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SHAMAN



Volume 12 Numbers 1 and 2
Spring and Autumn 2004



Molnar & Kelemen Oriental Publishers

SHAMAN
Journal of the International Society
for Shamanistic Research

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Editorial policy Manuscripts submitted to *Shaman* will be considered for publication by members of the Editorial Board and the Editors.

Editorial correspondence (manuscripts, communications, books for review) should be sent to the publishers: Budapest, Marczibányi tér 9. Hungary, H-1022.

Shaman on the Internet Photos in color, subscription information and orders, contents and abstracts of all previous and current issues: www.folkscene.hu

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Shaman (ISSN 1216-7827) is published once a year by Molnar & Kelemen Oriental Publishers, Budapest, Marczibányi tér 9. Hungary, H-1022.

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ISSN 1216-7827

Printed in Hungary

VOL.12. Nos. 1-2.

SHAMAN

SPRING/AUTUMN 2004

The Religious Practitioner *Bimo* in Yi Society of Liangshan, Southwest China, Today

BAMO AYI

BEIJING

This paper aims to analyze the nature and characteristics of the bimo, religious practitioners of Yi society in Liangshan, southwest China, today in the light of knowledge gained in my fieldwork between 1986 and 1996. Bimo mediate the relations between humans and supernatural beings by chanting scriptures, which is different from another kind of practitioner, the sunyi, who are similar to shamans. Bimo have developed four collective characteristics: (1) they have their own special beliefs relating to their religious activities; (2) a set of special religious institutions has evolved gradually to sustain the bimo community and regulate the conduct of their religious activities; (3) they have their own professional morals and ethics concerning relations with clients, supernatural beings and other bimo; and (4) members of the bimo community have a common professional identity reflecting their self-consciousness as a class.

Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture lies in the southwest of Sichuan Province, China. To the north of it flows the Dadu River, and to the south, the Jinsha River (the upper section of the Yangtze River). Its 60,000sq. km territory is the home of 1,610,000 Yi people in Liangshan, the single largest Yi community in China.

The ethnonym of the Yi in Liangshan is *Nuosu*. Until the democratic reform in 1956, no united regime had evolved and the Yi community was split into numerous patrilineal lineages. The estate-and-slave system with lineal descent and personal dependence as characteristics constituted the traditional Yi social institution. With high mountains and deep valleys as natural barriers and hostile relations with other communities around, especially with the Han, the traditional Liangshan Yi society was *sui generis* and developed a unique culture, including religious belief, in its

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“Talking to the *Ongons*”: The Invocation Text and Music of a Darkhad Shaman

ÁGNES BIRTALAN and JÁNOS SIPOS

BUDAPEST

with J. COLOO (ULAANBAATAR)

The present article is devoted to a Darkhad ritual song of the shamaness Bayar from the Cagaan xuular clan (the Darkhad are a Mongolian-speaking people of North Mongolia). The ritual was performed at night on 2 August 1993 with the purpose of divination and invoking good luck in general, and for fortune in travelling. The main corpus of the song was performed by the shamaness herself, although her assistants also took part. The song is based on a ritual dialogue between the shamaness and her ongons, and, with the help of Mongolian colleagues and the shamaness's family, the authors of the present work tried to investigate the role-playing aspect of the performance—which parts can be ascribed to the spirits and which to the shamaness. The text-corpus examined here has been put into the mythological context of ongon worship on the basis of newly recorded materials (reports by shamans), and also by referring to the oldest written sources (13th century).

As members of the Hungarian–Mongolian Joint Expedition¹ researching folklore and dialectal folk traditions of the Western and Northern Mongolian ethnic groups, we had the opportunity to collect shamanic invo-

¹ The expedition started work in 1991 under the leadership of Alice Sárközi, Senior Researcher of the Research Group of Altaic Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and Ágnes Birtalan, Associate Professor at the Department of Inner Asian Studies at the Loránd Eötvös University (Budapest), author of the present article. Associates of the Research Group, the Department, the Hopp Ferenc Museum of East Asian Arts and the Institute of Language and Literature of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences took part in the fieldwork. On the history and the publications of the expedition, see Sárközi and Birtalan 1996. The expedition and the researches are sponsored by the Hungarian National Research Fund (OTKA TO 21174, TO 32087) and the Stein–Arnold Fund of the British Academy.

cations and ritual texts in 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997 and 1999 among the Darkhads of Khöwsgöl (Xöwsgöl)² Province and the Bayads of Uws Province, both in the Mongolian Republic. Here we present a survey of one particular Darkhad shamanic invocation, collected from the shamaness Bayar in August 1993 in the Cagaan Nuur district of Khöwsgöl.³

Shamanic texts, incantations, invocations, blessings, curses, prayers and offering texts⁴ are not easy going, even for researchers with a fair knowledge of a shaman's native language, so the publication process can take some time. As shown in our publications issued so far, in collecting texts the researcher has two options—either to record a text outside the ritualistic setting, or to transcribe it *in situ* shortly after the ritual. The first is easier, and perusing any number of studies on Mongolian shamanism one finds that most texts are of this type. Texts recorded during a ritual do not appear in such a pure form as those recounted separately from the ritualistic circumstances. During the ritual the Mongolian (in our case the Darkhad) shaman converses with the spirits, arguing and quarreling with them, and the spirits answer or make inquiries. From a client's point of view this dialogue is the most important aspect because his or her problem will be solved during the exchange. We had the opportunity to collect several such texts *in situ*; however, their investigation takes a lot of time, requiring checking and rechecking. This is true even when we have listened to the text again with members of the shaman's family or the shaman's attendant, a person who helps to interpret what the shaman is saying—in the case of shamaness Baljir her daughter or in Bayar's case her husband.

Several years ago Ádám Molnár, the editor of this journal, suggested that one of our texts should be published not just as the annotated text with translation but also with tune and rhythm. On his request we, the

² In this article Mongolian words are given their conventional transcription, the letter *j* stands for /ds/ and *x* for /kh/.

³ Several students and escorts took part in the expedition, which was led by Alice Sárközi, Ágnes Birtalan and O. Sambuudorj.

⁴ A paper entitled "Preliminary Notes on the Analysis of Darkhat Mongolian Shaman Songs" and devoted to a textual survey of the Mongolian shamanic texts was presented by Ágnes Birtalan at the 6th Conference of the International Society for Shamanistic Research held in Viljandi, Estonia, on 12–17 August, 2001. For the variety of genres used by shamans, see Birtalan 2002.

two Hungarian authors of the present article, started to work on the analysis of several Mongolian shamanic invocations, and although the scoring has been finished, the setting of the text under the notes could not be completed. Some fragments of the texts remain undecipherable even though at our request Professor J. Coloo checked the tape with the shamaness's daughter Joljayaa and husband Manibajar in the summer of 2000.

Before discussing the text, the ritual environment and its tune and rhythm, we would like to summarise the present situation of Darkhad shamanism and its study.

The Darkhads

The origin of the Darkhads⁵ (Mongolian *Darqad*, Khalkha, Darkhad *Darxad*) is still not completely clear. On the basis of the first Mongolian sources it appears that the Darkhads were ordered to serve the religious leader of the Buddhist Church in Outer Mongolia during the Manchu period (1648–1911), his holiness the first Jëbjundamba (1635–1723), also called Öndör Gegeen, "High Brightness".⁶ According to oral tradition, they were the serfs of a nobleman, Geleg noyan, and his sister Dejid aqai, who offered themselves and their subjects to the Jëbjundamba and were required to pay only reduced taxes. The phenomenon *darqad* has several meanings in Mongolian and Turkic languages. The meanings 'blacksmith' and 'free from taxes and other obligations' are semantically

⁵ On the Darkhads, cf. Sanzheev 1930, 1931; the new edition of Jamsranii Ceween's survey on the Mongolian nationalities (1997: 75–87); and an encyclopedic summary of the history, material and spiritual culture of the Darkhads by Badamaxatan (1965). For more recently published materials see Cerel 1997: 179–183.

⁶ The Jëbjundamba (from Tibetan rJe-bcun dam-pa) *qutuγtus*, the living Buddhas in Yeke küriyen (later also called Urga in Russian form, today Ulaanbaatar, the later capital of Mongolia) are reincarnations of the Tibetan philosopher Tāranātha and ruled the Mongolian Buddhist Church (first only in Outer Mongolia, their power spreading later through the whole territory of Mongolia) from 1650 to 1924. A ninth reincarnation, discovered in Tibet, recently became known to the Mongolian religious population when he visited Mongolia in 1999.

connected because the occupation of blacksmith also had a special legal status.⁷

On the basis of their close interethnic relations with the neighbouring Turkic-speaking Tuvas and of the tribal names of the Darkhads, they are also considered to be partly of South Siberian origin.⁸ As Diószegi (1963) noted, the shamanic traditions of the Darkhads contain many elements similar to Tuvian shamanism.

Traditionally the Darkhads lived in three *sums* (districts) of Khöwsgöl Province, in Bayanjürx, Ulaan Uul and Rinčēnlhümb; nowadays a larger group of Darkhads also lives in the districts of Sümber and Artulag (D'iakonova 1996: 51) and in Cagaan Nuur. There are also smaller groups east and south of Lake Khöwsgöl.⁹

Darkhad Shamanism

Thanks to their geographical location, the Darkhads living in the forested region of Northern Mongolia retained their original belief system and shamanism after the Buddhist conversion and even during the last 60–70 years of socialism, which were times of ideological oppression. Even today this ethnic group is collectively famous for its unusual behaviour and shamanic abilities. Until recently there have been old, practising shamans (mostly shamanesses) who did not stop their activities of healing, divining and offering sacrifices in the time of anti-religious subjugation. During our research period we had the opportunity to visit one such aged shamaness (*udgan*), Tuwaanaa/Tuwaanii Baljir,¹⁰ who

⁷ On the historical transformation of the meaning of this phenomenon cf. Vladimirtsov 1934: 93, 117, etc., and Doerfer 1963: 327, 1965: 460–474.

⁸ In a recent study D'iakonova (1996) summarised the newest data about the Darkhads from the point of view of their relation to the Tuvas.

⁹ The expedition's research team worked with the Darkhads of Ulaan Uul, Bayanjürx and Cagaan nuur and also among a few families living east of the lake, in Cagaan Üür district.

¹⁰ According to the Mongolian custom there is no family name; people usually know their clan but officially they use only their father's (sometimes their mother's) name in the genitive case. The father's name of the shamaness *Tuwaa* + *-nāā* (genitive) points to the possible origin of her family from the neighbouring Tuva (cf. Diószegi 1963).

practiced these activities for more than 50 years and to whose work we devoted several articles and studies.¹¹ Together with O. Čuluunbaatar, a professor at the Mongolian State University, we visited her for the first time in 1992 and devoted a detailed description to one of her most frequent activities, scapulimancy (she practiced the pyromantic type of divination using the shoulder blade of a sheep); the article includes a short life story of the shamaness.¹²

There are also several new shamans among the Darkhads, chosen by the *ongon*-spirits and trained by the older Darkhad shamans, inheriting their traditional shamanic knowledge. One of these new practitioners is the Darkhad shamaness Bayar of the Cagaan xuular clan, who started shamanizing in the 1990s after the political changes, when religious oppression was abolished. When we first visited her summer camp in 1993 she lived in the centre of Cagaan nuur district, but later she moved with her family to Khailast (Xailast), a suburb of Ulaanbaatar. She claimed to be a descendant of Jotog, a legendary shaman who lived at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries (Chart 2). On her father's side she was a shamaness of the seventh generation, and on her mother's side of the tenth generation. Her mother, Yasnii Süren (1916–1992), was also a famous shamaness, but her father Banjaragč was not a shaman (Pürew 1999: 115, 189, 368).

Chart 1. Bayar's father's side

Xulgana jaarin	beginning of the 19th century
Galsan jaarin	
Ceweg udgan	1877–1950
Coyoogoo udgan	
Dašdawaa udgan	1899–1936
Banjaragč	
Bayar	

¹¹ We collected several ritual texts, shaman myths and stories from her. Two elaborate reports with her and her family members also have been recorded. These materials are in the process of published by the author (Á. B.). All the Darkhad and Bayad shamanic materials collected during the fieldwork will be published in a monograph devoted to the shaman texts.

¹² See Birtalan 1993. A more detailed life story can be found in Dulam 1992.

Chart 2. Bayar's mother's side

Ĵotog jaarin	turn of the 16th/17th centuries
Xaĵ jaarin	
Anir	
Sambuu	
Sündew lam	18th century
Yampil jaarin	
Norĵmoo	
Oxinĵii	
Süren udgan	1916–1992
Bayar	

Bayar died in 2001 while travelling in Mongolia curing people. On the basis of Pürew's quoted work and our fieldwork materials, we have prepared a list giving the names of her shaman (Khalkha *jairan*, Darkhat *jaarin*) and shamaness (Khalkha, Darkhat *udgan*) ancestors. In her ancestry there are also lamas (Khalkha, Darkhad *lam*) and lay persons, whose names are also remembered.

The Darkhad shamans are so-called "black shamans"—*xar böö*, *xar jaarin*, *jaarin*—and also *xar jüĵiin böö*, 'shaman of the black direction, of the black creed'. In the case of the Darkhads such descriptions are not used in contrast with white shamanism but denote the non-"lamaised" shamans whose rituals are not, or not significantly, influenced by Buddhism, by the Yellow Faith reformed by Cong-kha-pa (1357–1419). Darkhad shamans regard themselves as enemies of the Buddhist monks: for example, the shamaness Balĵir mentioned to us several times that she does not harm monks but that she does try to avoid them. Almost every published article on Darkhad shamanism reports curses (*xaraal*) that reveal the story of shamans who struggle with the lamas and are irreconcilable enemies of Buddhism. The text of a curse was published by Diószegi (1961: 201–202), and also see Badamxatan (1965: 226–227).

Studies of Darkhad shamanism started in the early 1930s when Sanzhev (1930, 1931) published his folklore and linguistic materials. The studies of Badamxatan (1965) and Diószegi (1963), who worked with this ethnic group at about the same time, could also be considered to form the basis of Mongolian shamanistic research. Almost thirty years after the first research a source book of Darkhad shaman legends and

invocations (*duudlaga*) collected by O. Pürew and S. Dulam¹³ appeared, and most recently Pürew (1999) has published a bulky monograph on Mongolian shamanism. Although Pürew's monograph covers Mongolian shamanism in general, it is based mainly on field research he carried out over several decades among the Darkhads. It is worthy of note that Pürew became a researcher on the influence of Diószegi, whom he accompanied as a Darkhad and Khalkha interpreter during the latter's fieldwork among the Darkhads in 1960 (Birtalan 2003). The Hungarian–Mongolian Joint Expedition visited the Darkhad territory four times (in 1992, 1993, 1997, 1998) and, except for the last journey, when the main aim was to collect material on the shaman spirit and Buddhist protector god Dayan degereki in Cagaan Üür (east of Lake Khöwsgöl), we worked with shamans living in the western districts of Khöwsgöl Province.

The Rituals

Below we give a chart that contains the main elements for a further typology of the Darkhad shaman rituals we observed during our fieldwork. We must emphasise again that it is based on our records. According to our observations, there are different types of Darkhad shamanic rituals in respect of their place, time, purpose and the circle of attendants. The following structure offers a preliminary pattern that could be modified during future fieldwork. This structure provides the background for the ritual conversation with the spiritual world.

1. Time

1.1. Concerning the part of the day:

1.1.1. Day ritual

1.1.2. Night ritual

1.1.3. Ritual that can be carried out by day and by night

1.2. Concerning the regularity of the ritual:

1.2.1. Regular rituals, ceremonies that can be carried out on any day that the shaman's clients desire.

1.2.2. Regular rituals connected to the calendar.

¹³ Cf. Dulam 1992.

1.2.3. Irregular, occasional rituals at the request of clients

2. Place

2.1. Inside the shaman's *ger* (felt tent) or house2.1.1. On the honoured place of the *ger* or house

2.1.2. In front of the fireplace

2.1.3. On the honoured place and in front of/next to the fireplace

2.2. Outside the shaman's place at altars or offering places out in the open:

2.2.1. At an *owoo*-altar (ritual stone cairn)

2.2.2. At a shaman-tree-altar

2.2.3. At a burial place

2.2.4. At a shamanic shrine

2.3. In the dwelling of a client

3. The purpose of the ritual

3.1. Healing

3.2. Purification

3.3. Pacifying the spirits

3.4. Sending off the soul

3.5. Divination

3.5. Cursing or counteracting the effect of a curse

3.6. Blessing

3.7. Offering

Type of trance during the ritual

1. Deep trance

2. Light trance

3. Rituals without trance

The shamaness Baljir practices and Bayar practiced both types of ritual concerning its time: the night-time ritual or shamanizing with the "mount" (Mongolian *kölöge*, Khalkha, Darkhad *xölög*), i.e. with the drum (Darkhad *xec*); and the day-time ritual or shamanizing "on foot", without drum or staff (Khalkha, Darkhad *yawgan böölöx*). Both types of ritual are based on the interaction between the shamaness and her *ongons*, 'helping spirits, spirits' (see below for details). According to



1 Shamaness Bayar sitting squat and drumming in front of her altar during a night ritual. Behind the shamaness her two assistants sit. In front of her, above the altar-chest the *ongon*-tassels hang besides of the family photos (Cagaan nuur. Photo: Gergely Bolya, 1993).



2 Shamaness Bayar talks to her *ongons* standing and drumming in front of her altar, her assistant puts up his hands for fear that she might have a fall, which happened quite frequently during her rituals (Cagaan nuur. Photo: Gergely Bolya 1993).



3 Day-ritual in shamaness Bayar's house in Ulaanbaatar, she does not wear her ritual garment (*xuyag*), but she puts a piece of *xadag* (ritual blue scarf) to her coverchief. She uses Jew's harp (*aman xuur*) and mirror (*toli*) instead of drum that is appropriate only for the night rituals (Photo: Attila Rákos, 1999).



4 The angry *ongons* caused shamaness Bayar to fall down during a day ritual in her house in Ulaanbaatar (Photo: Attila Rákos, 1999).

our observations this interaction can be called forth only during trance or, as Baljir explained to us, in dreams. From her words emerges a picture of a possibly quite continuous interaction between the shaman and the spirits during and beyond the rituals.

Ene jil yuunii türüündü nada barak ordak baesan minii duudsan onyad biši. Xamaaguee neg onyad biš; odaa bi yirtemciig ergääd yamar-č yumunaar oraaldaad čiadaxguee giž. Yamar daen dažin, yamar ükxül öwči boluu-l nada xaa-č xelnee, ünün xelnee. Teriig-l bi ikx gaexääd baeyaa yum.

This year they [the *ongod*] preferred to come to me. They have not been the *ongods* I have called. Not a lonely *ongod*, I cannot go around the world, and get to know about things. What a war, what a destruction, malady, they tell me, telling the truth. I really wonder at it.

The *ongons* are key figures of the shaman's activity. They are the messengers, as shamaness Baljir told us, who inform the shaman about the actual problems that are the purpose of the ritual and also notify the shaman of all the important events that are not connected with a particular ritual.

The *Ongons*

The key phenomenon of Mongolian shamanism and folk religion—the concept of spirits—presumably has its roots in the pre-shamanic belief system, in the animistic perception of the world. Although in the accessible written and oral sources numerous terms and designations belong to the concept of spirits (Hamayon 1990: 403–417; Birtalan 2001a: 987, etc.), the close connection of the concept expressed in the term *ongon* with ancestor worship is comprehensible. *Ongon* worship could be derived from the ancestor cult, and its significance in the ritualistic and magical context of shamanism is mainly as the spirit-protector and its representation. The word *ongon* (Mongolian *ongyon*) is also used in the plural as *ongod* (Mongolian *ongyod*), which means 'a group of spirits' on the one hand and expresses respect on the other. In contemporary usage *ongod* means mostly one, respected spirit (Birtalan 2001a: 1020–1022). Manzhigeev, the author of the Buryad shamanic and pre-

shamanic terminology, defined the concept of *ongon* as follows: “the types of *ongon*: 1. spirits of the territories, waters, mountains etc.; 2. spirits of ancestors; 3. spirits of dead shamans, hunters, fishermen, warriors etc., i.e. people who have led an unusual life; 4. spirits of young persons, mostly girls, who have died in early youth; 5. honourable tabooed deities or spirits” (Manzhigeev 1978: 62–65). His concept was based on two different beliefs, the worship of territorial spirits (*genii loci*, cf. No. 1.) and the worship of ancestors (cf. Nos. 2–4.). We would list the fourth group of spirits with the second group, for the reason that even if the young girls and lads are not *par excellence* ancestors, they did belong to a particular clan, and their worship contains this information. Manzhigeev’s fifth group of spirits belongs to another approach to the spirits and also other phenomena: the word *ongon* can be used as an attribute with different phenomena in the meaning ‘pure, original, sacred, noble, tabooed’, as in *ongon-mountain*, *ongon-tree*, *ongon-territory*, *ongon-offering* (*ongyon ayula*, *ongyon modu*, *ongyon nutuy*, *ongyon takily-a*); grey hair appearing among black hair, the uncut mane of a horse (*ongyon üsü*, *ongyon del*).¹⁴ If his etymology is correct, Bertagaev’s explanation confirms the original close connection between the expression *ongon* and ancestor worship. As he stated, the primary stem of *ongon* is *on-*, ‘pervoosnova, pervonachalo, nachalo, pervichnaia sushchnost’ (Bertagaev 1974: 28–39; cf. also Sečinčoytu

¹⁴ Here we chose the most characteristic from the point of view of our topic, although Sečinčoytu, the author of a Mongolian etymological dictionary collected more items for the use of this expression: “1. shrine, amulet, ancestors, *ongyon-shrine*; 2. cemetery of nobles and ancestors, corpse-*ongyon*; 3. taboo, noble, sacred: *ongyon-mountain*, *ongyon-tree*, *ongyon-territory*, *ongyon-offering*; 4. primary, original: white hair among the black ones, uncut mane of a horse; 5. pleasant, trusted; 6. the name of an old Mongolian tribe, that inhabited the northern side of the mountain Dalan Qar-a [Seventy Blacks]” 1. *sitügen*, *sakiyulsun*, *degedüs*, *ongyon sitügen*; 2. *yekes degedüs-ün kegür orsiyuluysan yaĵar*, *kegür ongyon*; 3. *darqan*, *nandin*, *seter*: *ongyon ayula*, *ongyon modu*, *ongyon nutuy*, *ongyon takily-a*; 4. *angqan-u*: *ongyon üsü*, *ongyon del*; 5. *eyelseg*, *dotonu*; 6. *erten-ü mongyol-un nigen ayimay-un ner-e*, *odo-yin Dalan Qar-a ayula-yin aru-bar nutuylaĵu bayije* (Sečinčoytu 1988: 327–328).

1988: 324–327). Sečinčoytu further suggested the connection of this stem with the stems *ang-*, *angyai-*, *ongyoi-*, ‘gap, space; to gape, to open wide’.¹⁵

Ongon worship appears in the system of the black and yellow shamans as well. Hereditary shamans (Khalkha, Darkhad *yajguurtai böö*, *udmiin böö*, ‘shaman with shaman ancestors, with roots’), who are descendants of shamans, inherit (Khalkha, Darkhad *süldl-*) their protector and helping spirits from their relatives, mostly from their father or mother or both, from clan members, and also from their master shamans. Shamans who are possessed by spirits without being hereditary shamans, who do not have shaman ancestors, inherit the spirits of their masters. Hereditary shamans possessing twenty or even more *ongons* are not rare among the Darkhads. In his encyclopaedic work, Badamxatan (1965: 215–216) listed the *ongons* of some famous shamans (such as Šagdar, Xas, Xorol, Doljinsüren) with numerous helping spirits. Our Darkhad shamaness informants Baljir, Bayar and Joljayaa inherited numerous protector spirits. Baljir has never revealed how many spirits she has; different sources give different numbers for Bayar’s *ongod* (36 according to Pürew, 42 according to our fieldwork); and Joljayaa had approximately 20 *ongod* in 2000.

In numerous Darkhad shaman invocations the expression *ongon* is used for the owner spirits of the shaman’s garments and of the different features of the landscape; while invoking the spirits the shaman calls them *aaw*, *eeĵ* ‘father and mother’. The souls of departed shamans become protectors at their burial place. Shamaness Joljayaa explained it to us as follows:

*Jöwxön biyiġ oršuulsan bus, xengereg, deel, büx šüteeniġ-n’ jalaji bairluulsan gajar yum. Nas barsan udgun jairinii sünüs-n’ ene gajartaa ongyod bolĵ buudag. Tegeed caaš-n’ Teelee aaw Ulaan modnii aaw geed bii.*¹⁶

Not only the burial place of their corpse, but the territory where their drum, garment and all their sacral objects were placed. The soul of deceased shamans, shamanesses descend to this place to become *ongod*. Then they will be called Father Teelee, Father Red Wood [after the toponym].

¹⁵ In our opinion, both etymologies have to be verified.

¹⁶ Fieldwork material on tape, recorded on 13 January, 2000.

According to Badamxatan (1965: 215), the main protector spirits of the Darkhads were the owner spirits of their objects: the shamanic garments and other ritualistic objects. Badamxatan also gave a detailed description of the appearance and emplacement of the *ongons* that corresponds to our own observations. Shamans keep their *ongons* in the honoured place of the yurt, just opposite the door. The *ongons* are represented as anthropomorphic, zoomorphic or anthropo-zoomorphic figures made of metal and textile (in Badamxatan's survey the materials from which *ongons* are made are felt and metal), or in numerous cases (according to my observations) they are symbolized with a piece of textile or silk according to the number of spirits.¹⁷ The *ongon* representations are attached to a thin rope, hung on the wall of the yurt and kept behind a cover during the day, even during a daytime ritual.¹⁸ Another type of *ongon* that receives its first detailed description here on the basis of our expedition's findings is an object also referred to as *ongon* and which is used during the day ritual. We concluded that it must be a relatively new type of ritual object. To describe it we use the term *gariin ongon*, 'an *ongon* used in the hands', as it was called on the basis of its function by one descendant of a Darkhad shaman. Baljir used such an *ongon* during her day ritual, although she did not call it *gariin ongon*. This type of ritual object consists of symbolical weapons, tassels of five colours, and also of a wooden or copper crow figure and a Jew's harp (or the box for a Jew's harp). Although Baljir's *gariin*

¹⁷ In his epoch-making work Zelenin summed up the types of *ongon*-representations as follows. The representations of the above mentioned types of *ongons* are the following: "Eto byli ili grubye skul'pturnye izvaianiia iz dereva, kamnia, kosti, metalla, travy, dazhe iz zemli (iz 'griazy') i snega; ili chuchela iz shkur, per'ev i shersti, ili kukly iz triapok, ili, nakonets, vyrezannye iz tkani, kozhi libo narisovannye na tkani ili kozhe figury" (Zelenin 1936: 6). The first mention of the *ongon*-representations such as felt and silk puppets by Plano Carpini and Willelmus Rubruck are quoted almost in every study written on Mongolian religions and shamanism, as by Harva (1938: 371) or Heissig (1980: 7). One of the first appearances of this phenomenon is in the *Hiao King*, an early Mongolian source, translated from the Chinese: *tariyan-u ongyod-ta taqil-iyen güyičegen čidayad* "(he) succeeded in completing his offering to the deities of corn seeds" (Ligeti: 1972: 80). Cf. also in *Hua-I ih-yü* 459: *ongut* 'Geister' (Haenisch 1957: 21) and also in New Persian *ōnqūn* 'Filzpuppe, der als Stammestotem götterliche Ehren dargebracht werden' (Doerfer 1963: 179–181).

¹⁸ Fieldwork material of the Hungarian–Mongolian Joint Expedition 1992, 1993, 1998.

ongon did not include a Jew's harp, she explained to us that originally it was attached to one (Birtalan 1996; Somfai Kara 1998: 237–247).

The Ritual Text, Conversation with the *Ongons*

As we have mentioned above, in Mongolian the shamanic trance is called *ongon or-*, 'the *ongon* enters [the shaman's body]', and the interaction between shaman and spirits takes place during the trance.¹⁹ This interaction is an achievement of a very special kind of communication, the so-called sacral communication.²⁰ The shaman is both an active and a passive participant in this action; thus he invites the *ongons*, he begs them, he can even scold them, but the *ongons* also talk through his mouth and use his physical body to transmit their opinions, demands or condemnations. From the client's point of view the dialogue with the *ongons* is the most important part of the ritual. The shaman can invite the *ongons* for different purposes, such as healing the sick, finding lost property, divining the causes of misery, sending off the soul of a deceased person, etc., but the first phase in all these aims is to ascertain the cause of the misery or suffering—i.e. to query the *ongons*. The *ongons* also ask the shaman about the current situation of his community (people and their property). It is rather unusual to find such a conversation with the *ongons* in the literature, since what is mainly reported is the traditional corpus inherited by disciples from their masters, whereas the conversational part varies with the situation. Although the dialogue is improvised, it is subject to strict rules and motives and has elements that are fixed by tradition. Here we would like give a short outline of such a ritual text that was chanted in August 1993.

The text starts with an invocation (Khalkha, Darkhad *duudlag*), which can be longer or very short (just naming the spirit or god that is invoked) and is followed by the shaman's conversation with the invoked *ongons*. The text of the invocation is standard and inherited from the shaman

¹⁹ "The word *ongon* means both the spirit and the material representation of the spirit, and the verb *onguulakh*, 'to make into an *ongon*' is used, for example of a shaman entering an ecstasy—that is, when the spirit enters his body—or of an animal that is possessed by a spirit" (Humphrey 1971: 271–290).

²⁰ On the sacral communication see Lovász 2002.

master by the disciple. Several Darkhad shaman invocations have been published by Rintchen (1975), Badamxatan (1965) and Dulam (1992), but there are only few data about the improvised parts of a ritual.²¹ Whereas the invocation text contains the usual *loci communes*—namely, the evocation of the spirit(s) and descriptions of the spirit, its dwelling place and how it arrives at the place of the ritual—the improvisational part varies according to the requests of the “clients” and the actual situation. This free talk contains the questions of the shamaness and the answers of the *ongons*, and the *ongon* may begin what he has to say with an animal sound if he has an animal form.

From the text of the “talk” the following observations can be made:

(1) A dialog with the *ongons* forms a part of both the night and the day rituals. A dialog between the shaman and, in most cases, several *ongons* is as important a part of the ritual text as the traditional invocations, prayers, blessings, etc. The text of the dialogue is improvisatory, varying with the type of ritual and the requests of clients.

(2) The talk with the *ongon(s)* is not identical with the shamanic invocations, its text being only partly defined.

(3) In most cases this text follows the rules of alliteration.

(4) Several of the invited *ongons* talk through the shamaness’s mouth. Most can be identified from features of the dialog—the motives stated, expressions relating to them, animal sounds, rhythm and tune.

(5) The talk consists of many distorted words (with several syllables added to the words), many of which cannot be identified.

(6) Problems of genre: in which traditional genre does the improvisatory dialogue appear? How does the shaman or one of his assistants define it? The relation of the text to other folklore genres (parts of folksongs, blessings, curses, proverbs) also appears in the talk of the shaman and the *ongons*.

²¹ *Xan Tömörlengiin dudlaya* “Invocation to Khan Tömörleng” in Rintchen (1975: 82–84); on the collecting, see *Köbsögül ayimay Bürin sumu-yin iduyan Čebegdorji kelejšü öggügsen-i temdeglen bičibei 1954 on*, “Collected from shamaness Čebegdorji in Xöwsgöl province, Bürin district, 1954,” translated by Even (1988–1989: 241–244). Another example: *Caŋxilang xaf’niü duudalya*, “Invocation to Khatan Cangxilang” in Rintchen (1975: 84–85); on the collecting, see *Köbsögül ayimay Bürin sumu-u iduyan Čebegdorji-eče temdeglejšü abubai* “Set down from shamaness Čebegdorji in Xöwsgöl province, Bürin district,” translated by Even (1988–1989: 244–247).

(7) The relation of the defined and improvisatory parts in the shamanic text, namely: (i) the traditional defined parts, (ii) the traditional improvisatory parts, and (iii) the non-traditional (innovative) improvisatory parts, which vary according to the actual situation.

Some Preliminary Conclusions Concerning the Analysed Texts

(1) The dialogue with the *ongon(s)* is not identical with the shamanic invocations or prayers, and its text changes with the situation.

(2) The talk may also follow the rules of alliteration.

(3) Several *ongons* are invited to talk through the shamaness’s mouth, but not all are identifiable from their talk or the animal sounds they make. This talk consists of lots of distorted words, many of which cannot be identified because of the added syllables.

(4) The dialogue contains fragments of other folk genres.

Description of the Ritual Performed by Shamaness Bayar on 2 August, 1993²²

Time: at night, full moon

Place: the honoured place (southwest side of the yurt) in the shamaness’ tent, centre of Cagaan nuur district

Purpose: divination and blessing

Trance: deep trance

Audience: the shamaness’ family, the shamaness’ community (the people of Cagaan nuur), members of the research group

Assistants: the shamaness’ husband, a kinsman called Baljir (the degree of relationship was not clear)

²² The text will be published with more notes and remarks on its genre specification in the above mentioned monograph on Mongolian shamanic texts.

The Ritual Process

(1) The drum has been animated during the evening with the help of family members. The shamaness changed from her everyday clothes, putting on her shaman's garments aided by family members—her husband, her husband's previous wife and her children. (2) Bayar performed a libation in front of her altar; (3) Drumming in front of the altar, she called the spirits, the *ongons* (for details see the text inserts below). During the ritual the spirits wanted some food (*cagaan idee*, 'white food', i.e. milk product), some drink (*šimiin arxi* 'milk brandy') and some tobacco to smoke (*tamxi*). Representing the spirits, the shamaness ate a little curd, drank a sip of milk brandy and took a puff from a cigarette, offering them in this way to the invoked *ongons*. (4) After the spirits' departure the shamaness changed her clothes and performed a blessing ritual to her fireplace with a bowl of milk mixed with juniper (*arc*).

Language

The invoked spirits are of Mongolian and Tuvian origin, the Mongolian spirits speaking in Darkhad-Mongolian. The Tuvian spirit, who is called Uighur (a clan of the Khöwsgöl Tuvas), understands and is able to communicate in Mongolian, but generally he starts to talk in Tuvian. Rintchen quoted similar situations when the attendants at the ritual ask the *ongon* to communicate in a language they can understand: "Speak in Mongolian please! We do not understand this Uighur language."²³

Bayar began by invoking her main spirit, Mother Öjüür (var.: Ojuuraa yum):

*Saalaa, saaluu, saaluu, saaluu saalaa, saaluu, saaluu, saaluu, saalaa.*²⁴

²³ *Mongolčilaj xair!* *Ene guigur* (sic!) *xeliig bid medexgüi baina* (Rintchen 1975: 83). The transcription of the text is simplified by the author (Á. B.).

²⁴ Typical beginning of Darkhad shaman ritual texts. Used for the invocation of the spirits, according to our observations it cannot be connected to a particular spirit or god.

Tawan taldaa tarj yow!
Arwan taldaa
Alga bolox čin' boloo yuu?
Ongon tawan tengertee
Sain jalbiraltaí bai!

Saalaa, saaluu, saaluu, saaluu saalaa, saaluu, saaluu, saaluu, saalaa.
 Go spreading to five directions!
 Have you disappeared
 spreading in ten directions?
 Pray, as it is befitting
 to the five *Ongon* gods.²⁵

Mother Öjüür²⁶ scolds²⁷ the shamaness Bayar:

Ödör yaax gej böölöw či?
Xünees čin' yuu üxeew?
Malaas čin' yuu üxeew?
Ee, jailuul! Iim ačil bitii xii!

Why did you shamanize during the daytime?
 Who of your people died?
 Which of your cattle perished?
 Oh, dear! Do not do such a thing!

Trying to pacify²⁸ Mother Öjüür, shamaness Bayar says:

Öndör šar Öjüür bair min'!

²⁵ The group of five spirits or gods is typical in the Mongolian pantheon, i.e. *Jayačači tabun tengger* 'Five Destiny Gods', *Tabun Dalha* 'Five Dalxa Gods'. The grouping of the *ongons* into this quinary assembly follows perhaps analogously other spirit groups.

²⁶ Also Ojuurai yum, a main *ongon* of the Xuular clan. Dulam (1992: 57) explained as *yajguuriin ongon*, 'ongon of the roots, origin'. In a shaman myth collected by Dulam Ojuurai yum is identified with a group of spirits called *Daraanii yum* (Dulam 1992: 57).

²⁷ This kind of blaming is rather typical in those few texts which contain fragments of conversation.

²⁸ The pacifying of angry spirits is one of the main aims of shaman rituals (Birtalan 2001b).

Örgön Xarmaa cengelt min'
Nartiin ornää xümüüs
Bügd amar sain baina.

My high, yellow place Öjüür!
My broad place Xarmaa cengelt²⁹
People living under the Sun,
they all feel well.

The *ongon* Öjüür asks again:

Činii öširxöj yawdag
Nöxöd xed we?
Sain sanaj yawdag
Nöxöd xed we?
Öširxöj yawdag xünd čin'
Öšöön, tašaan xürgej čadna bi.
Sain sanasan xünd čin'
Sain büxniig talbij čadna bi.
Nariin cagaan Deežgee čin'
Ee, jailuul, büren mend üü?
Mendee, mendee?
Ee jailuul!
Tungaaž üjeereegti, daa! Ee jailuul tedüü nöxöd minee! Mendüü?

Companions under your protection
how many of them?
Companions, living the right way
how many of them?
To people under your protection,
I am able to cause bad luck.
To people living the right way
I am able to give all the best.
You thin white Deežgee³⁰

²⁹ Xarmai river, where one the ancestors of Bayar called Xaj shaman lived. After his death he became the spirit in his burial place, the river Xarmai; today in Ričenlhümb and Cagaan nuur districts he is called Xarmain aaw 'Father Xarmai'. Cengelt is a river in the Darkhad territory.

³⁰ We could not identify this entity more closely.

oh dear, are all of them healthy?
Are they healthy? Are they healthy?
Oh dear!
Clarify and see! Oh dear, they, all my companions! Are they healthy?

The assistants of shamaness Bayar³¹ answer:

Mendee, mendee!

Healthy, healthy.

Agariin³² *ongon* arrived and says:

Öndör Agar bair min'!
Örgön mörön Cengelt min'!
Gangan cagaan ulaač min'!
Tegelgüee yaaxab-daa!
Saixan eejiin tašaand
Sanxaragsan biye min' giij,
Gangan cagaan ulaač min!
Gangan cagaan ulaač-l
Gangan bailguee yaax we!?
Ulaastiin goloor-l...
Ee jailuul, ulaač min'!
Ulaačaa-l bodooroi!
Ee jailuul, Ulaastan goloo min'!
Gangan cagaan eežee min'!
Xatan baraanii deej ulaač min' -ee!
Tegelguee yaaxaw binaa!

My high place Agar!
My wide Cengelt river!

³¹ There is a similar fragment in Rintchen's (1975: 83) collection.

³² The Agariin river flows in the territory of Bayanjürx district; the *ongon* called Agariin xairxan is the transformed soul of the shamaness Baglaan (Pürew 1999: 24, 144, 277).

My tidy white messenger!³³
 Of course you are!
 (I am) on the beautiful mother's hip (?)
 my exhausted body shines,
 my tidy white messenger!
 The tidy white messenger³⁴
 should be of course nice!
 Along the river Uliast...
 Oh dear, my messenger!
 Think about your messenger!
 Oh dear, my Uliast river!
 My tidy white mother!
 You the best of... (?)
 Of course you are!

Shaman Damdin's³⁵ *ongon*, called Caxiriin aaw,³⁶ arrives:

Ee, ee, ee, ee!
Xalx darxad xoyort
Xalbadag nertei yawsan.
Nariin cagaan Delbee čin'
Uurlaad dairaad dagaĵ baina.

Ee, ee, ee, ee!
 Among the Khalkhas and Darkhats
 My name was "The Flying".³⁷

³³ *Ulaač*, originally means 'an attendant sent with relay horses', and in the Darkhad shaman texts is one of the appellations of the messenger spirit. Sometimes the spirits might also call the shaman as their messenger.

³⁴ In the following lines of this fragment it is not clear whether it is the shamaness or the spirits talking.

³⁵ A very famous Darkhad shaman (1898–1972) of the Cagaan xuular clan (Even 1988–1989: 136–137; Pürew 2003: 67). Damdin was the master-shaman of Bayar's mother, shamaness Süren.

³⁶ Caxiriin aaw is the transformed soul of shaman Damdin, which became an *ongon*.

³⁷ One of the famous flying shamans, who travelled flying between the Darkhad and Khalkha territories (for the etymology of its name, cf. Darkhad *xalba-*, 'fly, float'). There are legends, myths about the seven flying shamans of the Darkhads.

Your thin, white Delbee³⁸
 follows me angrily, attacking.

Bayar's assistants say:

Tegelgüee yaaxaw!
Im, iim aĵltaa bolood, gadniin ulsuud ireed...
 Of course!
 She became busy, foreigners arrived...

Shamaness Bayar prays (*jalbiral duudlag*)³⁹ to the *ongon*:

Xan-daa buurul eeĵ min'!
Ajai buurul tenger min'!
Uurgüi nomxon jalarč,
Nariin cagaan Delbee min'!
Ogcomgüi dölgön jalaraa!
Ucaargüe nomxon jalaraa!
Altan tuyaagaa tusaxtan!

My grey-haired king mother!
 My grey-haired respected god!
 You arrive without anger and calm,
 my thin, white Delbee!
 Arrive without fury, quiet!
 Arrive without anger, gentle!
 Beam golden rays!

A new *ongon* called Uraanii eeĵ⁴⁰ arrives:

Ee jailuul, üür-čin'!
Tand duldag yum yuu baixaw?
Xargiĵ nargiĵ xarixad...
Nariin cagaan Delbee min'!
Xaĵuud tan' yuu č bolood

³⁸ The name is not specifiable.

³⁹ On this genre of shamanic texts see Birtalan (2002: 855–856).

⁴⁰ Uraanii eeĵ is an *ongon* that could not be identified more closely.

jogsooĵ čadna bi.
Ta nar diilex üü? Bi diilex üü?

Oh, dear, offspring!
What do you miss?
I revel, revel, when I return...
My thin and white Delbee!
I am able to stop anything
besides of you.
Will you win? Shall I win?

Bayar's assistants say:

O, tegeĵ boloxgüee. Aĵil töröl xiiĵ baixad tegeĵ boloxgüee!
Ulaastaan golooroo bodooroo!

O, you should not act this way! While working and acting it is impossible to do it so!
Think about your river Uliaast!

Another *ongon* called Usudagiin eeĵ⁴¹ arrives and asks shamaness Bayar:

Xalx darxad xoyort
Xaanan č xalbaĵ yawsan biye min'
Nartiin ornii borčuul
Büren büten mend üü?

Among the Khalkhas and Darkhats
I myself went flying everywhere.
The poor beings under the Sun,
are they all healthy?

Bayar says:

⁴¹ One of the three *ongons* of the Agariin river (*Agariin gurwan xairxan* 'the three merciful ones of Agar river'). The soul of the shamaness called Amaĵii transformed into this *ongon*. She is also called Sudgiin eeĵ, 'Mother of Sudag' (*sudag* means 'canal', or 'ditch'), see Pürew 1999: 353.

Mend, mend!

They are healthy, healthy!

An *ongon* called Taigiin Caatan Balĵgaa⁴² arrives and asks:

Taigiin Targuul nutag min'-dee-xöö!
Tawiad cagaan caa mor' min' mend üü?
Taigiin Targuul nutag min' dee-xöö!
Tawiaad cagaan mor' min' ...
Yuu bolow? Yaagaad ödör böölöw?

My dwelling, Targal, in the Taiga,⁴³ hoy!
Are my almost fifty white reins and horses healthy?
My dwelling, Targuul, in the Taiga, hoy!
My almost fifty white horses...
What happened? Why did you shamanize by day?

Shamaness Bayar talked to Balĵgaa in the Caatan⁴⁴ language:

(...)

An *ongon* called Caramiin eeĵ⁴⁵ arrives and says angrily:

Eekee, eekee, eekee
ee jailuul!
Mend yüü? Mend üü?
Mendee, mendee bainaw.

⁴² An *ongon* of the reindeer herder Caatan people who live in the northern part of Khöwsgöl province.

⁴³ The dwelling place in the Taiga of the reindeer keepers is called Targal or Targuul Taiga (personal communication by J. Coloo).

⁴⁴ A dialect of the Turkic Tuvian (Tüwa) language. This part of the text was not understandable to anybody from the shamaness's family, who stated that the shamaness has no idea what she is saying in Tuvian she is not in a trance. As the family explained, they do not speak or understand Tuvian.

⁴⁵ Carmiin eeĵ is the name of an *ongon* that dwells on a mountain peak (Darkhad Khalkha *caram*, 'mountain peak').

Togloom naadmiin yumaa šinge
 Ödör böölj baigaa čin' yuu we?
 Önöö yüü? Margas-uu?

Eekee, eekee, eekee,
 Oh dear!
 Are you healthy? Are you healthy?
 Healthy, I am healthy.
 It is like a play, a game
 that you shamanize by day?
 Today or tomorrow?

Shamaness Bayar answers with a prayer (*jalbiral*):⁴⁶

Xöxöö üülen nömrogtön,
 Xaw xar üülen xuwcastanguud,
 Xar lusan xamjaatanguud,
 Xaltar üülen nömrogtöngüüd,
 Awran öršööj xairla!
 Altan tuyaagaa tusgaĭ
 Ačit buural xöörxös min'.
 Aa, öršöögtii, šüteĭ yawyaa, xündelĭ yawyaa!

You, whose cover is the blue clouds,
 You, whose garment is the pitchblack clouds,
 You, whose assistants are the black *lus*-spirits,⁴⁷
 You, whose cover is motley black clouds,
 You kindly protect me!
 You make beam the golden rays,
 My generous, grey-haired dearest ones.
 Oh, protect [us], we will believe [in you], we will respect [you]!

Shamaness Bayar calls the *ongon* Ulaan modon:⁴⁸

⁴⁶ On *jalbiral* see Birtalan (2002: 859–860).

⁴⁷ The *lus* or *luus* are the spirits of the water. Their name also occurs in the expression *lus-sawdag*, which has the meaning 'protector spirits of earth, waters, trees, mountains etc.' (Birtalan 2001a: 1006–1007).

⁴⁸ The two *ongons* of place in Ulaan uul district (the northern part of the Lake Caw). Presumably the *ongon* of Tatai eej 'Mother Tatai' (Dulam 1992: 121).

Örgön tengis bair min'!
 Xaan ulaan mod nöxöd min'!
 Sain eriin ganjgand yawĭ
 ...nada yagaad...
 Ulaač min'-ee!
 Al' saixan oljoo
 Duudaad irsen biye min'!

My place, the wide sea!⁴⁹
 My king red tree-companions!
 Follow the best man on his saddletongue,
 ...why me...
 my messenger!
 Any good booties
 I called myself.

The *ongon* asks shamaness Bayar:

Xeden xünii olj omog duudax
 Yamar ganjag awčirsan be?
 Xel! Xel! Xel!

How many peoples' booty shall I call?
 What kind of saddletongue did I bring?
 Tell me! Tell me! Tell me!

The *ongon* of the plain, the Taliin *ongon* or Xonĭ aaw 'Father Xonĭ', arrives and scolds Bayar for shamanising at an improper time and wants to stop her shamanizing.⁵⁰

Shamaness Bayar scolds one of her younger relatives that some illness afflicted him because she put on somebody else's garment.⁵¹

⁴⁹ For the Darkhads, "the sea" means the Lake Khöwsgöl.

⁵⁰ The recording is inaudible; this comment was added by members of the shamaness's family.

⁵¹ A very typical part of the shamanic texts; we have also heard it stated several times that the shamans hate wearing someone else's clothes, jewels, etc. Personal

*Xüntei či xuwcasaa sol'j ömssön baina? Yaagaad xuwcasaa sol'j xüinii xuwcas
či ömssön yum be? Čamd xuwcas dutaa yuu? Daxiad xüntei xuwcasaa sol'j
ömswöl biye xar čin' öwdööd l baix yum baina. Bol' odoo či.*

You put on the clothes of somebody else? Why did you put on, changing the clothes of somebody else? Are there not enough clothes for you? If you change and put on the cloth of somebody else once again, your miserable body will suffer for sure. Stop doing it now!

Bayar's *ongons*, stopping her shamanizing, return to their fireplaces.

*Xaluun galdaa
Xar' buc!*

Return, go back
to your fireplace!

Bayar asks:

Tarax-uu, tarax-uu?

Shall we finish, shall we finish?

All the *ongons* answer:

*Xaluun galdaa xar'na bi,
Bucna bi taruu, taruu?
Xaluun galdaa
Xar' buc!*

I return to the warm fire,
I go back. Shall we finish, shall we finish?
Return, go back
to the warm fire!

Bayar asks:

paraphernalia keeps the destiny of their owner, and bad luck can be transferred in this way to another person.

Tarax-uu, tarax-uu?

Shall we finish? Shall we finish?

The *ongons* answer:

*Xaluun galdaa xar'na bi, bucna bi.
Taruu, taruu?*

I return, I go back to the warm fire.
Shall we finish? Shall we finish?

Bayar continues:

*Öögi, öögi, öögi,
Naiman cagaan biyed min',
Nariin bumbiin tuyaatanguud!
Tarax-uu, tarax-uu, tarax-uu?*

*Öögi, öögi, öögi,
To my eight white bodies,
You shiny [spirits] from the thin vessel (!)
Shall we finish, shall we finish, shall we finish?*

Bayar's assistants say:

Odoo bolson bolox, ongod cöm orj garaad...

Now it is come to an end, all the *ongod* spirits entered and left...

A Musical Analysis of Bayir's Song

Ágnes Birtalan asked me (J. S.) to transcribe and analyse the Darkhat shamanic songs collected and published by her in this article. I was more than happy to undertake this task as the shamanic songs of the Mongol peoples are very little studied and, to the best of my knowledge,

none have been transcribed.⁵² Hungarian ethnomusicologists have a longstanding interest in Mongolian folk music as there are similarities between some pentatonic layers of Hungarian and Mongolian folk music. They have visited Mongolia and Inner Mongolian peoples living in Northern China,⁵³ and I myself have been able to discover the Inner Mongolian parallel of a Hungarian musical style.⁵⁴

Although we find references to shamans and professional minstrels in the *Secret History of the Mongols*⁵⁵ going back to the early 13th century, musical transcriptions of Mongolian shamanic ceremonies are lacking even today, and analytic works concerning Mongolian shamanic songs are practically non-existent.⁵⁶ If we attach great importance to these séances, we need also to examine the musical and extra-musical devices that represent an essential part of the shamanic ceremony.

The examination of shamanic songs is important from another point of view, in that they probably preserve old traditions. It is not easy to imagine that new songs creep into the repertoire of genres such as laments or shamanic songs since they are so close to the world of instincts.

I (J. S.) was not present during the shamanic ceremony described in the first part of this article, so I worked with tapes provided by Ágnes Birtalan. I selected the characteristic tunes from the whole material.

⁵² However, there are lots of recordings. In January 2004 I attended the 37th World Conference of the International Council for Traditional Music, where interesting papers on Korean and Manchu shamans were read, while there was only one lecture on Mongolian shamans (Liu Guiteng 2004). Though the lecturer presented video recordings, the melodies were neither transcribed nor analysed.

⁵³ E.g. Szabolcsi 1956; Vargyas 1968; Vikár 1958.

⁵⁴ See Sipos (1997, 1998, 2003).

⁵⁵ For example in paragraph §272: "...he was in distress, when one caused to divine by divers sorcerers and by diviners, [they said]...'Sorcerers, incant and conjure!', when the sorcerers conjured, Prince Tolui drank the water of conjuration."; in paragraph §174: "...we pray [Heaven], seeking [him], saying 'Abui! Babui!'"; in paragraph §189 we read "to play the *qu'ur* [A stringed instrument]" (Cleaves 1982: 212, 213, 100, 116).

⁵⁶ There are only a few analytic works concerning Mongolian folk music. One of the earliest publications is Rudnev (1909). Important studies have been published in Inner Mongolia, such as Rinčindorji *et al.* eds. (1979–1984). These books do not contain musical analysis but are full of reliable transcriptions.

The songs published here were sung by one of the most famous female shamans in Mongolia. The shamaness, whose power is equal to that of the male shamans, calls the *ongod* with songs and *xec* or *xengereg*, the skin-covered frame drum.

The drum accompanies the songs and fills the pauses between them. The basic rhythm pattern is ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ or the smoother ♪♪ ♪♪. During the quite impulsive performance the pitch and the intensity of the units in the patterns above often alters. A remarkable phenomenon is that both the songs and the drums are performed in strict rhythm but they sometimes break away and then cling to one another again.



Fig. 1. Transcription of the pitches

In the majority of the songs the range of the voice reaches, or at least approaches, the octave. In some melodies we can hear the embellishments, trills and glissandos so characteristic of the Mongolian *urtiin duu*, 'long song'; however, most of the songs belong to the less ornamented *tempo giusto*, or 'short song' category.⁵⁷

During the ceremony we hear fifteen songs following each other, from motivic songs based on a few tunes, to the arched, quaternary melody forms. Every melody moves on pentatonic scales, most of which are *do*-pentatonic (Nos. 2, 4–7, 9–12, 14), but there are a few *la*-pentatonic (No. 1), *so*-pentatonic (Nos. 3, 8) and *mi*-pentatonic (No. 13) tunes as well.

As is not rare in musical worlds that are relatively uninfluenced by composed music, we can hear sounds that do not fit perfectly into the pentatonic system and sounds intonated on various pitches too. In the transcriptions these are sometimes indicated by an arrow above the note (e.g. No. 13).

⁵⁷ The concept *urtiin duu* came into general use after standardization of music under the communism. In reality each Mongolian group has its own repertoire and names for its musical styles and forms.

Mongolian Shamanic Songs

No. 1.

Sā - lā - sā - xa - lū xū, sā - xū - lū
Sā - lū, sā - lū, sā - lā - sā - xā - lā.

No. 2.

Ē - xē jai - lūl...

No. 3.

Ön - dör šar...

No. 4.

Ē jai - lūl...

"Talking to the Ongons"

No. 5.

Ē - xē - xē - xē,
Xan - dū bū - ral āw min'

No. 6.

Xan - dū bū - ral ē - xē - xēj...

No. 7.

Ē - xē - ē - xē, jai - lūl ūr ċin' ū - xū - xū...

No. 8.

ūr min' ē - xē - xē...

No. 9.

Tai - gín tar - gúl tar - gúl nu - tag min'

tr *tr*

No. 10.

Ē - xē, ē - xē, ē - xē

Ē - xē, jai - lúi, mend ū

No. 11.

Xō - xō ū - lín nóm - rögt...

tr

No. 12.

Ör - gön ten - ger...

No. 13.

Ē - jē, ē - jē...

(1) (1) *many times*

No. 14.

Ta - rax - ū, ta - rax - ū, ta - rax - ū, ta - rax - ū

The melodies built up from simple motifs and the melodies with large melodic arches succeed each other as follows (I mark the motivic ones with underlining):

No. 1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

The motifs are usually constructed from leaps of a fourth, sometimes a fifth. Nos. 2 and 3 turns around F' on the C ← F' → Bb' triton. After a fanfare-like high opening, No. 8 moves on the F, ← Bb-C → G' tetraton. Here the middle zone is Bb-C, from where the melody jumps a fifth or a fourth up or down.

We have to discuss No. 13 separately. Seemingly its melodic line forms a dale, but if we examine it detail, after a four-note opening and a high-pitched bar we see a unique ascending motif ending on D repeated many times.

Among the melodies with larger melodic arches there are various forms. The simplest consist of a single melodic section and its variants (Nos. 5–7, 11, 14); others are two-sectioned (Nos. 1, 4, 9, 10, 12). The shamaness did not sing four-sectioned melodies, though amongst the two-sectioned ones No. 1 and still more No. 9 have a four-sectioned character because of their distinct inner caesuras. For the most part the movement of the first sections is descending, (Nos. 4–6, 11, 12), but there are wave-like (Nos. 7, 14), dune-like and even more mobile sections (Nos. 9, 10) as well.

The shamanic songs of different peoples are usually simple, being built up from a few tunes. Here I am referring only to the Selkup and Nanai shaman songs published in this journal,⁵⁸ but the same conclusion can be drawn from examining Tuvian shamanic songs or shamanic songs collected by Vilmos Diószegi in Siberia.⁵⁹ A repertoire like our shamaness's consisting of such compound and well-developed melodies appears to be quite exceptional.

⁵⁸ See Niemi 2001 and Bulgakova 1995.

⁵⁹ I transcribed several melodies from Diószegi's shaman collection. These recordings can be found in the Archive of the Institute for Musicology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

We may add that it would be important to examine the relationships between the Darxat shamanic songs and the shamanic songs of other Mongolian people.⁶⁰ Similarly, we should also compare shamanic songs of different peoples. Though certain materials are at our disposal, the elaboration of this subject would require more space than this article permits.⁶¹

We have published the transcriptions here mainly in the hope that this musical material and the analysis will serve as new data for a later comparative musical examination.

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⁶⁰ For example according to J. Coloo, No. 13 is a typical Darkhad song.

⁶¹ As an example I mention that Kyrgyz (1993) published shamanic songs from different Tuvian areas. As Tuva neighbors the Mongolian Xöwsgöl area, from which the Darkhad melodies spring, it is worth making a brief comparison. The Tuvian material consists of fewer compound melodies with smaller compass. The typical note set does not reach the octave, e.g. (D-C)-Bb-G, (F'-D)-C-Bb or the D-C-Bb trichord turning round its central C tune. The melodies are usually built up of motifs containing neighboring pentatonic notes. The only similarity between the mentioned Mongolian and the Tuvian musical styles is the unique third and fourth trill which appears in Kyrgyz No. 8 and in our Nos. 3 and 9.

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Shamanism or Monotheism? Religious Elements in the Orkhon Inscriptions

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The Orkhon inscriptions (three runic tombstone inscriptions from the 8th century) contain various references which enable us to reconstruct a world view or belief system characteristic of the Türk people—even though these inscriptions are primarily epics about battles waged by the Türk tribes against neighboring peoples and about their efforts to build an empire. This belief system seems not to have been influenced by established religions which were later to spread among Turkic cultures. As regards the nature of this belief system, two theories have emerged: one was developed by Roux, who suggested that the texts indicate a monotheistic faith, organized around the concept of a heaven-god, which generally characterized societies at a relatively high level of socio-political organization; the other is the earlier but still prevailing view which connects the belief system of the nomadic Türk tribes to shamanism. The present paper contrasts these two theories and analyzes them in relation to these three Türk texts in the hope that a more precise and thorough textual analysis of the inscriptions will assist in pointing out the shortcomings in these theories and thus result in conclusions which may provide a firmer ground for future studies.

The first and only group of Old Turkic sources written by Türk authors which may assist the researcher in outlining the belief system of the Türk tribes before world religions spread among them comprises three runic inscriptions from the Second Türk Kaghanate (687–745) on tombstones erected for Tonyuquq around 726, Köl Tekin, the brother of Bilge Kaghan, in 732, and Bilge Kaghan himself in 735.