btus pa* (Tibetan Tripitaka 144, No. 5839); *rje btsun thams cad mkhyen pa bsod nams rgya mtsho'i rnam thar dngos grub rgya mtsho'i shing rta zhes bya ba* (1646) by Ngag dbang blo bzang chos kyi rgya mtsho; *rDo rje čhang lcang skya rol pa'i rdo rje ye shes bstan pa'i sgron me dpal bzang po'i rnam par thar pa dad pa'i padmo rnam par 'byed pa nyi ma'i 'od zer zhes bya ba/ Včir dhar-a ljang sky-a lilida bajar-a jñana šasan-a dibi srii badr-a-yin čadig süsüg-ün lingqu-a-yi teyin büged negegi naran-u genel kemegdekü* (1787) by Ngag dbang thub bstan dbang phyug; *Grub mtha' thams cad kyi khungs dang 'dod tshul ston pa legs bshad shel gyi me long* (1802) by Thu'u bkvan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma; *Rus-un kür-ün jegün sibiiri-yin dotora ayči buriyad kemekü yasutan jun-u terigün yaruyisan ba tegün dotora-ača qori 11 ečige-yin buriyad jun-u tegüke egüni siirabningbova qubitu-yin eblegülen bičigsen bülüge* (19th century) by Širabningbo Hobituev (see Hobituev 1935); *Selengge-yin mongyol buriyad-un darqan tayiši danbi jilčan lombočeren-u jokiyaysan mongyol buriyad-un teüke bolai* (1868) by Lombotseren (see Lombotseren 1936); *Qori kiged ayuyin buriyad-nar-un urida-dayan boluysan anu* (1863) by Tuylutur Toboev (Toboev 1935); *Qori-yin arban nigen ečige-yin jun-u uy ijayur-un tuyuji* (1875) by Vandan Jumsunov (see Jumsunov 1935).

“When later, in the year of the white dragon [1580], the Qayan fell ill with a high fever, the ministers and high dignitaries, not having realised the profound essence of the *dharmā*, once again relied on the formerly rejected wrong world-view [i.e. the shaman’s practices] [...]”.

Their powerful and dominant position in Mongolian societies is also evident from the active attempts of the Mongolian rulers and nobles to restrict their activities by law and persecution (*Erdeni tunumal*, fol. 29r12–15):

“After they had set on fire the outer *ongyod*-images, they weakened and eliminated the ecstatic and ignorant shamans and shamanesses”.

Tibetan second-order taxonomies

According to the extant texts the *böge* and *iduyan* were a group of ritual specialists that acted mainly as healers and also practised divination. The encounter and ensuing competition between them and the newly-arrived Buddhist monks gradually led to the creation of the category of religious opponent on the level of discourse. Contrary to the male and female shamans who were usually illiterate, the Tibetan Buddhists were well versed in the employment of a second-order terminology that had been developed over long centuries of inner Buddhist polemical debates. Therefore in the Mongolian Buddhist texts an already standardized terminology is applied to single out Buddhism as a distinct field of social interaction. Almost exclusively two terms are used, *nom*⁵ and *šasin/sasin*,⁶ that translate the Tibetan terms *chos* and *bstan pa*.⁷

- 5) Mongolian *nom* goes back to the Greek *nomos* that was borrowed by the Syrians and later used by Manichaeans as a technical term for “rule, doctrine”. In Sogdian Buddhist texts *nwm* translates the Sanskrit *dharmā*. The Inner Asian Turks used the word in Manichaean as well as Buddhist works. The word made its way from the Turkic Buddhist texts into the Mongolian language.
- 6) From Sanskrit *śāsana* that can be translated as “authoritative teaching or communication”. A detailed investigation into the use of *nom* and *šasin* in Mongolian texts ranging from the 17th to 19th centuries is provided in Kollmar-Paulenz 2012, pp. 96–98.
- 7) Whereas early *Ganjur*-colophons and the early Mongolian chronicles indiscriminately translate *chos* and *bstan pa* as *nom* and *šasin*, in the 18th century, in the course of the translation enterprise of the Tibetan *bTan* ‘gyur into the Mongolian language, the terminology was standardised. In the Tibeto-Mongolian terminological dictionary *Dag yig mkhas pa’i ’byung gnas/ Merged yarqu-yin oron*, that was compiled in 1741/42 by a translation committee led by the 2nd lCang skya Qutuytu Rol pa’i rdo rje, *bstan pa* is translated as *šasin*, and *chos* as *nom* – see for example chapter *ka*, fol. 6v2, 7r1, 10r2. I have used the Beijing xylograph of the work in the collection of Prof. Ernst. Many thanks to Prof. Ernst for his generous permission to make use of the xylograph.

Both terms are often employed together with the attributive *burqan-u*, “of the Buddha”: *burqan-u nom/ burqan-u šasin*, “Dharma of the Buddha, teaching of the Buddha”.

The Tibetan terms have an impressive semantic scope in their relevant communicative contexts. These include:

- (1) exclusively the Buddhist doctrine, the *dharma*
 - (2) religious-philosophical doctrine or singular doctrines relating to soteriological goals
 - (3) teaching traditions, including social communities or groups that pursue particular doctrines and cult practices
 - (4) in the word composition *mi chos* may even denote moral and legal rules.
- They thus include doctrinal teachings that are related to soteriological goals, ritual practices as well as social communities and their communicative actions.

Categorising religious opponents

In the Mongolian sources of the 17th and 18th centuries that deal in one way or another with the shamanic adversaries of the Buddhist monks, the debate follows a discourse about the “true teaching”, namely Buddhism, and the “wrong view”, which the shamans possess. By employing the standard appellation *buruyu üjel*, “wrong view”, or *buruyu nom*, “wrong dharma”, the activities of the shamans were gradually turned into a homogenous entity. In a text fragment about the turning back of bad omens found in Xarbuxyn Balgas and dating to the early 17th century, I found the first mention of the appellation *buruyu üjel-tü böge [idu]yan*, the “male and female shamans possessing a wrong view” (*Terigün-tür qariyul*, see Chiodo 2009, p. 182). The term is often used in direct opposition to *burqan-u šasin*, the “teaching of the Buddha”.⁸ *Buruyu üjel* translates the Tibetan term *lta log* that in Tibetan Inner-Buddhist polemical discourse usually denounces doctrinal adversaries. The use of *nom*, *šasin* and *buruyu üjel* attests to Inner-Buddhist polemical discourse about the religious “other” (Lopez 1996).

8) For example in the biography of Neyiči Toyin, the *Čindamani erike*, fol. 54r11–13. Other appellations include *yadayadu nom* (“outer doctrine”), from the Tibetan *phyi pa*, as opposed to *dotoyadu nom* (*Erdeni-yin tobči*, fol. 34r19–21).

Taken out of their conventional contexts, in their new environment these terms were employed to renegotiate boundaries between different social groups. Their first appearance in Mongolian sources on the one hand illustrates the reifying processes in the Buddhist intellectual discourse of the time with regard to the shamans, while on the other hand it testifies to the fact that the idea of a plurality of different religious teachings during that period was not yet present. The practices of the shamans were looked upon from a normative and exclusivist Buddhist viewpoint. "Religion" in this intellectual context was synonymous with "Buddhism", and the shamanic practices were judged to be wrong from the only standpoint imaginable, they were "Buddhism gone wrong".

Mongolian *üjel*, "the act of seeing, view, conception" derives from the verb *üje-*, "to see, behold, to look upon", but also "to experience", "to be affected emotionally or intellectually, primarily through the act of seeing". The suffix *-l* forms nouns designating abstract ideas. The semantic field of Mongolian *üjel*, "the act of seeing, beholding, view, conception", stresses the notion of the individual as interdependent part of the community and the role visibility plays in his or her relationship with the group. Who sees and is seen, what is seen and what is publicly acted out, but also the conceptions formed through the act of seeing – all these components constitute *üjel*. The discourse structured by the semantic field of *üjel* focuses on the actors and their performance, as well as their emotional and intellectual responses to seeing and being seen.⁹ The focus on the actors and their relationship with their group or community discloses the structural aspect that led the Buddhist monks to the conclusion that the male and female shamans belonged to the same social field they themselves acted in and thus ultimately subsumed them under the same generic second-order term. As already mentioned, the shamanic activities included their public performance as healers and exorcists for their communities. Thus they had the same social role and function as the majority of the lower Buddhist clerics. They were, in Tibetan-Buddhist terms, *chos pa*, people who practice *chos*.

As is already hinted at in the use of the collective term *buruyu üjel*, in the course of the Buddhist encounter with the Mongolian shamans the loosely connected and local shamanic ritual practices were reified and in the end unified into a single system. The Qing Empire further enforced the reification in their law codes for the Mongols. The Mongolian law code of the Kangxi-era that was published sometime after 1694 (Heuschert 1998, p. 46–47),

9) For the role of vision in Mongolian cultures see also Empson 2007, pp. 129–134.

contained an article on the Buddhist lamas and the male and female shamans who had violated the socially accepted rules of their respective communities (Heuschert 1998, p. 215–217). The discourse about “religion” is thus intricately interwoven with questions of political and social power. Interestingly, at a later time this article was annulled by an amendment announcing the content of the article to be regulated by a new directive. This new directive, preserved in the revised Mongolian law codes of the Qianlong-era, however, only addresses lamas and ordained Buddhist monks, and no longer includes the shamans.¹⁰ Apparently, the shamans had effectively lost their social status and power and thus the need to domesticate this group was no longer felt by the Qing administration. The employment of the derogatory term *qara šasin*, “black teaching” which was coined in opposition to the self-descriptive *sira šasin*, “yellow teaching” the *dGe lugs pa*-tradition used self-referentially in the Mongolian regions, further attests to the effective social and political marginalisation of the shamans. The use of these terms marks the birth-hour of the invention of “Shamanism” as a reified system in 18th century Mongolia.

A “performative turn” in the adoption of Tibetan terminology

An interesting question arises concerning the designation of “teaching”. In Mongolian the term *Šasin* is used, relying upon the Tibetan term *chos* and *chos lugs*. In a Tibetan source dating back to the 9th century we find the word *gtsug lag* which denotes philosophical and religious teachings that have been systematised. The famous passage about Manichaeism in the Tibetan treatise “Summary of the proofs for the true revelation” (Tib. *bKa’ yang dag pa’i tshad ma las mdo btus pa*)¹¹ attests to the long history of this comparative approach:

“[...] The great Persian liar Mar na ne, who is full of insatiable lies, has borrowed [something] of all systems in order to create a system deviating from all the others; whereas he, in accordance with what he did, arranged the [borrowed elements] deviating from [their original] meaning, the doctrinal views held by the other systems are present and [at the same time] changed, therefore non-authentic.”¹²

10) *Mongyol čayajin-u bičig*, 11th debter, see Bayarsaikhan 2004, pp. 224–229. See also Heuschert 1998, p. 136.

11) Tibetan Tripitaka 144, No. 5839, folio 99v2–4 (folios 64r4–103v6). The work is ascribed to the great Tibetan king Khri bsrong lde’u btsan (reigned 755–797).

12) My translation differs slightly from Geza Uray 1995, p. 408. The term used for “system” here is *gtsug lag*.

Whether called *chos*, *chos lugs* or *gtsug lag*, the Tibetan conceptualisation of “religion” strongly focuses on religio-philosophical doctrines. These doctrines, be they fellow Buddhist or non-Buddhist, are discussed and compared with regard to “which of the two religious systems, the non-Buddhist or the Buddhist be the better one” (Tib. *phyi nang gnyis chos lugs gang bzang*).¹³ In the Mongolian context, however, we note a subtle shift of the meaning of *chos lugs* in its Mongolian translation *śāsin* away from the theoretical to a more pragmatic perspective. The focus on the body and ritual performance in the Tibeto-Mongolian conceptualisations of the religious field is mirrored in yet another term that is extant in the sources: *śāsin mörgöl* for “Buddhism” and *böge mörgöl* for so called “Shamanism”. Mongolian *mörgöl* literally denotes “the act of bowing”, stressing the bodily performance of venerating the Dharma or the shamans. The wider semantic field connects to the pastoral background of this Mongolian second-order conceptualization: *mörgöl* is a deverbal noun, deriving from the verb *mörgö-*, literally “to butt (of animals)”. It refers to the cattle butting their horns. Furthermore, *mörgö-* is used to denote respectful greeting in a broader venerational context. *Mörgöl* then refers to a special way of greeting in Tibeto-Mongolian Buddhist culture, when a lama greets a fellow lama, a monk or a high ranking lay person softly butting his forehead to the other person’s forehead. This gesture can also be performed to honour somebody. The term and concept of *mörgöl* thus implies notions of social interrelation, hierarchy and honour and it emphasizes the visible and performative aspects of the Mongolian discursive and embodied, interrelational construction of “religion”. In Mongolian sources from the 18th to 19th centuries *mörgöl* was used exclusively in the compounds *śāsin mörgöl* and *böge mörgöl*.

In the formative years of Mongolian Buddhism the term *śāsin* translated the Tibetan *bstan pa* and *chos* with their already mentioned multiple meanings. However, in the process of its re-integration into the new socio-cultural contexts, the semantic field came to include the inter-relational, visual and performative aspects that are addressed in Mongolian *mörgöl* and *üjel*, thus coining an understanding of “religion” as “embodied teaching and practice”. The term and the concept also refer to the historical genealogy of a tradition. Finally, the use of *śāsin* together with a defining attribute led to the development from an exclusivist to a comparative terminology. From the late 18th century onwards *śāsin* emerged as a comparative term, signifying concepts

13) The comparative use of the term *chos* is also obvious from the description of Islam, *kla klo'i chos*, literally “teaching of the Muslims”, see Sum pa mkhan po ye shes dpal 'byor 1998, pt I, p. 88.

and practices which were deemed to be functionally equivalent to Buddhist teaching and practice and thus subsumed under the same taxonomical notion. Our sources now speak of *böge-ner-ün šasin*, the “teaching of the shamans”, to denote the practices (and concepts) of the male and female shamans.

“The teaching of the shamans” goes west

Although in 17th and 18th century Mongolian sources the shamans and their doctrine/teaching/view are discursively singled out, we do not get to know the contents of their alleged “world-view”. The Buddhist texts from the 17th and 18th centuries do not elaborate on the concepts and practices that are allegedly subsumed under the terms *buruyu üjel/ yadayadu nom*. Therefore these labels remain vague and unspecific with regard to their content. The first texts that provide a definition of a shaman and shamanic teaching as well as an overview of shamanic practices date from the second half of the 19th century and originated in Siberian Buryat-Mongolia, the colonial backyard of the Russian empire. Buryat-Mongolian chronicles (Toboev 1935, Jumsunov 1935, Hobituev 1935, Lombotseren 1936) provide us with systematic overviews, defining *böge-ner-ün šasin*, the “teaching of the shamans”, as a “method that helps the living beings [in this world]” (Jumsunov 1935, p. 107). These chronicles draw on different epistemological models: they are genealogical accounts, which is typical of Mongolian historiography (Kollmar-Paulenz 2010, pp. 251–257); in the systematic enumeration and description of different religious doctrines and practices they take as their model Tibetan Buddhist doxographical literature (Hopkins 1996) which had its heyday in the 19th century. And finally, in the treatment of the “teaching of the shamans”, the stress on the initiation, the dress, the shamanic séance etc., they reveal Russian influence.

In 1846, the Buryat scholar Dorji Banzarov, who had received his diploma from Kazan university, published the first scholarly monograph written in a European language about so called “shamanism”, entitled “The Black Faith or Shamanism among the Mongols” (Banzarov 1846), thus introducing the emic term *qara šasin* to a wider scholarly audience. On the one hand Banzarov, who was deeply influenced by European Romanticism, traced the origin of “shamanism” back to “the external world, nature, and the internal world, the soul of man” (Banzarov 1846, p. 52). On the other hand, his explanation of “shamanism” as arising out of man’s attachment to the landscape is also found in the Mongolian literature of the time on which he drew in his work. In the Mongolian chronicle *Qori-yin arban nigen ečige-yin jun-u uy ijayur-un tuyuji*

the shamanic powers are said to originate in the transformation of the souls of the male and female shamans into “the masters, ongyod and demons of these mountains, streams, brooks, lakes and forests etc.” (Jumsunov 1935, p. 95) To this day, Banzarov’s work has proven one of the most influential writings about shamanism, and today’s universalised concept of “shamanism” owes a lot to the adoption and appropriation of the Mongolian taxonomic notion of the “teaching of the shamans” by European elites. In the debate about the European construction of “shamanism”, however, the question whether the European discursive construct could have been influenced by Inner Asian discourses has not even been raised.

Conclusion

In the wake of the Buddhist conversion of the Mongols the encounter and confrontation between Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhist monks and Mongolian male and female shamans led to the creation of a second-order terminology to select and distinguish the male and female shamans that form part of the religious field in historical Mongolian societies. The categorisation of the shamans set in motion the reification of the loosely connected and local shamanic ritual and performative practices into a unified single system, the so called *böge-ner-ün šasin*, the “teaching of the shamans”. The connections between the Mongolian reification processes of shamanic practices and beliefs into which created a homogenous system and the European creation of a religion called “shamanism” have yet to be explored. The notion of “shamanism”, however, exists not only in the Western anthropologist’s imagination, but already existed in the imagination of Mongolian Buddhist intellectuals of the 17th to 19th centuries, once again proving right Foucault’s statement that discourses are practices that “systematically shape the subjects they talk about” (Foucault 1997, p. 74).

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The murdered king protecting fields: A Tibetan deity-medium from the Bonpo village in Amdo

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Summary: Following a brief overview of the development of studies of Tibetan deity-mediums, the paper introduces a case-study of the contemporary deity-medium from a Bonpo village in the area around Ngawa. It discusses the origin of the possessing deity, previous deity-mediums and the life of the contemporary one. Unlike past Gelugpa masters of this area, who evidently struggled to eliminate village deity-mediums except those possessed by deities associated with Pehar, in this case the village medium lives in a kind of symbiosis with the Bonpo monastery. The possessed deity-medium takes part in the deity-cairn (*la btsas*, etc.) festivals of the village and this raises serious questions about the apparent relationship of Tibetan deity-mediums to the fumigation ritual (*bsang*) and worship of deity-cairns.

Introduction

The present contribution was stimulated by my research conducted in the years 2007 and 2010 in the southern Amdo region near the town of Ngawa (Rnga ba, Ch. Aba). Nowadays it is a part of the Sichuan province of The People's Republic of China, but in the past the area was deep inside the territory populated by Tibetans. It deals with the case of a village deity-medium following the Bon religion. Originally, it was my intention to return once again to the area in order to check some information and witness some rituals in which the deity-medium plays the crucial role. However, this area became quite recently the nerve-centre of a wave of self-immolations¹ and it is entirely closed to foreigners.

Very little has been written on the deity-mediums from these areas of Amdo and thus this paper is intended as a humble contribution to scholarship. The introductory sections give a brief outline of existing research on Tibetan deity-mediums. As a focus for understanding the territory, some notes concerning deity-mediums extracted from the influential 19th century

1) On the subject, see the proceedings of the symposium "Tibet is Burning. Self-Immolation: Ritual or Political Protest?" in *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, No. 25, décembre 2012. <http://www.digitalhimalaya.com/collections/journals/ret/>.

Gelugpa master's hagiography (8th Kirti master Lozang Trinlay Tenpa Gyamtsho /Blo bzang phrin las bstan pa rgya mtsho/, 1850–1904) will then be presented. It is hoped that these parts will enable the reader to consider better the context of this case-study.

Questions surrounding the ancient past of deity-mediums

The existence of Tibetan deity-mediums (in the literature also called oracles, spirit-mediums, shamans, oracle healer, trans-mediums, etc.)² has been known to tibetology for a long time. Up to the middle of the 20th century the Tibetan deity-mediums were often dealt with only in a general way by scholars. In some older studies their origin used to be connected with the Bon religion (cf. Hoffman 1950; Ekvall 1964, p. 27). But since the rapid development of Bon studies from the second half of 20th century, it has been sufficiently demonstrated that within the contemporary monastic tradition of Bon (called “Eternal Bon”, Tib. *g.yung drung bon*) the deity-mediums are not the core of their religious ideas at all and that their presence in the Bonpo monasteries seems to be even less frequent than among other schools of Tibetan Buddhism (cf. Kværne 1972, 2000, 2009).³

It is rather surprising that among the old Dunhuang manuscripts (8th–10th centuries) very little, in fact almost no evidence is found about deity-mediumship.⁴ The lack of evidence to date does not allow us to conclude that

- 2) The most fitting expression would be *medium* both for the reasons discussed by specialists on shamanism (distinguishing between *shamans* and *mediums*) and the terms employed by Tibetans themselves (*sku khog*, *lha khog*, *sku rten*, *lha pa* – all these terms indicate that the man/woman is a “vessel” or receptacle, thus being close to the idea of *medium*). Some of them are not uttering prophecies (thus *oracle* is thus not applicable to all of them) and some of them do not heal, etc. The usual expression *spirit-medium* somehow lowers them, since they believe that they serve as receptacles of the important “deity” (*lha*), not just a “spirit”. For these reasons the term *deity-medium* is used in the text, but in a more general context one should not necessarily be so strict and all of the above-mentioned designations could be applied.
- 3) The monastic tradition of Bon (*g.yung drung bon*) as it is known today is often sharply distinguished from the indigenous Tibetan religious tradition of the Royal period by many scholars. The core of the monastic teachings is strongly inspired by Buddhism and present evidence suggests that it appeared suddenly in Tibet from the 10th–11th centuries onwards (cf. Blezer 2011). Among the corpus of surviving Bonpo texts, there nevertheless appear some which could be inspired by the older non-Buddhist practices. Yet again, the practice of mediumship does not seem to leave many traces even among such texts.
- 4) R. Stein mentions that in connection with *bon po* the expression *lha bka'* is found, designating “deity-speech”. It appears in P.T. 990 with a phrase stating that “male and female *bon po*

such a tradition would be the usual practice of non-Buddhist religious specialists of the Royal period (cca. 650–850 CE), the so-called bonpo (*bon po*) and shen (*gshen*).

The far more revealing information about the early deity-mediums comes from the old text labelled often as “the earliest Buddhist chronicle in Tibet“, the so-called *Bazhay* (Dba’ bzhad, etc.).⁵ In a passage of this text there is a description of the well-known Indian master Padmasambhava performing mirror-divination (*phra phabs*) in order to identify the deities and *nāgas* standing behind the calamities in Tibet. Then he causes them to descend into human bodies (*mi la phab*). With the help of a translator he teaches them the basics of Buddhist teaching (Diemberger 2007).⁶

This narration seems to explain the buddhicized nature of almost all of the deity-mediums found in Tibet up to now, which is a fact documented by anthropological research.⁷ Could it be that this event marks a change of

received instructions from gods and spoke to the king” (*bon po dang bon mo gnyis lha bka’ nod cing kha nas byung rgyal du smra ba dang* (Macdonald, Imaeda 1978, pl. 297, l. 15–16; Stein 2010, p. 125, n. 15). This he takes as being a tradition of mediums. He further writes that *bon po* is taken to be the equivalent of the Chinese word *shigong*, i.e. “sorcerer”, in the Tibetan-Chinese vocabulary from Dunhuang, designating the mediums in the Chinese understanding of the expression (Stein 2010, p. 34). But although one might agree with the conclusion that in this case deity-mediums are mentioned, it surprisingly stands as the sole reference in the many non-Buddhist texts from Dunhuang. The expression *lha bka’* appears again in the manuscript P.T. 0126, where the context shows that the meaning here is simply “instructions from gods” and is not connected with any possession by deity. A. Macdonald referred to the Dunhuang divination text (P.T. 1047) in which there seems to be a narrative about two ladies possessed by nine divine Mumen (Mu sman) sisters, but this brief note does not connect the practice with *bon po* or *gshen* (cf. Macdonald 1971). There is also a Buddhist polemical text (ITJ 220), where the expression *mo bon* clearly designates a “female medium”. But this text is in fact a translation from Chinese and speaks about Chinese practice (i.e. it translates the Chinese word *shimu*, cf. Stein 2010, p. 247–8). In a number of other Dunhuang texts where *bon po* and *gshen* figure, no single reference to the possession by deity has been found.

- 5) The authorship of this chronicle is attributed to Sba gsal snang from the late 8th century. Yet there are a number of versions, which are mostly the result of various additions and comments included in the text (see Martin 1997, p. 23). Pasang Wangdu and H. Diemberger have translated a newly discovered manuscript which seems to contain fewer such additions (Wangdu, Diemberger 2000). Yet H. Diemberger in her later article revised the translation of the crucial part mentioned here (Diemberger 2007).
- 6) The Tibetans themselves refer to this event as the origin of mediumship in Tibet, for the references see Buffetrille 2008, p. 24; Cha ris bska! bzang thogs med 2001, pp. 307–308, Snying po rgyal, Rino 2008, pp. 54–55. For the significant role of Padmasambhava in the practice of the deity-mediums see interviews with them contained in Bellezza 2005.
- 7) The deity-mediums place their possessing deities within the Buddhist (or Bonpo) classifications of them, often recite Buddhist text for inviting the deities, use Buddhist ritual tools and respect the superiority of the monastic clergy.

deity-mediums in Tibet onto a much larger scale? An interesting feature noted by Diemberger is that Padmasambhava employed evidently Indian techniques of that time in this case, such as mirror-divination (Tib. *phra phabs/'bab*, Skt. *prasenā*).

We are left with more questions than answers at this point. But it might be significant that the tradition of deity-mediums was never treated as a kind of coherent belief-system, but instead it was somehow absorbed by the dominating Buddhist schools (including Bon) in Tibet. It seems to reflect the fact that in Tibet the buddhification of mediums started at the very outset of the arrival of Buddhism and the Indian trace of Tibetan mediums cannot be dismissed, since the position of deity-mediums in Tibetan society displays some similarity to India in this respect (i.e. they are not seen as representing some ideas differing from the established “religions”).

In Tibet, as against the shamans in Mongolia (Mo. *böö*, *udgan*), the deity-mediums are treated according to their degree of immersion inside the prevailing Buddhist/Bon world-view. Tibetans nowadays distinguish the tradition of “local deity-mediums” (*dpa' po/mo*, *lha pa/mo*, *mkha' 'gro*), who are known to scholarship only from the rather recent times, from those of high position used by large monasteries and Tibetan government, called mostly politely as “body-receptacle” (*sku rten*), “body-vessel” (*sku khog*), “deity-vessel” (*lha khog*),⁸ “protector” (*srung ma*), “lord of Teaching” (*chos rje*), etc.

Monastery or state deity-mediums and local ones

The knowledge of the historical past of the latter category, those higher standing ones, who also exhibit a higher degree of appropriation by the Buddhist/Bon clergy, is in a slightly better situation. One must note that no single scholarly study of such a deity-medium from a Bonpo monastery seems to exist in the Western scholarly literature.⁹

These monastic or state deity-mediums differ from the “local deity-mediums” in their standard attire, using often huge and heavy helmets placed on

8) The appellations *sku khog* and *lha khog* are also used for the local deity-mediums in Amdo.

9) The classical texts containing an impressive wealth of information on such deity-mediums (named oracles by the author) are to be seen in many parts of the book by René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956). They remain valid for contemporary research. Other information could be gained through an eye-witness account from Eastern Tibet published by J. Rock (1935) and other case-studies. H. Havnevik (2002) deals with the female state deity-mediums.

their head during the possession. The deity is mostly invited to enter the body by monks chanting Tantric Buddhist texts and usually a mirror is attached to their breast of the medium during the possession. Most of them are males, but not exclusively. Usually they do not heal. The possessing deities are considered to be rather high class within the Buddhist world-view in Tibet, often referred to as the highest of the “worldly deities” (*’jig rten pa’i lha*).¹⁰

As for the local deity-mediums, scholarship had to wait for a long time, up to the 1970s, for several rather detailed studies of Tibetan deity-mediums living in Nepal written by Per-Arne Berglie (Berglie 1976, 1978).¹¹ Numerous studies concerning the deity-mediums from Ladakh appeared then,¹² followed by published interviews with some 15 deity-mediums in present day Western Tibet by V. Bellezza (2005)¹³ and an informative longer article written by H. Diemberger on local deity-mediums in Central Tibet (2005). The cases of deity-mediums described in them do not differ from one another substantially despite a certain degree of variability.

Most of the local deity-mediums described in these studies use mirrors for calling the deity and it is mostly a head-dress with depiction of the five-fold family of Buddhas (*rigs lnga*), and occasionally rainbow-like colored “wings” around the ears (*snyan gshog*), that appears among their paraphernalia. They use drums, *damaru* or flat bell (*gshang*) besides the usual Buddhist bell. For “invitation” (*spyen ’dren*) of the deity they often use the Buddhist ritual texts, which they are chanting themselves. Among the deities possessing them are both local deities (often of the *btsan* class or the main mountain-deity of the

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- 10) Those associated with the Gelugpa regime are well-known. Besides Pelden Lhamo (Dpal ldan lha mo) and Dorje Shugden (Rdo rje shugs ldan), the group of deities possessing their mediums is dominated by Pehar (Pe har/ Dpe dkar, etc.), a deity who was allegedly stolen from the Uighurs in the 8th century (for further discussion see Nebesky-Wojtkowitz 1956, Stoddard 1997). This family was enlarged to include those deities who are called Nechung (Gnas chung), Gadong (Dga’ gdong), Tshangpa (Tshangs pa), Kunga (Sku lnga) and the like.
 - 11) He conducted pioneering research on some 11 deity-mediums from Nepal, six of them being mediums from the Tibetan-speaking areas of Nepal and five of them were exiled Tibetans.
 - 12) See for example Burke Mason 1996, Schenk 1993, Kaplanian 1984, Kressing 2003, Rösing 2006, etc. The most detailed of them and the one relevant to the topic discussed here is that of S. Day (1989). One of the interesting findings seems to be the fact that Ladakh underwent an enormous increase in the number of deity-mediums towards the end of the 20th century and that most of the deity-mediums are women (Kressing 2003).
 - 13) His book as whole could be taken as a collection of interesting, but often unrelated materials. It seems that Bellezza tries to connect the deity-mediums with the Bon religion, the Zhang-zhung kingdom and the prevalent cult of the mountain deities as it is known nowadays. But in fact the book contains almost no evidence for such a connection.

region)¹⁴ and protectors of monasteries. In some cases, some assistants of the principal deity appear to the deity-mediums in their zoomorphic form as wolves, bears, etc. They are mostly males in Western Tibet, but females in Ladakh and Central Tibet. Both the healing rituals with the practice of sucking the main location where the disease began (*'jib*) and the prophetic functions of various kinds (i.e. not only “speech of the deity”) are attested in all these localities. Many of them come from a particular family lineage and such deity-mediums seem to have better reputation. But also those without any family-lineage are rather frequent.

It is the merit of the article by H. Diemberger (2005) that it questions the development of the position of the deity-mediums over the last decades in Central Tibet. The domination of Buddhist (including Bonpo) clergy over them was apparently weakened according to her study and thus one must presuppose the much stronger influence of the clergy in the past.¹⁵ At the same time, the deity-mediums have since the 1980s been under the danger of falling under the label of “superstition” (Tib. *rmongs dad*, Ch. *mi xin*).¹⁶ The situation of the modern deity-mediums is illustrated by Diemberger even through the accounts of a political deity-medium arrested after claiming the

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- 14) Not every mountain deity necessarily possesses his/her chosen deity-medium. For example, the deity of the famous mountain Nyenchen Thanglha (Gnyan chen thang lha) is frequently among the deities entering the deity-mediums. But in case of another important mountain Amnye Machen Pomra (A myes rma chen spom ra) it has never been recorded that its deity would possess any deity-mediums.
 - 15) This seems to be also demonstrated by interviews by Bellezza from Upper Tibet (2005). Those exiled deity-mediums probably also appeared outside traditional social bounds (Berglie 1976, 1978). Unlike the Tibetan territories in China, their number in Ladakh has increased considerably in the last decades, but the question also remains whether they could be taken as traditional ones.
 - 16) H. Diemberger gives an example of the deity-mediums, the movement of the so-called “Heroes of Ling” from the 1980s in the area of Nagchu (Nag chu), when many people were possessed by Gesar of Ling and his heroes there, a fact that perhaps led the authorities to the precautions in the form of separating “religion” and “superstition”. It is not clear in this case to what extent the concern of the authorities was connected with older events surrounding so-called “Nyemo incident”, which occurred during the time of the Cultural Revolution in Central Tibet and which is referred to by the author as well. The main role in it was played by a female deity-medium, who was possessed again by the deity known from the Gesar epic (namely his aunt A ne gong ma'i rgyal mo). The movement led to a kind of rebellion which eventually resulted in the execution of its main protagonists. This interesting episode from Tibetan history was also the subject of a recent book focusing on the historical events rather closely, but giving less attention to the religious ideas connected with them (Goldstein, Ben Jiao, Tanzen Lhundrup 2009).

independence for Tibet in the state of possession, and a Maoist one, by a medium who became a fervent follower of Mao.¹⁷

The deity-mediums, both monastic and local, are reported to be overcoming a crisis referred to as “deity-sickness” (*lha nad*). In most of the known cases they then undergo some testing on the part of the experienced monk. Following this, the deity is either allowed to enter the medium or not. In the first case the rituals put to use are mentioned in general as “opening the door of the deity” (*lha sgo phye ba*) which could consist of pronouncement of an “oath” by the deity. Other rituals of “opening the door of speech” (*ngag sgo phye ba*) were also attested. One repeatedly mentioned specific ritual of appropriation is the so-called “opening the door of the channels” (*rtsa sgo phye ba*), which besides monks is carried out in some cases by another deity-medium.

The “energy-channels” (*rtsa*) referred to in the last case are the same as those of the “subtle body” (*lus phra ba*), playing the role in Tantric teachings of the so-called *yoginitantras*. The deity is believed to enter the body through them, mostly through the fourth-fingers where the two side-channels (*ro ma*, *rkyang ma*) of the “subtle body” have their openings. Alternatively, the deity can also enter the body from the crown of the head.

During this ritual, the fourth-fingers of the deity-mediums are often tied by a ribbon and this procedure is believed to control the movement of the deity into the body, the deity being allowed to enter and leave the body or not (cf. Nebesky Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 417; Berglie 1978, pp. 90–91; Diemberger 2005, pp. 132–133).

The attention of scholars was also attracted by the other side of ethnic Tibet. This concerned the colourful festival called Lurol (*klu rol/ glu rol*) in Amdo taking place in a number of villages near Rebkong (Reb gong). Deity-mediums and their performances are at the centre of this festival and seem to retain a number of specifics. One might presuppose an influence on the part of Monguors (Ch. Tu) living in the given area. The healing role of the deity-mediums appears to be lessened (though being present as well) and they have a martial character, i.e. they are surrounded by the symbolism of army leaders, they are stabbing themselves, etc. The selection of the new deity-medium does not involve the well-known “deity sickness” these days and the use of mirrors is not attested among them. Their single tool is usually a hand-drum made from goat skin resembling that used by the Monguors of the locality (but originally a Manchu one). They also employ horns of goats

17) For an interesting study dealing with the reflection of deity-mediums in contemporary Tibetan literature see Robin 2008.

for divination. Despite the specifics of this case, much more than those mentioned here, the description given by the available studies makes it clear that they are immersed in the Tibetan Buddhism-dominated world view.¹⁸

Ngawa and its recent deity-mediums

As for the deity-mediums in North-Eastern Tibet (Amdo), very little is known to scholarship. The only exception is several studies devoted to the deity-mediums (*lha ba / pa*) playing the leading role in the very specific *lurol* (*klu / glu rol*) festival taking place in the villages near Rebkong and mentioned above.

We can only learn through scattered and brief references that a rather large number of monastery deity-mediums were once present in Amdo and many local deity-mediums used to exist in Amdo as well. This means that there is a large gap in our knowledge about the deity-mediums existing between Western / Central Tibet and the almost north-easternmost locality of Rebkong.¹⁹

In this paper a single case study from the surroundings of the town of Ngawa (Rnga ba, Ch. Aba) Southern Amdo will be presented.

Near Ngawa, the Kirti monastery of Gelugpa tradition (founded around 1870) was in the past the most powerful in the area through its close relationship to the local king known as Megyal (Rme/Dme/Rme'u rgyal, see Berounský 2012).

There is, however, a considerable number of other monasteries with a great variety of traditions around Ngawa including the Sakya, Nyingma, Jonang and Bon tradition as well as Gelugpa.²⁰ The presence of almost all the main

18) See Start, Banmadorji, Huangchojia 1995; Epstein, Penk 1997; Dpal Idan bkra shis, Stuart 1998; Nagano 2000; Buffetrille 2002, 2004, 2008; Snying bo rgyal, Rino 2008.

19) A not very safe reference to the Gologs in the Washul Sertha (Wa shul gser thar/ Dbal shul gser thal, etc.) region of Amdo says that in this area besides the chief of the tribes (*dpon chen*) they also had a kind of medium called "deity-official" (*lha dpon*) as a senior deity-medium. Besides him there were a number of junior ones (*lha pa*), at least one for each tribe. These were present here up to the 1960s. However, the source of this information is not given in the article, and though there might be something in it, it is very imprecisely written (see Gelek 1998).

20) Bon is represented by Nangzhig monastery (Snang zhig, so-called "old Bon" tradition, 11th or 12th centuries) and Togden monastery (Brtogs Idan, so-called "new Bon" tradition). The Jonang school has its presence here through the Se monastery (Bse dgon, established around 1620). Other Gelug monasteries present here are, besides the Kirti one, Gomang (Sgo mang) and Amchog (A mchog) located in the proximity of Ngawa (Gomang was established in 1791 by Gungthang of Labrang; Amchog was established in 1823). The Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism spreads its influence mostly through the Sagang monastery (Sa sgang dgon,



Fig. 1. Map of the area.



Fig. 2. Nangzhig monastery (photo by D. Berounský 2010).

schools of Tibetan Buddhism near Ngawa creates rather complex relationships between monasteries with a highly competitive atmosphere. The monastery deity-mediums were undoubtedly participating in them.

The 8th Kirti master ritually tamed the deity called Powerful Hero (Dpa' rt-sal) in 1883. He became a protector of Kirti masters and later started to possess

established in the 18th century) and the Nyingma tradition is represented through Yengoe monastery (Yas ngo'i dgon, 1627) here. See Skal bzang ngag dbang dam chos; Bstan 'dzin).

his chosen monastery deity-mediums. The interpretations of this deity as being a “miraculous manifestation” (*sprul*) of Pehar quickly appeared. This deity possesses its deity-medium in the Ngawa Kirti monastery nowadays and has been dealt with in detail elsewhere (Berounský 2008).

In the past, there used to be a deity-medium in the Bonpo Nangzhig monastery who was possessed by the deity Genyen (Dge bsnyen). The details concerning him have evidently faded into oblivion.²¹

Interestingly, the monks of the Bonpo Nangzhig monastery told me that Powerful Hero was “minister” (*blon po*) of their deity Genyen and thus subordinate to him. Another deity-medium was present in the Jonang monastery Segon until some ten years ago. The monks of the Bonpo monastery considered the previous deity-medium of Jonang monastery to be a very powerful and true one. These examples of deity-mediums reflect the alliances and opposition to each other of the particular monasteries.

There is the possibility of using a large hagiography of the 8th Kirti master Lozang Trinlay Tenpa Gyamtsho (Blo bzang phrin las bstan pa rgya mtsho, 1850–1904) as a narrow opening for a glimpse into the situation of the area in the 19th century.

Kirti himself had the deity-medium of Nechung (Gnas chung) in his main seat, Tagtshang Lhamo monastery (Stag tshang lha mo), and during his life he ritually appropriated the new one, i.e. made him to “pronounce an oath” (Dge 'dun bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho; Lcang lung khri rgan 'jam dbyangs thub bstan rgya mtsho 2007, p. 148). Besides that, he had been frequently consulting a deity-medium known as Canglung Kurten (Lcang lung sku rten) from the area near Dzorge (Mdzod dge), who was possessed by the Tshangpa (Tshangs pa) deity and who “entrusted his life-force” to the Kirti (ibid., p. 156).²²

In the Golog (Mgo log) area near Nyenpo Yutse (Gnyan po g.yu rtse) mountain range he encountered a household, where a person was fiercely possessed by the Nechung deity, making a knot on his sword. Kirti pacified him and offered him a painted scroll with a depiction of the deity, a new sword and a Buddhist prayer-text (ibid., pp. 253–4).

But besides these accounts, Kirti had to face “false mediums”. These were undoubtedly those “local” or “village mediums”. Let’s see two extracts from his hagiography, which are rather straightforward. The first of them speaks about

21) According to an old informant from the monastery, its last medium lived during the first decades of the 20th century. After his death no other medium appeared and thus the possession of the deity was interrupted.

22) Later this deity-medium became seriously sick and was cured by Kirti (ibid., p. 230), and then frequently consulted by him (ibid., pp. 236, 238, 265).

an area around the dominion of a certain Tamtshang chief (Rtam tshang dpon po) (ibid., pp. 249–250):²³

Henceforth, at that place, besides the precious Triple Gem all the monks and laymen of the common people relied on false practices of seeing the deities and demons. It could be extremely dangerous, if they listened to the mouths of these individual false deity-mediums and so he resolutely ordered that those of such a kind must be abandoned. He made them “free the life” of more than five hundred [animals] (*tshe thar*) and on some of them he bestowed the full vows of monks. When he faced some unrest [on the part of the deities], he visualized and recited the great wheel of Vajrapāṇi and [the unrest] was entirely pacified through it.

In another part of the hagiography the text mentions again the local deity-mediums. It follows the story about a fierce storm with hail after which some people could not breathe freely. A certain lady Wanag Khandroma (Sba nag mkha' 'gro ma) was considered to be dead, but he performed a ritual of “instructing the deity” (*bka' bsgo*) after which she started to breathe again. Immediately after this story the text continues with the following part, which shows that she was a kind of deity-medium (ibid., pp. 173–4):²⁴

The mind-streams of the so-called deity-mediums and “deity receptacles” are mostly caused to jerk by poisonous demons these days and it is difficult to gain some confidence in them. Despite that, in conformity with the respect [he received from] the believers he performed the ritual of “instructing the deity”. So, in the village of Chingwang there was a deity-medium possessed by a very powerful [deity]. Because of his death he was led by representatives of such places as Arig Sogpo, Bojam, etc., coming and urging him to perform the ritual of “opening the door of the deity”. He performed the ritual of “instructing” them and [the deity] immediately descended. He urged them not to descend any more and satisfied them with what they desired. And in this area the veneration of individual believers and the corresponding gift of Teaching prospered...

Besides these events those in which “mad women” figure also appear. They are (*smyon ma*, ibid., p. 262) cured by him in a similar manner, through the ritual of Vajrapāṇi. Then there are three women who were made to quiver by demons and were again cured by him (ibid., p. 203).

23) *De phyogs ser skya dmangs la slan chad thams cad kyis mchog gsum rin po cher blo rtse gtad pa ma gtogs lha mthong 'dre mthong gi grub rdzus dang/ lha pa rdzun ma rnams kyi kha la nyan na nyen shin tu che bas/ de rigs spang dgos tshul gyi bka' nan bstsal cing tshe thar lha brgya lhag gtong du 'jug pa gnang/ 'ga' zhig la bsnyen rdzogs kyi sdom pa bstsal/ 'tshub ngo cung zad byung ba phyag rdor 'khor lo chen po'i sgom bzlas mdzad pas lhag med du zhi/.*

24) *Da lta lha pa dang sku rten zer ba phal cher sdug 'dres rgyud brlams pa rtsam las yid brtan 'pher ba dka' yang dad ldan rnams kyi mos pa dang bstun nas lha pa 'gar bka' bsgo gnang zhing/ ching wang gi sder mthu chen 'bab sa'i lha pa zhig yod pa shi bar brten a rig bsod kho (sog po) dang bo 'jam sogs sa'i dod 'gas mi zhig khrid 'ongs te lha sgo byed dgos tshul gyi nan zhus ltar bka' bsgo gnang bas 'phral du babs/ slar 'bab dgos kyi dam sgrags gnang ste re 'dod bskangs/ 'di phyogs su'ang dad ldan so so'i mos pa dang 'tshams pa'i chos sbyin spel/.*



Fig. 3. Village of Thara (photo by D. Berounský 2010).

The picture of the role of a Gelugpa master dealing with deity-mediums in 19th century Southern Amdo appears to be rather clear from these extracts. The only deity-mediums allowed to be possessed were those whose deities were from the group of deities surrounding Pehar (i.e. Nechung, Tshangpa), an already established tradition of Gelugpa clergy. In all other cases, possession was not allowed and was ritually eliminated. These deity-mediums were regarded as false, mad or possessed by demons, though we could suppose that this was not the opinion shared by the deity-mediums themselves.

In the following lines the contribution will concentrate on the deity-mediums, who in this case did not come from the monastery but were always part of village life. The present deity-medium seems to be the only one of his kind in the area around Ngawa. His activities are closely bound up with his village named Thara (Thar ba/ Thar ra), whose inhabitants follow the Bon tradition. Besides only occasional predictions for the people of the area (those following Bon), the role of the deity-medium is clearly bound to the village of Thara.

Thara belongs to the “parish” of Bonpo Nangzhig monastery. Despite close ties with the monastery and the fact that the deity-mediums were ritually appropriated by high-standing monks of the monastery, the village deity-medium deals only with the affairs of the lay people of the village. I was told that he is never possessed in the monastery. The villagers see the deity possessing the medium as a matter in which outsiders, including the monks of the Nangzhig monastery (with the exception of reincarnated masters and highest-standing monks), should not interfere.

The origin of the deities of Thara

The following narration about the origin of the deities possessing the deity-mediums has not survived in a written text of any kind, as far as I know, and is carried on solely by the oral tradition. However, a few allusions to the events described in it could be found in the texts dealing with the history of Ngawa or with the lineage of the local Ngawa kings known as Megyal (Rme/ Rme'u rgyal).²⁵ These texts place the events in history and show that indeed they are based on some real events. Yet the particular versions come only from the oral tradition of the village and thus should be taken as an example of "small history", i.e. history as seen by villagers themselves.

The main events leading to the appearance of the deity possessing its village mediums are connected with the rise to power of, and subjugation of the surrounding tribes by, the kings of Ngawa known by their title Megyal. Until the second half of the 19th century Me kings (or Megyals) were not very powerful in the area and it seems that they were probably the only ones among the many local tribal chiefs of comparable position. They rose to considerable power only during the rule of the three last kings, Gompo Sonam (Mgon po bsod nams, 1871–1913), Zhingkyong (Zhing skyong, ?), and Pel Gompo Thrinlay Rapten (Dpal mgon po 'phrin las rab brtan, 1916–1966). These rulers subjugated a number of local tribal chiefs and through diplomacy, but also frequent force, became powerful kings of most of the vast areas of southern Amdo. One particular source informs us that these last three kings annihilated around some 80 petty kings and tribal leaders of the area; some of them surrendered and some of them were killed (cf. Hor gtsang 2009, p. 167). The origin of the deity is bound up with these events.²⁶ The written sources seem to date the following narration to the time of rule of Gompo Sonam (1871–1913).²⁷

The narration is based on information gathered from three informants.²⁸ However, besides some different accentuation of some events, all of them

25) The leader of Thara is mentioned among others who were "sent to the other world" (*'jig rten pha rol tu btang...*) by Megyal. For the reference see Blo bzang chos 'phel 1993, p. 20; this is also repeated in Hor gtsang 2009, p. 167.

26) For the Me kings and Kirti monastery in Ngawa see Berounský 2012.

27) However, during the interview with the present deity-medium, the name of his successor Zhingkyong was mentioned instead, but other information makes it indeed more likely that the events should be ascribed to the rule of Gompo Sonam.

28) The first of the informants is a geshe (*dge bshes*) from the Nangzhig monastery, to whom I am obliged for his cordial help. I owe him also an apology for leading him often into not very convenient situations. He does not come from the village of Thara and this fact was often seen by the inhabitants of Thara as a strange intrusion into their dealings. Thus later



Fig. 4. Pel Gombo Thrinlay Rapten (1916–1966), the last king of Ngawa (photo by an unknown author).

were in agreement and thus one could extract from them the subsequent core of the story.

There used to be a leader from the Thara clan, called “king” (*rgyal po*) by the villagers, known as Tharasang (Tha ra/ Thar ba/ Thar ra sang / tshang). According to some informants his proper name was Dramdul (Dgra ’dul). The village of the same name, Thara, is one of farmers growing barley. It is located in the large valley some 2km north of Ngawa as it is called today, behind the Kirti monastery. Dramdul Tharasang was a lord of the fertile valley and neighbour of Megyal, the king of Ngawa, and the owner of the valley to the east. According to the informants from Thara he was an honest and admired king.²⁹

Megyal became jealous and evidently saw the “king” of Thara as an obstacle for spreading his own dominance in the area.³⁰ Once he invited him to his palace and during their discussions he warned Dramdul Tharasang not to interfere with his dealings. This was, however, only a pretext. He had already sent several men to lie in ambush on the way from the king’s palace to the

the narration of a temple-keeper in Thara, who was about 70 years old, has been taken into account, as has another rendering of the story by a monk from Nangzhig monastery in his 30s, who comes from Thara.

29) This was emphasised by the old temple-keeper.

30) Such an interpretation of being an obstacle for the spread of the power of Megyal was stressed by the monk-informant.

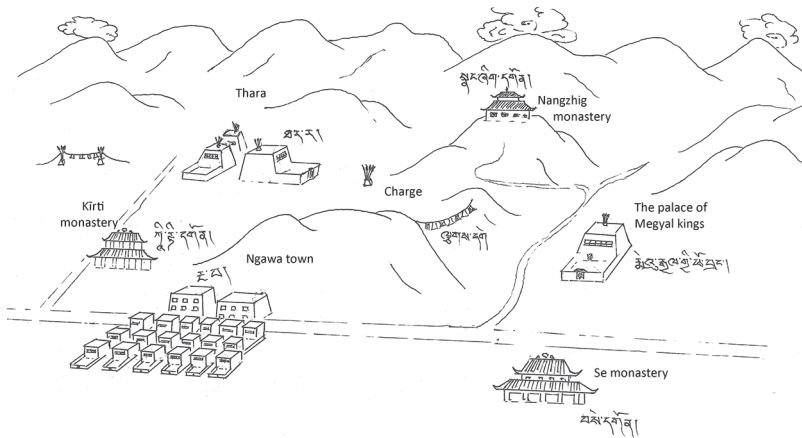


Fig. 5. Sketch of the area around Ngawa (by D. Berounský).

village of Thara. While riding his horse on the way back, Dramdul Tharasang was murdered at the place known as Charge (Lcags dge). One of the killers put his clothes on and used also his horse and was riding it.

Meanwhile, in the village of Thara, the people felt that there was something strange in the air. Their village leader Dramdul Tharasang had two small children, a boy and a girl. The village people became worried about them and thus ordered them to run across the field to the neighbouring village to their maternal uncle (*a zhang*). The two children had almost reached the village when they saw riders on horses. They recognized the horse of their father and also his cloth. Assuming that their father was returning, they started to run towards the riders. This became fatal for them, they were both killed in the field, dying under the spears of the killers and the hooves of their horses.

In such a way the family line of the village leader Tharasang was interrupted. The people believed that after his violent death he remained angry. And not only him, but also his grieving father. They became dangerous non-humans (*mi ma yin*). Later, they were ritually tamed by the lineage holder of Bonpo Nagzhig monastery, Namkha Lodroe (Nam mkha' blo gros, 1891–1949) at his age of 13 years, i.e. around 1903. They became protective deities of the village of Thara.³¹ The former king of Thara became the deity Yungdrung Dramdul

31) There is a deal of uncertainty concerning the date. Each of the informants gave different names of the tamer of the deities, for example Namkha Lodrö Thogmä (Nam mkha' blo

(G.yung drung dgra 'dul) and his father is known as the deity Trashi Phunts-hog (Bkra shis phun tshogs). They started to possess their human deity-mediums and due to their background, they are seen as deities of the “king” (*rgyal po*) class. These deities were once powerful persons according to Tibetans.

The deity-mediums of Yungdrung Dramdul and Trashi Phuntshog

The present medium is the last in the series of five of them. Very little information is known these days about his four predecessors besides their names. However, the fact that they do not belong to the same family (*tshang/sang*) is important and thus it is apparent that the mediums were not part of a particular family lineage, as was frequently observed in Tibet.

The following information comes mostly from a longer interview with the present deity-medium Tenko (Bstan ko, born 1965) recorded during the summer of 2010,³² but the details were discussed also with the other informants (introduced in the note 28).

Names and families of the mediums:

1. Chukortshang (Chu skor), family Me ? (Rme sang?)
2. Dom Tendzin (Sdom bstan 'dzin), family Dom (Sdom sang)
3. Namsay (Rnam sras), family Workong (Wor kong sang)
4. Choedzin (Chos 'dzin), family Taka (Rtag ka sang)
5. Tenko (Bstan ko, b. 1965), family Dom (Sdom sang)

The first of the mediums was a certain Chukortshang. No one remembers from what time he started to be possessed (*bdag byed*) by the deity, but the deity was entering his body until he reached the age of 80. His family name remains uncertain, one of the informants suggested without being sure the Me family.

gros thogs med, living in the second half of the 19th century). This, however would be too early and would not fit the dates of the rule of the possible two kings of Ngawa given above. The date given here follows the information given by the temple-keeper, which I assume to be the most probable.

- 32) The Ngawa dialect used in the recording of the interview is a problem. The dialect does not have any written version of Tibetan and the deity-medium is definitely not a “man of letters”. I am indebted to geshe Nyima Woser Choeckhortshang for writing down the crucial parts of the interview, and for trying to render them in the written form of Tibetan. This enabled me to check whether my understanding was wrong (and in some cases this proved to be the case). However, to reproduce the written form would not in any case provide a precise rendering of the actual wording.



Fig. 6. Yungdrung Dramdul
(from the mural in Nangzhig monastery, photo by D. Berounský 2007).



Fig. 7. Trashi Puntshog
(from the village temple of Thara, photo by D. Berounský 2007).



Fig. 8. Village temple of Thara (photo by D. Berounský 2010).

The second medium came from the Dom family and is remembered as Dom Tendzin. The deities did not possess him for a long time, but according to the present medium both he and the former Dom Tendzin are from the same family Dom and their houses are approximately close to the location where the family-house (*khyim tshang*) of the former king Tharasang used to be located. This was suggested as a reason why in particular the present medium and Dom Tendzin were chosen by the deity.

The next deity-medium was a certain Namsay from the family of Workong. He was a problematic one, as he got a disease (probably leprosy) and was considered to be “polluted” since then and called “stricken by the pollution of corpse” (*ro grib phog*).

The fourth and previous medium was a certain Choedzin from the family of Takasang.

The contemporary deity-medium is Tenko (born in 1965) from the family Dom. He is married and his family-house is located some two hundred metres from the village temple (*rgyal khang*), the main temple of the village dedicated to both of their deities possessing the medium. According to his own words there are few Bonpo villages around and he does not accept any money when he is occasionally asked to perform divination (*mo*) for the



Fig. 9. Tenko (photo by D. Berounský 2010).

people. Thus he depends on running a *tsampa* business. He is prophesying, but not healing people.

Deity-sickness of the present deity-medium Tenko

In 2010, at the time when the interview was conducted, he was 46 years old (45 according to the western convention). The deity started to possess him around 1983, i.e. several years after the end of the Cultural Revolution.

The following description could be clearly taken as a particular version describing “deity sickness” (*lha nad*) common among most of the cases of deity-mediums.

Rather than clear possession, his state at that time was described as constant tiredness and as if he was becoming mad or was drunk. Other symptoms described by him include a frequent need to sleep. It was happening that he fell asleep and woke up in an unknown place.

He described how he often appeared to the people in a fit and they thought that he must be in pain, but this was not the case. His body was not very well, his head was spinning and he was also vomiting, but he could not call the

state painful himself. According to him, if people knew that he did not feel any pain, they would probably regard him as mad.

Once he started to beat his head against the masonry stove and he destroyed the upper surface of it with his head, but there was not even a swelling on his head. When once being possessed by the deity, even when many people tried to keep him still, they were unable to do so.³³

Being the youngest of the three children, at that time he stayed only with his mother. Both of his brothers married into other families.

From the time when he started to be possessed by the deity (*lha zhugs*), nobody trusted that it could be deity-possession and there were people thinking that it was only a pretence. Some people would say that what was possessing him was not a deity, but something else (i. e. suggesting possession by demons). Having no father, he stayed only with his mother and they were very poor. People thought that the deity Yungdrung Dramdul would not enter the body of a son coming from such a poor family.

The first person who recognized that he is possessed by the deity Yungdrung Dramdul was a monk from the Dzatshang family (Rdza tshang).³⁴ He made a protective amulet (*srung 'khor*) for him, which Tenko still wears. The amulet was blessed by Gyaob Rinpoche (Rgya 'obs bstan 'dzin dbang rgyal, born 1928).³⁵ It was that monk from the Dzatshang family who started to explain to the people that he was a deity-medium (*lha khog*). This happened some seven or eight years after the deity started to possess him. Gyaob Rinpoche was probably still not certain about it or least he did not speak about any possession by the deity. It took some two years before the decision to perform the ritual of "opening the door of the deity" (*lha sgo phye ba*) was carried out by him and Namkha Loden (Nam mkha' blo ldan), the father of the present "lineage holder" of the masters of Nangzhig monastery.³⁶

33) Taking into account the symptoms he speaks about, it seems very probable that it could be considered to be a form of epilepsy. For example absence of pain during the seizure is quite frequent among epileptics (though not among all of them), as well as the vomiting and muscle spasms.

34) Because he had already passed away, his name was not pronounced during the interview.

35) He spent his efforts in rebuilding the destroyed Nangzhig monastery since the 1980s and was a "representative of the lineage holder" (*rgyal tshab*) of the monastery at that time.

36) Nangzhig monastery has a considerably long history, which is not the subject of this article. Its highest representatives are members of the family of half-mythical founder Nangzhig Yonten Gyaltsen (Snang zhig yon tan rgyal mtshan) or Dophag (Do 'phags) living probably in 11th-12th centuries, who are considered to be "lineage holders". For Western sources on the Nangzhig monastery see Kværne 1990 and Rossi 1998.



Fig. 10. Tenko in the state of possession by the deity
(personal picture of Tenko).

Meanwhile his mother visited many times the already mentioned Gyaob Rinpoche from the Nangzhig monastery, who at that time worked as a horse vet, asking him to help cure her son. Tenko described how it was only she who saw his situation closely. Gyaob Rinpoche suggested performing fumigation rituals (*bsang*) and using the “purification liquid” (*khrus chu*), but it turned out to be of no help. Gyaob Rinpoche later advised him to take refuge in the Triple Gem and to keep firmly his vows (*tha tshig*) and he also started to circumambulate the stūpa at the Nangzhig monastery, which was in ruins at that time. Tenko had bad visions, he describes that situation as “being below the golden place of the Triple Gem and seeing the rising light in the sky”. Gyaob Rinpoche tried to encourage him, saying that one day “the sun will rise”. At that time Gyaob Rinpoche started to compose a propitiating ritual text (*bskang ba*) dedicated to the possessing deity of Yungdrung Dramdul, which was eventually written on some 17 pages.

It was then decided to perform the “opening of the door of the deity” ritual (*lha sgo phye ba*), which took place around the year 1993.

At the appropriate time many people gathered by the village temple and burned many fumigation offerings from the top of the temple. They were climbing up and jumping off the temple there. A certain man climbed the ladder first and after his jumping off the people were saying, apparently as a joke: "The deity has descended, the deity has descended (*lha babs song*)!"

Tenko recalled that he was overwhelmed by fear given the lack of trust of the villagers. He came to the house of Gyaob Rinpoche and it was in his shrine-hall that the ritual of "opening the door of the deity" was performed by Gyaob Rinpoche and Namkha Loden.

Although Tenko did not mention it in the interview, the old temple-keeper remembered that during the ritual of Tenko's predecessor, the fourth fingers were tied by a thread at their roots and the master kept their ends during the ritual. According to him in such a way the undesired spirits were prevented from entering the "veins" (*rtsa*) of the deity-medium and only those deities who were allowed to enter the body of deity-medium did so. In the case of Tenko, it seems that this was not applied, but was once a part of the tradition.

People gathered there and there was a lot of fumigation using juniper twigs (*bsang*) being carried out in the shrine. After the masters had recited the texts and thrown consecrated barley (*phyag nas*) over him, the deity started to approach him. Through the smoke of fumigation he was growing higher and higher and the people were becoming smaller and smaller. The smoke of fumigation was changing into a finer vapour. And then he does not remember anything. It was as if the darkness had become flames of fire and he felt himself being swallowed.

After the performance of the ritual of "opening the door of the deity" he started to feel extremely comfortable (*bde bo*) as if he would like to drive a motorbike, car or ride a horse. And the previous state resembling drunkenness disappeared completely.

He was complaining that to be a deity-medium is rather difficult. Both of the deities possessing him are very fierce according to him and as an illustration of his words he showed me some totally twisted pliers, a witness to the strength of the deity. The deity entering his body is nowadays mostly the former father of the past "king", Trashi Phuntshog. The older temple-keeper once commented that everybody can recognize the deity possessing him. When he moves fiercely with quick movements, the younger Yungdrung Dramdul has entered him. But when he moves more slowly, it is the deity coming from his older father, Trashi Phuntshog.

Rituals connected with the protective deities of Thara

In Thara itself, there is a temple of the protective deities Yungdrung Dramdul and Trashi Phuntshog. According to the informants this temple was originally the house of Tharasang himself, but it was destroyed and later rebuilt several hundred metres away from its original location. The temple houses *thangkas* of both protective deities and a statue of Yungdrung Dramdul by its altar. These are surrounded by depictions of Bon deities and Bon scriptures.

There is a huge helmet on the altar of the temple. This helmet is used by the deity-medium when being possessed by the deities and according to the old temple-keeper the helmet is of much greater size than the head of the deity-medium. However, during possession it fits accurately onto his head. As I have been told, this is one of the reasons why the villagers consider the deity-medium to be the true one. It is to be noted that the deity-medium puts on the helmet only when being possessed by the deity inside the temple. On other occasions of possession outside it, the helmet is not used.

The village itself consists of some 60 households and has two *labtses* (*la btsas/ lab tse/ la rtse*, etc), i.e. cairns formed by clusters of arrows and considered to be places of the presence of the deities. The first of them, called Thara *labtse* (*tha ra la btsas*), is situated at the foot of small hills and is dedicated to



Fig. 11. Helmet on the village temple altar (photo by D. Berounský 2007).

both of the protective deities of the village: Yungdrung Dramdul and Trashī Phuntshog. The second one is located amidst the barley fields. This second *labtse* in fact consists of two cairns. The first of them is dedicated to the deity Lhanyen Rinchen Terdag (Lha gnyan rin chen gter bdag) and the second cairn is called “The *labtse* of the boy and girl” (Bu dang bu mo'i la btsas). Its name is a reminder of the children of the past village leader Dramdul and this *labtse* is located at the place of their murder.

According to the informants,³⁷ during the *labtse* festivals only the male members of the village take part. The rituals consist mainly of adding new arrows to the existing clusters of old ones. Interestingly, the first arrow is usually added by the deity-medium in the state of possession by the deity during the ritual. This is clearly taken as a presence of the deity which constitutes the identity of the villagers. It is the deity itself in its human vessel (*sku khog*) which leads the male villagers during the ritual.

As for the community of farmers, the celebration of the *labtses* is closely connected with the annual agricultural cycle. Besides the Tibetan New Year, the first *labtse* is celebrated during the fourth month, just before sowing barley. The time for the next occasion for the ritual at this *labtse* is not fixed, but the ritual serves for the protection of barley (*nas srung*) at the time when the plants have grown a little bit, but are still small. The last *labtse* festival is connected with the harvest and is celebrated either in the ninth month of the lunar calendar (*glang bzhi rgyal*) or during the tenth month (*byi'i bcu gcig*) by the second *labtse*.

Such a role of the deity and his deity-medium is thus not only evidently closely connected with the history of the village, but also plays the dominant role in the agricultural cults, which are of highest importance for the village, agriculture being the main source of their livelihood.

Conclusion

From this article we can see that the attitudes of the elite monks of Nangzhig monastery, i.e. Namkha Lodroe, differ from those of 8th Kirti. He did not eliminate the local deity-medium possessed by a new deity. The local deity-medium, the village and the monastery seem to live in a kind of symbiosis in this case. The borders of the fields of activities of the village and monastery, the deity-medium and the highest representatives of monks, are clearly delineated. The deity-medium plays a role subordinated to the lineage-holder

37) I.e. the old temple-keeper and the monk-informant.



Fig. 12. Thara labtse (photo by D. Berounský 2010).

of the Nangzhig monastery as well as to its “representative” (*rgyal tshab*). But not to the rest of monks. His domain is to deal with the affairs of the village, in which the historical past of the village interestingly makes its presence known in the daily life of the village of these days through the deity-medium.

One interesting feature is the fact that his attire, including the helmet, resembles that of the higher monastery deity-mediums, although his role remains that of being definitely restricted to the domain of the lay village people. It is true that he is considered possessed by the “king” (*rgyal po*) class of the deity, in which case the heavy helmet appears as a part of the dress of such deity-mediums. But still, it seems to be rather rare that such a class of

deities possesses the deity-medium dealing clearly only with the affairs of the village. This shows the difficulty in drawing a distinctive line between monastery deity-mediums and the local ones. This deity-medium seems to have attributes of both of them.

Another interesting observation is the clarity of all the narrations surrounding both the deities and his deity-medium in the particular case studied here. There is a high probability that the story of the origin of the deity indeed reflects historical events. The deity participates in ritual dealings concerning the crops and this makes good sense as well. This again stands in some contrast to the deity-medium of Gelugpa Kirti monastery located nearby. In the study of the deity possessing him, it became evident that there were many twists in interpreting him and an effort was spent in presenting him as related to the deity Pehar (Berounský 2008).

What, however, is most striking in this case is the role of the deity-medium during the annual *labtse* festivals of the village and in connection with fumigation (*bsang*) ritual. Tenko, the contemporary deity-medium described clearly his inner feelings during the process of possession by the deity through inhaling the smoke from juniper, i.e. the fumigation ritual. Possession by the deity is also an integral part of the *labtse* festival dedicated to the local deities. This raises questions concerning the relation of the *labtse* festivals to deity-possession in the past of Tibet.

It is strange how in other studies concerning the local deity-mediums, very little attention was paid to their relation to the fumigation ritual and to the *labtse* festivals. This is perhaps also partly due to the circumstances surrounding Tibetan deity-mediums nowadays. The case studies dealt often with deity-mediums who are uprooted from traditional society.

Though the origin of the deity and the history of the series of five deity-mediums is rather recent, one cannot straightforwardly dismiss this role of the deity-medium during the *labtse* festival as a new feature and a recent change. One can recall the study of Nebesky-Wojtkowitz, in which such a relation, albeit strongly under Buddhist influence, is mentioned (Nebesky-Wojtkowitz 1956, p. 422). Nebesky-Wojtkowitz firstly recalls the legend about the origin of the “world fumigation” festival (*dzam gling spyi bsang*), one of the main festivals of Lhasa.³⁸ According to him all deities of Tibet were obliged to possess

38) According to him, it first appeared during the reign of well-known apostate figure of Tibetan history, the king known as Langdarma (Darma u'i dum brtan). After deterioration in state affairs he made the deities of Tibet advise him on the fifteenth day of the fifth month (i.e. the date of the festival).

their deity-mediums during the fifteenth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar, the day of the festival.

A lesson to be learnt from this case could also be that on a very general level, it has some common features with the deity-mediums near Rebkong. In their case the use of juniper during possession by the deity was also observed, though this feature did not attract much focused attention from scholars.³⁹ The deity-mediums also participate in the most important festivals of the village. Lastly, in their cases too there is a strong tie with the past village leaders. Their village temples are often called “temples of the army leader” (*dmag dpon khang*), being the place dedicated to their heroic past leaders (cf. Buffetrille 2002).

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39) Remarkable is the description of the choice of the new medium. It is said that the male villagers gathered in the temple (*dmag dpon khang*), were chanting the “fumigation text” (*bsang yig*) to the deity while juniper was burnt and they were also washed by juniper water and made to drink it. Those who appeared to be possessed were singled out later (see Snying po rgyal, Rino 2008, pp. 120–121).

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The Ya-ngal family of Tibetan Royal priests in Dolpo

Part II¹

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Summary: The present paper continues in its second part by dealing with Ya-ngal family from Dolpo in Nepal. It introduces four different versions of the manuscripts of the *Genealogy of Ya-ngal (Ya ngal gdung rabs)* plus the fifth edited text published in a book-form. The introductory parts contain also an attempt to establish the chronological sequence of the particular existing manuscripts. The paper then approaches the translation of the first part of the text dealing with a general introduction to the Ya-ngal family of Tibet. The translation of the larger part about the family lineages of the Dolpo and Mustang will be published later as Part III. The translation published here gives different readings of the various manuscripts in the footnotes and the original Tibetan text is appended to the paper.

7. Introduction to the manuscripts of Ya ngal gdung rabs

There are four versions of the handwritten text of Ya-ngal Dhungrab (YD), which I have in my possession at the present time, plus one version published in a book-form, which I edited myself in 2005. At the time of working on the later book, I had access only to a single version published by Khedup Gyatso (listed here as YD-D). In the light of the new versions I got access to, this older edition made by me should be revised. However, since it has already been published, I will rely on its text in the following translation, giving the different reading of other manuscripts in the footnotes with brief explanations.

The handwritten versions differ from one another in many respects. Nevertheless, after a closer look at them it was possible to establish their sequence, i.e. the version closer to the original text and the versions which consequently included some additional texts. The sequence of the manuscripts introduced below follows in chronological order and they are marked by the letters in alphabetical order after the siglum of the title of the text (YD).

1) I would like to express my gratitude to Daniel Berounsky and Katia Buffetrille for their corrections and valuable suggestions.

I. YD-A

Full title: *Kun (kyis) [gyi] nang nas dbang po'i (dang) [dwangs] ma mig ltar sngon du 'byung ba rgyal gshen (yang) [ya] ngal bka' rgyud (kyis) [kyi] gdung rabs un chen tshangs pa'i sgra dbyangs zhes bya ba bzhugs s.ho.*

Length: 37 folios (74 pages).²

Provenance of the manuscript: The origin of this manuscript is still unknown but judging from its careless and plain script I can believe that it is from Dolpo. I received this copy, which is originally preserved in the Library of Tibetan Work and Archives, in Dharamsala (India) from Roberto Vitali who was kind enough to send it to me.

Chronological order: This manuscript is the oldest one. It is obvious from the following fact that the manuscript served as source for all the others. All the other manuscripts contain a scribal error consisting of misplacing exactly one folio of this manuscript. The text which corresponds exactly to folio seventeen of this particular version YD-A is placed just after the text appearing on folio ten of this manuscript YD-A. All the copies mentioned below repeat this mistake which leads to the conclusion that all of them are based on this particular version, since the text misplaced³ corresponds exactly to the text which is on folio seventeen of this version. It thus should be taken as the oldest one.

Besides that, all the rest of the manuscripts contain some additions to this particular version of the text. Among them, the note on the author was evidently given after his death and the later manuscripts also inserted some information on contemporary masters, which are absent in this particular version YD-A.

This version also contains the largest number of spelling mistakes while in the other manuscripts, these are gradually corrected. The spelling errors in fact reflect the common style of Dolpo, in which attention is paid primarily to the phonetic rendering of the words, not to their correct spelling.

Additional notes: Written in multiple handwritings ('bru, 'jib and yig chung). The text mentions in its colophon that it was written by a scribe (yi

2) The last folio of this text contains the Tibetan numbering of thirty-seven. However folio number thirty-six is missing in the copy that I have. Later English numbering is given up to thirty-six on the right side of the folios.

3) This misplacement was initially made in YD-B by inserting a section about Milue Samlek, that does not appear in the YD-A version. But there is the sign of a swastika in YD-A, which shows something had to be placed there.

ge 'du byed pa).⁴ Thus it seems probable that this version was not written by the author himself.

II. YD-B

Full title: *Kun (kyis) [gyi] nang nas dbang po'i (dangs) [dwangs ma] mig ltar sngon du 'byung ba gshen (yang) [ya] ngal bka' rgyud (kyis) [kyi] gdung rabs un chen tshangs pa'i sgra dbyangs zhes bya ba bzhugs so*.⁵

Length: 57 folios (114 pages).⁶

Provenance of the manuscript: This manuscript is originally from Lubra, Mustang and it was also kindly given to me by Roberto Vitali.⁷

Chronological order: Apart from YD-A, the rest of the manuscripts contain much additional information. It is, however, evident that these parts of the text were initially inserted into YD-B. Among those insertions, there are two particular folios attached to folio number fifty-one, giving Tibetan numbering fifty-one-middle⁸ and fifty-one-lower⁹ in this manuscript. Both of the folios are shorter in size and written in a very different and much nicer handwriting. Thus these differences make clear that both folios were added later to this manuscript by some other scribe. However, considering the appearance of this additional text in the other two versions (YD-C and YD-D), it appears there without any distinction from its main text. The additional text is evidently written by the same scribe as the main text and nothing warns the reader that it was in fact originally an additional note. It is thus certain that those two manuscripts are later copies of this version YD-B.

4) See YD-A, folio 37a: 'on kyang lung rig gzhang lugs ma rtogs shing// rnam 'dren mkhas pa'i gsum yang ma thos te// bslab gsum yon tan tshogs kyang mi ldan pa'i// rang che'i phung sgra sgrog la ci byar yod// ces bya ba 'di ni yi ge'i 'du byed pa'o// //

5) Charles Ramble translates this title as the following, see Ramble, 1983, p. 270: "The Voice, so called, of Brahma, the lineage history of the clan of the Yang-ngal Priests which is like sight, the foremost of all the senses."

6) The Tibetan numbering of the folios in this text continues only up to number fifty-four. Ramble, 1983, p. 270 also mentioned: "It contains fifty-four folios written in Tibetan cursive (*dbu-med*) scripts." In fact there is one addition folio of number forty-five and two additional folios of number fifty-one. So all together I counted fifty-seven folios.

7) It was copied in Lubra by Charles Ramble. See Ramble 1983, p. 270: "I was kindly permitted to photograph and copy this document by the present heir of the Yang-ngal inheritance in Lubra. It contains fifty-four folios written in Tibetan cursive (*dbu-med*) scripts."

8) See YD-B, folio 51–2a: *nga gcig bar ma* written on the left side of the folio.

9) See YD-B, folio 51–3a: *nga gcig 'og ma* written on the left side of the folio.

Besides the above-mentioned insertions, this version contains another additional folio attached to folio number forty-five. This is clearly marked by a swastika-sign as an addition to the original text. The size of the folio and the handwriting is the same as in the main text. However, the absence of this information in the first version of YD-A indicates that this manuscript YD-B was written later than YD-A. The same part of this text is repeated in the YD-C and YD-D versions, but nothing marks it as an additional note and it looks just like a part of the main text. This shows clearly that this manuscript YD-B is earlier than YD-C and YD-D and that both YD-C and YD-D are result of later copying YD-B.

The three additional inserted folios of this version contain information about the passing away of the author of the text, Migyur Gyaltsen (1804–1834; cf. Choekhortshang 2011, p. 48), which can be found in the last folio. The second folio contains events of the life of Yangton Goejor¹⁰ (1769–1834; cf. Choekhortshang 2012, p. 5) of Samling, and the first folio describes the life of Yangton Wangyal¹¹ of Lubra. Goejor passed away just seven days before the author. Yangton Wangyal was Goejor's disciple and although we do not know his exact dates, it appears from the context that he was much younger than his teacher. However, the text gives also information about his passing away in Tibet which makes clear that this additional note was written a rather long time after the composition of the main text in 1833. It is thus certain that these additional notes were inserted only after the YD-A version had been written down. Again, it confirms that YD-A is the oldest since it does not contain these additions.

Additional notes: Since Lubra is the place of origin of this version, the manuscript gives the following additional information connected to it, which does not appear in YD-A:

1) The list of three more generations after Tenzin Namgyal of Lubra (see YD-B, folio 45a),

10) See Yang sgom mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan 2005, p. 73: *yang ston dgos 'byor/ gtsang gtsug gi mtshan ye shes rgyal mtshan/ drang song gi mtshan gtsug phud rgyal mtshan/*. (Yangton Goejor's 'tsangtsuk' ordination name was Yeshe Gyaltsen [and] his Drangsong name was Tsukphue Gyaltsen).

11) Yangton Wangyal received his ordination from Yangton Tsukphue Gyaltsen alias Yangton Goejor, who died just seven days before the death of the author Migyur Gyaltsen. See Yang sgom mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan 2005, p. 66: *yang ston dbang rgyal de 'khor ba la zhen pa log nas dol por yang ston gtsug phud rgyal mtshan las rab tu byung nas tshul ming blo gros rgyal mtshan du gnan/*. (Yangton Wangyal became disgusted by the samsāra and was ordained as a monk by Yangton Tsukphue Namgyal in Dolpo and he was given the ordination name Lodoe Gyaltsen).

- 2) Additional folio concerning the life of Yangton Wangyal, the last living male lineage descendant of Lubra (see YD-B, additional folios a-b of folio 45a),
- 3) The life events of Tashi Gyaltsen, subduing demon and founding Lubra village (see YD-B, folios 38a-39a) and
- 4) The information about the life of Ya-ngal Drangsongma of Lubra (see YD-B, folios 40b-41a).

Since none of this appears in YD-A, we can presume that YD-A was a Samling version and confirm YD-B to be a Lubra version.

III. YD-C

Full title: *Kun (gyis) [gyi] nang nas sngon du 'byung ba dbang po'i (dangs) [dwangs] ma mig ltar gces pa rgyal gshen ya ngal gyi bka' brgyud kyi gdung rabs un chen tshangs pa'i sgra dbyangs zhes bya ba.*¹²

Length: 43 folios (86 pages).

Provenance of the manuscript: The origin of this manuscript is Samling, Dolpo. David Snellgrove brought it from Dolpo and it is preserved in the British Library (Shelfmark: OR 14208.1).

Chronological order: This manuscript follows the YD-B of Lubra without any additional information except for a few minor differences.¹³ This version definitely comes from Samling, but it confusingly follows the reading of YD-B, which clearly comes from Lubra and it also contains the Lubra-related material described above. It seems likely that someone in Samling ordered a copy or copied it himself (or was given a copy) of the original Lubra version. Thus I take it to be a later copy of YD-B provided for the Samling monastery.

Additional notes: This manuscript is written in *dbu med* script. So far I haven't had any chance to consult the original in the British Library. I fully rely on the transcription of the text into Wylie (including the pagination) made by Amy Heller, who kindly and generously provided me with it.

12) Snellgrove translates part of the title as follows; see Snellgrove 1967, p. 4: "the genealogy of the lamas of Samling, entitled rGyal-gśen Ya-nāl gyi bkaḥ-brgyud kyi gdun-rabs 'Genealogy of the religious line of the noble priests of Ya-nāl'"

13) The YD-C contains a slightly different reading in the parts mentioning Yangton Tenzin Namgyal and his siblings.

IV. YD-D

Full title: *Kun gyi nang nas dbang po mig ltar sngon du byung ba gshen ya ngal bka' rgyud kyi gdung (rab) [rabs] un chen tshangs pa'i sgra dbyangs zhes bya ba bzhugs so.*

Length: 68 folios (136 pages).

Provenance of the manuscript: Dolanji, India.

Chronological order: In the beginning Gelong Achoe copied the original text from Lubra in the 1960s, probably YD-B, on common sheets of paper. Later it was rewritten in traditional *dpe cha* form by Geshe Yungdrung Gyaltzen (see Choekhortshang 2011, p. 46) in Dolanji (India); and then published in Dolanji by Khedup Gyatso in 1978 (see Yang sgom mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan 1978).

Additional notes: Written in *dbu med* script. In part I of this article I wrongly presumed that the misplacement of some folia was the result of the double copying of this text. However, now it is clear that this was not. The point is explained in the "Chronological order" section of YD-A above.

V. YD-E

Full title: *Kun gyi nang nas dbang po mig ltar sngon du byung ba rgyal gshen ya ngal bka' rgyud kyi gdung rabs un chen tshangs pa'i sgra dbyangs zhes bya ba bzhugs.*

Length: 80 pages in book form.

Provenance of the manuscript: Edited by the author of this paper and published by *Dol po'i gsung rab nyams gso khang* (A publication centre for Dolpo's old manuscript), Menri/Kathmandu.

Chronological order: I published this book in 2005 in an edition intended to replace disordered folios and correct scribal errors found in YD-D.

Additional notes: Since none of the above-mentioned manuscripts, with the exception of YD-D, was available to me at the time of editing the text, the corrections were mostly based on comparing the YD-D version with the original texts often mentioned as the source of information or quotation. The main ones were the following: *Dri med gzi brjid*, *Bsgrags pa gling grags*, *Bka' rgyud skor bzhi*, *Dar rgyas gsal sgron* and *Bon ri'i dkar chag*.

8. Translation of the main text; Genealogy of the Royal priests Ya-ngal¹⁴

Genealogy of the family lineage of transmitted instructions of the Royal priests Ya-ngal which emerged earlier than all [others] as an eye [among] the senses¹⁵ called Melodious voice of Brahma's great conch shell

(...) (28) [Lharab Nyenrum had] arranged the Jambudvīpa in peace and pleasure¹⁶ and returned to the [paradise of] Thirty-three [gods]. He married Mucham Drama, the princess of the lord king of Mu.¹⁷ Then a goiter about [the size of] a stomach had appeared on the curved place of the nape of his wife. As it burst open after nine months and ten days there appeared a crystal scorpion with turquoise spots, a golden frog with silver warts, a turquoise fish with golden wings and a [white] conch tadpole with a pearl as its head ornament. These four appeared there. Father and mother did not take these signs [of their bodies] and its omens as imperfect.¹⁸ They spread out¹⁹ curtains of white silk, laid a cushion of blessing,²⁰ kept [them] in a golden container,²¹ placed [the container] as receptacle of “good fate” and “abundance” (*phyag yang gi rten*) and performed the [ritual of] protecting “abundance”.

They checked after three days and the sunny part of a fourth day and found four wonderful miraculously manifested (29) humans. From the crystal scorpion [appeared] a crystal man with turquoise hair, ^{King Nyatri} wearing a cloak

14) The numbers of the pages appearing in the translation follow the pagination of YD-E version. At the very beginning, the text deals in general with how the Buddha of the thousand eons came into being and how the sentient beings of the three worlds are released. Since the information about Ya-ngal starts only after page 28, I started my translation from there. See Yang sgom mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan 2005, p. 1–28. Throughout the text appear additional notes written by an unknown commentator. These are mostly above the main text or below it and we include them in smaller and “indexed” type. Square brackets mark the addition of some expressions which are missing in the original text, but were added for better understanding in English.

15) Tib. *dbang bo mig ltar*. This is interpreted in the sense that Ya-ngal is the first lineage of Bon (even before Shenrab Miwo's lineage, see Yang sgom mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan 2005, p. 43.) as the eye is the first among senses (listed first and being also the most important).

16) The original manuscript reads *mi bde* instead the correct *zhi bde*.

17) Tib. *Dmu rje btsan po*.

18) Both YD-A and YD-B read *yab yum ya [m]tshan skyes skyon du ma zung bar* YD-D changed it into *yab yum mtshan ltas*.

19) Tib. *gres*. Other sources contain *dril*, i.e. “to wrap”.

20) Tib. *dmu-yad*.

21) Tib. *gser skur*. Other versions contain *gser dngul ga'u bkur ma'i*, i.e. “ga'u (container) from gold and silver of high esteem”.

of white silk. The white light²² radiated around his head to the length of an arrow and he was carrying a crystal staff in [his] hand. From the golden frog [appeared] a golden human with turquoise bird-horns [on his head], ^{Ya-ngalpa} wearing a golden cloak [and] carrying [a] crystal rosary and stick. From the turquoise fish [appeared] a turquoise man with a golden turban tied around [his head]. ^{Tsemi} He was wearing silk garments of five different colors on [his] body and carrying a resounding turquoise drum. From the conch tadpole [appeared] a conch man with pearl knot of hair at the crown of the head, ^{Chomi} wearing on the body a fur cloak of the three kinds of [color] of onyx (*phra men gya gsum*) [and] carrying a jingling golden flat bell.

Father and mother told them:

“You, four wonderful sons, what is the reason for such a behavior and [such] dress?”

As it was said, the crystal man replied:

“Yes father and mother, (30) we [are] the sons [of] Lharab Nyenrum, I am Nyatri Tsenpo.²³ *sras bar ma srid med de*²⁴ Why [was I called] ‘Nape Throne King’? ²⁵ Staying nine months and ten days at mother’s nape [I was called] ‘Nape Throne’ [and] issuing strict orders to all appearances [and] existences, I am [thus called] ‘King’.

This golden man is Ya-ngal; a priest of existence, ^{Compare with Gyimong Sipa} [he] has power over [polluting contamination of] hearth, [polluting] burning and [pollution] of malice, these three. This turquoise man is Tsemi, a son of Nyen of the race of gods. ^{Lineage of Mubon Yethen} This conch man is Chomi [called/speaking with] cuckoo voice, skillful in chanting. ^{Lineage of Chabon Theleg} So far as our produced miraculous appearances are concerned, (31) [we are] departing from gods of the sky to be king [and] priests on earth. We request our father to give us an instruction.”

Thus they pronounced. [Their] father said:

“When gods of the sky depart for the earth, the land of human beings is largely polluted²⁶ and incestuously impure.²⁷ So, let Ya-ngal priest lead you. [There are] a multitude of harmful things [and] obstacles, so let Tsemi support the right [side] of the [king’s] body. Gods and demons of appearance and existence are quick [in causing] sudden accident, so let Chomi support the left side of the [king’s] body. Ya-ngal, perform purification [ritual] and cleansing [ritual], Tsemi, bestow [your] empowerment and blessing, Chomi, carry away the effigy of ransom [ritual] to

22) YD-A and YD-B read *thod* (turban) and which is corrected in the rest as *’od*.

23) YD-A and YD-B read right spelling as *gnya’* but YD-D has changed into *snya* and became an issue among the scholars as a typical feature of this Genealogy. See Namkhai Norbu 1990, p. 173.

24) Both YD-A and YD-B have a note which can hardly be read from YD-B and is more likely to read *sras bar ma srid med de*.

25) Tib. *Gnya’ khri btsan po*.

26) YD-A has a *sgrib* word which was omitted in others.

27) YD-A reads *nal*, YD-B reads *mnal* and YD-D reads *mnol*.

set free.²⁸ (32) Hold the Mu-cord [as] support for hands, place the stairs [of] Mu-ladder [as] support [for] feet, 'Four [Miraculous] Goddesses, support the surrounding of [king's] body!'

Thus [he] said and commanded.

Then 'Four Miraculous Goddesses' seized four cloud-horses with the power [of the wind] from the sky and put a magical throne on the horses' backs; [they] so made a support for the feet. Holding the Mu cord [by the] right hand [and] placing their left feet on the Mu ladder the horses went through the midst of dense clouds and mist. Going to [become] the lord of black-headed humans he was also blessed by Teacher [Shenrab] and sent for the welfare of beings. They looked at the shoulder-blade-shaped Yarlung, the pure [land of the] narrow earth descended to the pure holy place of Tsemo Jung-gyal [mountain], and they built the palace of Jiwa Taktse. They practised the pure behavior and deeds of Shen[rab]. They asked the [teaching of] the Bon cycle [called] *Heap of Universality*, (Spyi spungs) from the priest Namkha Nangwa Dogchen and then practised it. Tsemi, Chomi and Ya-ngal, the three, were acting as priests of the body (33) [of the king towards] purity and cleanness. Shoulder-blade-shaped Yarlung was established as the earliest country; Jiwa Taktse was built as the earliest palace; Nyatri Tsenpo was the earliest King; Tse[mi], Cho[mi] and Ya-ngal, the three, [were] the earliest priests. *Heap of Universality*, the cycle of secret [was] the earliest Bon [teaching]. Thus it is said in *Bon ri'i dkar chag* [text].

[He] built the temple Yungdrung Lhatse on the [hill called] Tsemo Jung-gyal as a sign of his deeds. Nyatri and Lhamen Karmo coupled in the space [of the sky] and Mutri Tsenpo was born as their son. [Mutri Tsenpo] also descended via the Mu cord and Mu ladder as [his] father did and arrived on the surface of [Mt.] Lhari Gyangtho. [His] father taught him the instructions of the secret [teaching] *Heap of Universality* and he received the empowerment from the great master Nangwa Dogchen. Chobu Chagkar acted [as his] royal priest. He built a temple (*gsas mkhar*) [called] Khoema Nechung upon the [Mt.] Lhari Gyangtho. Since the Bon [teachings] *Heap of Universality* were so profound, Mutri concealed them there in a copper-golden casket; so, it did not spread for three generations. A plague sent from the Mu, Dud and Tsen spirits, the three, fell on the king and he [became] not well. Diviner Kyidhem performed a divination, (34) the two royal priests Tse[mi]

28) YD-A reads *sku bklud thar khye gyis cig*, YD-B *sku klud ther khye gyis cig*, YD-C *sku glud thar khyer gyis shig* and YD-D *sku glud ther khye gyis cig*.

and Cho[mi] together with the first Bonpo²⁹ Ya-ngal, those three performed a To ritual³⁰ and consequently, the might of the lord became equal to the sky. Bonpo [priests] were granted the following [signs of honour] for their glorification. The signs of honour given to their body were:

Hair kept loose and not cut at their ends; a turban of bright white silk into which a feather of the king of the birds, the vulture, was inserted and golden bird-horns and turquoise [peacock] plume as crest. A robe of long fur coat from [skins of] white lynx and white wolf appended with collar made of tiger, leopard and caracal skin. A high seat [used for] mounting and dismounting horse. They were placed in the first row on the right side [in the assembly].

The signs of honour of the speech given [to them]:

Until the speech of priest has reached the three words, the king won't give orders [and] ministers won't give their counsels. Until the three words of priest's song have been sung, king and ministers won't dance and sing.

The signs of honours pleasing the mind were:

The fine for killing [the priest or someone from the family of priest] was eleven thousands, [a sum] equal to the [fine for killing the] king. Murderers were actually given [to the priests]. One who hit the priest with a staff was handed over [to Bonpo]. (35) For stealing [their] wealth it was ordered that they repay [an amount] that was ninety times [bigger].

The son of Mutri Tsenpo and Choma Yesang was Dhingtri Tsenpo, the royal priest [was] Chobu Minkar. They built the Khoema Yangtse temple at the peak of [Mt.] Jagmo.

The son of Dhingtri and Trima Tongtso [was] Sotri Tsenpo; the royal priest [was] Chobu Woekar. They built the Gukhyue temple at Drampatsal.

The son of Sotri and Namen Chugmo [was] Dhagtri Tsenpo, the royal priest [was] Chobu Shelkar. They built the Zowo Khyunglag³¹ temple at Yarlung.

During the earlier part of the life of this king and the later part of [his] father's life, 'Four Miraculous Goddesses' took out a copper-golden casket from

29) The term *srid bon ya ngal* is difficult here. Despite possible interpretation as "Bonpo of existence", here the meaning seems to be much more probably that of the translation (i.e. *srid* as "original", "beginning").

30) To (*gto*) is a specific ritual, which is ascribed to the ancient times in Tibet by the Bon tradition and often connected with divination (*mo*), astrological calculation (*rtsis*) and diagnosis (*dpyad*).

31) YD-D reads *gsas mkhar zo bo dbu dgu*. This part is, however, based on *Bon chos dar nub kyi lo rgyus bsgrags pa rin chen gling grags* and its version from Menri monastery reads indeed *gsas mkhar zo bo khyung lag* (Rgyung ya bla chen khod spungs, fol. 30a).

the pinnacle of Khoema Nechung [temple] and handed it over to Hara Chipar, the Bonpo of Mon, and thus disseminated the teachings.

The son of Dhagtri and Semen Chugmo [was] Jatri Tsenpo, Chona Michen guarded them as a [their] royal priest. They built the temple Yungdrung Tritseg on the rock of Yerpa.

(36) The son of Jatri and Yechi Gunggyal [was] Tridhe Yagpa, Chobu Shalkar guarded them as [their] royal priest. They built the Khoema Ruring temple at the Dhawetsal [of] Nyangro. [The kings] up to this [time] were called ‘Seven Kings of the Sky’ as [they were] sons [born] from intercourse with goddesses (*lha sman*). As these kings departed by the Mu cord and the Mu ladder at the time of their death, the same [event] was also known as that “they had left for heaven” (*dgung*).

The son of Tridhe Yagpa and Drangza Lhagyen [was] Drigum Tsenpo. The royal priest Chobu Tsemkar built the Sale Jeutsang temple at Patsab Gongphug. The son of both Drigum and Walza³² Tritsun was born at midnight [and on the day of] Gyal constellation having hair of wolf fur, he was given the name Pudhe Gung-gyal.

Thus during the reign of these kings the teaching of Bon spread and flourished like the rising sun in the sky. Furthermore, their glory was very high since the gods made them the lords of humans. [The kings] lived a long life as [their] life-force was maintained by priests; (37) the continuum of their [inner] path was clean as [they were] practicing a way of life involving virtuous action. [They had] a good ladder to ascend when the Mu cord was sent from the sky. They were supported by pure deities who befriended them greatly, the grace was great from the honour paid to the Bonpo priests by the kings; the foundations of the kingdom were stable since the ministers were wise in their advice. So it is said in the *Dar rgyas gsal ba'i sgron me*.³³

32) This is the end of folio 16b in YD-A. All the other three manuscripts; YD-B, YD-C and YD-D have misplaced a whole section that appears in folio 17a-b of YD-A. A few lines about Pudhe Gung-gyal were mistakenly inserted into the part dealing with Sangpo and Chucham. A larger part of the section dealing with the conflict between Drigum and Longam is included after the Milue Samlek section. So it clearly shows that YD-A is the prototype of the other manuscripts. I have re-inserted this missing section in my edition YD-E by comparing with the *Bsgrags pa gling grags* (see Rgyung ya bla chen khod spungs). New insertion of the text containing the information about Milue Samlek in YD-B caused the above mentioned misplacement that does not appear in YD-A.

33) YD-A gives a swastika sign that indicates something should be placed here. Making a comparison with *Dar rgyas gsal ba'i sgron me* I realized that these eight lines are likely missing here. They have been restored in my edition YD-E.

At a certain time, an evil spirit entered the heart of the king Drigum Tsenpo. It is said [that he] is a manifestation of a Theurang demon [called] Mangnya Uwer.³⁴ and suppressed the precious teachings of the Yungdrung Bon. [The king] banished the Bonpo priests who had been honoured by [his] ancestors to beyond the borders. Due to the practice of the reversed teaching of the heretics and of worshipping the Theurang demons as gods, the region of Tibet was filled with diseases [and] famines. The actions of the king became perverted. By riding the royal horse Phummar (red mane) 'Four Miraculous Goddesses' fell to [the status of] demons (*bdud*). 'Male [guardian] Deities' disappeared into the sky as he adorned the pommel of the saddle with a [dead] red monkey. 'Female [guardian] Deities' were taken away to the height since he tied a [dead] cat to the backside of his saddle. As [the king] waved round [his] sword above his head, the 'Mu cord' was cut off in the middle. (38) 'Royal Divinities' (*mgur lha*) faded away in the sky after the smoke from various [burning] kinds of poisonous trees was produced. Since the sacks filled with ash [together with] points of spears were loaded [on animals], the intermediate space was gloomed in darkness. The king attached to himself the white silver mirror and thus the divine signs of the king fell to [the state] of demons (*bdud*). The 'retribution' for the suppression of Bon occurred quickly. The conflicts between the lord king and his subjects took then place and [the king] was killed by Lo-ngam at the age of thirty six It is said [that he] is a manifestation of knife/sudden-death devil [called] Halla.³⁵ having shot his arrow [and] his sword at the 'dust-grove' of Nyangro (*nyang ro thal ba tshal*). As the 'Red Mu Cord' and 'Nine-rung Mu Ladder' were cut off, the [king's] corpse remained on earth. It was put inside the copper box and thrown into the river of Nyang at Dhale Zamkha by Lo-ngam.

[Lo-ngam] banished the prince Pudhe Gung-gyal to Dhagpo [in] Kongpo. [He] killed the capable ministers [and] banished the less capable ones.³⁶ [He] made the queen a shepherdess, appropriated the divine princess [as his] wife, and ruled the kingdom for thirteen years. At about that time, the great minister Ya-ngal Sekyap, Thangnak Bonpo Tsemi Yungdrung and Cho[mi] Gyimbu Lentsa, these three were royal priests. (39) The royal priest Ya-ngal despaired and [felt] unpleasant to reside at this place. He went to Kongpo valley with Lord Pudhe. [He] built a temple at [Mt.] Bonri and resided there, and the so-called 'Ya-ngal Temple' still exists now.

34) YD-A gives this note but the other texts have omitted it.

35) YD-A gives this note but the other texts have omitted it.

36) Folio No. 17b of the YD-A ends here.

Once, the queen of the lord Walza Tritsun went above the upper part of the valley to look after the sheep. She fell asleep and dreamed of having intercourse with a handsome youth. When [she] woke up, [she] found a white yak lying near the place where [her] head had been placed. Then one day, she gave birth to a fatherless son about [the size] of a fist of blood-meat. [She was] very ashamed because of other [people] and put [the child] into a yak horn. [She] fostered [him] near [her] hearth-stone, so [he] grew up much faster [and] became much more vivacious than other children. [This is why she] even gave [him] the name 'Son of Blood – Born in Horn' (Trakgibu Rulekye).

When the boy grew up he asked [his] mother:

"Who is my father?"

[She] replied:

"[I] found you in a yak horn so I do not know who your father is."

Still unconvinced, he asked again insistently:

(40) "How could we, both mother [and] son, have such suffering right now if you had a father?"

[She] replied and did not wish to tell. Then when the son went up the valley to look after the horses, a white man with a white horse come to him and said:

"I am the god of Yarlung [called] Shampo, you are my son, there was a father named Drigum Tsenpo, [but he] was killed by Lo-ngam and he won the kingdom."

That very evening the boy told his mother the words [of his father] and then she said:

"It was like that and this entire palace was your ancestor's palace. Your elder brother named Phu-dhe Gung-gyal was exiled to the Kongpo region and is still living there."

Thus she explained in detail.

Later, Rulekye invited [the prince] Pudhe Gung-gyal and the royal priests. [He] enthroned [them] in the palace of Jiwa Taktse. Various people from Central [Tibet] (*dbus*) had gathered, and [they] gave Rulekye the name "King Trimonzung" and made him a "minor king". After that [he] led a war against the Tsang region and the Tsang people were even saying:

"Our chief lord has arrived."

He led his troops inside [the kingdom] (41) and [they] destroyed the [castle] Shampo [Lhatse] from the top. [They] killed with knives Lo-ngam [and his subjects], a hundred fathers and a thousand sons. But there is also [different] narrations told by some people: Rulekye smeared poison on the body of a white dog with conch [colored] ears and Lo-ngam died after touching him. Lord Pudhe Gung-gyal said:

“Although my father hated the Bon teachings I will make them spread out.”

He built in such a beautiful way a memorial (*tho*) of Bon that he was later given the name Tholeg Tsenpo, King of Good Memorial.³⁷

To both, Lord King [Pudhe] and Queen Lhasa Gungtsun, a prince called Sholeg Tsenpo was born. [He] built the Zowo Khyunglag³⁸ temple. The teachings of the Yungdrung Bon flourished and spread during twenty three royal generations starting from the lifetime of Lord Pudhe. It was so recorded in the *Bsgrags pa gling grags* [text].³⁹

At that time various inauspicious events such as various epidemics [and] contagious illness, bad harvests and uneasy times arose in the region of Tibet. (42) In the meantime [appeared] *dākinī* Choza Bonmo,⁴⁰ the daughter of both royal priest Cho Gyimbu Lentsa and her mother Gyalmo Kyicham. [She was] disgusted by the *samsāra* from [her] childhood and studied through listening the exposition of [the Dzogchen teaching] *Six instructions*, (*Lung drug*) from the priest Lishu Takring at the ‘Red Rock’ of Samye. She received [the teaching] *Aural tradition of the thought of space* (*Snyan rgyud klong gi dgongs pa*) from Drenpa Namkha himself. [He] bestowed [on her] four empowerments in their entirety and [also] the empowerment of the *Dynamic energy of awareness* (*rig pa'i rtsal*), [and] then [she] practised meditation on [Mt.] Hepori. [She] also invited teachers that had perfected the power of concentration. [She] was transforming [her] ordinary body into various [forms]; [she

37) This section is followed by an event about Choza Bonmo which actually happened during the Trisong Deutsen era. The mistake is once and for all made by the author Migyur Gyaltsen himself since the misplacement occurs initially in YD-A. I have replaced it at the end of Phude's account in my edition YD-E. Probably it was placed there because she is said to be the daughter of Bco gyim bu lan tsha by the author.

38) This temple *Zo bo khyung lag* was already mentioned as existing. This might be reason why YD-D reads *gsas mkhar zo bo dbu dgu* in the previous case (cf. note 31).

39) These four lines about Phude come after Choza's event in YD-A, but I replaced it before Choza's account in YD-E.

40) The following section about Choza should come during the reign of Trisong but here it concerns the rule of Drigum Tsenpo, since her father was his priest.

was] arriving and departing without obstruction flying in the sky like a bird. Holding counsel the king and ministers of Tibet turned upon that *ḍākinī* who attained accomplishment (*siddhi*):

“From what comes the retaliation which had produced various unwholesome events in the region of Tibet? Please, give us the instruction on the manner of removing it.”

As [they] asked [her], the wisdom-*ḍākinī* answered:

“[These were] the retributions for suppressing Bon teachings. If you invite the Bonpo priests, if king and ministers would practise the Bon, if you would reward an insignia of honour to the royal priests and (43) revere [them] as Masters, [then] the region of Tibet will live in peace [and] happiness, the life of the king will be prolonged, [his] ruling power will be maintained, his kingdom will also expand and progress.”

Thus [she] spake.

Finally, that *ḍākinī* [achieved] enlightenment, [transforming] her body into rainbow light and not leaving any remainder [of her] dead body [on earth]. Then [following] the *ḍākinī*'s instructions, the king [and] ministers sent several quickly-running youths as messengers and offered to the priests and the Bonpos the confession [of their misdeeds]. They invited them. The Royal priests Ya-ngal, Tse[mi] and Cho[mi], the three, were also offered privileges of honour. [They were] seated at the head of the row on the right side, on the ivory throne on the spread silk cushion. Golden daggers were offered [to them] as an emblem of their rank.⁴¹

In particular, the genealogy of the royal priest Ya-ngal will be separately treated in two specific [parts]. These are [1] *The teaching focused on the body of oral instructions* and [2] *The exposition of the origins of the [Ya-ngal's] family lineage*. Therefore, if one asks why it is said that it had ‘emerged earlier than all [other] genealogies in a similar way [to meet] the eye [among] senses’, (44) it is explained that this Ya-ngal family lineage existed even before the Teacher [Shenrab's] arrival into this “world of destruction”. [To the question] “In which way?” the sūtra *Dri med gzi brjid* says:

“Teacher [Shenrab] miraculously manifested himself as a King of the Wrathful Ones, the Glorious Lotus, the Horse Headed One and the Lord of Dance, in order to subdue the haughty spirits of the ‘world of destruction’ at the ‘Turned-Harsh Grove’⁴² of Haughty [Spirits]. At that time

41) Four lines that come after this section were placed before this section.

42) Skt. *Pāruṣika*, a grove to the south of Indra's Sudarśana city on Mt. Meru, but YD-A, YD-B and YD-C have *dur khrod* where YD-D changes into *tshal*.

the Srin demon Ya-ngal, along with the [whole] realm of demons Srin and one from among eleven 'Great Yen (*g.yen*) of Earth', appeared in the presence of the Teacher [Shenrab]. Shenrab said himself that they became his middle attendants⁴³ on the top of Mt. Meru."

Further, [In the scripture] *Lha gshen brgya pa* it is said:

"Homage to the Ya-ngal Gyimgong Sipa⁴⁴ who differentiates black and white and decides the re-payment of past deeds (*lan chags*) to gods and demons from the world of appearance."

And in [the text] *Lha sel* it is said:

"Great prayers and even small prayers to the gods are prayed by the great god Ya-ngal. Great cleansing ritual and even small cleansing ritual of the hearth are performed by great god Ya-ngal."

And also [the scripture] *Gtsang ma klu 'bum nag po* says:

"Invite the Phawa⁴⁵ priest Ya-ngal and perform the purification and cleansing [ritual]."

Hasn't Glorious [lineage of] Ya-ngalpa, (45) come towards [the place of] Dhakpo?⁴⁶ It is because in the Collected Works of Jetsun Mila[repa] it is said:

"Choegyal Dhakpo Rinpoche was [born as the] son of the two, the father Uchoe Dorje, [who was a] physician, [and] of the mother Samten Dronma [of] Ya-ngal [family], and took birth from [her] womb as a bhikṣu and a bodhisattva who reached the thirteenth [bodhisattva] stage [named] 'Vajra-holder'.⁴⁷"

Furthermore there are more [notes] from the whole of canonical and commentarial [scriptures], but I did not include them here.

Alas! Great wonder!

To the Master endowed with qualities of triple bodies,
Origin of all qualities of peace and pleasure,
With thorough faith I pay homage,
And pray to accept me with compassion as your follower.

43) The "middle attendants" means here that they are neither the closest nor the distant ones.

44) The translation is not certain. The word *srid pa* could be a part of the name of Gyimgong or with *dkar nag*. In the latter case the translation would be "Homage to the Ya-ngal Gyimgong who differentiates the black and white world of existence...", since *srid pa dkar nag* is also a meaningful sentence.

45) YD-A reads *pha ba*, YD-B and YD-D changed it into *phag ba*.

46) YD-A and YD-B reads *bdag po* and according to Heller's note YD-C reads *dags po* but YD-D reads just *bdag* that changes whole meaning. It is likely that the meaning was *dwags po*.

47) The thirteenth bodhisattva stage as it appears among Kagyupa masters, cf. *Shes bya kun khyab* (Kong sprul yon tan rgya mtsho 2002, p. 529).

Abbreviations

- YD-A *Kun (kyis) [gyi] nang nas dbang po'i (dang) [dwangs] ma mig ltar sngon du 'byung ba rgyal gshen (yang) [ya] ngal bka' rgyud (kyis) [kyi] gdung rabs un chen tshangs pa'i sgra dbyangs zhes bya ba bzhugs s.ho.* Manuscript kept in the Library of Tibetan Work and Archives, Daramsala, India.
- YD-B *Kun (kyis) [gyi] nang nas dbang po'i (dangs) [dwangs] ma mig ltar sngon du 'byung ba gshen (yang) [ya] ngal bka' rgyud (kyis) [kyi] gdung rabs un chen tshangs pa'i sgra dbyangs zhes bya ba bzhugs so.* Manuscript from Lubra copied by Charles Ramble.
- YD-C *Kun (gyis) [gyi] nang nas sngon du 'byung ba dbang po'i (dangs) [dwangs] ma mig ltar gces pa rgyal gshen ya ngal gyi bka' brgyud kyi gdung rabs un chen tshangs pa'i sgra dbyangs zhes bya ba.* British Library, Lodon (Amy Heller's transcription).
- YD-D 1978, *Kun gyi nang nas dbang po mig ltar sngon du byung ba gshen ya ngal bka' rgyud kyi gdung (rab) [rabs] un chen tshangs pa'i sgra dbyangs zhes bya ba bzhugs so.* Published in Dolanji by Khedup Gyatso, Dolanji, India.
- YD-E 2005, *Kun gyi nang nas dbang po mig ltar sngon du byung ba rgyal gshen ya ngal bka' rgyud kyi gdung rabs un chen tshangs pa'i sgra dbyangs zhes bya ba bzhugs.* Edited by Nyima Woser Choekhortshang, Dol po'i gsung rab nyams gso khang, Kathmandu/Menri.

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- YANG SGOM MI 'GYUR RGYAL MTSHAN, b, *Kun (kyis) [gyi] nang nas dbang po'i (dangs) [dwangs] ma mig ltar sngon du 'byung ba gshen (yang) [ya] ngal bka' rgyud (kyis) [kyi] gdung rabs un chen tshangs pa'i sgra dbyangs zhes bya ba bzhugs so*. Manuscript from Lubra copied by Charles Ramble (YD-B).
- YANG SGOM MI 'GYUR RGYAL MTSHAN, c, *Kun (gyis) [gyi] nang nas sngon du 'byung ba dbang po'i (dangs) [dwangs] ma mig ltar gces pa rgyal gshen ya ngal gyi bka' brgyud kyi gdung rabs un chen tshangs pa'i sgra dbyangs zhes bya ba*. British Library, London, Amy Heller's transcription (YD-C).

Appendix: The original Tibetan text

Kun gyi nang nas dbang po mig ltar sngon du byung ba rgyal gshen ya ngal bka' rgyud kyi gdung rabs un chen tshangs pa'i sgra dbyangs zhes bya ba bzhugs

(28) [lha rabs gnyan rum des] 'dzam gling (mi bde ba) [zhi bde] la bkod nas/ slar sum cu rtsa gsum du byon/ khah tu dmu rje btsan po'i sras mo dmu lcam gra ma bzhes pas/ yum gyi ltang khung du lba ba grod pa tsam zhig byung/ de zla dgu ngo bcu nas brdol bas/ nang nas shel gyi sdig pa g.yu yi thig le can dang/ gser gyi sbal ba dngul gyi grang brum can dang/ g.yu yi nya mo gser gyi gshog pa can dang/ dung gi lcong mo mu tig gi thor gtsug can dang bzhi byung bas/ yab yum mtshan ltas skyon du ma bzung bar/ dar dkar gyi yol bas (gres)/ [dril/] dmu yad kyi gdan bting/ gser skur gyi [gser dngul ga'u'i bkur ma'i] nang du bcug nas/ phyv g.yang gi rten du bzhag nas g.yang skyabs byas so//

zhag gsum (gro)[dro] bzhi nas bltas pas/ ya mtshan sprul pa'i (29) mi bzhi gda'/ shel sdig las shel gyi mi la g.yu yi dbu skra can/ (rje gnya' khri mchan) dar dkar gyi na bza' dang/ dbu la 'od dkar po mda' gang tsam 'phro ba/ phyag na shel gyi 'gying (dkar)['khar] bsams pa zhig gda'/ gser sbal las gser gyi mi la g.yu yi bya ru btsug pa/ (ya ngal pa mchan) gser gyi na bza' gsol ba/ shel gyi phreng ba dang dbyug pa bsams pa zhig gda'/ g.yu nya la g.yu yi mi la gser gyi thod bceng ba (mtshe mi mchan) dar tshon sna lnga'i na bza' sku la gsol ba/ g.yu rnga ding ba bsams pa zhig gda'/ dung gi lcong mo las/ dung gi mi la mu tig gi thor gtsug can/ (bco mi mchan) phra men gya gsum slag pa sku la gsol ba/ gser gshang 'khrol ba bsams pa zhig gda'o//

de la yab yum gyis gsungs pa/ ngo mtshar can gyi sras bzhi khyed/ cha lugs mdzad spyod (ji) [di] ltar mdzad pa ci yi don [zhes] gsungs pas/ shel gyi mi pho na re/ yab yum lags/ (30) bdag cag lha rabs gnyan rum sras/ bdag ni gnya' khri btsan po (sras bar ma srid med de/mchan) lags/ ci yi phyir gnya' khri btsan po ni/ ma yi gnya' bar zla ba dgu [dang] ngo bcu bsdad pas gnya' khri/ snang srid kun la bka' btsan pas btsan po'o//

gser mi 'di ni ya ngal srid pa'i gshen/ (gyim gong srid par zhib dgos/ mchan) thab gzho
 'khon gsum thub pa legs/ g.yu mi 'di ni mtshe mi lha rabs gnyan (gyis bya) [gyi bu]/ (dmu bon
 ye than rgyud/ mchan) dung mi 'di ni bco mi gyer mkhas khu byug gsung/ (phyva bon the legs
 rgyud/ mchan) sprul pa 'di ltar bgyid pa ni/ (31) gnam gyi lha las sa rgyal gshen du 'gro/ yab
 kyis lung zhig phog tu gsol/ zhes gsungs pas/ yab kyi zhal nas/ gnam lha (sa) dog la gshegs tsam
 na/ mi yul (sgrib) btsog dang mnol che bas/ ya ngal gshen gyis sna drongs shig/ bar chad hur
 pa grangs mang bas/ mtshe mis sku yi g.yas rten zhig/ snang srid lha 'dre ye 'brog rgod/ bco mi
 sku yi g.yon rten zhig/ ya ngal (gyis) sel dang bsang gyis shig/ mtshe mis dbang dang byin rlabs
 shig/ bco mis sku glud thar khyer zhig/ (32) phyag rten dmu thag skas la 'jus/ zhabs brten dmu
 skas them (la) [pa] zhog/ sman bzhis sku yi mtha' rten zhig/ gsungs nas bka' (bskos) [bsgos] so//

de nas rdzu 'phrul sman bzhi yis nam mkha'i kham nas sprin rta lung gi shugs can bzhi
 bzung nas/ rta'i gnya' bar 'phrul gyi khri bzahg/ zhabs brten de la byas/ phyag g.yas dmu thag la
 'jus/ zhabs g.yon dmu skas la bzahg nas/ rta sprin dang na bun gtib pa'i gseb nas byon te/ (mgo
 nag mi yi rje ru gshegs pa yang ston pas byin gyis rlabs te 'gro don la gtang ba lags so// mchan/)
 dog sa gtsang ma yar lung sog kha la gzigs/ gnas gtsang ma rtse mo byung rgyal la babs/ sku
 mkhar byi ba (phying ba) stag rtse brtsegs/ las spyod dag pa gshen gyi las la spyod/ gshen nam
 mkha' snang ba mdog can la/ spyi spungs bon skor zhus nas spyod/ sku gshen (33) dag gtsang
 ya ngal mtshe bco gsum gyis mdzad/ yul la snga ba yar lung sog kha btap/ mkhar la snga ba
 byi ba stag rtse brtsegs/ rgyal la snga ba gnya' khri btan po yin/ gshen la snga ba ya ngal mtshe
 bco gsum/ bon la snga ba spyi spungs gsang ba'i skor/ zhes bon ri'i dkar chag las gsungs so//

phyag rjes rtse mo byung rgyal la gas mkhar g.yung drung lha rtse bzhangs/ gnya' khri dang
 lha sman dkar mo nam mkha'i kham su 'tshos pa las/ sras mu khri btan po 'khrungs/ de yang
 yab bzhin dmu thag dang dmu skas las bab nas/ lha ri gyang mtho'i kha la byon/ yab kyis spyi
 spungs gsang ba'i lung bstan/ dpon gas snang ba mdog can la dbang zhus/ sku gshen bco bu
 phyag dkar gyis mdzad/ lha ri gyang mtho'i kha la gas mkhar khod ma ne chung bzhangs/ der
 mu khri spyi spungs bon rnam zab nas bse'i sgrom bur sbas so// mi rabs gsum du ma spel/ der
 rgyal po de la dmu bdud btan gsum gyis dal kha babs te ma bde ba la/ mo ma skyid ldem gyis
 mo (34) btap/ sku gshen mtshe bco gnyis/ srid bon ya ngal dang gsum gyis gto byas pas/ rje yi
 mnga' thang dgung dang mnyam/ bon po la yang che thabs su 'di rnam byin te/ sku la rtsigs byin
 pa/ dbu skra sil ma rtse rgyal la (spyad) [bcad] cing gtub tu med pa/ dar la sing dkar po'i 'gying
 thod la/ bya rgyal rgod kyi ldem phod btsugs pa dang/ gser gyi bya ru dang/ g.yu'i ldem mdongs
 dang/ na bza' dbyi dkar spyang dkar gyi slag pa la stag zgig gung gsum gyi gong lag btags pa dang/
 gdan thog nas chibs pa la bab 'dzegs byed pa dang/ gral gyi dang po g.yas gral byin no/ gsung la
 rtsigs byin pa/ gshen ngag tshig gsum ma byon bar/ rgyal pos bka' mi tsal, blon pos gros mi 'cha/
 gshen glu tshig gsum ma blang bar/ rgyal blon gyis bro glu mi byed/ thugs mnyes pa'i rtsigs su/
 (stong thang khri chig stong rgyal po dang mnyam pa dang) [stong phrag gi thang rgyal po dang
 mnyam]/ lag dmar dngos su 'bul/ (gshen la ber kha rgyab na brteg mkhan byin/) (35) [gshen
 la ber kha rgyab mkhan bon la byin] dkar nor khyer na ni dgu bco chal du bkas gnam ngo//

mu khri btan po dang (khro) [phyo] ma ye sangs kyi sras/ ding khri btan po/ sku gshen
 bco bu smin dkar/ 'jag mo'i rtse la gas mkhar khod ma yang rtse bzhangs/ ding khri dang khri
 ma stong tsho'i sras/ so khri btan po/ sku gshen bco bu 'od dkar/ gram pa tshal du gas mkhar
 dgu khyud bzhangs/ so khri dang gnam sman phyug mo'i sras/ gdags khri btan po/ sku gshen
 bco bu shel dkar/ yar lung du gas mkhar zo bo khyung lag bzhangs/ rgyal po de'i tsho stod yab
 kyi tshe smad la/ rdzu 'phrul sman bzhis khod ma ne chung yang rtse nas/ bse yi sgrom bu ston
 [bton] nas mon bon ye shes bla ma la gtad nas bstan pa spel lo//

gdags khri dang se sman phyug mo'i sras/ (byang) [bya] khri btan po/ sku gshen bco na mi
 chen gyis srung/ yer pa'i brag la gas mkhar g.yung drung khri (36) brtsegs bzhangs/ (byang)
 [bya] khri dang ye (byed) [phyi] gung rgyal gyi sras/ khri lde yag pa/ sku gshen bco bu zhal

dkar gyis srung/ (nya) [nyang] ro zla ba'i tshal du gsas mkhar khod ma ru ring bzhengs/ de yan chod gnam gyi khri bdun zhes bya ste/ lha sman rnames dang bshos pa'i sras lags so/ rgyal po de dag 'da' khar dmu thag dang dmu skas la gshegs pas rgyal po dgung du gshegs zer ba yang de'o// khri lde yag pa dang/ sbrang za lha rgyan gyi sras/ gri gum btsan po'o// sku gshen bco bu tshems dkar gyis spa tshab sgong phug tu gsas mkhar sa le bye'u tshang bzhengs/ gri gum dang dbal za khri btsun gnyis kyi sras/ nam gung skar ma rgyal la spyang ki spu la skra byas pa zhis skyes/ mtshan spu lde gung rgyal du btags so// zhes rgyal rabs de rnames kyi ring la bon gyi bstan pa mkha' la khri gdugs shar ba bzhin du dar zhing rgyas pa lags so// [de yang mi rje lhas mdzad pas dpal mtho/ sku srog gshen gyis btsas pas sku tshe ring/ (37) las spyod dge la spyod pas lam rgyud gtsang/ dmu thag gnam nas drangs pas 'dzeg skas bzang/ gtsang rigs lha ru brten pas sdong grogs che/ rgyal gyis bon gshen bkur bas thugs rje che/ blon po gros la mkhas pas rgyal gzhi brtan/ zhes dar rgyas gsal ba'i sgron me las gsungs so//]

dus re zhis na rgyal po gri gum (the'u rang mang nya dbu ber gyi sprul pa yin par bshad/ mchan) btsan po'i thugs la gdon zhugs nas/ g.yung drung bon bstan rin po che bsnubs/ yab mes kyis bkur ba'i bla bon rnames sa mthar spyugs/ mu stegs log chos spyad nas the'u rang lha ru mchod pa'i rkyen gyis/ bod khams nad mug gis khengs/ rgyal po bya byed log/ rgyal rta phum dmar bzhon pas sman bzhi bdud du bab/ sprel dmar snga shal byas pas pho lha gnam du yal/ byi la phyi shal thogs pas mo lha 'phangs su khyer/ ral gri klad la skor bas dmu thag rked nas chad/ dug shing rigs (38) dgu'i dud pa btang bas rje yi mgul lha gnam du yal/ thal sgro mdung rtse bkul bas bar snang mun pas 'thibs/ dngul dkar me long btags pas rgyal de lha rtags bdud du bab/ bon bsnubs pa'i dbu yog myur du byung ste/ rje btsan po yang 'bangs dang rtsod res byas pas/ dgung lo sum cu rtsa drug la/ nyang ro thal ba tsal du lo ngam (gri bdud ha la'i sprul pa yin par bshad/ mchan) gyis gri mda' brgyab nas bkrongs so/ dmu thag bzang yag dang/ dmu skas them dgu chad pas/ spur sa la lus pa de lo ngam gyis zangs kha sbyor du bcug ste/ mda' le zam kha nas nyang chu la bskyur ro//

sras spu lde gung rgyal dvags kong du spyugs/ blon po drag pa bsad/ zhan pa rnames spyugs/ btsun mo la lug rdzi byed du bcug/ sras mo lha lcam khab tu blang nas/ rgyal sa lo bcu gsum bzung ngo/ dus de tsam na/ rje yi sku gshen blon chen ya ngal gsas skyabs/ thang nag bon po mtshe mi g.yung drung/ bco mi gyim bu lan tsha gsum yin (39) te/ sku gshen ya ngal de thugs chad nas/ gnas 'dir bzhugs pa ma dge nas/ rje spu lde dang mnyam du kong yul du gshegs so/ bon ri la dgon pa btab nas bzhugs nas/ yang dgon bya ba dus da lta yang yod skad/

dus nam zhis gi tshe na/ rje'i btsun mo dbal za khri btsun de/ nyin zhis phu nas yar la lug 'tsho ru phyin pas/ gnyid du song ba'i rmi lam la/ skyes phran yid du 'ong ba zhis (gis) [dang] 'tshos pa rmis/ gnyid sad tsam na sngas na g.yag dkar po gcig nyal nas snang/ de nas re zhis nas mo la pha med pa'i bu/ khrag sha lag mgo tsam zhis skyes so/ der gzhan la ngo tsha nas g.yag ru'i nang bcug nas/ (mas skyed) [ma sgyed] kyi rtsa ru gsos pas/ bu tsha gzhan bas skyed che ba/ rgod drags pa zhis byung ste/ ming yang khrag gi bu ru las skyes su btags so// bu de cher song nas ma la nga yi pha su yin dris pas/ khyod g.yag ru'i nang nas rnyed pa yin/ pha su yin cha med zer ro// yang yid ma ches par nan skyed nas dris pas/ khyod la pha yod na da ltar 'u ma (40) bu gnyis la sdug po 'di 'dra ba ga la 'ong zer nas bshad du ma 'dod do// de nas bu de'i phu na yar la rta 'tsho ru phyin pas/ mi dkar rta dkar can zhis byung nas/ nga ni yar lha sham po yin/ khyed nga yi bu yin pas/ pha gri gum btsan po bya ba yod pa yin/ lo ngam gyis bsad nas rgyal sa khos thob pa yin zer ro// der sras kyi ma la de'i nub mor de skad bzlas pas/ mas kyang de ltar yin te/ rgyal sa de kun khyed kyi pha mes kyi pho brang yin/ gcen po spu lde gung rgyal bya ba da lta kong yul na bros nas yod/ ces zhib tu bshad do//

der ru las skyes kyis spu lde gung rgyal dang rgyal gshen rnames spyang drangs/ mkhar byi ba stag rtser rgyal sar bton/ dbus kyi 'bangs rigs bsdu/ ru las skyes kyi ming ni/ rgyal po khri smon gzungs bya bar btags te rgyal phran byas/ de nas gtsang du dmag drangs pas gtsang gi

'bangs rnams kyis kyang/ nged kyi rje dpon byon byung zer nas dmag sna nang du drangs (41) te/ sham po'i rtse nas phab/ lo ngam pha brgya bu stong gri ru bsad/ yang kha cig gis/ ru las skyes kyis/ lo ngam la khyi dkar po dung gi rna ba can la reg pa'i dug bskus te/ lo ngam de la reg nas gum zer ba yang snang/ der rje spu lde gung rgyal zhal nas/ yab bon la sdang rung/ ngas bon dar du 'jug/ bon gyi tho 'dzugs te/ de legs par byas pas/ phyis mtshan tho legs btsan po gsol/ rje btsan po dang btsun mo lha bza' gung btsun gnyis kyi sras sho legs btsan po bya ba 'khrungs so// gsas mkhar zo bo khyung lag bzhangs/ rje spu lde'i sku tshe'i ring nas rgyal rabs nyi shu rtse gsum bar du g.yung drung bon gyi bstan pa dar zhing rgyas pa lags so// zhes bsgrags pa gling grags las gsungs so//

{di nas mar khri strong gi dus su yin dgos 'dug} dus der bod kham su nad yams rims sna tshogs dang/ lo nyes dang dus ma bde (42) ba la sogs mi dge ba sna tshogs byung bas/ de dus sku gshen bco gyim bu lan tsha dang/ yum rgya mo skyid lcam gnyis kyi sras mo mkha' 'gro bco bza' bon mo ste/ chung nas 'khor ba la zhen pa log nas/ bsam yas brag dmar du gshen li shu stag ring la lung drug gi bshad nyan sbyangs/ dran pa nam mkha' nyid la snyan rgyud klong gi dgongs pa slangs/ dbang bzhi rdzogs par gnang zhing rig pa'i rtal dbang bskur gnang nas has po ri la sgom sgrub mdzad/ ting 'dzin rtal rdzogs bla ma spyen yang 'drons/ thun mong 'du ba sna tshogs su bsgyur/ gshegs bzhad thogs med mkha' la bya ltar 'phur/ grub pa thob pa'i mkha' 'gro ma de la bod kyi rgyal blon rnams bka' gros byas nas zhus pa/

bod kham su mi dge ba sna tshogs byung ba ci yi lan lags/ 'di bsal ba'i thabs zhig bka' stsol shig ces zhus pas/ ye shes kyi mkha' 'gro ma'i zhal nas/ bon bsnuks pa'i dbu yogs yin/ bon gshen rnams spyen drangs la rgyal blon rnams bon la spyod/ sku gshen rnams la che rtags (43) byin zhing bla mar bkur na/ bod kham kyang bde skyid ldan/ rgyal po yang sku tshe srang zhing chab srid zin/ rgyal kham kyang dar la rgyas par 'gyur ro// zhes gsungs so// mthar mkha' 'gro ma de sku lus gzha' 'od du lhag nas phung po lhag ma ma lus par mngon par sangs rgyas so// de nas rgyal blon rnams kyis mkha' 'gro'i lung (yin) [bzhi] khye'u myur mgyogs 'ga' pho nyar mngags nas bon gshen la gshags pa phul nas spyen drangs so// sku gshen ya ngal mtshe bco gsum yang/ che thabs gtsigs byin pa/ g.yas gral gyi mgo la ba so'i khri la za 'og gi gdan btings nas bzhang go// yig tshangs su gser gyi phur bu gnang ngo//

bye brag sgos don du rgyal gshen ya ngal gyi gdung rabs dmigs bsal du 'chad pa la gnyis te/ de yang bka' rgyud kyi khog dbubs pa'i don bstan pa dang/ gdung rabs kyi byung khungs gleng ba'o// de phyir gdung rabs las sngon du byung ba dbang po mig ltar zhes (44) ci ltar zhe na/ ya ngal gdung 'di yang ston pa 'jig rten du ma byon gong du yang yod par bshad/ gang zhe na/ mdo dri med gzi brjid las/ ston pa ri rab kyi kha khyer rtsub 'gyur dregs pa'i (dur khrod) [tshal] du ston pas 'jig rten dregs pa can dbang du sdud pa'i phyir khro bo'i rgyal po padma gzi brjid rta mgrin gar gyi dbang phyug tu sprul pa'i dus su yang sa g.yen che ba bcu gcig gi gral nas srin po ya ngal srin kham dang bcas nas ston pa'i drung du 'khod do// gshen rab kyi zhal nas/ ri rab kyi rtse nas 'khor 'bring po yin gsungs so//

yang lha gshen brgya pa las/ ya ngal gyim gong srid pa dkar nag gis shan 'byed cing/ snang srid lha 'dre'i lan chags 'jal ba la phyag 'tshal lo// zhes dang/ lha sel las/ lha che gsol chung gsol yang/ lha ya ngal chen po de yis gsol/ thabs che sel chung sel yang/ lha ya ngal chen po de yis sel/ zhes dang/ yang gtsang ma klu 'bum nag po las/ pha ba ya ngal spyen drangs nas sel dang bsang bya/ zhes dang/ dpal ya ngal pa/ (45) (bdag po) [dwags po] phyogs su phyag phebs pa ma yin nam/ gang zhe na/ rje btsun mi la'i bka' 'bum las/ chos rgyal dwags po rin po che de nyid/ yab lha rje dbu gcod rdo rje/ yum ya ngal za bsam gtan sgron ma gnyis kyi sras su/ dge slong rdo rje 'dzin pa sa bcu gsum non pa'i sems dpa' de nyid lhums nas bltams pa lags skad/ gzhan yang bka' lung tha dag las mang bar 'dug kyang 'dir ma gdabs so//

e ma ngo mtshar che/ zhi bde yon tan kun 'byung zhing/ sku gsum don ldan bla ma la/ kun nas dad pas phyag 'tshal lo//

Initiation rituals of Mongol shamans (Hulunbuir City, Inner Mongolia, China)

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Summary: The article is based on several years of field research in the Hulunbuir region. It describes two initiation rituals performed under the guidance of an Ögeled master shaman: the initiations of an Evenki man and of a Buryat woman. First, a general description of the major ritual involving animal sacrifice is given. It is followed by detailed descriptions of the two rituals, with an emphasis on the significant differences between them. The article is concluded by a brief interpretation of the basic symbolism of the ritual.

Introduction

The research, on whose findings the present article is based, has been pursued as part of a four-year project to study shamanism in societies of the Altaic language group.¹ Since I am not familiar either with Chinese or Mongolian the help of a translator was vital to my research. I was fortunate enough to find a translator who is not only Mongol but also has a personal interest in shamans, and in addition has many friends and acquaintances in the chosen region, Hulunbuir City in Inner Mongolia. These circumstances allowed me to successfully establish good personal contacts with a number of shamans and to remedy at least part of my linguistic handicap. So I decided to restrict my research to shamans among Mongols and Evenki in Hulunbuir City.²

In the course of my research I had twice the chance to witness the important initiation ritual by which a person is publicly established as a shaman. Both rituals were performed under the responsibility of the same shaman, an Ögeled Mongol woman, so that one might expect that they would closely resemble one another. Yet, this was not the case. Although their basic structure was practically the same as that of any major ritual, i.e., a ritual including the

1) Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Grant-in-Aid for Basic Research (B) (1), No. 12571020. 2000–2004. Project representative: Peter Knecht. Project title: “Anthropological Research on Shamanism and Society among Peoples of the Altaic Language Group in Northeastern China.”

2) Here I wish to thank Dr Erdemtu of the Central University of Nationalities in Beijing for his unfailing help and patience as translator and friend.

sacrifice of an animal, they strikingly differed in the ways they served to initiate the new shaman. In this article, therefore, I propose to first outline the general sequence of the main stages in a ritual involving an animal sacrifice. Second I will describe the setting so to say, the stage, of the initiation ritual. This introduction should be useful in describing the two rituals so that the individual characteristics of each one can be more clearly appreciated. Finally, I will propose a brief interpretation of the ritual's main symbolism.

The main stages of a ritual involving an animal sacrifice

The more experienced a shaman is the greater is the variety of rituals she is prepared to perform.³ The scale goes from simple rites of divination and the preparation of magic medicines to more extended rites of purification, to day-long rituals for an ancestor of a family and its group of relatives or to initiate a folk healer, a *bariyači*.⁴ The most elaborate form of a ritual, however, is reserved for the initiation of a new shaman or for the promotion of a shaman to a higher rank. Yet the basic form of these elaborate rituals remains practically the same, no matter for what exact purpose the ritual is performed.

In this basic form of a major ritual we can identify a sequence of three stages and a lengthy interval between the first two stages. The first stage is the preparation for what is to come later. The shaman dresses and is handed the drum and a staff with several small flags of various colours attached. Meanwhile the shaman sings in a low voice and dances lightly, taking small steps back and forth until the dressing is finished and the shaman is ready for the ritual. At this moment she turns to the altar, where one or several images of

3) Among the shamans I have become acquainted with are women as well as men in about an equal number. However, since the main actor in the rituals I am about to discuss is a woman I will, in most cases, use expressions suitable for a woman.

4) Not every *bariyači* is initiated by a shaman. In fact, such initiation by a shaman seems to be a rather recent phenomenon. (A short description of such an initiation is given in Peter Knecht, 'Initiation rituals of shamans and folk healers in Hulunbeir, Inner Mongolia: Similarities and dissimilarities'. *Shaman* 18, 2010, pp. 88–99.) Sometimes it is considered to be a way of solving the dilemma of a person who is called by a spirit, but does not want to or cannot answer the call for personal or family reasons. Older *bariyači*, however, especially those in high esteem among their customers, told me that they did not undergo such an initiation. They may even strongly oppose such an initiation by a shaman and claim, that becoming a *bariyači* is a gift and charisma bestowed by a *bariyači* among a healer's ancestors. On the other side, I was recently (Summer 2012) told by a shaman that she has decided to study in order to become a *bariyači*, because of a recent sharp increase in the number of shamans, a fact that cuts much into her activities as a shaman.

spirits are installed. These images are given a human shape made of cloth or felt, and represent the spirit (*ongyon*) or spirits (*ongyod*)⁵ for whom the ritual is held. Now the shaman's drumming grows more forceful and in her singing she greets the *ongyon* and invites it to come. At a certain moment she suddenly throws down the drum and falls to the ground where she violently rolls back and forth until she is grasped by her assistant who picks her up and seats her on a chair. This sudden violent action is taken as a sign that the *ongyon* has entered her. Once she is seated, she is given two staffs, whose tops are carved in the form of horse-heads. She clutches a staff in each one of her hands and while she swings them, she begins to talk. It is thought that not the shaman, but the *ongyon* in her is talking through her mouth. While the shaman is in this state, several persons from the audience are called forth. They kneel before the shaman, listen to the pronouncements and may offer small bits of drink or a lighted cigarette. Finally the shaman suddenly jumps up and then returns rather unceremoniously to her normal state. This introductory session is usually short. Once it is ended, the sacrificial victim, a sheep, is dragged before the altar and the shaman. There it is anointed with three liquids, milk, tea and liquor, before the shaman throws a fistful of polished rice over it. After that, the animal is taken away and immediately killed.

Dissecting the victim's body and cooking the meat takes about an hour or an hour and a half. It is a time for the shaman to rest, but often she is approached by people asking her to divine their fate, to prepare magic medicine or perform a short purification as a healing rite. Those who do not take part in the victim's preparation enjoy a snack of Mongol tea and some sweets or may be engaged in conversation.

The victim's body is dissected into large pieces such as the legs, ribs, breast-bone, tail and head. The skin is laid out before the altar and when all the meat is finally cooked, the pieces are arranged on top of the skin in such a way that the victim's complete body is reconstructed, the head included. Now the ritual's second stage can begin.

The second stage is very much the same in form as the first one. After a short invitation to the *ongyon* the shaman falls again suddenly to the ground, is picked up, seated on a chair and handed the two horse-head staffs. This is again the moment, when the spirit begins to talk and address individual members called forth from the audience. They kneel before the shaman and listen to the spirit's words, offering at times a little bit of drink or a cigarette. The most striking difference of this second stage is the length of time

5) *Ongyon* (pl. *ongyod*) is an ancestral spirit, but the term may also be used for the spirit's image.

the spirit takes now to address each person and the number of persons addressed. This part may last an hour or even considerably more. At the end the shaman jumps up suddenly, holds the two horse-head staffs together and, thrusting them upwards, rushes to the room's door and outside to send the spirit off. Outside she bows in the four cardinal directions and shakes the staffs each time to make their small bells ring. Now the spirit is dismissed and the ritual is ended.

The third stage follows immediately the ritual's end, when people get busy arranging tables and chairs and bringing out a great amount of food and drink. The main food item is the meat of the victim that had been offered to the spirit. The shaman is given the main seat and first cuts small pieces from the meat's most tasty parts, the fat of the tail and the most savoury red meat. The pieces are brought outside and thrown in the four directions as a token to the spirit. Only then are all the participants invited to eat and drink. It is considered important that whoever took part in the ritual also participates in this common meal before leaving the site.

Ritual actors and ritual space

After describing the main steps followed in a major ritual, I now turn to introducing two specific rituals, i.e. the initiation rituals for the two new shamans, conducted by the same master shaman. However, since each one of the rituals is conducted under somewhat different conditions, it will help to understand them, if I briefly introduce these conditions now because they form the general setting for the rituals. Generally speaking, the conditions are of two kinds: the actors and the nature of the ritual space.

The principal actor is, of course, the master shaman. In both of the cases to be shown this is an Ögeled Mongol woman shaman, whom I will call shaman H.⁶ She is the master shaman for both of the shaman candidates whose rituals will be introduced. In the first case, it was the first initiation ritual she performed and she performed it for her first disciple. For that reason, she invited a more experienced shaman to officiate as the main shaman while she took second place. In the second case, however, she conducted the ritual together with this her first disciple. The shaman candidates, the focus of the two rituals, were of different ethnic backgrounds, the first being Batu, a male

6) Since shaman H is still active, I prefer not to use her full name. The same will be done for the other living shamans mentioned below.

Evenki, while the second was a Buriat Mongol woman. The audience consisted mainly of the candidates' family and group of relatives, but the rituals attracted also other people, some of them taking the shaman's action seriously while others participated mainly to satisfy their curiosity.

The space where the rituals were performed was, in both cases, located within the respective family's premises, separated into an indoor and an outdoor section. In the first case the "indoor" section included also a brick house where the *ongyod* were enshrined, but in both cases a Mongol tent (*ger*) newly built for the occasion provided the ritually more important "indoor" space. The decisive part of the ritual took place in this *ger*. The "outdoor" space was marked by structures fashioned by birch trees and bundles of willow branches. These structures, as will be shown later, are the sites for the core action of the initiation ritual. They are the places where the candidate demonstrates that he or she has become a shaman.

The initiation of Batu, an Evenki man

We are now in a position to have a closer look at the two rituals and appreciate the manner in which they differ from one another. As mentioned above, they were both performed by shaman H, although in the ritual to be introduced first she played a subdued second role for most of the time, entrusting the leading role to a more experienced invited shaman. This latter person was shaman S, a Daur woman shaman, who for some time had been a disciple, as shaman H also had been, of a Barga master shaman. The candidate in this first ritual is Batu,⁷ an Evenki man and herder, living however in a settled village. At the time of his initiation he was 48 years old.

On 18 June 2002 we, my translator and I, arrived at shaman H's house about noon. There we also met with Batu, who together with the shaman was engaged in preparations for the ritual. The shaman told us that the time of the ritual and the form it was to take were not yet known. Both would be revealed later by the *ongyon* during a ritual at Batu's house. All of us, shaman H included, went there in the early afternoon.

7) Batu passed away two years after his initiation as shaman. He and his family always extended warm hospitality to the intruding researcher. Batu seemed never to grow tired of answering questions about his being a shaman, even when he was already marked by grave illness. For these reasons I am most grateful to him as a friend and wish to dedicate this article to his memory.

On arrival we went straight to a room in the brick house that was set aside for Batu's *ongyod*. Before we entered, shaman H sprinkled liquor in front of the house, then we all entered stepping over a container with smoking incense. Shaman H immediately went before the three altars for a first simple greeting of the three *ongyod*, one Barga and two Evenki, installed there. Batu busied himself making last arrangements at the altars and feeding the shaman's drum and her other utensils with milk, tea, and liquor. When these preparations were completed, shaman H, accompanied by Batu, went outside, where shaman H threw salt towards the eastern direction. After their return to the room of the *ongyod*, shaman H took a seat and was now formally greeted by members of Batu's family. Batu put on a Mongol dress (*deel*), bound it with a sash and put a blue ribbon with a brass mirror attached over one of his shoulders so that the mirror came to rest on the waist on the opposite side of his body.

By this time everybody was awaiting the main shaman to arrive any moment. It was already late afternoon when shaman S, the Daur, and her group of disciples and helpers arrived. They, too, passed over the smoking incense before they entered the house and the room of the *ongyod*. After she had greeted the *ongyod*, she sat down and received the formal greetings of Batu and his family. By that time, it was still not quite clear when the ritual would start, especially since it had started to rain, but rumours were that it would start around five o'clock the next morning. In the late hours of the evening the shamans and most of the other people retired to have some rest before the main ritual would begin. My translator and I were given a place to rest in the house of Batu's eldest daughter.

Early the next morning at around three o'clock we heard the sound of drumming and immediately rushed to the room of the *ongyod*. There, shaman S was already dancing. She moved quietly before the altars drumming in all four directions, and then she had her drum and the other utensils fed with the usual three liquids. In spite of the early hours the room was filled with many more guests than on the evening before. At a certain moment many of them went suddenly outside to make place for three men, who dragged three sheep into the room and lined them up before the altars. Shaman S prayed over the sheep before⁸ they were led out and killed next to the house. The man who skinned them first cut a narrow strip of skin from the middle of the

8) In other rituals I could observe later the sheep were first anointed by an assistant with the three liquids before the shaman finally threw a fistful of polished rice over them. But I am not sure whether this was done in the present case.

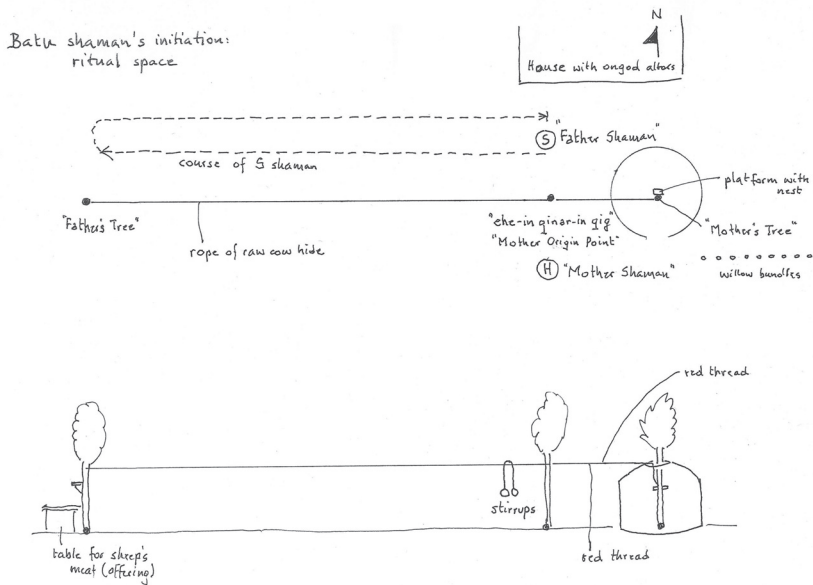
chest and belly and also from the four legs leaving only the hoofs attached to it. This section of the skin was then brought into the room and spread out on the floor before the altars, one for each *ongyon*. It was explained that this part of the skin served as a bridle (*jiluyu*) for the *ongyon*. Later on, the spleen and lungs were placed on this piece of skin and the whole was then finally covered by the remaining main part of the skin.

As was mentioned earlier, the ritual space is divided into an indoor and an outdoor section (see Map 1). The ritual action that has taken place up to this moment has been going on indoors, i.e., in the house set apart for the ritual. Outside, on the southern side of this house, another kind of indoor space has been prepared. This was a new Mongol tent, a *ger*, specially built for part of the ritual to take place there. This *ger* forms a unit together with the outdoor space next to it, which is structured by birch trees and bundles of willow twigs arranged in a straight line.

In the centre of the *ger* itself stands a birch tree, whose branches have been cut except for those close to the top, which protruded through the roof opening of the *ger*. To the west of the *ger* two more birch trees were set up, trimmed the same way. One stood close to the *ger*, the other one at a distance of about twenty meters.⁹ These three trees stand in one straight line from east to west. The tree on the western far end is called “Father’s Tree” and the one in the *ger* “Mother’s Tree”. The tree between the two and close to the *ger* is called *eke-yin činar-un čig*, “Mother Origin Point”.¹⁰ A strong rope cut from raw cow hide was spanned from the “Father’s Tree” to the “Mother Origin Point” at a height of about two meters above ground. The latter tree was further connected on its opposite side with the central tree in the *ger*, the “Mother’s Tree,” by a red thread which ran down the trunk of that tree to reach a nest attached to it at about the height of a person’s chest. The nest was made of wheat dough mixed with sheep’s hair. It contained several eggs also made of dough. Finally, there was a small dish, also made of dough and contained a burning butter lamp. Over the rope of cow hide outside another short rope of the same

9) If my field notes were correct, I was told by shaman H that the distance between these two trees is 9×9 arm spans. However, this would be a distance of more than hundred meters, which certainly was not the case. Therefore, I suppose my notes reflect a misunderstanding. A distance of 9 arm spans, roughly twenty meters, is no doubt closer to reality.

10) “Mother Origin Point” is no doubt an odd term, but it is a literal translation of the Mongol term. When shaman S explained the term’s meaning to me, I understood it in the sense of “Point of Origin of the Sexes”, because shaman S said that it applied to both sexes, female as well as male. However, since *ehe* means ‘mother’ I decided in favour of the odd translation. The reason for my decision should become clear in the final section of this article.



Map 1

material was hung. Its two ends were formed into rings to make the thing look like the stirrups on a horse saddle.

On the opposite, i.e., on the eastern side of the *ger*, nine bundles of willow twigs were thrust into the ground to form a straight row. Some space was left open between the bundles so that a person could easily pass through that opening. However, during the ritual no apparent use was made of them. Ritual action was focused on the *ger* and the trees on its western side.

While the three sheep were dissected and their meat cooked, a fourth one was led to the foot of the "Father's Tree". At the foot of this tree a table had been put up. A small platform was attached to the tree's trunk, about half way between the ground and the rope fixed to the tree. After the sheep had been presented under the assistance of Batu and the shamans it was killed close to that tree. The piece of the aorta that had been ripped out of its chest to kill it, was then put into a small tray and placed on the small platform. After this had been completed, everybody moved back to the house to have a rest and take some tea and snacks. By that time it was about four o'clock in the morning.

Back inside in the room with the altars, Batu was suddenly seized by spirits. His son, who acted as his assistant, had him sit on a chair and gave him

a horse-head staff for each hand. Batu was swinging his body together with the staffs, until he suddenly jumped up and threw them away violently. His action was being closely watched by shamans S and H. He did not appear to be speaking, although it was said that Evenki and Barga Mongol spirits had entered him. When he was seated again he looked exhausted. While he relaxed, and shaman H helped him by massaging his arms and hands. Meanwhile a woman of shaman S's group was seized and began to dance forcefully. People came to kneel before her although earlier she had declared that she was not yet an initiated shaman.

At around five o'clock shaman S was dressed in her formal shaman costume, a heavily decorated leather coat, and her headgear adorned with deer antlers made of metal. Holding her drum in her left hand she began dancing rather lightly when, a few moments later, she fell to the ground and violently rolled back and forth. Put up on a seat by her assistant she was sweating and had foam on her lips, but immediately her spirit began to talk. Batu, who meanwhile had changed again into a Mongol dress, knelt before her and listened to the spirit's word for a while. Then his relatives took over, taking turns kneeling before the shaman and listening to the spirit. At the end of the spirit's pronouncements shaman S jumped up from her seat, clamped the two horse-head staffs together and thrusting them upwards rushed to the door. She looked tired, but soon after she had been relieved of her costume she recovered.

By that time the cooked meat of the sheep had been brought into the room and arranged on the sheep skins lying before the altars in such a manner as to restore the complete body, the head included. The meat of the sheep that had been presented outside to the "Father's Tree" was arranged on the table at the foot of that tree, but the head was set up separately on the small platform above the table, where it was placed together with the piece ripped from the sheep's aorta.

With all the meat in place the initiation ritual's most important part was about to begin. Batu and the shamans together with their assistants left the house that had been the main ritual space so far and proceeded to the new *ger* outside. There was nothing else in the *ger* than the central "Mother's Tree" with the nest on its trunk. Batu and the shamans entered, and while the shamans were lightly beating their drums, one of shaman S's disciples guided Batu two times clockwise around the centre tree. While he walked Batu kept sprinkling little bits of liquor. The rest he left at the foot of the tree, opposite to the *ger* entrance, and bowed over it pressing his palms together, then he left the *ger* followed by the shamans. As soon as he was outside he

was given a bow and arrows, which he shot into the four cardinal directions except north because this was the direction of the house with the altars for the *ongyod*. When he was shooting the arrows he was already encircled by a group of men who kept pressing on him until they finally picked him up, lifted him above their heads and made him sit on the cow hide rope as if he would ride a horse with his feet in the saddle's stirrups. As soon as he was sitting in that position, some in the group pulled him with a rope towards the "Father's Tree". There he turned around in his "saddle" and was pulled back to the tree next to the *ger*. While he was riding the rope, shaman S accompanied him walking to the "Father's Tree" and back. He should have done the course one more time, but he was so exhausted that he was taken down, seated on a chair and given two horse-head staffs. At this moment, people said, his *ongyon* had entered him. Initially his body was swaying gently, but suddenly he threw the staffs, opened his arms widely and fell into the arms of his assistant. His face looked worn and he gave the impression that he had fallen unconscious for a moment. As soon as he recovered, his mentor shaman H stood before him addressing him with a song to quiet him down. As soon as Batu had returned to his normal state, he was about to leave when one of shaman S's disciples was seized by her *ongyon*. This prompted another and very violent seizure on the part of Batu. When it finally subsided, it meant the end of Batu's initiation. The bystanders appeared to be satisfied by what had happened and said that Batu's initiation as a shaman had been successful. He was now in a position to safely invite his *ongyod*. However, there remained one more short ritual.

Earlier in the morning some young men were catching a young horse from a herd grazing nearby. This horse was now brought to the scene. Shaman H approached it with her drum and flags in hand. Batu took an incense burner and had the horse first sniff some of the smoke, then he knotted several coloured ribbons into its mane. Finally he poured some liquor and milk over its head and along its back. Then the horse was released. Jumping wildly it ran back to join its companions. By this small rite the horse was set apart. It was not to be used anymore for any labour and nobody else than the shaman was allowed to ride it.

After this short concluding rite everybody returned to the house of the *ongyod*, where the meat of the sheep sacrificed was served together with much liquor in a festive meal for the shamans and for whoever had taken part in the ritual. Shaman S cut small pieces from the tail fat and the juiciest meat and had them thrown outside to the spirits. Only then did people begin to eat. The new shaman Batu went around generously serving liquor to everybody.

The initiation of D, a Buriat woman

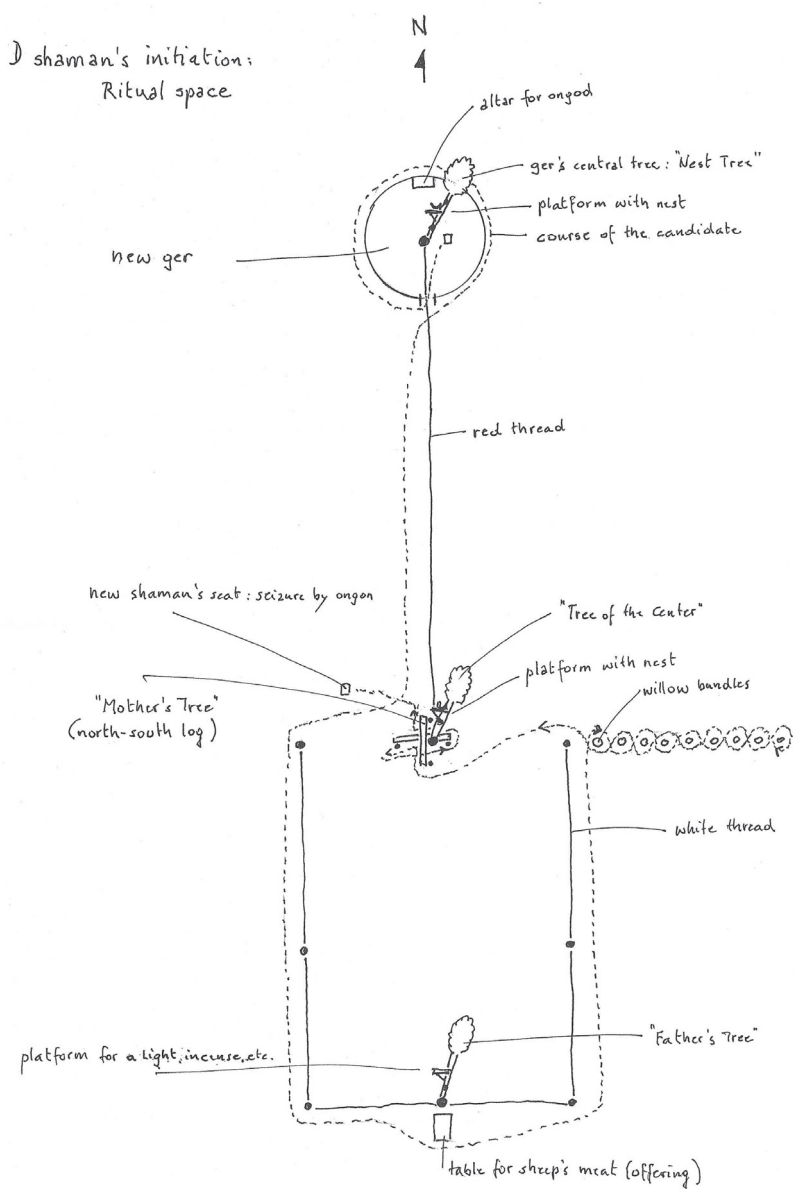
A year later shaman H invited me to observe another initiation ritual. This time she conducted it herself together with Batu for her disciple D, a Buriat woman. The ritual took two days in 2003, August 25 and 26, the same time the ritual for Batu had taken one year earlier. However, this time the circumstances and the ritual itself were almost entirely different from those of the ritual for Batu. One of the striking differences was that the ritual's site was prepared according to a sketch shaman H had drawn in a notebook the year before.¹¹ Shaman H's young male assistant, this notebook in his hands, went around the area where the ritual was to take place making sure that the *ger* and the various trees needed for the ritual were put up according to the notebook's sketch (see Map 2).¹²

Another striking difference with the ritual for Batu was the arrangement of trees, especially that of birch trees. There were nine of them. They structured the ritual space in two ways. Three of them whose top branches were left and decorated with coloured ribbons were put up on a straight north-south line extending from the centre tree in the *ger* at the line's northern end. The other six had their tops cut. They served as poles of about two meters to mark the closed area whose centre was the tree that later became the outdoor centre of the ritual.

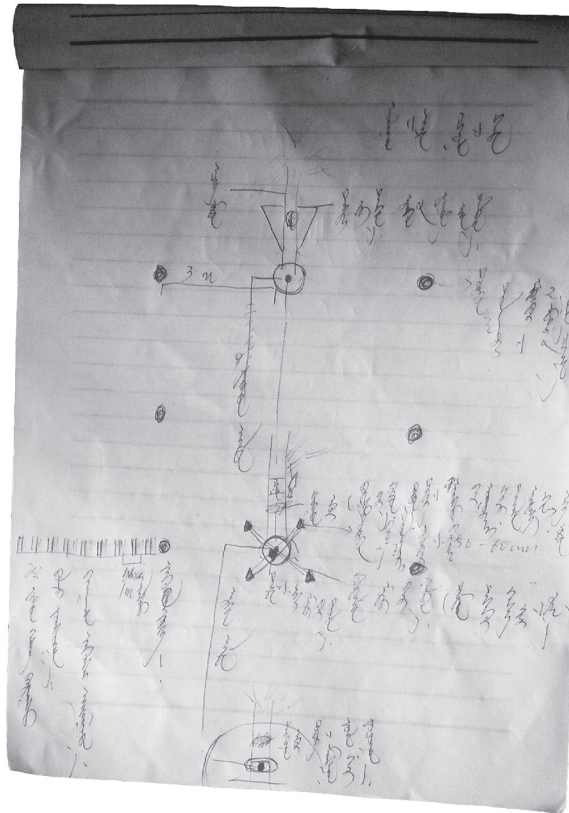
The northernmost tree in the north-south line was put into the ground through the rooftop ring of the *ger*, which later on was built around that tree and used as the indoor space of the ritual. This tree had a nest attached to its stem and was therefore called "Nest Tree". South of it, at a distance of ten steps, a second "Nest Tree" was put into the ground. It was also called "Tree of the Centre". It stood in the centre of the closed space marked off by the six poles as well as in the midst of the straight line of birch trees. The third and southernmost tree was planted nine steps from the "Tree of the Centre". This was the "Father's Tree". It had a small platform attached to its trunk and a table placed before it on the side farthest from the *ger* at the line's northern end. At the foot of the "Tree of the Centre" a structure was made using two logs arranged crosswise with the tree in their centre. These logs were bound to poles

11) On a visit in the previous year she had shown me this sketch saying that it was the plan of a ritual performed by shaman S for a Buriat and that she had made the sketch after she had taken part in the ritual. This is the only case of all the rituals I have observed, where the shaman used such a written plan in order to prepare the ritual space.

12) Map 2 is based on what I have observed at the ritual. It is not an exact copy of the map drawn in shaman H's note book. See Note 13.



Map 2



Sketch

at the height of about fifty centimetres. The one on the north-south line was called “Mother’s Tree”.¹³ A red thread linked the tree in the *ger* with the tree in the centre of the marked ritual space outside. The poles that marked this space off, including the “Father’s Tree”, were linked by a white thread, but the side of this space facing the *ger* was left open. Small pieces of fur from each of the two small animals, *qaliyu* (otter) and *bulaya* (sable),¹⁴ were attached to the “Tree of the Centre” under its nest as a guard against evil influences.

13) On shaman H’s sketch the two logs are shown in the form of an X with the one forming the line from top right to low left being called “Mother’s Tree”.

14) The information that both are small animals living in rivers and that their fur is used by the Mongols I owe to Zhao Yue-mei. Dr. Veronika Zikmundová provided me with the animals’ English names. I am grateful to both for their kind help.

Furthermore, to this tree and the one in the *ger* had pieces of white paper with some sign on them bound around their trunks, while a piece of red paper was fixed to the "Father's Tree". We were told that red signified the sun, while white stands for the moon, but there was no further explanation of the reason why these symbols were used.

On the eastern side of the marked off space and outside of it a line of nine bundles of willow rods stripped of their leaves were put up in a straight line towards the east. Between these bundles a space of about one meter was left.

So far I have described mainly the outdoor space where the ritual was to be performed. The only indoor space involved in the ritual was the *ger*, which was built purposely just for this ritual. Actually, there was a small dirt house in the north-eastern corner of the family's compound, next to the new *ger*. It housed the candidate's two *ongyod*, but they were transferred immediately before the ritual began into the *ger*, where they were installed on an altar prepared at the *ger*'s northern wall, facing the entrance. Compared with the spaces used in Batu's ritual it will be noticed that in the ritual for D only one kind of indoor space is used, namely the new *ger*, while the outdoor space shows a considerably more complex structure.

We are now in a position to consider the ritual action that took place in this special frame during two days. A few days earlier shaman H had mentioned that her *ongyon* wished for nine shamans to be present at this ritual, but when we arrived in the afternoon of the first day notice had been given that several of them would not attend because of other obligations. Shaman H had also mentioned that the *ongyon* would announce the time when the ritual was to begin and also guide the shaman in its performance. When we arrived this time was not yet known. Usually, all the preparations should be completed by the time the shaman arrives for a ritual, but when we arrived almost nothing was ready. Preparations had just started and took all afternoon and part of the early evening.

Shortly before sunset D transferred her *ongyod* from the dirt house into the *ger* put up for the ritual. With this the conditions necessary for the ritual to begin were fulfilled. It finally began at about eight o'clock in the evening, when two sheep were brought into the *ger* and led before the *ongyod*. Shaman H holding her drum and flags began to sing over them and her assistant had the sheep sniff some incense before he anointed their ears, head and back with milk, tea and liquor. Then they were made to kneel before the *ongyod*. D's father knelt behind them bowing deeply several times before they were led outside to be killed.

Now shaman H began to beat her drum, but soon she jumped up violently, was caught by her assistant and seated on a chair. Her *ongyon* had taken her and began to speak. At this moment the *ongyon* let it be known that the main ritual should start early the next morning at five fifteen. Then it addressed first D and Batu, but then also a great number of bystanders. Shaman H finally jumped up again. Holding her drum in one hand and the horse-head staffs in the other she rushed towards the entrance and then outside, where she circled the *ger* once. In this manner she had sent off the *ongyon*. Time was now ten o'clock at night. Here and there preparations were still going on, but many of the guests tried to get some sleep before the ritual began again early the next morning.

The next day we arrived back at the site about half an hour before the ritual would begin according to the *ongyon's* wish, but there was no sign suggesting that it was to begin soon. D's mother and other women were still sewing D's coat and headgear and some men were busy making a structure of logs at the foot of the nest tree in the centre of the closed ritual space. However, another sheep, one with a black head, had just been sacrificed and a piece of its aorta had been put on the table before the "Father's Tree." At this time D was seized by her *ongyon*, a fact people interpreted as being a sign that the main ritual would proceed smoothly and that she truly would become a shaman.

Now the space circled with a white thread was declared to be off-limits for everybody. It was further announced that persons carrying sharp utensils such as knives or polluted things should not be in the area where the ritual was to take place. A black goat had also been killed.¹⁵ After the meat of the sheep that had earlier been offered at the "Father's Tree" was cooked and laid out on the table before that tree, D's father sprinkled some of the goat's blood over the six poles standing around the main ritual space.

It was about half past seven when things finally began to move. Shaman H had gone to the *ger*, where she had a short rest after having passed the whole night without sleep. On a stove in the *ger's* centre, on the southern side of the "Nest Tree", water was boiling in a cauldron. It contained milk, crushed dry

15) I did not witness the killing of this goat. Therefore I do not know how it was killed but assume that this was done in a way similar to that used to kill a sheep. I also do not know, what had been done with its meat. At another occasion I could observe the killing of a black goat and a ritual performed with it. In that case no ritual had taken place before the killing in order to offer the goat to some spirit. The goat's meat was not cooked either. It was aligned raw on a rack and unceremoniously thrown away at the end of the ritual of which it was part. The goat was sacrificed in order to keep evil spirits away from the main ritual (At the ritual of promotion to a shaman's highest rank in behalf of shaman S, 13 August 2010).

ganga herb and nine stones. Shaman H and Batu were standing on the stove's northern side, another shaman and D on its southern side. Close to the altar and on shaman H's side, the new shaman coat for D was hung from the *ger*'s roof and next to it her headgear was sitting on a small stand.

D had taken off her Mongol dress and stood with joined palms. At times her whole body was shivering but otherwise she did not seem to have fallen into a particular state. Shaman H had been singing for a while accompanying herself on her drum, when she took up a brush and began to dowse D with hot water from the cauldron, first her front and then also her back side, until D was thoroughly drenched. Then she turned to the coat hanging from the roof to dowse it the same way. Finally she did this also to the headgear. After this sprinkling of hot water D was helped to put on first her Mongol dress, and then over the dress her new shaman coat and sash and also her headgear. As soon as this dressing was finished, D rushed out of the *ger* together with her assistant. Always running they first circled the *ger* once, then they circled the space marked by the six poles linked with white thread. From there they turned to the nine bundles of willow to the east running zigzag through the spaces between bundles. Then they returned to the centre tree in the closed off space and D mounted the structure of logs at the tree's foot. She began at the south, proceeded to the centre tree, where she turned to walk on the western log. From there she returned and continued on the eastern log, then she returned again to the centre where she now turned northward. When she reached the end of this log she jumped to the ground. There she performed a short dance before being seated on a chair in a short distance from the centre tree. As soon as she was given the horse-head staffs her *ongyon* began to address those who had previously asked to be addressed. This had been going on for quite a while, when shaman D jumped up. But she was caught by her assistant and seated again. However, this time she did not use the staffs as before but grasped the two bells attached with long strings to her coat. When her *ongyon* resumed speaking she began to hit her upper thighs violently with the two bells. Yet, this continued only for a few minutes. At the end shaman D returned to her natural state without any dramatic action and was given her drum and the flags. Her *ongyon* had continued to speak for about an hour. Many of those addressed had been taking notes of the *ongyon*'s words addressed to them.

Her father now brought forth a young horse. He decorated its mane with coloured ribbons and anointed it first by having it sniff some incense which he then carried around it. Next he poured liquor, milk and tea onto its head and onto its backbone up to the tail. He put the cup he had used for this on

the horse's back when it was led away and people watched in what manner it would fall off. If it fell to the ground with its open side upwards it was a good omen. Unfortunately I missed to paying attention to this feature.

The attending shamans, led by shaman H, had accompanied the brief ceremony with soft but constant drumming. At the end they all moved south to line up behind the "Father's Tree" facing the *ger*. After a few moments only shaman H was seized by her *ongyon*, who now mainly addressed the new shaman D and members of her family. It did not take long that shaman H jumped up, but when her assistant held her fast, she quite naturally calmed down and became quiet. Then, followed by the other shamans, she turned towards east to bow in that direction while making the bells on the horse-head staffs sound. Next, they all returned to the *ger* to perform the same greeting to the *ongyod*. Then shaman D took a plate with small cups of milk, tea and liquor to sprinkle the liquids into the open outside. This marked the end of a long ritual. By that time it was eleven o'clock.

A festive meal with a great amount of meat and drink for everybody followed. The new shaman was visibly happy, but so were many of those who had attended the long ritual. The poems and songs that adorned the gathering were a vivid testimony of this joy.

Conclusion: A brief interpretation

Above I have attempted to describe two important rituals with as much detail as a basic understanding would require and the space of a short article would allow. In what follows I wish to offer a few and rather unsystematic observations about some aspects of the rituals I find to be quite noteworthy.

During the decade I had the good fortune to meet and get acquainted with the shamans mentioned in this article more and more shamans have appeared in Inner Mongolia. To my knowledge no exact numbers are known but one encounters quite often rumours of sizeable numbers. One shaman surprised me this last summer by saying that she was preparing to become a healer, a *baryacı*, because the number of new shamans has become so great of late that she does not have enough work anymore to support her family. If I think of the shamans I know, I notice that all of them have become shamans in the closing years of the 1990s. They all had to go through long periods of suffering until their becoming a shaman finally brought them relief. Part of their problem was that they could not find a suitable person, i.e., an experienced shaman, who would guide them. In one way or other they see

a reason for this situation in the traumatic experience of the Great Cultural Revolution and its aftermath. This event had created a vacuum because it had destroyed much if not all of the traditions that earlier had supported shamans. Yet even in this situation there were persons who felt that a spirit was calling them. When the social and political pressure subsided to some degree they saw a chance to find a solution to their suffering. But the world in which they became shamans was not the old world anymore. The shamans in this new world are not called to function mainly in their own social group, they are accessible to almost anybody who seeks their help. For this reason the shamans mentioned do not perform an initiation ritual only for a shaman candidate of their own ethnic group. Shaman H, an Ögeled Mongol, certainly initiated another Mongol, namely shaman D, but D is a Buriat and therefore, in spite of her being a Mongol, too, belongs to a group different from that of her master shaman, an Ögeled. Furthermore, the same shaman H also initiated an Evenki disciple, Batu, for whose initiation she secured the help of a Daur shaman, who although a fellow Mongol again belongs to a different group within the Mongol nationality.

Although the range of activities of the shamans introduced here is not restricted to the group from which they originate, this sort of crossing borders seems to have its limits. I became aware of this aspect a few years ago, when I witnessed how the Daur shaman mentioned refused to accept a Han Chinese person as her client. When I asked why she had refused this person, she said she did not feel comfortable enough with the Chinese language and, therefore, was afraid that she might be misunderstood. Reflecting on my own experience I notice that I cannot remember of having encountered a Han Chinese seeking advice or help from the Mongol and Evenki shamans I know. Their activities, I have come to believe, in spite of their crossing borders between such minorities as Mongols and Evenki, do not seem to cross the border to the Han Chinese majority. I further believe that the reason for this situation is not simply insufficient knowledge of the Chinese language but also certain bitter experiences in the recent past. But at this point in my research I lack sufficient material in order to decide this question. A brief comparison of the circumstances for the core action in the two rituals described appears to be more meaningful.

Although the two rituals differ from one another, in many details they unfold in a strikingly similar set of elements. The set consists of a new *ger*, of three birch trees planted in a straight line, and of a nest with eggs attached to one or more of these trees. The tree at the far end of the line is the "Father's Tree". There is also a "Mother's Tree", but its position is different in the two rituals. In Batu's ritual it is the centre tree in the new *ger*, but in shaman D's

ritual it is one of the logs arranged at the foot of the middle tree in the straight line. For Batu's ritual a nest is fixed to the centre tree in the *ger*, while in shaman D's ritual we find a nest fixed to this tree and a second one attached to the tree in the middle of the line, the tree bound to the "Mother's Tree", a log at the tree's foot. The central action in both rituals, which is to result in the shaman candidates being seized by their *ongyon*, begins in the *ger* by a circling of the tree with a nest. Shaman D is seized by her *ongyon*, when she jumps from the log "Mother's Tree" after having run around all the trees on the sacred space, including the "Father's Tree". Batu's case is a bit more complicated. He begins in the *ger*, where he circles the "Mother's Tree" and its nest. From there he goes outside and mounts the rope at the middle tree of the line, is pulled from there to the "Father's Tree" and back to descend at the middle tree, then he is seized by his *ongyon*.

A few days after Batu's ritual I had an opportunity to meet shaman S and to ask her to explain the ritual she had performed. At that time she said that the tree, where Batu descended from the rope, is called *eke-yin činar-in čig* ('Mother Origin Point'). She also called my attention to a fact, to which I had not paid much attention. This is the positions she and shaman H had taken when Batu mounted the rope and descended from it. She herself stood on the northern side of the tree in the role of "father" and calling the spirit of Batu's *obo*. Shaman H, however, stood on the opposite side, south of the tree in the role of "mother". It appears, therefore, that a new shaman is 'born' in result of the cooperation between a male and a female principle represented by the "Father's Tree" and the "Mother's Tree" respectively and, in Batu's case also by the cooperation of a "father" shaman and a "mother" shaman. The name of the tree, where Batu mounts and then descends from the rope, namely "Mother Origin Point" appears to underline this fact of a birth, because it is separate from the "Mother's Tree", while it is the point and, therefore, the 'mother' where the shaman is born. Here the shaman's birth clearly happens by the cooperation of 'father' and 'mother' represented by two trees and the two supporting shamans in the role of father or mother respectively. The nest with nine eggs in it further underlines this idea of the shaman being 'born' by means of the ritual. In both rituals a nest is either attached to the "Mother's Tree" (Batu) or to the tree fastened to the "Mother's Tree" (shaman D). Finally, there is the red thread that links the tree in the *ger* with the tree at whose foot the new shaman is seized by the *ongyon*. It is the road for the *ongyon*. In the context discussed it appears to be a blood line between the nest tree and the tree where the new shaman is seized by the *ongyon*. Considering this symbolic expression of the shaman's birth the term used to designate the

initiation ritual and also later promotion rituals of a shaman is of interest. It is *ominare*, a term that contains the word *ome* meaning 'womb'.¹⁶ In other words, the ritual's name offers a clear reference to birth. We can therefore conclude by saying that the initiation ritual is a potent symbol for the birth of a person's new identity as a shaman. A symbol that functions on two levels, one is the ritual action, the other are the material markers, i.e., the trees, nests and the *ger*, supporting the action.

16) I owe these terms to the explanation of shaman S. When she explained the meaning of *ome*, we translated it as 'reproductive organ'. But now I prefer the translation 'womb' I owe to Zhao Yue-mei.

Rituals and dreams in shaman “study”. (Experience of a western disciple of a Mongolian shaman)

Part 1: Rituals

VERONIKA ŽIKMUNDOVÁ

*Hu'nii ooriin gez' baihu'i,
hol oiriin gez' baihaas bis¹*

Summary: This paper is intended as the first part of the description of a process, at the end of which a Czech archaeologist, having become a disciple of a Mongolian shaman, was initiated as a *bariaac* – a healer in the Mongolian tradition. The narrative, illustrated by the disciple's own description of her reflexions on the process and supplemented by material from fieldwork among Sibe, Horc'in and Ho'lonbuir shamans, may provide background material for comparison with other shaman narratives. The observed process highlighted some aspects of “shaman training”, most importantly the role of rituals and dreams. The different cultural background of the disciple also reflected the openness and flexibility of the Mongolian shaman's approach.

0.1. Introduction

In summer 2010, in discussion with a colleague,² a PhD. student of archaeology during her fieldwork in Mongolia, we came accross the topic of dreams. Stricken by the resemblance of her dreams to what the shamans in Eastern Mongolia describe as “dreams sent by deities”, I proposed that she should visit the latter area together with me. Initially my hope was to wittness shaman rituals from a different point of view and possibly to get access to an

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- 1) A saying frequently used by shaman H during her rituals, roughly translatable as: “Nothing is (another) man's (or) (one's) own, there is nothing more than the proximate and the distant.” The implication of the first part of the saying is that “there is nothing which is an exclusive property (general rather than material) of mine or of someone else”. The general implication is that one should treat everybody and everything as equal.
 - 2) I wish to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my friend and colleague for allowing herself to be observed and interviewed, and for sharing her opinions and feelings.

interpretation different from both that of the “native” shamans and believers, and from my own as a foreigner. During our visit to Inner Mongolia in December 2010 my colleague became an apprentice of an O’olod female shaman from Imin in Ho’lonbuir. More than a year later, in June 2012, she was initiated as a *bariaac* – a healer and masseuse,³ and begun her own ritual practice. This provided me with the rare opportunity of close observation of the process leading to the initiation. The master shaman had never before had a foreign disciple, nor had she travelled abroad, and except for one visit to Beijing had spent most of her life in the Ho’lonbuir countryside. Due to cultural differences and for other reasons, during the time between meeting the master and the initiation, the apprentice was placed in a series of unfamiliar situations and the shaman master encountered a number of unexpected problems, which were solved by both in the course of events. The case, unique as it was, also bore a number of traits which may be seen in the context of Central Asian shaman traditions.

During the period described no direct training took place. Instead, two aspects of the process surfaced as the most important – rituals and dreams. In this first part of the article I focus on the rituals which took place during the observed period.

In view of the problems of definitions, perspectives, approaches and methodology of “shaman studies”, it seems that a collection of material and case studies may be helpful for further research. The intention of this text is to present comparative material by means of a description of the succession of events which led my colleague to her first initiation, supplemented by her own sensations and feelings in related situations. Samples of comparative material from fieldwork are appended. In the course of the text, focusing in particular on the interaction between the master and the disciple⁴, rituals which took place are described in more detail. The material used in the narrative comes, besides my own observations, mainly from several interviews with the shaman master, conducted between October 2010 and August 2012, and from two interviews with the apprentice made during October-November 2012.

3) cf. e.g. Knecht 2010, p. 88, Somfai-Kara and Hoppál 2009, p. 160. The definition of *bariaac*, Mo. *bariyači*, Hor. *bieraaš*, a category known throughout all Mongolian speaking areas, is vague, ranging from a ‘masseur’ or ‘bonesetter’ to a ‘lower degree of shaman’. It is, however, always connected to the notion of *bari*- lit. ‘hold’, meaning various ways of healing by hands. In the Eastern Mongolian shaman traditions it is also frequently connected to the *lus/nāga* deities.

4) Erdenetuya has only a basic knowledge of Mongolian. During all the described rituals I was acting as an interpreter.

For comparison I use the interview with S., at present the only other female disciple of the same shaman master, originating from the Horc'in Northern Banner and married to an O'olod man in Imin, where she was possessed by her husband's clan deity. Not unlike Erdenetuya,⁵ S. comes from a distant place with a different culture⁶, but also with a very distinct shaman tradition. In addition I use parts of earlier interviews with Sibe⁷ and Horc'in shamans.

The question may arise as to how the account of a disciple coming from a different geographical and cultural background should be treated in relation to the accounts of "native" religious specialists. Since the Mongolian and Sibe shamans I had the chance to interview originate from extremely varying social conditions, coming from pastoral, agricultural and urban societies, and with different educational levels and knowledge of the scholarly discourse about "shamanism", I suggest that the Czech disciple's feelings may be perceived as subjective in a similar way as the subjective sensations of other informants. Access to this type of information and above all its interpretation is rather difficult in the case of Mongolian and Sibe shamans. Therefore I hope that the descriptions presented below, using "western" means of expression, may present a more plastic picture of experiences during rituals.

0.2. Cultural background of the master and the disciple

The shaman master comes from the multi-ethnic milieu of the nomadic O'olod and Barga Mongols⁸ living together with the half-settled Buryats, the Evenki and Daghurs, who are settled herders and immigrants from the agricultural Horc'in area. All the mentioned groups have their own, distinct shaman traditions. As described by scholars, and witnessed during my own fieldwork, the ethnic traditions, at least in the recent period, co-exist and

5) In the text I refer to my colleague by the name she was given by H shaman.

6) The Horc'in area lies cca 700km to the south-east from Hailaar. The geographical distance is not as significant as the difference in life-style and culture: The Ho'lonbuir O'olods share the common Mongolian nomadic culture, while the Horc'ins are settled farmers like the Manchus and Chinese of the area.

7) The Sibe shaman tradition and its connection to that of the Horc'ins was discussed in Zikmundová 2010.

8) The Barga, and the O'olod who are culturally close to them, retained the nomadic way of life until recently. The last two decades are marked by rapid settlement following the opening of coal mines and inflow of Chinese peasants. Concerning the shaman traditions, the form of rituals and ritual implements of the Barga and O'olod traditions are close to those of the Buryats.

often merge in the form of shamans having disciples from other ethnic groups (Somfai-Kara and Hoppál 2009, p. 164). The shaman called H had Evenki, Buryat and Horc'in disciples, and she also mentioned that one of her own deities was an Evenki clan deity (personal communication 2010). The Inner Mongolian shaman traditions, in comparison to the Buryat and Tuvan⁹ traditions, are relatively little, if at all, influenced by Western esoteric spirituality, and compared to the situation in Khalkha Mongolia little commercialized. Most of the shamans operate predominantly in a way that may be labelled as rather "traditional", solving the problems of people of their own clan, ethnic group, or neighborhood. On the other hand, all Inner Mongolian shaman traditions have been the target of scholarly research, and have received some forms of scholarly reflection.¹⁰ No instance seems, however, to have been reported from Ho'lonbuir of a local shaman teaching a foreign apprentice, which has thus been a new experience for H shaman.

The disciple comes from a cultural background in which most of the genuine non-Christian religious traditions are long extinct. On the other hand, and not unlike the situation in Central Asia, individuals with dispositions towards parapsychology, healing with energy or herbs, etc., occur now and then and often find their field of activity within the scope of modern alternatives or revived traditions. It is notable that the milieu in the Czech Republic is rather receptive towards exotic cultural and religious phenomena.¹¹ A broad scale of Eastern religions, including several Hinduist and Buddhist groups, Islam and Baha'i, "classical" western esoteric schools, the whole complex usually designed as New Age, and constantly emerging new groupings¹² and directions, all find fertile soil here. The milieu is inspiring for both seekers and scholars, many of whom travel to remote parts of the world to pursue study or research.¹³

9) For a study about modern Tuvan shamanism, see Boumová 2007.

10) This is particularly important in the Horc'in tradition, which has been systematized by native scholars, whose work and opinions are valued by at least some shamans. In Ho'lonbuir the Daghur shamaness S. claimed frequent contacts with the academic world both within China and abroad.

11) In 2011, 11% of the population claimed adherence to the Roman Catholic Church, which is the most influential of the Christian churches in the Czech Republic (http://www.christ-net.cz/magazin/obrazky/2011_scitani.pdf).

12) The Encyclopedia of New Religions lists 30 non-Christian and non-Jewish religious groupings in the Czech Republic in 2005. However, many of them such as the New Age, in fact include more different schools or directions.

13) Cf. the case of the ethnographer P. Brzáková, who did research among the Evenkis and Tuvans and wrote popular books on the subject. She also collaborated with several "neo-shamanist"

Concerning phenomena reminiscent of shamanism in the broadest sense of the term's usage,¹⁴ several types may be identified in modern Czech and Slovak society. The only ancient tradition documented for several centuries, the *bohyně* (lit. goddesses) of the White Carpathian Mountains, became extinct with the death of its last practitioner in 2001.¹⁵ Apparitions of Christian saints, and above all of the Virgin Mary, may possibly be viewed as a specific case of "mediation of the super-human" in christianised areas. In the Czech and Slovak lands, cases of individual visions and miraculous healing in sacred places are common in folk tradition. The last major instance of a Marian apparition occurred in Eastern Slovakia from 1990 to 1995.¹⁶ Another type of mediators of the "super-human" is the already mentioned para-psychologists and psychotronics who combine cartomancy, certain psychotherapeutic methods (holotropic breathwork, work with spiritual emergency, constellations, and many more) and other healing methods (*reiki*, kinesiology) with their innate

groupings who invited Tuvan shamans to the Czech Republic. Brzákova's books on Evenki, Even and Nganasan folklore have been an inspiration in both the academic and non-academic spheres.

- 14) The study of Central Asian shamanism, as many other fields in Central Asian studies, is confronted with many problems stemming from the application of research methods shaped primarily by certain aspects of European reality. A well-known example is the question of the relationship of "shamanism" and "religion". As V. Anttonen (2007, p.6) points out, this question arises only if "great" or "organized" religions are taken as the standard. As soon as the definition is changed (he, for his reasons, formulates the definition as "various forms of human thought and behaviour involving some verbal or non-verbal interaction with super-human or non-human agents"), viewing "shamanism" as a religious phenomenon poses no particular problems. Following this discourse, the main trait of this religious phenomenon is some kind of direct communication with the "superhuman", and the broadest definition of a shaman would be a person called, or given the abilities to mediate this communication to other members of society. All types of the above-mentioned ritual specialists focus on solving the problems of their clients through various types of communication with the "superhuman" sphere, which makes their social role close to that of the shamans in "native" societies.
- 15) The "goddesses" seem to have been a distinct regional tradition, first mentioned in 1630 and handed down in the female lineage until the 20th century. According to existing studies the "goddesses" were healing in the name of God and the Virgin Mary but using ancient magic formulas and practices. Their main field of activity was healing with herbs, bone-setting, divination from wax and magic rituals predominantly in the fields of health, love and family relationships and personal careers (cf. Jilík 2005).
- 16) This case has probably not been described in scholarly literature. Between 1990 and 1995 two girls of 11 and 12 had regular monthly apparitions, mediating Mary's messages to the public. It is not without interest that, although the visionaries were not from religious families, the messages bore many traits common to most Marian apparitions (see <http://www.litmanova.info/1992.htm>).

sensibility and who have already found a stable customer base in urban society. The spreading recognition of psychic causes of disease, accompanied by seeing magical practices as a form of psychotherapy by one part of society, reflects a change from a strictly scientific and analytic approach to one more open to symbolic, synthetic and, perhaps, even “mythological” perceptions.

Erdenetuya, though coming from a “rational” family, was inclined towards symbolic and irrational reception of the surrounding world. Her fascination with the archaic, genuine and traditional, as well as her search for her own spiritual way and voluntary acceptance of the “shaman calling”¹⁷ reflects her native Czech culture. On the other hand, features she felt to be “strange” in this society found reception and interpretation in the Mongolian shaman tradition.

The following narrative encompasses the period of Erdenetuya’s life until her initiation, divided into three sections, which seem to be marked by important turning points, and also have some parallels in other shaman narratives.¹⁸

1.1. Section 1 – life before the realization of one’s shaman calling

This part focuses on the signs of the shaman calling and, of course, on the “shaman illness”. In the stories of Mongolian and Tungusic shamans, as in other religious traditions (cf. Knecht 2009), the “shaman illness”¹⁹ is usually the main motif, the indication of one’s being chosen and the direct reason which leads some adepts to find their master and start the shaman practice. Besides illness, the shaman calling is usually manifested by characteristic dreams or visions (Oberfalzerová 2005, Knecht 2009, pp. 86–90, Noll – Shi 2009, p.131, Somfai-Kara – Hoppál 2009, p.145), and suggestions by religious specialists about one’s shaman calling.

17) It is a typical feature of Central Asian shamanism, that the “chosen” individuals usually put up strong resistance to their deities, which has to be finally broken by the “shaman illness”.

18) In recent years many scholars have published studies focusing on, or including the life stories of shamans from various ethnic groups. The more they are, the more striking is their resemblance. In the present text I mainly refer to Knecht 2009, Somfai-Kara and Hoppál 2009, Oberfalzerová 2006, Noll and Shi 2009, Möngkebulag 2009,

19) I attempt to use this term for the whole complex of unpleasant events which is usually mentioned by shamans – various mental and physical diseases of self and family members, accidents and failures in life (e.g. Knecht 2009 pp.86–90, Somfai-Kara and Hoppál pp. 145, Möngkebulag 2009 p. 285; for a study of the shaman illness in Okinawan shamanism see Yoshinaga and Sasaki 2007)

When I think back, in my childhood I was doing strange things, but maybe this is normal with children? I was doing small rituals, looking for portents, finding and wearing talismans. I was fond of the number nine,²⁰ doing all the rituals nine times. When I later learned about the role of this number in shaman traditions, it sounded familiar to me. And I always had clear and colourful, sometimes predictive dreams and was aware that this was not usual in my surroundings.

In my study of archaeology, I was attracted towards certain parts of Euro-Asia: Latvia, Lapland, Siberia, Central Asia. I liked reading books about shamans.²¹ Concerning the "shaman illness", I think my mother may be the cause. For years she was very ill and weak, but allways found "healthy" by doctors. On the other hand, although she categorically denies it, she has predictive dreams and perfect intuition. She solved this problem for herself by studying folk medicine and herbs, which improved her health, and she is really good at it – she cured my appendicitis, already diagnosed by a doctor, with raspberry leaves, and she has also helped many of our relatives.

From my early childhood I had depressions and sometimes serious thoughts about suicide. Depression is like an unbearable physical pain. Some days were better and some worse, but I was living with it and it was only, when a severe depression attack led me to a psychiatrist who, calling his colleague, labelled me as an "acute crisis with suicidal intentions", that I realized the gravity of the state. This was three years ago. The depressions finally disappeared after my first journey to China and meeting with Grandmother,²² and now I feel horror when I think about falling back into such state.

My first acquaintance with shaman techniques was in 2006, when I, out of curiosity, visited a neoshamanic circle led by a Slovak woman who was introduced to us at the University by a professor of Germanic mythology. She taught us drumming and undertaking "trips to other worlds". This experience was shocking and I did not really know how to handle it. It was as if suddenly a door opened into a space which you have no right to enter. You have asked me whether there is anything I do not want to speak about – it would be what I saw during these trips. It is both impossible and inadequate to describe them. Over two months I had different, very specific dreams. I left the circle because of the feeling that this was not "my way", maybe it was the collective character that did not suit me.

But I was left with my protective animals whom the instructor introduced to us during the course. Mine was a "hybrid" of a wolf and a dog, a big white animal. From then on he stayed and walked with me all the time. I was feeling his warmth besides me. Strange things happened – a friend who had a dog-fur allergy twice had an asthma-attack in my place. I never had pets, but he tried to convince me that there must be a dog in my apartment. Or, when I was in Turkey and at night in a hostel a man came to importune me, I could hear the dog snarling. One

20) In many Siberian and Manchurian shaman traditions Heaven is connected with the number nine, e.g. the nine layers of Heaven in Tuvan tradition, (Boumová 2007 p. 44) nine children of Heaven in Daur and Buryat traditions (Somfai-Kara and Hoppal 2009 p. 161), the offering to Heaven on the 9th day of the 9th month in Horc'in and Ho'lonbuir traditions, the Nine passes in the initiation of Horc'in shamans, the rule of bowing nine times to the deities in Ho'lonbuir. According to Has-Oc'ir (August 2009) the number nine is the most auspicious one in shaman matters.

21) Erdenetuya related that the books which influenced her were Eliade's *Shamanism and Ancient Techniques of Ecstasy* and books by the ethnographer P. Brzákova.

22) From the first meeting Erdenetuya has been calling her shaman master Grandmother. All other disciples call shaman H *ijii*, "Mother/Grandmother".

night I woke with terrible lust for raw meat.²³ I wolfed down a big piece of bacon... All this was extremely hard to accept – when you are brought up in a rationally thinking milieu, you suddenly feel schizophrenic. This lasted for several months. Now I can feel him only in some situations.

Comparative material:

Interview with S. (39), a “fellow-student” of Erdenetuya, a Horc'in woman (July 2012):

Before knowing that I had deities I was ill, I lay twenty-five days and could not move. Then I visited one lama in the (Horc'in) Northern banner. He said, you have a deity in your body, you have to get this deity embedded. I did not believe him since I have no shaman ancestry. But the lama was very categorical and said: Your master is there (in Imin), you must find him. I said I cannot find a teacher there, I have not lived there long, only eight years. But the lama insisted that I must find my master there. When I returned home, I was told in a dream the name of my master. In the morning I got up and went directly to shaman H, saying: “My deity told me the name of your deity and that you were to be my master.” But shaman H did not believe me at first. So I went again to our Northern Banner to see another master and there I had my *lus*²⁴ deity embedded. When I came back I went to shaman H again, and this time she accepted me. This time my deity advised me: “You should go and directly bow to her as your master, saying: ‘You are my master of the shaman side,’ then she will take you forth and your problems will disappear.”

In fact, from my childhood I often had various accidents, such as being burnt by fire or falling into water, all kinds of problems. Because of that, when I was twenty-six, I visited an astrologer who said that I had a Buddhist deity in my body and that I should worship this deity which would protect me. That is why I first started to worship this Buddhist deity. This deity teaches me²⁵ in dreams and brought different Buddhist deities into my dreams.

Interview with the Sibe shamaness Yin Xingmei (72) in Chabchal, August 2009:

Before one becomes a shaman, one is sick all the time. I don't know about others, but I used to faint. I have a Grandfather whom I worship. This is called *soorin* (a “seat”). That one (pointing to the altar on the wall under the ceiling). I say that I am worshipping a Grandfather. I went to see

23) A Chinese healer in Hailaar, when examining Erdenetuya, asked her whether she sometimes had an uncontrollable yearning for meat, as a sign of the deities' presence.

24) The *lus* (<Tib. kLu) deities are an important notion in the Mongolian world-view. While being close to the local earth deities (*ezen*), they are distinguished from them by their connection to water. They belong to the water realm ruled by the Khaan of the *lus*, who merges with the Chinese and Manchurian notion of the Dragon king, ruler of the sea (Chin *lung wang*, Ma. *mederi ejen*). The notion of *lus* is in many ways close to the *nāgas*. Their manifestations are dragons, snakes, fish and frogs. The *lus* are often connected with healing abilities and ancestral deities (cf. Somfai-Kara and Hoppal 2009 p. 152).

25) Hor. *nom jaaj ögnöö*– lit. teaches me *nom*. *Nom* is an expression covering a broad semantic field covering with meanings such as “dharma, teaching, knowledge, script, book, prayer”,

doctors many times, it became slightly better but then started again. Then older people suggested that I may visit a shaman. The shaman said, you have pure bones, you have this kind of matter.

2. Section 2 – finding one’s shaman master

The following section presents the succession of events that led Erdenetuya to meet her shaman master. While some shamans claim that they did not have a teacher,²⁶ some studies (e.g. Möngkebulag 2009 p. 186) ascribe great importance to the moment of meeting the master. Our common journey in December 2010, which was concluded by Erdenetuya’s meeting her master, was full of surprising moments and certainly formed a remarkable part of the whole story. In my interview with Erdenetuya I focused on her reflections of the whole process.

When you suggested that I see a shaman, I shuddered. Now I had made a decision – either remain forever wondering about my dreams or coincidences, or face “it” and get the answer. I was afraid of that. If the answer is “yes” – what would I do with it in our society? But if the answer is “no”, what are all the strange things I have been experiencing since my childhood?

In fact, I did not really believe that I could go. I had no money for such a journey. But suddenly Father said he had the possibility of a free air ticket, and insisted on presenting it to me. Shortly afterwards, I got my ticket and told all those who were asking questions that I was going for Christmas shopping to Beijing – they stopped asking then.

2.1 RITUAL OF THE HORC’IN SHAMANESS.

My initial plan was to visit two Horc’in shamans in the Tongliao area and shaman H from Imin in Ho’lonbuir. The first ritual we participated in was performed by the shamaness B. of the Horc’in Northern banner. The previous year I was allowed to witness this shamaness’s healing ritual.²⁷

Within the PRC the Horc’in shaman tradition²⁸ has been long studied and many publications deal with its various aspects. Since, to my knowledge,

26) Fieldwork evidence suggests that such statements by shamans are often contradicted by statements of their surroundings. It would rather seem that denying being taught by a master is a matter of prestige.

27) This first ritual was, in almost all details, similar to the second one described in this paper.

28) The study of Horc’in shamans began with Prof. Walter Heissig, who during his research in China collected a great amount of material. In 1950s Horc’in scholars started intensive fieldwork which was interrupted by the Cultural Revolution, but was resumed from the 90s. By now several monographs and a large number of articles on Horc’in shamanism have been

in Western literature few, if any, descriptions of Horc'in rituals exist, below I allow myself a description of the ritual which was a rather representative example of a Horc'in shamanic ritual including the summoning of deities for the sake of an individual.

The shamaness agreed to see us, but it was still not certain whether any ritual would take place. Accompanied by the shamaness's niece and a young Horc'in researcher we arrived at the shamaness's home. The shamaness summoned Erdenetuya to sit besides her on the *kang*, and after a short while said: "This person has something, I will summon the deities." Around ten people, including little children, were attending the ritual.

I became really scared before the ritual. As we went out to the toilet, in that terrible cold, under the glittering stars, I did not want to return to the house. I felt that now something was going to happen...

The shamaness, dressed in her ritual costume, made the offerings to her altar – a rack with oil lamps and an incense-burner, fixed high on the western wall of the room under the images of deities²⁹ – and, beating her drum, accompanied by the drumming and singing of her husband and helper, started praying at the doorway.³⁰ The first invoked deity was one of her two main deities, a *yooyoo šitgeen* – Grandfather deity.³¹ After a while she started shaking and bending and began a dance with energetic and man-like movements. Several times she approached Erdenetuya, who stood opposite the door with closed eyes, slightly shivering.

published in China, while in the West this topic remains obscure and has been studied mainly by Elisabetha Chiodo (2011). The Horc'in shaman tradition is characterised by its formal resemblance to the Manchu one. While the pantheon and types of rituals refer generally to the common Mongolian base, the shaman drum, costume and the forms of some rituals bear a striking resemblance to those of the Manchus. The long and elaborate dance before the deity's arrival is a remarkable feature.

- 29) The altars of the Horc'in shamans take a variety of forms. Some shamans follow the ancient tradition of worshipping small bronze figures of *ongons*, others use display-cases or glass-covered wall boards with images of ancestors and other (mostly Buddhist and Taoist) deities. The altar in the shape of a rack fixed to the room wall seems to be another ancient tradition. The same type of altar is used by the Jungarian Sibe.
- 30) Many Horc'in rituals are performed inside a house. The deities are believed to assemble above the roof of the house (Rašipungsug, personal communication August 2008) and enter through the open door on the shaman's invocation.
- 31) The Horc'in shaman ancestral deities are generally addressed as Grandfather (*yooyoo* < Chin. *yeye*) and Grandmother (*nienie* < Chin. *nainai*.) Such an address to shaman ancestral deities is found over all Central Asian territory (cf. Somfai-Kara and Hoppál, 2009 p. 148, Guo 2009.)

When she started praying at the door, I suddenly felt as if many beings rushed in through the door, or maybe they had already been inside, and were watching me. The room was full of them and they became concentrated around me. In the beginning I felt a certain hostility – such as "What are you doing here? What did you come for?" I was trying to address them humbly, saying that I had come to ask them about my path. After the first moment everything calmed down, and as the shamaness was dancing around me, it seemed to me as if she was introducing me and appeasing them.

The shamaness finished her dance, waved her drum above the prepared seat on the *kang* and with a jump backwards got seated.³² Having been offered a cup of liquor by her husband-helper, she spat it over the kowtowing audience, and in the manner of an old man asked about the health and peace of the house and the gathered people, addressing them as *nilha* – 'nurslings'. After the ceremonial greetings with long pauses in the old man's murmuring, the Grandfather deity was offered a lit pipe which he smoked with the burning end in his mouth, a bunch of five cigarettes whose burning ends he bit off and ate, and finally a bowl with three burning cinders which he crunched and swallowed, showing his satisfaction by stroking his beard and moustache. After some 15 minutes the main cause of his summoning was presented by the shamaness's husband – helper, and Erdenetuya was brought forward. The deity asked about various symptoms (sudden pressure on the chest, feeling like kneeling and bowing on special dates, *tinnitus*, desire to help sick people). Erdenetuya answered positively all except *tinnitus*. The deity announced the result of the examination: "You have two deities, one of them is your ancestral deity which is a *lus*. With the help of this deity you may become a *bieraaš*. The other is a *toomol*³³ deity which follows you from Mongolia. Now, if you want to become a *bieraaš*, you have to find your teacher." When asked, in what direction and how the teacher should be sought, the deity replied: "You will find the teacher yourself, either in your homeland or here." Then the shamaness proposed to make a *sayig*³⁴ which would bring Erdenetuya relief from her problems. Taking a strip of white cloth, she spat liquor and blew on it

32) This part of the performance – purification of the prepared seat on the *kang* or bed by the shaman's drum and jumping backwards onto the seat as the sign of the arrival of the deity is one of the characteristic formal features of the Horc'in tradition.

33) Mo. *toyamal*, lit. 'liking' – in Horc'in tradition a deity possessing a person without connection to his clan (Möngkebulag p. 285.)

34) An expression of Tibetan origin, in the Horc'in area used to denote a healing practice used in the Chinese healing tradition, where a mantra is written on a strip of paper, burnt, the ash dissolved in water and given the patient to drink (Wang Changquan, personal information, December 2010). The shamaness B. uses several modifications of this method as a frequent means of healing. The variants were dissolving the ash of a strip of cloth soaked

and burnt the cloth, dissolving the ash in a glass of water, which she gave Erdenetuya to drink.

I remember you said that she spared me the worst – drinking her blood. But at that moment I would agree to do anything. If she had pissed into the glass, I would have drunk it.

The shamaness also conjured a red tie by spitting liquor and blowing on it, and put it around Erdenetuya's neck for protection from negative forces. The main problem was solved and other participants came with their questions. The whole session lasted more than an hour, after which the deity started showing signs of impatience. He was offered liquor which he spat around the room. The helper took his drum and started singing a see-off prayer. The shamaness left her seat and after a short dance threw herself with a powerful take-off into the doorway, where several male participants were prepared to hold her with their hands. After being caught by them she vomited all she had eaten during the session and was escorted to the *kang* where she lay for a short while, painfully moaning. After a minute or two she got up and started invoking the other of her two deities, the *nienie šitgeen*. The order of this ritual was the same as the previous one, the main difference being the performance of the deity, which this time behaved in a womanlike manner, danced in the manner of a *lieešin*³⁵ using cymbals, and during the session from time to time was slicking her hair up and looking into an imaginary mirror. No healing or counseling took place, the atmosphere was freer and the overall impression was that the Grandmother deity came to enjoy a chat about the family's news. When seeing the deity off, the shamaness threw herself towards the door jumping backwards, which was commented on as a feature of a *lieešin*.

Generally I felt that this is what I should have done. Now I know that what I have thought for myself is not an illusion, and I should follow this way. Now I was at the right place. I enjoyed sleeping there on the shamaness's *kang*. I felt a kind of relief, as if you are having a terrible fever, overnight you sweat and in the morning the illness is gone.

Next morning we left for Tongliao from where we were heading to the northwest, to the Ho'lonbuir capital Hailaar. Before we left Tongliao, a strange incident occurred on Erdenetuya's seemingly smooth way.

with liquor and blood from the shamaness's tongue, and dropping the blood into water. In each case the shamaness pierced her tongue with a big needle.

- 35) Lit.Mo. *Layičing*, Khor. *lieešin*, one of the religious specialists lower than a shaman. In literature a rather vague explanation is given, saying that a *layičing* is something between a shaman and a lama (QBM). The etymology seems to be unclear. The shaman Has-Oc'ir attributed the use of cymbals instead of a drum to *lieešin* (personal communication 2009).

2.2 THE OBSTRUCTION ON THE WAY³⁶

On the staircase of the Tongliao University we ran into professor B. who, several years ago, was doing research on Horc'in shamans. Earlier that autumn I had preliminarily asked him to arrange for us a visit to the renowned Horc'in shamaness Tieliang. During our talk he mentioned that he had become a disciple of a Buddhist master. He further spoke about his study of secret mantras of both shamans³⁷ and Buddhist teachers.

By the time of our return from the Northern Banner Erdenetuya was content with what she had learnt from shamaness B. Therefore, during the short meeting on the University staircase, I only told prof. B. that there was no need for meeting the shamaness Tieliang. An hour later, prof. B. called me on phone, insisting that I bring Erdenetuya to his office where he "would have a look at her".

During that meeting on the staircase something unpleasant passed between us. That one glance we exchanged was sufficient to make me feel that I did not want to meet this man and be examined by him. But I thought that everything that was happening on our journey was in order, and I did not dare to oppose you.

Prof. B. asked Erdenetuya about her dreams, concluding that a *lus* possessed her which she should get exorcised. "I will perform a ritual for you, and you will become a Buddhist and do meditation," he said. He seated Erdenetuya on a chair in the middle of his office, put burning incense sticks into her clasped hands³⁸ and put on a record of Buddhist mantra recitation. After a while, he turned the record off and continued the recitation himself, periodically putting his hands close to Erdenetuya's head and body, saying that he was opening her chakkras. For some time he let her hold two clay balls engraved as skulls, which he claimed to contain bones of a corpse. At one point he asked her, what she felt. She replied: "I feel as if something is unrolling in my stomach and ascending along the spine towards my head." Prof. B. then hit the top of her head with his palms, as if pushing something inside, and the ritual was over.

36) In some shaman narratives (Knecht 2009, Oberfalzerová 2005) and other studies (Möngkebulag p.287) obstructions caused to the future shaman by deities and demons are mentioned.

37) Horc'in shamans speak about *nuuč tierin*, secret protective mantras, which are conveyed upon them by their ancestral deities and should not be revealed to anybody, in which case they lose their power.

38) The beginning of the ritual is reminiscent of descriptions of nowadays extinct exorcist rituals called *andai* (Načinšongqor 2001, pp. 61–108).

If I had listened to my intuition, I would have immediately have got up and leave. But I was also a bit curious. The overall feeling during the ritual was agreeable, I think he is really well versed in such practices. During the whole ritual I had one strange thought – I was trying to build a shield against his influence, praying that, if he was about to do anything evil to me, it would not affect my way I had just chosen. Now I see that with such thoughts I should have rejected the whole thing. He was apparently trying to impose his will on me. As if saying, “now I will do something pleasant to you but what I will not tell you is that it will change your way of perception.” But those clay balls he put in my hands were extremely repellent and still worse was when he was hitting my head – that was a real intrusion into my mind. When leaving, I was convincing myself that I was taking my animals with me and leaving the rest there with him.

Next afternoon, already in Hailaar, Erdenetuya suddenly asked me: “Don’t you know what the man did to me? I am feeling as if he hung something on me I did not want...”

From the moment we left Tongliao I had an increasingly bad feeling. I could not get the man out of my mind, I had a vision as if I was trying to leave a room through a door in which he was standing and shutting it in front of me. I saw his hand holding the handle. Watching the video-clip with a mantra-recitation in our friends’ car, I felt fascinated and drawn-in, although I was fighting against it. It was something that was in me but did not belong there. I have never had any strong affinity to Buddhism, but now I could not stop watching the clip and listening to the recitation. What the man had planted in my head was apparently working against my will. He must have used some kind of magic to divert my mind in a different direction. But my wish to follow my own way was stronger and that was why I was feeling so bad. Maybe I would have overcome it myself but I was not sure, therefore I wanted to visit Grandmother as soon as possible. When I think about it now, I feel that it was something that should have happened. It made clear for me what was my way and what was not. And it was a lesson that magic practices work, regardless whether used for good or bad purposes, and they can easily be misused. One has to be very careful with them.

2.3 MEETING THE SHAMAN MASTER

In his study about Horc’in shamanhood Mǒngkebulag (2009, p. 287) writes: “The people who have become shamans accordingly relate that when they find their master, they experience a sudden relief and joy, as if they have got out of a straight jacket, which leaves no doubt in them that they have found the right person. Most of them immediately develop a strong emotional attachment to the master. This is explained as the deity rejoicing in them.”

Next day we visited shaman H, who first made divination from her Buddhist rosary. The result was similar to that of the Horc’in shamaness. Erdenetuya had two deities. One of them, her ancestral deity, was a *lus*, through whose power she should become a *bariaač*. Shaman H directly proposed that she would accept Erdenetuya as her disciple. Next we asked about prof. B. and

his exorcism ritual. Shaman H, looking at her rosary, said: "He made an obstruction for her. He did something to close her way to *come forth*."³⁹ When asked why he did so, shaman H again looked at the rosary and said: "Because they did not like each other." Shaman H proposed to make a *dom*⁴⁰ to remove the effect of prof. B.'s ritual, for which she had to summon her senior disciple and helper, a 33 years old Evenki man, who lived in a nearby village. While waiting for his arrival, H shaman added that she would attach a prayer to prevent prof. B. from making further "obstructions" for people.

2.4 THE MAGIC RITUAL

After his arrival the disciple prepared the ritual implements, the main one of which was a large sheet of hard paper with several drawings. On the bottom of the paper there were ten human-like figures, explained as „ten people who would carry the obstruction away". In the upper part there were two human figures facing each other, one labelled "the man who made the obstruction", and a sketch of Erdenetuya's home and its surroundings, in which the direction of the nearest frequented street was important.⁴¹ The reason for the ritual was then written on the paper.

A shovel with burning thyme was placed in the vestibule of the house, shaman H took her drum and, standing inside the main room facing the open door to the vestibule, at which the paper with drawings was placed, started to chant a prayer, in which she took care to pronounce correctly the name and family name of Erdenetuya,⁴² as well as the name of prof. B. When she finished the prayer, she instructed Erdenetuya to go a certain distance in a north-easterly direction from the house and cut the paper with scissors

39) The word *hars'*, meaning obstruction is mostly used by shaman H to mean an obstacle made intentionally to block another person in order to deprive him of his goal.

40) *Dom* – a magic ritual, used both in Buddhist and shamanic context and folk medicine.

41) In all other cases of magic rituals, performed by shaman H for the sake of the removal of spells, faery or the results of other's malevolence, various human figures (mostly cut out of paper) were used for introduction of the negative effect. The figures were then torn into pieces or burnt at an often frequented place, mostly a crossroads, from where the by-passers would carry the negative force away.

42) In all her rituals and prayers shaman H, identifying people to deities, introduces them by their clan name and the year of birth according to the 12-year cycle. Shaman H also urges people to pronounce their clan names and years of birth when making offerings to deities, because otherwise *zavsariin yum avaad yavčihna* – lit. 'the things (spirits, beings) from between (people and deities) would steal (the offering)'.

into strips, throwing the strips away in a north-easterly direction. After finishing this act and being purified by the burning thyme we all received purification through a “tarni”.⁴³

“In order to *come forth* one has first to be purified by an *ars'aan*⁴⁴ three times. I will do this for you in spring,” shaman H told Erdenetuya.

As we entered Grandmother's home, it was an immense relief. During the ritual she literally took the strange thing off from me. As we were sitting and talking after the ritual, I had the feeling that I had finally reached home.

3. Section 3 – Study and initiation

On our first common visit Erdenetuya received several orders from her new master:

- to establish an altar at her home and make regular offerings of milk, tea and liquor to shaman H and her ancestral deity on the 9th, 19th and 29th⁴⁵ day of the lunar month.
- to bring a ring with coral⁴⁶ and a Buddhist rosary during her next visit.
- to keep five abstentions (from eating the meat of dead animals, drinking alcohol, approaching cemeteries and places with recently dead people, visiting weddings and feasts, and visiting families with newly born children).⁴⁷
- Because of the *lus/nāga* deity Erdenetuya should not eat fish.

43) *tarnida-*, a verb derived from the noun *tarni*, originally meaning “tantra” but frequently used to mean a magic formula. This is the most frequent among the rituals performed by shaman H, which includes spitting out liquor, a short massage of the head, body and hands and whipping with a rosary, all in order to expell the evil and impure entities.

44) Kha. *ars'aan* (Cl. Mo. *rasiyan* < Skt. *rasāyana*) ranges from a nectar (in the Buddhist context, through which it entered Mongolian), to holy water, a sacred spring, a spa and a special holy liquid prepared by shamans.

During our visit shaman H performed a ritual called “making *ars'aan*” every ten days on the 9th, 19th and 29th of the lunar month. In her words, “*ars'aan* purifies the five organs of human body”. The ritual was attended by her disciples (some of whom have to come from a great distance), sometimes by their family members, other shamans and people who seek help. The liquid included water, milk, liquor, *s'ar tos* and dried thyme, which are boiled together with nine stones from the Ho'lon lake. After prayers and consecration of the liquid shaman H sprinkles it over the attending people.

45) When asked about the meaning of these dates shaman H explained that the “three nines” are dates of worship of shamanic clan ancestral deities, unlike the 2nd and 16th day of the lunar month, which are dates of offering to the *lus* deities.

46) Coral was explained as facilitating the communication between the deity and the shaman adept.

47) These abstentions apply to the concept of “pure” and “impure” in the understanding of Central Asian people, in which a person with “pure bones” attracts, and is more vulnerable to, impure beings such as harmful souls and evil spirits (this information was provided by the

In addition, for a week after the magic ritual (*dom*) she should avoid dealings with drunk people and quarrels in general and not leaving home after sunset.

3.1.1 SECOND VISIT TO THE MASTER

The next visit of Hailaar took place in July. The first concern of shaman H was Erdenetuya's dreams, which she approved as auspicious. The rosary and ring were animated⁴⁸ by shaman H by spitting out liquor, blowing and shedding grain over them while whispering a prayer. Erdenetuya was ordered to find a "heart mirror" for the next *arsaan*.⁴⁹ The mirror was then animated in the same way. These three items were explained as protecting Erdenetuya's body and smoothing the "path". During the one month of her stay in Hailaar Erdenetuya took part in three *arsaans* and in one major ritual on a clan *ovoo* of another disciple of shaman H. Participation in the master's rituals was said to support quick smoothening of the "path".

The instructions Erdenetuya received this time were to keep the abstentions, to change the regular offering days from the „three nines“ to the *lus* days on the 2nd and 16th of every lunar month, and observing her dreams.

3.1.2 THE MASTER'S VISIT TO EUROPE

The same year in winter shaman H, encouraged and assisted by her relative and our scholarly colleague, received our invitation to visit Europe. Having spent her whole life in the countryside, she agreed, after much hesitation, on the grounds that she would visit her foreign disciple.⁵⁰ During her visit she used a few opportunities to show Erdenetuya several types of massage. One day close to her departure she gave the day of Erdenetuya's initiation, the 2nd day of the Fifth lunar month.⁵¹

Tuvan shaman Očur-Oolovič, 2008). The mentioned items and events to be avoided are likely to involve higher concentration of such impure entities.

48) *amila*- 'to animate, to give life' – a term in some contexts translatable as "consecration", imparting magical and protective powers to the objects.

49) *Zu'rhen toli* – a mirror made of silver, 6–7cm in diameter, which is hung on one's chest on a khadak laced through a snare in the middle of the back side of the mirror.

50) As shaman H put it: "I promised to see Erdenetuya off, when she was leaving, but I was called to a patient, so I could not keep my promise. That's why I came to see her at her home."

51) According to shaman H, there are two days in a year suitable for an initiation of a *bariaac'* – the 2nd and the 16th of the Fifth lunar month.

3.2 INITIATION⁵²

I had no other opportunity to witness the initiation of a *bariaac*'. However, a detailed description of a *bariaac*' initiation from the same region is provided by the article of P. Knecht (2010). The ritual described by him included animal sacrifice and other features that were similar to a shaman initiation of the Barga-Buryat tradition, as was the sacred space with birch trees and the candidate running around them. In his text the author mentions three other *bariaac*č, none of whom had undergone any initiation ritual.

Erdenetuya and I arrived in Hailaar several days before the assigned date. Upon our arrival shaman H said that the initiation ritual should take place on the 16th day instead of the 2nd day. Since we could not change our airplane tickets, shaman H decided to perform a preliminary ritual on the 2nd day, and complete the ritual on the 16th day in our absence. The initiation ritual had two parts, one of which took place on the 2nd and the other on the 4th day of the Fifth month.

3.2.1 BEGINNING OF THE INITIATION

The first part of the ritual was performed with the assistance of three of shaman H's disciples. First an *ovoo* was erected in the shrine⁵³ of shaman H's deities. It was an imitation of a "Barga type" *ovoo*⁵⁴ – a bunch of willow branches about 2 meters high, which were planted in a bucket with soil. At the foot of the *ovoo* an image of a windhorse was placed.⁵⁵ Erdenetuya, dressed in a Mongolian costume, put on all of her protective items. Shaman H was astonished

52) The expression *gar-* – 'to come forth', as used by the Mongolian shamans in Ho'lonbuir, denotes a ritual which largely corresponds to the western term "initiation". The causative *gar-ga* – 'to take sb. forth' means an initiation ritual performed by a shaman master for a disciple. At present one may also hear the expression *oóroo garsan* – 'he/she came forth by himself' relating to certain people whose shaman illness manifested itself shortly after the Cultural Revolution and who could not find an appropriate master. I encountered this term in the clause *boó gar-* 'to come forth as a shaman' and *bariaac' gar-* 'to come forth as a healer'. The Jungarian Sibes use an equivalent term *tič-/čič-* 'to come forth' for an initiation.

53) Shaman H has a *s'uteenii ger*, lit. the 'house of deities' in a separate room of her house.

54) The Barga Mongols strongly follow the revitalized tradition of worshipping clan deities at a clan *ovoo*, which, unlike the cairn *ovoo* of most other Mongol groups, contains only a few stones at its base and is made of long willow branches decorated by five coloured cloth strips.

55) Since, to my knowledge, in no Mongolian tradition is an *ovoo* placed inside of a house, this 'ovoo imitation' was rather a symbol of a real *ovoo* which was to be erected in Erdenetuya's homeplace. It was, however, arranged and adorned as a real *ovoo* for the occasion of an offering ritual.

that she did not have two big bronze mirrors as did all the other disciples,⁵⁶ and suggested that we find the mirrors before the second part of the ritual.

Before the actual beginning *hadags* of five colours were folded into the shape of a belt and “animated” by shaman H in the same way as all the previous items. This was explained as a substitute for a leather *suunag*,⁵⁷ the making of which would require more time. Another set of five coloured *hadags* was handed to Erdenetuya who, under the guidance of shaman H, tied them to the *ovoo*.

At the beginning of the ritual Erdenetuya was told to sit in front of the altar and pray for the sake of her shaman path. Shaman H started drumming and chanting her invocation. After a while she stopped to tell Erdenetuya that she may be shivering, which is not a reason for fear. Then she invoked the *lus* deity and fell down, wriggling on the ground. Erdenetuya was sitting on the ground, visibly shaking, her face in her palms.

I was already shaking inside, something which frightened me. Grandmother’s words consoled me but I could not avoid shaking, as if my diaphragm was kicking me. I had never experienced such a feeling. At one moment – I did not watch her, but I think she must have been wriggling on the ground – I felt like bursting with loud laughter from joy. As if somebody inside me was laughing happily. I felt like jumping up and laughing, but I was afraid to disturb the solemnity of the ritual, so I contained myself.⁵⁸

After the *lus* deity entered shaman H, the female disciple S. was told to assist Erdenetuya during the main part of the ritual which consisted of eating a small amount of *sar tos*, while *sar tos* was also sprinkled around her in three circles, drinking three cups of milk and eating a bowl of dried curd and sweets.⁵⁹ In the end, the deity summoned Erdenetuya, giving her a blessing for her future healing practice including the formula *erhii huruund emtei, doloovor huruund domtoi bol*,⁶⁰ translatable as “may you have medicine in

56) As in many other instances of missing ritual implements and other necessities, shaman H always found a way of replacing them or solving the situation in nother way.

57) In shaman H’s practice the *suunag* is an important protective item used mainly during rituals with summoning deities. A leather strap about 2 meters long ending with a brass ring with cuts bearing a symbolical meaning is tightly engirdled around one’s waist, serving for protection from evil powers during the ritual and at the same time as a handrail for the helper to hold the shaman when he jerks and falls.

58) Later shaman H explained that it was the deity rejoicing in Erdenetuya’s body and that she should have followed her feelings and done what she felt like doing.

59) According to shaman H, the *lus* deities like, and should be offered milk, milk products, sweets and other “delicacies” such as fruits, rather than liquor and meat.

60) This formula was recited by shaman H frequently to her disciples who were to become *bariaac*.

your thumb and magic in your forefinger". The ritual was ended with a festive meal held by H shaman.⁶¹

3.2.2 CONCLUSION OF THE INITIATION

The second, concluding part of the ritual took place two days later. This time only the senior disciple was present. Shaman H consecrated the two new mirrors, and after the initial prayer in front of her altar she ordered Erdenetuya to sit and pray as in the previous case. When shaman H had finished the prayer and ordered Erdenetuya to make the offering of liquor, milk and tea outside the house, Erdenetuya was unable to open her eyes,⁶² until shaman H spat liquor over her. After the ritual was over, the *ovoo* in shaman H's shrine was dismantled, the *hadags*, the windhorse and a large portion of the soil from the bucket were given to Erdenetuya to carry home, and the willow branches were to be left at a place of her own choice on the way to Hailaar. Erdenetuya then received a bottle of liquor, consecrated by shaman H, to perform libations on her way back to Hailaar.

3.2.3 INSTRUCTIONS

Before we left, shaman H gave Erdenetuya several instructions for the forthcoming period:

- For 49 days following the initiation Erdenetuya may not perform healing for anybody.⁶³ During this period she should strictly observe the abstentions and avoid all situations of possible ritual impurity, and to remember her dreams. "Dreams will come to you," shaman H said, meaning dreams with important instructions.
- After her return home Erdenetuya was told to establish her own *ovoo*. At first shaman H gave rather concrete advice as to the type of suitable place, but the end of our discussion she suggested that Erdenetuya should simply choose a place she liked. She was to choose a living tree, put the soil she received at its foot and arrange the *hadags* and windhorse in the same way as they were arranged during the initiation.

61) In all other observed cases, at a ritual performed for the sake of an individual, a concluding meal was offered by those who organized the ritual. Shaman H, perceiving the difficulty for foreigners of handling this complicated social event, decided to solve the situation for us.

62) After the ritual Erdenetuya told me that she was feeling as if her eyes were turned inside her head, in a spasm, and the feeling was painful. Later, however, she did not wish to speak about this experience.

63) An example of a disciple who recently got sick because he tried to heal a person shortly after his initiation was brought up to emphasize the importance of this point.

- After returning home Erdenetuya should continue to perform offerings on the 2nd and 16th days of the lunar month, while it was also suggested that she perform *ars'aan* one the Three nines. She must, however, not perform offerings or any other rituals during menstruation days.⁶⁴
- After the passing of the 49 days people will come to be healed, something which would be announced to Erdenetuya in dreams. Before healing, she should light oil lamps and incenses and pray to her deities, first introducing herself and then saying the family name and year of birth of the sick person. "What if I do not know what to do?" Erdenetuya asked. Shaman H replied: "You have to pray wholeheartedly, and then by your whole mind approach the sick person, and your deity will help you. Sometimes my deity or I myself will come to give you instructions." "What language would your deity speak to me?" Erdenetuya asked. "He will follow the language of your country," shaman H replied confidently.
- The gifts or money brought by the patients should be placed on the deity altar. "What if they do not bring anything?" Erdenetuya asked. "They must bring at least a symbolic present to make the deities happy," shaman H said strictly.⁶⁵

3.2.4 INCIDENT

The next day Erdenetuya was faced with one of the situations she was admonished to avoid, when we met a car accident on the road. Our friends stopped the car at a distance and went to help. Erdenetuya had them purified with alcohol and asked me to spit alcohol onto her. Some days later shaman H said: "I had a dream that Erdenetuya experienced such a complication. Later, if you cannot avoid bad things, simply do not consider them bad, and they will not affect you."

Suddenly seeing the car, I could immediately feel a violent death. I felt physical discomfort. My first idea was to take off my cap and turn it inside out. I could feel the soul which was desperate, I felt his confusion and agony caused by the things which had gone wrong, and at the same time I knew that he could also feel me and was trying to get to me. I could not be indifferent to the enormous distress around me. What frightened me still further was that before we got the information, I was absolutely sure that a person had died, which meant that the initiation made me open to a degree of such sensibility I never had before and – I did not really want to have. It became much better when you spat alcohol over me and still better after the night, during which I dreamt about Grandmother.

64) According to shaman H's explanation the impurity of menstruation offends the deities.

65) As follows from the observations during my fieldwork, in the Mongolian (and probably also other Asian societies) bringing presents to ritual specialists is perceived as an offering to their deities, and not a simple payment for the ritual. Thus, although in most traditions shamans are discouraged from seeking wealth and charging great amounts of money, the ideal way being to simply accept anything the believers bring, and in the case of poor people perform their rituals free of charge, the notion that pleasing the deity by paying the shaman is to the believers own benefit allways secures for the shamans a certain level of income.

3.2.5 THE ENTERING DEITIES

I am especially grateful to Erdenetuya for her description of her sensations during her initiation, which is information rarely given by the “native” ritual specialists. Below I present an account by S. of the first time a shaman deity entered her.

I was terribly scared, shaking inside. Originally I was preparing to let (the deity) enter but then I suddenly lost courage and I toughened my body not letting (the deity) in. Master became angry saying: “Why don't you let in what's going to enter you?” I was very scared and nervous but master called (the deity) which entered me...

Conclusion

As is made clear by the interviews with shaman H, the basic order of rituals during teaching was the same as in the cases of her other disciples. The differences were mainly on two grounds – the difficulty constituted by geographical distance, and the different cultural background of the disciple due to which she was excused for her ignorance of certain rules.

Erdenetuya's study with her shaman master consisted almost entirely of rituals performed for the sake of “smoothing her way”, purification, removal of obstacles caused by others or by ritual impurity, and the introduction of deities. The notion of purity was repeatedly mentioned, beginning with the first meeting when Erdenetuya was said to have “pure bones”, a statement used most often in the context of one's innate disposition to become a shaman. At every occasion the disciple was admonished to avoid situations that would cause impurity, such as death, birth, quarrels or drunkenness. The impurity of menstruation was said to offend deities. The fieldwork of an archaeologist, including digging in the ground and encountering graves, was regarded as highly un auspicious and Erdenetuya was strongly recommended to change her work. On the other hand, the use of consecrated objects, performance of rituals (regular offerings and *ars'aan*), as well as participation in shaman H's rituals, were said to make her path smooth and quick. Her progress in the “path” was evaluated on the basis of dreams.

The core of the initiation ritual which concluded the first part of the “study” was summoning a deity into Erdenetuya's body. During initiation she first experienced bodily sensations which shaman H explained as “the deity rejoicing in her”. From then on she experienced the same kind of sensations during the erection of her own *ovoo*, during offerings, and in particular during

her first *ars'aan*, when the deity entered her body and communicated his will. According to Erdenetuya the possibility of the deity's presence in her body was the result of the initiation ritual. Another consequence of the initiation, as perceived by her, was a suddenly increased sensibility demonstrated in the encounter with dead person.

Observing the described case, which is supported by the comparative material and other studies (Noll and Shi 2009), it repeatedly surfaces that purification and “deity-introduction” rituals are crucial to the shaman adept's progress, while close following of the master is not always vital. This idea is further corroborated by the cases of shamans who claim to have had no master.

Erdenetuya's initiation and other rituals revealed the astonishing openness of the Mongolian shaman tradition as represented by shaman H, an example being the consecration of a symbolic *ovoo*, whose parts were carried to the Czech Republic.⁶⁶

Erdenetuya's case also sheds more light on the crucial role of dreams, which are often mentioned in the narratives of the shamans' life stories, but the close observation of shaman H's teaching gives a clear-cut picture of dreams as the main means of communication used by the deities, the means of guidance and instruction, the attestation of the adept's progress, and the approval or disapproval of his performance. Detailed study of the role of dreams in shaman “study” will follow in Part 2.

I believe that this unique case, besides bringing some parts of the Mongolian shaman tradition closer to our “western” perspectives, raises the issue of the universality of certain religious phenomena that should be further studied. I hope that this paper may be of interest not only for Mongolian and religious studies, but also for other fields, such as psychology.

66) Usually an *ovoo* is made on a fixed site, to which it is connected. On the other hand, instances of moving shrines by means of transferring sacred objects are known (cf. Ha and Stuart 2008).

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Review Section

Buffetrille, Katia (ed.), *Revisiting Rituals in a Changing Tibetan World*. Brill's Tibetan Studies Library, vol. 31, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2012, 386 pp.; ISBN 978-90-04-23217-4 – Reviewed by Daniel Berounský

The Tibetan cultural milieu is an extremely fertile soil for rituals of various kinds. Despite the great number of existing scholarly texts touching upon the topic of rituals from various perspectives, many aspects of the exuberant and interlacing Tibetan rituals remain untouched by scholarly attention. It is by no means an easy field of studies, but at the same time it is essential for a better understanding of Tibetan society.

The title of the book under review promises a unique perspective on Tibetan rituals. Rituals are known for their stability and one must wonder before opening the book whether this stability will be maintained in an environment of the rapid changes.

The book presents papers from the conference *La transformation des rituels dans l'aire tibétaine à l'époque contemporaine* held in Paris in 2007 and contains contributions by ten scholars.

The volume opens with an article by Hildegard Diemberger on the role of books in contemporary Tibet (*Holy Books as Ritual Objects and Vessels of Teaching in the Era of the 'Further Spread of the Doctrine' [bstan pa yang dar]*; pp. 9–41). In the introductory part the article documents and discusses the perception of books in the Tibetan past. It is a matter of general knowledge that in Tibet books are treated as sacred ritual objects, but Hildegard Diemberger provides nuanced and much detailed analysis. For example, an illuminating extract from the 15th century shows how Tibetan honorific terms for people are also used for books. Books are “invited” (*spyang drangs*), “met” or “seen” (*mjal*), “offered robes” (*na bza' phul*) and “belts” (*sku rags*). Through these and similar examples the author shows that the distinction between animate and inanimate is transcended in the case of books.

In the parts dealing with the revival of written texts after the time of the Cultural Revolution in PRC (1966–1976 /1979 in Tibet/) the author points out that the Cultural Revolution was taken by some Tibetans as a parallel to the “disintegration” and dark age of Buddhism in Tibet between the middle of the 9th and 10th centuries. And hence the time following it is called “further spread of the Doctrine” (*bstan pa yang dar*). Vivid examples of activities,

focused on retrieving texts witnessed by the author in a remote monastery in south-western Tibet follow, as does the story of retrieving the collected works of Bodong Chogle Namgyal. These examples illustrate “how ritual could be both conservative and creative”. The attitudes towards books have remained traditional to a great extent, but the environment has radically changed. The books take new forms and there is a question of how the Tibetan rituals concerning books would deal with digital texts.

Delighted by the first contribution the reader continues with high expectations. The title of the second article is *The Use of the Ritual Drawing of Lots for the Selection of the 11th Panchen Lama* (pp. 43–67) and it is authored by Fabienne Jagou. The article starts with the tradition of drawing lots in the process of recognition of the highest incarnations in Tibet. Next comes a revealing and careful outline of events leading to the imperial edict issued in 1792 by the Chinese emperor on drawing lots. It seems that the main reason for the edict was mistrust towards the Tibetan “state oracles” and possible corruption (high-standing incarnations frequently appeared within the single family). But, on the other hand, there had already existed precedents for choosing officers or incarnations through drawing lots in Tibet. It is apparent that Tibetans interpreted these events within the schematic view of the “patron-priest” relationship between Tibetan and Chinese rulers. The concluding part of the article discusses the choice of the 11th Panchen Lama and the claim of the Chinese side that it was based on the tradition established by the above-mentioned edict. Fabienne Jagou mentions deviations from the established tradition in this case. Harsh events that took place at this time (members of the searching team were imprisoned, the whereabouts of the Panchen Lama chosen by the Dalai Lama are still unknown) clearly reveal the political background of the process. It resulted in failure. In the eyes of Tibetans the new Panchen Lama is not the legitimate one. In 2007 the Chinese office of religious affairs promulgated new measures for the recognition of Tibetan incarnations and the Dalai Lama proposed new methods of selection for his successor.

The next contribution by Thierry Dodin (*Transformed Rituals? Some Reflections on the Paradigm of the Transformation of Rituals in the Tibetan Context*; pp. 69–82) could be seen as a critical polemic against the influential book by D. Schwartz, *Circle of Protest*. This book claims that rituals were transformed into political protests in Tibet in the case of the demonstration in 1987 in Lhasa. By careful consideration of the details T. Dodin asserts that this claim cannot be substantiated. He then examines other similar cases of fur burning in 2006 and the prayers for the long life of the Dalai Lama in 2007. In conclusion T. Dodin shows that only in a certain context may some religious rituals

have had some political undercurrents, which are nonetheless not present in the rituals themselves. In the case of fur burning some forms of ritual behaviour appeared accompanying it, but these were not intended as a political protest. One thus wonders whether such a concept of transformation of religious rituals into political protests is applicable to the Tibetan environment at all.

In the following contribution (*Legal Dramas on the Amdo Grasslands: Abolition, Transformation or Survival?* – pp. 83–107) Fernanda Pirie discusses mediation practices in feuds among the nomads in Amdo. This highly interesting text departs from the existing rendering of them by R. Ekvall, who lived in Amdo in the 1930s and 1940s. According to his description the mediation process involves a number of theatrical features. The main function of the mediator is to convince both parties to the conflict to accept the proposed solution and for that he has to use his oratorical skills. Quite surprisingly, such legal dramas seem to have been preserved, especially in the nomadic communities in Amdo, to this day. F. Pirie illustrates this from rather recent cases, in which a lawyer employs a suitable mediator, who then settles the conflict in several months during which both parties and himself stay in a hotel in the city of Lanzhou. The surrounding has changed in this case but not the process of negotiation. The author interprets the process of mediation in terms of “order” and “anti-order”. Mediation does not only restore order. But it must be negotiated through almost theatrical performances and the equal position and independence of the various clans must be confirmed as “anti-order” at the same time.

Nicola Schneider deals with a different case of ritual in her article *The Ordination of Dge slong ma: a Challenge to Ritual Prescriptions?* (pp. 109–135). After a careful historical overview of the problem of full ordination of Buddhist nuns, she continues by revealing many aspects of the ongoing discussions concerning the introduction of fully-ordained nuns to Tibet. In Tibet such a tradition had not been established in the past (though a case of a fully-ordained nun is reported in history, the ordination was doubtful for most Buddhist scholars and did not set a precedent). The responsibility for the introduction of fully-ordained nuns to Tibet lay with the western nuns and some of them received their full ordination within the Chinese tradition in Hong Kong in the 1970s. Later, in 1987, they were followed by several Tibetan nuns. One of the particular problems concerning these events is the fact that the Chinese tradition preserves the lineage of the *Dharmaguptaka vinaya* tradition, while in Tibet the *vinaya* of the *Mūlasarvāstivādins* is dominant. The full ordination of the nuns was supported by the Dalai Lama, but there is no consensus on the practical ways of achieving such a goal among the

Tibetans. The author presents both the arguments of some Tibetan scholars who oppose categorically the introduction of fully-ordained nuns and the suggestions of those who are in favour of it. Tibetan nuns seem not to join the Western nuns in their radical claim for the necessity of full ordination of nuns, but instead respect the authority of the Tibetan Buddhist scholars.

The following article by Mireille Helffer (*Preservation and Transformations of Liturgical Traditions in Exile: the Case of Zhe chen Monastery in Bodnath /Nepal*; pp. 137–162) also concerns the situation of the Tibetan Buddhists within the globalized world. The subject of her research is the celebration of the so called “tenth day” (*tshes bcu*) festival of the Zhechen (Zhe chen) monastery of the “Old sect” (*rnying ma*). This monastery was originally in Kham and did not rank among the biggest and most prestigious ones. However, the new twin-monastery was established in Nepal near Bodhnath in the 1980s with sponsorship from the royal family of Bhutan. The French Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard also played a substantial role in the fortunes of the monastery. The monastery first tried to re-establish its annual liturgical cycle in the most traditional way. However, as part of their fundraising activities, the monks started to visit Western countries, performing *cham* dances after 1995. Inevitably this led to adjustment of the ritual to the tastes of the western audience. The result is secularization of the once meticulously revived ritual dance and its “folklorization”.

With the next contribution *Low Tricks and High Stakes Surrounding a Holy Place in Eastern Nepal: the Halesi Māratika Caves* (pp. 163–207) the reader remains in Nepal. Its author Katia Buffetrille guides him through carefully recorded events accompanying the establishment of the Tibetan pilgrimage place of Halesi-Māratika in Eastern Nepal, which is allegedly connected with the personage of Padmasambhava. This has already been the subject of the author’s article published in 1994, but the later events were not predictable at that time. This much more updated article provides fascinating reading, containing a detailed chronological survey of the events on the background of the agitated political situation in Nepal. In a balanced way it pays much attention not only to the acts of Tibetans, but also to the questions of the original Giri population of the place. The described events led eventually to organized guided tours to the pilgrimage place and mass dissemination of information about it through web-sites, DVDs and “propagation books”. This unique article provides well-documented account of the expansion of Tibetan Buddhism in Nepal.

With the next article by Alexander von Rospat (*Past Continuity and Recent Changes in the Ritual Practice of Newar Buddhism: Reflections on the Impact of*

Tibetan Buddhism and the Advent of Modernity; pp. 209–240) the reader has the opportunity of having a closer look at Nepalese Buddhists of the Newar ethnic group. They have never received the intense attention on the part of westerners their Tibetan brothers in faith did. Well written, it first discusses the history and practices of the Newar Buddhists and then illustrates the changes which are taking place within their practice. It documents that they are not immune to global trends. According to the author the main changes are the (1) easing the restrictions governing access to the rituals and doctrine, (2) new attention being paid to the meaning of the rituals and doctrine, (3) standardization of their practice and (4) revival of some rites aimed at strengthening Newar Buddhism.

With the following article by Marie-Dominique Even (*Ritual Efficacy or Spiritual Quest? Buddhism and Modernity in Post-Communist Mongolia*; pp. 241–271) the reader travels to Mongolia in order to learn about the contemporary position of Buddhism there. The historical events in Mongolia led its inhabitants through a development which has been very different from that of Tibet. Mongolia became a communist country early in the 1920s (thus avoiding its probable incorporation within the PRC). The article briefly surveys the pre-communist past of Buddhism in Mongolia including the reformist tendencies, which appeared here in the 1920s. Its protagonists saw reformed Buddhism often as compatible with communism. Buddhism was openly condemned in the 1930s when the destruction of the Buddhist clergy and Buddhist places of worship begun. A religious revival has been taking place here since 1990, i.e. almost 60 years later. But the environment has changed significantly since the pre-communist times. In 1990 Mongolia became a pluralist country where religion and state are separated. Buddhism has to compete with a considerable number of mostly Christian missionaries who employ a language understandable to their lay followers. In the past such a feature was almost unknown to the Mongols, who for the major part used Tibetan for liturgical purposes. But not only have the new religions been competing with the Mongolian Buddhist church, but also the Buddhist organizations based in the West and with modern appeal for Mongols are spreading their influence here. This is illustrated by the case of the *Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahāyāna Tradition*.

The last lengthy contribution (*Notes on Contemporary Ransom Rituals in Lhasa*; pp. 273–374) by Robert Barnett deals with the highly interesting tradition of ransom rituals (*glud*) in Tibet. Although the title of the article mentions the contemporary period, a large part of the article (pp. 276–316) also deals with this, evidently ancient, ritual of the Tibetans in general. In

the ransom ritual the person attacked by demons is substituted by a dough-effigy of the sick person. Then the demon is attracted by the effigy and is subsequently carried away. Although this ritual had been integrated into all Buddhist sects in Tibet in the past, it still preserves features typical of the non-Buddhist Tibetan rituals. The author argues that knowledge of the values of the demons is crucial for the choice of the adequate tricks which would attract the demons to the substitute for a human being in this ritual. The effigy is then left at a place (mostly a crossroads) from which it would be difficult for the demon to find his way back.

The article continues with a discussion of the reappearance of the ritual in the form of the dough effigies making their presence felt in the streets of Lhasa since the 1990s. Due to the political situation and the fact that it is mostly a household ritual, it is impossible to research them in detail nowadays. Yet the author sees them as representing an “untested zone between the tolerably religious and the semi-visible, borderline world of so-called superstition”. In the context of the Chinese modernity in Lhasa, these dough-effigies are silent witnesses to the presence of the ancient Tibetan values connected with the aforementioned ritual. Such a situation is in a rather poetical way linked to the events mentioned at the opening of the article. This was the report by the British officer L.A. Waddell about the entrance to Lhasa by the army-expedition of Francis Younghusband in 1904. Waddell writes that the British troops were “heartily received by the Tibetans at Lhasa clapping their hands”. But for Tibetans, clapping hands is the exorcism ritual in its simplest form.

The whole volume is a cornucopia of careful and original research. These results are highly topical and timely. The difficulty of research on the topics presented in the book is marked by the fact that most of the papers touch upon an unfolding process. Rather little attention has been devoted to the changes that have taken place in the recent past within the Tibetan cultural milieu. The reviewed book thus must be taken as a pioneering event. I am convinced that it will become an essential reference work for future, similarly-oriented studies. In my opinion, the inclusion of the articles dealing with Newar Buddhists in Nepal and with the contemporary state of Buddhism in Mongolia is a valuable enrichment of the book. These studies will inspire discussion within a broader perspective, very relevant for Tibetologists. In many cases the value of the articles of the volume is hidden in the precise details they contain. But if with necessary simplification one should express the main message of this admirable book, it could be done in terms of the characterisation contained in the first article of this volume by H. Diemberger. Ritual can be conservative and creative at the same time.

Daniel Berounský, *The Tibetan Version of the Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Quest for Chinese Influence on the Tibetan Perception of the Afterlife*. With a Comparative Description of the Paintings by Luboš Bělka. Triton, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague 2012, 319 pp.; ISBN 978-80-7387-584-8 – reviewed by Agata Bareja-Starzynska

Judging from the title, the book under review consists of two parts: Daniel Berounský's analysis of the Tibetan version of the Ten Kings story known from the Chinese tradition, and Luboš Bělka's description of the paintings illustrating this story. However, the parts are not equal and actually the main part of the book is written by Berounský (pp. 9–263), while Bělka's description "elucidating the depictions contained in the manuscript" is placed in the Appendices of the book together with reproductions of colour pictures (pp. 269–297).

In the Introduction Berounský wrote (p. 11) that the discovery of the Tibetan version of *The Scripture on the Ten Kings* provided an incentive to prepare the present publication. The Tibetan manuscript "is a unique copy of a previously unknown Tibetan rendering" of the Chinese text *Shi wang jing*.

Daniel Berounský presented his research divided into four chapters against the broad background of Asian traditions of depicting hells, namely Chapter I "Indian ideas about the hells", Chapter II "Returning from the hells", Chapter III "Maudgalyāyana's travels in hells" and Chapter IV "Ten Kings of the afterlife". Besides the text by Berounský each chapter includes a translation from Tibetan into English of an appropriate text or of its fragment, namely *Teaching Concerning the Places of Dwelling of the Sentient Beings* in Chapter I, A Brief Hagiography of the Delog Lingza Choekyi in Chapter II, *The Noble Sūtra called the 'Wholly Saving Vessel'* and Story of Maudgalyāyana's mother by Sonam Lhay Wangbo in Chapter III. Only in the last chapter (IV), is the annotated English translation of the front-page Tibetan version of the *Scripture on the Ten Kings* presented (pp. 163–219) and the facsimile of the Tibetan original reproduced (pp. 220–262). The book concludes with References (Tibetan – 38 titles and Other Sources – 120 titles) and a very useful Index of names, proper nouns, titles and selected topics.

The reason for giving such a long introduction to the main topic of the book, the Tibetan version of the Chinese story, is explained by the author in the following way: [the three chapters] "are intended to draw the reader into the wider context of perception of Buddhist hells in Tibet" (p. 12). This context is

very wide, indeed, and it is therefore difficult to accuse the author of not including even more materials. However, since he discusses the Tibetan – and actually also Mongolian – tradition of depicting hells and he does mention the tradition of *abhidharma*, one may suggest that he could also have mentioned the Sa skya pa great scholar 'Phags pa bla ma Blo gros rgyal mtshan's exposition of Buddhism written in 1278 for the Mongolian prince Ching gim (Tib. Jing-gim) called *Shes bya rab tu gsal ba* (English translation by Hoog 1983)¹ which has been translated into Chinese (see Bagchi 1947, English translation by Willemen 2004)² and Mongolian (edition and study by Uspensky 2006).³ We know that this particular text exerted great influence on Tibetan and Mongolian lay believers. A description of the world was presented, for example, in the chronicle *Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* (Soerensen 1994, Kuznetsov 1966)⁴ and was partly included in the 16th century Mongolian compilation *Čiqula kereglegči tegüs udqatu śastir* by Siregetü güüsi čorji (Bareja-Starzynska 2002, 2006),⁵ quoted later in other Mongolian works, such as for example the chronicle *Erdeni-yin tobči* by Sayang Sečen in 1662, and also re-written in Oirat by Zaya-Pandita Nam mkha'i rgya mtsho in 1650–51 (Uspensky 1994, p. 196).⁶ Therefore it seems that the tradition of *Shes bya rab gsal* would also

- 1) C. Hoog, *Prince Jñi-gim's Textbook of Tibetan Buddhism. The Śes-bya rab-gsal (Jñeya-prakāśa) by 'Phags-pa Blo-gros rgyal-mtshan dPal-bzari-po of the Sa-skya-pa*. Leiden 1983.
- 2) P.C. Bagchi, Chang-so che-lun Jñeya-prakāśa-śāstra. An Abhidharma Work of Sa skya Paṇḍita of Tibet. *Sino-Indian Studies*, 1947, pp. 136–156; Ch. Willemen, *The Treatise on the Elucidation of Knowable. Translated from the Chinese (Taisho volume 32, number 1645)*. Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, Berkeley, California 2004.
- 3) V.L. Uspensky, "Explanation of the Knowable" by 'Phags-pa bla-ma Blo-gros rgyal-mtshan (1235–1280). *Facsimile of the Mongolian Translation with Transliteration and Notes*. Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, XII, Tokyo 2006.
- 4) P. Soerensen, *The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies*. Asiatische Forschungen, Wiesbaden 1994, pp. 44–49; B. I. Kuznetsov, *Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long (The Clear Mirror of Tibetan Genealogies)*. *Tibetan Text in Transliteration with an Introduction in English*. Scripta Tibetana, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1966, pp. XV–XVII.
- 5) A. Bareja-Starzynska, Brief Study of the Mongolian Transmission of the Buddhist Treatise 'Śes bya rab gsal' by 'Phags pa bla ma Blo gros rgyal mtshan. In: *Tractata Tibetica et Mongolica. Festschrift für Klaus Sagaster zum 65. Geburtstag*. Ed. by Karenina Kollmar-Paulenz und Christien Peter. Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2002, pp. 13–20; Sziiregetü Güüsi Czordzi, *Czikula Kereglegči. Zasady buddyźmu* (wstęp, przekład i opracowanie Agata Bareja-Starzyńska) [*Czikula Kereglegči. The Buddhist Principles* (edited, translated and commented upon by Agata Bareja-Starzyńska)]. Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warsaw 2006.
- 6) V.L. Uspensky, Some Rare Oirat Manuscripts in the Collection of the St. Petersburg University Library. In: *Aspects of Buddhism. Proceedings of the International Seminar on Buddhist Studies*. Ed. by A. Bareja-Starzynska and Marek Major. Liw 1994, pp. 195–202.

have been of interest to a study of Tibetan and Mongolian popular beliefs on hells. The wide dissemination of it can be confirmed by the Russian translation of selected fragments of *Čiqula kereglegči* included in Józef Kowalewski's pioneering work on Buddhist cosmology (*Buddijskaja kosmologija*) in 1837.⁷

Nevertheless, it is very interesting to see the translation of another 13th century Tibetan text, introduced by Daniel Berounský as “the famous Tibetan commentary on the *abhidharma*” entitled *Exposition of Abhidharmakośa Arranged in Chapters and Called ‘Ornament of Abhidharma’* (the Tibetan title given in References: *Chos mngon pa mdzod kyi tshig le’ur byas pa’i ’grel mngon pa’i rgyan zhes bya ba bzhugs*) by Mchims ’jam pa’i sbyangs / Mchims nam mkha’ drag pa (1210?–1285/1267), who is described as one of “the most highly educated Tibetan monks”. Dungkar Rinpoche, in his Great Encyclopaedia *Tshig mdzod chen mo* (2002, p. 858), writes the name as Mchims nam mkha’ grags or Mchims ’jam dpal dbyangs, and also gives a reference to the *Deb ther sngon po* (*Blue Annals*. Transl. by Roerich, reprint 1995, I, p. 81; II, p. 1024). Since Mchims nam mkha’ grags was also a scholar of Sa skya, a closer comparison of his work with the mentioned *Shes bya rab tu gsal ba* by ’Phags pa bla ma⁸ and with the Mongolian work *Čiqula kereglegči tegüs udqatu šastir* by Siregetü güüsi čorji is a desideratum. It can be stated here briefly that in comparison with Berounský’s source the descriptions of hells in *Shes bya rab gsal* (ff. 91r–111r) and in *Čiqula kereglegči* (Bareja-Starzynska 2006, pp. 137–146) provide information about the duration of time necessary for beings to spend in hells, but they did not include the information about the reasons for beings being reborn there (glossed in Berounský’s text and marked with small letters in his translation). The surrounding hells are described in the *Shes bya rab gsal*’s tradition in even greater detail, though there are differences in their description as compared with the Mongolian *Čiqula kereglegči* (commented in Bareja-Starzynska 2006, pp. 140–144). Daniel Berounský observes that Mchims nam mkha’ grags makes references to his additional sources, which are, however, not mentioned in the description of hells by ’Phags pa bla ma nor Siregetü güüsi čorji. Therefore this brief comparison shows that the mentioned authors used *abhidharma* sources⁹ in independent ways.

7) O. Kovalevski, *Buddijskaja kosmologija*. Kazan’ 1937.

8) *Sa skya bka’ ’bum*. Toyo Bunko, Tokyo 1968, vol. 6, pp. 1–18.

9) ’Phags pa bla ma (f. 35r2) listed his sources as: *Abhidharmakośa*, *Smṛtyupasthāna*, *Sūrya-garbha* and *Prajñāptiśāstra*. Siregetü güüsi čorji’s 15 sources were listed, compared to the sources of ’Phags pa bla ma and commented upon in Bareja-Starzynska 2002, 2006 (pp. 45–60). Except for *Abhidharmakośa* mentioned by all authors, the other sources used by them were different.

Daniel Berounský decided to translate the names of hells from Tibetan into English instead of using their original Sanskrit names. This method may not prove to be the best since the Tibetan translations are usually very condensed and may not reflect the whole meaning of the Sanskrit compounds. For example the *Kālasūtra* hell which is translated into Tibetan as *thig nag*, should be understood as “Having Black Lines” (compound *bahuvrīhi*), not just “Black Lines”. This is confirmed by the Mongolian translation: *qar-a siyum-tu* – “With Black Lines”. On the other hand, the Tibetans did call hells by their Tibetan names and so their understanding of this particular name was exactly “Black Lines”.

In Chapter II on “Returning from hells” Berounský introduces the idea that the Tibetan *delog* narrations about people who returned back to life after death and “brought to the living their witness of the afterlife” (p. 44) are “much closely related to the particular subgroup of the very old Chinese genre of *zhiguai* stories (“accounts of the strange”)” (p. 49). Berounský compares 17 *delog* stories and concludes that they are not similar to the saviour narrations found in Tibet. He also points to the fact that the *delog* stories are attested in Tibetan Kham, a region bordering on Sichuan in which the Chinese narratives about returns from hells are widespread. Only one *delog* story was popular in Mongolia, namely that of Lingza Choekyi (Gling bza’ chos skyid), i.e. Choyjid dakini in Mongolian. Berounský mentions the profound study of it by A. Sazykin. In his book, however, the Tibetan version of Lingza Choekyi previously not studied by scholars, has been translated.

The third chapter deals with “Maudgalyāyana’s travels in hells”. Maudgalyāyana, called Mulian in Chinese, rescues his mother from the hells. The subject of Maudgalyāyana’s story is well known from the Chinese sources. Berounský first recalls the Chinese settings and the “Buddhist foundation text”, the *Yulanpen jing* (called also *Ālambana Sūtra* or *Ullumbana Sūtra*) and its further developments. The text was the basis of the Yulanpen festival known as the “Ghost Festival”, which, as it is explained by Berounský, had not only a Buddhist background but also merged with the Taoist festival. The further development of the text – *The Pure Land Yulanpen Sūtra* – is described as well. In the next subchapter Berounský deals with the Tibetan versions of Maudgalyāyana’s story. It was an open question for Tibetologists whether a Tibetan version existed at all, though Mongolian versions were known. Interesting discoveries were made recently by Matthew Kapstein who devoted several articles to this topic. In this chapter Berounský puts together and presents all available information about the Tibetan narration on Maudgalyāyana (in Tibetan called Me’u gal ma or Me’u gal gyi bu). He concludes that “only two

editions of the Kanjur did not regard the text with suspicion, while the rest of them apparently excluded it from the Kanjur on the grounds of serious doubts” (p. 99). The two Kanjurs he mentions are *Phug brag bka’ gyur* (kept in Dharamsala) and *O rgyan gling bka’ gyur* (kept in Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh).

He also discusses the Mongolian translations, known as stories on Molon Toyin’s journey to hell. He mentions the translations by Siregetü güüsi čorji (the same person who wrote *Čiqula kereglegči tegüs udqatu šastir* mentioned above) and by Altangerel ubasi in the early 17th century. However, several Mongolists (Vladimircov, Heissig, Chiodo) expressed the opinion that since this Mongolian version preserved archaic language features, it had to reflect a much older Mongolian translation, perhaps dating to the 14th century.¹⁰ It can also be added that the Mongolian scholar Dulaan (University of Beijing), who worked on this subject, suggested that there were indeed two traditions in Mongolian: scholarly translations from Tibetan and, secondly, a popular tradition with paintings based on Chinese sources (oral information).

While dealing with Maudgalyāyana’s story, Berounský also gives information about the *Sūtra of Lhabu Pematrul* – the Bon version of the text. It is a *gter-ma* text “of the Bonpo master known as Nyenton (Gnyen ston/ Gnyen mthing shes rab rdo rje) living probably in the 11th century” (p. 102). While in general it follows “the Chinese Maudgalyāyana transformation text”, it also adds the title in the Zhang-zhung language suggesting its Zhang-zhung origin. Berounský analyses thoroughly all eighteen chapters and concludes that this text “probably appeared in the Bonpo Kanjur as one not very influential residue of the attempt to explain the origin of rituals called *Emptying Naraka Hells from the Bottom*” (p. 114).

Then Berounský presents the translation of one of the versions of Maudgalyāyana’s story from Stog Kanjur (No. 266, vol. 79). Finally he gives a list of 15 Tibetan manuscripts of the story on Maudgalyāyana’s rescue of his mother. This list is a very valuable tool for Tibetologists and for all who are interested in this subject.

Finally in Chapter 4 the *Ten Kings of the afterlife* are discussed. The Chinese tradition of *The Scripture on the Ten Kings* is dated to the 8th–10th century. The Uighur translation from Qočo is known to exist in fragments, but the Prague manuscript in Tibetan is the first and only example of the Tibetan tradition of the Ten Kings. In general Berounský explains that “the text is apparently an attempt to consolidate the foreign Buddhist ideas about the afterlife with the

10) E. Chiodo, *The Mongolian Manuscripts on Birch Bark from Xarboxyn Balgas in the Collection of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences*. Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 2009, vol. 2, p. 172.

already-existing Chinese ones" (p. 133). He summarizes the whole narrative and points to Chinese influences. He also stresses that the text was an integral part of the funerary ritual. The Buddhist 49 days of searching for rebirth were expanded, according to the Confucian sources, to 3 years.

Then follows a more detailed description of the history of the whole collection of Tibetan texts in the National Gallery in Prague to which the Ten Kings story belongs. Since one text from the collection praises Karma Pakshi, Berounský concludes that it came from the followers of Karma Kagyu. He also gives convincing arguments that the manuscript was copied from the already existing Tibetan text. He points to many errors and also shows additional parts, which could have been added by a copyist. Berounský is certain that "the text does not come from the educated and higher strata of the society" (p. 156). In the next subchapter he analyzes the possible influence of this narrative on the Tibetan milieu. He even suggests its possible influence on the Tibetan funeral rituals.

The following subchapter contains a translation of the whole text. All mistakes, both scribal and content-related, were accurately noted down and corrected in the footnotes. The facsimile with photos of the original manuscript was carefully printed.

In his "Concluding remarks" Berounský recapitulates all the hell depictions he has presented. He once again discusses the Chinese elements, such as Twin Boys at the court of Yama – in the Tibetan version "black and white Children of Deeds", the scales measuring the deceased's evils and virtues, and the mirror of deeds. At the same time he reminds readers that "there is lack of evidence on how the Chinese ideas entered Tibet in the form of the particular individuals who translated and spread these texts in Tibet" (p. 267). He speaks about the general background and "the arrival of influences from the Indian, Mongolian, Turkic, Sogdian and Iranian cultural spheres" to Tibet. Nevertheless, in his quest for the Chinese influence on the Tibetan perception of the afterlife, he attempted to document "a few concrete items of evidence".

In the Appendices the colour plates of the scenes of the kings' courts were presented with a description by Luboš Bělka. He explained that his role in the book was to compare the illustrations in the "Prague manuscript" with the "Dunhuang depictions", since the very oldest instances of these depictions have been known from the caves of Dunhuang. It appeared clear during analyzing the illustrations and text of the Prague manuscript that the illustrations did not only accompany the text. According to Bělka with the passing of time and numerous copying the visual representations of hells underwent their own transformation. It became evident that the author (or copyist) of the

illustrations of the Prague manuscript made them not on the basis of the text which they accompany, but on the basis of another set of illustrations. Bělka concludes that “the degree of inconsistency between the text, as the primary source of information for the depiction, and its illustration has considerably increased” (p. 297). In comparison with the Dunhuang paintings the Prague illustrations “show a number of innovations, including those known from typical Mongolian pictures” (p. 297). Bělka’s detailed descriptions do really elucidate the paintings to the reader who is then able to admire the art and to understand the content. One may only wish that the book had a bigger format which would make it possible to print larger and more clearly visible reproductions of the original illuminated manuscript.

Summing up this review, it is a pleasure for the reviewer to congratulate the authors of this remarkable book. From the descriptions of the world in the Indian sources via Tibetan and occasionally mentioned Mongolian versions in depicting hells, to the Chinese tradition and its influence and even the actual funeral rites in Tibet – the book really offers a lot to anyone interested in the subject of Tibetan visions of the afterlife and hells in particular. At the same time the scholarly objective introduced on the title-page: “the quest for Chinese influence of the Tibetan perception of the afterlife” is presented in a very detailed and systematic way. The author, Daniel Berounský offers clues and hypotheses showing directions for continuation of the research.

The illustrations of the Prague manuscript were commented on by one of its temporary owners, Prof. V. Chytil, as rather primitive. However, in the modern perception of visual art they seem not just primitive, but also interesting and intriguing. Even after gaining illuminating commentary to them by Luboš Bělka, there is still so much room for further studies. Therefore, one may only recommend both scholars to continue their work on the subject with the same enthusiasm and results which show such a high level of scholarship.

