New Material on East Mongolian Shamanism*

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In the past fifty years some interest has been manifested in the existence of a branch of East Mongolian shamanism. This is the shamanism of the Mongol population north and east of the Hsingan mountain range up to the Yablonoj Mountains.

We owe the first congruent information about such shamanism to the Danish explorer Henning Haslund-Christensen, who travelled in this territory from 1936 to 1939 (HASLUND-CHRISTENSEN 1937, 1944; AALTO 1989, 97–98). Incantations of a male *böge* and a female *iduγan* were collected by myself in 1943 in the Küriye Banner, one of the smallest divisions of the East Mongolian area. Both incantations have been published (HEISSIG 1944b, 1950). The publication of an incantation by Ügedelegüü, another shaman from the Küriye Banner (MANIJAB 1957), and by Wančanmayadaγ, an Arukhortsin shaman from the neighborhood of the Küriye Banner (SODNOM 1962, 100–110), brought about the opportunity to compare these four texts and to obtain from them some clues as to the homogeneous oral tradition of these rare religious testimonies (HEISSIG 1966a, 81–100). Additional information about the songs of another shaman, *Čoγčai böge*, sung in autumn of 1945 in the Juuqačin *ayil* of the Küriye Banner, was reported by Manijab.[1]

A rather strong activity of shamans, as well as of exorcizing Lamas, is reported for the turbulent time immediately after the end of the war in eastern China, from the autumn of 1945 to spring 1946. For the time thereafter, and for the years of the Cultural Revolution, however, no information about shamans in East Mongolia seems to be available, so much so that complete extirpation of all remnants of this branch of

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popular religion was feared.

Unexpectedly, however, new material turned up after 1978, searched for and noted down by East Mongolian scholars. This material has been published mostly in excerpts only, in papers and books by ERKIMBATU (1982), BUU YU-LIN (1982), BUYANBATU (1985), MANSANG (1984, 1987), ČIGEČI/TAǰID/BAΓATUR (1984), QIU PU (1985), and others. Some of the publications are even accompanied by musical scores. In addition to these publications I have at my disposal, through the kindness of some Mongolian colleagues, about sixty shamanist invocations from East Mongolia, either on tape or in written form. These invocations testify to a tradition of shamanist practices still extant among the indigenous population of East Mongolia, having been collected by East Mongolian scholars within the period 1978–1988 from shamans living in the territory of Khortsin, Küriye, and Monggholdzin.

Scholars from the Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia in China have in the meantime found a division of labor among the representatives of shamanist and semi-shamanist activities, among male shamans (*böge*) and female shamans (*iduγan*) and among semi-shamans like male healers (*layičing*) and female healers (*daγuči/čaγan eliye*) (MANSANG 1988, 365–370; KÖKEBUYAN 1988, 282–288). We are here only concerned with the incantations by the male shamans: Serinčin *böge* from Mongγoljin, Mendübayar from Küriye Banner, and Li sing, Buyankesig, Bökeǰiyaγa, Buuyü, J̌anaγabayar, and Gomboǰab *böge* from the Khortsin Darqan Banner. Most of these shamans belong to an age group over seventy years old, though some are in their sixties. Serinčin *böge*, for instance, was born in 1915, while Li sing was born in 1909. Some, like the master shaman (*baγsi böge*) Hsiao Buyankesig, born in 1924, or his disciple (*šabi*) Bökeǰiyaγa, born in 1929, are a little younger. All, however, had taken up shamanizing in their youth, long before the attempts to eradicate shamanism during the Cultural Revolution. This ensures a certain correct continuity in a somewhat older and unbroken tradition of vocations and prayers, a prerequisite for the use of such material in establishing traits of homogeneity with shamanist texts previously published by RINTCHEN and NOVIK.[2] If and how this tradition is continued by younger inhabitants of the J̌irim territory cannot be determined yet. (This should be one of the foremost concerns of further research in this field.)

The prayers and incantations of the above-mentioned Khortsin shamans invoke Tngri for help, with Qormusta tngri as the highest embodiment of charismatic power; they further address spirits (*sünesün*) of ancestors, other objects of veneration (*sitügen*), Ongghot and descending helpful spirits (*baγumal>buumal*).

Particular emphasis is given to the numinous figure of the "fate god" (J̌ayaγači tngri). It has been created by giving to one of the five metastatic appearances of "the blue eternal heaven' (*köke möngke tngri*) a new identity as the incarnation of an old, faithful herdsman (NEKLJUDOV 1982, 500a; HEISSIG 1989, 162–168), making him into the guardian of horses and cattle. The relatively great number of more than ten prayers to this J̌ayaγači tngri confirms the dominance of this syncretistic personality in the Khortsin shamanist tradition, which under the name of J̌ol J̌ayaγači spread further north to the Silinghool District of Inner Mongolia.[3] Prayers collected there use the same phraseology.

The stability of such mythological figures, with their old traits, is so much more significant because Mergen gegen Lubsangdambiǰalsan (1717–1766?), the famous author of a Buddhist liturgy in the Mongolian language, attempted already in his time to substitute the exclusively Lamaist divinities Mahakala, Tara, Sridevi, Esrua qormusta tngri, and Činggis Khan for the ancient shamanist pentad of the five J̌ayaγači tngri (fate gods).[4] The infiltration of a figure from Chinese mythology into the Mongol shamanist pantheon, such as the Chinese mother goddess Wang mu niyang niyang (RIFTIN 1982, 231–232), is not surprising in a district where the intensive settlement of Chinese peasantry goes back more than two hundred years, as is true in the Khortsin area (LATTIMORE 1935; HEISSIG 1944a, 1–95). Some shaman prayers there call her "White Mother" (*čaγan emege*) or "Holy Mother" (*boγda emege*), imploring her together with the old god of fertility and longevity, the Čaγan ebügen (SÁRKÖZI 1983, 357–369; HEISSIG 1987a, 589–616), for help against illness and death and for many children. *Niyang niyang nainai* has been worshiped among the Manchu, too, as Niyang niyang enduri—"divine Niyang niyang." This might have had some influence upon Mongol syncretism, considering the proximity of the Manchu to the East Mongolian population.

Ancient local lore of the Liaodong region is revealed in some of the East Mongolian shaman songs referring to the origin of ten thousand of their Ongghot from soldiers of the army of the Tang emperor Li shi min, who drowned during his campaign against Koguryŏ and Liaodong (645–648) (see LATTIMORE 1933 and 1941, 118–119; HEISSIG 1989, 159–162). Similar allusions were already found in 1943 in the invocations of J̌angča *böge* and Tungčingγarbu *iduγan* in the Küriye Banner (Heissig 1944b, 49; 1950, 196).

Another sample of religious syncretism, of the merging of Mongolian and Chinese conceptions, gives the iconographical description of a guardian deity:

Very majestic guardian deity,
With an outbranching helmet,
Grasping in the fist the sword,
Clad in a cuirass of silver and gold.
Riding a ferocious tiger
With a crupper of poisonous snakes,
Holding the drum of silken gauze and
The drumstick of white, shiny copper
Which originated in the Dynasty Shang
From the flint-white Idugan. . . . [5]

The diversity of the elements merged here calls for some explanation. The helmet with its branches designates the iron antlers of the iron coronet of the Mongol shamans, the number of antlers showing the spiritual and healing capacity[6] achieved by the particular shaman, while the " golden and silver cuirass " is a frequently used expression for the ritual dress of the Mongol shaman (HEISSIG 1982, 35).

The tiger as a mount, however, belongs to creatures of Chinese mythology, where Chinese deities ride tigers, and where the Chinese female goddess of the west, Xiwangmu, appears even in a zoomorphic manifestation in the form of a tiger (EBERHARD 1983, 282; TOPOROV 1982, 512). The mount of the Lamaistic guardian deity dPal ldan lhamo/Sri Devi, either horse or mule, has a bridle or crupper of poisonous snakes (URAY-KÖHALMI 1987, 235; HEISSIG 1987b, 71–79). Mother goddesses have been represented since the Stone Age in the company of chthonic snakes. A drumstick of curved iron or copper was often used with the great ceremonial tympanum of the Lamaist services. The " flint-white lady " (*Sahiurša sagaan xatan*), however, is to be found venerated by Buriat shamans, and depicted on a white rock where the Anga River flows into Lake Baikal (BALDAEV 1970, 116 and 1975, 180; HEISSIG 1988, 706). Most remarkable is the connection of this female guardian deity with the ancient Chinese Shang Dynasty (1751–1050 B.C.), to which period the so-called melody " Wu-yin " of the incantation is also ascribed. A certain Chinese contamination of this Mongol shamanist incantation is beyond doubt.

Reference is made in another shaman song to the Red Cliff, the Ulaγan Qada (Chin.: Hongshan), near Linxi, Qifeng, where various neolithic burial grounds have been excavated (HAMADA and MIZUNO 1938; HEISSIG 1953, 504). This place is mentioned in a shamanist chronicle from Tsakhar (HEISSIG and BAWDEN 1971, 123; HEISSIG 1966b, 163–168; 1953, 501–508) as the site where the first shamans found " their crossbar drums " and their ceremonial " hats with feath-

ers of the yellow bird, being commissioned by Ataγa tngri" (HEISSIG 1953, 505).

The Khortsin shamans profess a clear line of descent from the three famous shamans (*čolatai γurban böge*), Kökečü[7] Teb tngri of the time of Činggis Khan, Tenggeri *böge*, and Qoboγtai taγiji *böge* of the Khortsin who was pacified by the renowned Lamaist missionary Neyiči toyin (1557–1653), bringing about the infiltration and camouflage of shamanism by Lamaist notions.[8] Neyiči toyin appears in the East Mongolian invocations with his hagiographical epithet "*Boγda lama*" ("Holy Lama") or "*Qutuγtu lama* ("Incarnated Lama"). Other shaman songs from Khortsin invoke the Sülde spirit,[9] the early masters of East Mongolian shamanism, shamans of the black[10] as well as of the white creed,[11] and those nine masters (*baγsi*) who "crossed the passes" (*dabaγa dabaqu*),[12] make offerings for the four seasons, cure maladies (*ebedčin jasaqu*), foresee the future (*tölge üjekü*), and accompany libations with the sprinkling of milkwine (*ariki serjikü*) and offerings of meat (*sigüsü jiγaqu*). The last of these abound in detailed descriptions of the various parts of the consecrated animal, thus showing many similarities to prayers noted down much earlier in the Küriye Banner by Sodunprinlai (RINTCHEN 1975). Spells for banishing spirits and pacifying demons (*čidkür nomuγadqaqu*) who bring illness, exorcising these into an effigy (*joliγ*) which is buried in a hole in the ground, are found to be still in use (SÁRKÖZI 1984; HEISSIG 1986).

Remarks similar to those found some forty to fifty years ago, pointing to an explicitly oral tradition of the shamanist prayers and invocations, are found in the newly discovered texts. Shamanism is called:

A religion without books,
. . . . . .
A religion not on paper,
. . . . . .
A religion without letters,
This, as explained by the master, my Sülde,
The teachings thus given,
Are a scripture by drum and drumstick,
A scripture kept by speaking,
A scripture by drum and drumstick . . . [13]

Such parallelism and similarity of formulaic expressions in the individual incantations corroborate their oral transmission, as implied by the designation "spoken religion."[14]

As a sample of this parallelism of expression, five invocations of

the *buumal* < *baγumal* (descending auxiliary spirits) have been compared (HEISSIG 1953, 509). They were sung by Buyankesig *böge*, his disciple Bökejiyaγa, and by J̌alaγabayar *böge*, Buuyü and Li sing *böge*.

Buyankesig *böge* and Bökejiyaγa describe in their invocations the " five descending spirits of anger " (*kiling-un tabun baγumal*) as:

Five descending spirits of anger,
Covered by fur of squirrel and sable,
With dark-brown rounded eyebrows
And eyes of foamy pearls.[15]

J̌alaγabayar *böge* uses nearly the same formulaic expression:

Five *buumal* of anger,
Set up on sable and silk,
With eyebrows of sable fur.
Set up with coral-pearls. . . . [16]

For another pentad, the five *buumal* of the habitation, the formulaic description by Buyankesig *böge* and Bökejiyaγa runs as follows:

Five *buumal* of the five habitations,
At home in the narrow plain,
With geese and ducks for mounts,
With hot (?) water to drink,
With beaver and geese for mounts and
Worshiped by noblemen and commoners alike. . . . [17]

While a slightly different version runs:

Buumal and heavenlies of the nine settlements,
On double-coloured damask and silk,
With silken gauze of five colours
Painted and adorned
By the noblemen and rulers. . . . [18]

All these parts from the ritualistic poetry certainly refer to objects of veneration painted on or applied to silk or other fabrics as they were in use after the destruction and conflagration of the Ongghot figurines in the time of Neyiči toyin (1557–1653) and other Lama missionaries (HEISSIG 1953, 524–526).

The problem of the use of stereotype formulae in oral shaman poetry has to be thoroughly studied, like all other problems arising from this material. The intention of this paper is solely to draw the

attention of scholars in this field to this newly found corpus of syncretistic shamanist traditions.

NOTES

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1. Unpublished notes.

2. RINTCHEN 1975, 4–10, Nrs III and IV, collected by Sodunprinlai in the Kuriye Banner. French translation by EVEN (in print). An until now unpublished *J̌ayaγači takiqu* (offering to J̌ayaγači), noted down in the Darkhad Banner, shows the same structure as that from the Kuriye Banner (RINTCHEN 1975, Nr III), in describing the features and parts of the offered animal. Such sacrificial formulae seem to correspond with the " material character " of the formulaic requests of Siberian shamans (NOVIK 1984, 136; German edition 1989, 169).

3. *J̌ol ǰayaγači-yin daγudalγa* [Invocation of the J̌ol J̌ayayači], SILI-YIN ГООL 1982, 251–258.

4. *J̌ayaγan tabun Tngri-yin sang* [Incense offering to the five fate gods], in MERGEN GEGEN LUBSANGDAMBIǰALSAN 1986, 538–572. The many pentads, of which this one of the five fate gods is but a single example in the popular religion of the Mongols, might, like the Bon-pentads, stem from very early " Iranian " Manichaean influences, and not from Buddhism. See HOFFMAN 1975, 106–107; KVAERNE 1987, 165–166.

5. Li sing *böge*, 1981, at age seventy (in BUU YÜ-LIN 1982, 37):

Arbalǰing duγulγa-tai yum e
Adqun-daγan bariγsan seleme-tei yum e
Arǰiγ yalǰaγu bars-i kölgelgsen
Qoortu moγai yin qudarγa-tai yum
Qurča sürtei sakiγusu sitügen
Ša toryan kenggerge-tei yum e
Čaγan γaulin ǰasiyur-tai yum e
Čakiγur čayan uduγan-ača
Šang ulus-un üye-dü γaruγsan yum e
U-yin gedeg ayas mön tere.
Üye-eče egüsčü γaruγsan ayalγu yum e

6. *oryoi*. The newly initiated shaman begins with only an iron ring around the head; to this, antlers are added later, according to the achievements of the shaman (see POPPE 1989).

7. *Niγuča tobčiya*, § 242, 243; HAENISCH 1941, 119–120; DE RACHEWILTZ 1972, 259. See also the invocation of J̌angča *böge* " *Mila Kögčü* " (HEISSIG 1944b, 62).

8. *Boγda neyiči toyin dalai manǰušryi-yin domoγ-i todorqai-a geyigülügči Čindamani erike*, 37v; HEISSIG 1953, 520–521 (there I read *qobus-tu*; see HEISSIG 1989, 154–159).

9. The personal genius of human beings and families. MANŽIGEEV 1978, 94–95; N. L. ZUKOVSKAJA 1982, 475; HEISSIG 1980, 58–59; 1981, 84–102.

10. The section of Mongol shamanism that in popular opinion was held to be more harmful to human beings.

11. The more helpful group of shamans; this incorporates Buddhist notions.

12. The Eastern Mongols designate as " crossing nine passes " (*yisün dabaγa dabaqu*) those shamans who have passed a kind of test of invulnerability by marching eighty-one times over sharp implements. The ceremony takes place on a protruding

hill. Four master shamans watch the test, in which the applicants march barefoot over a platform surrounded by sharp knives and adorned with little flags in nine colors. When the attendant has reached, unharmed, the big bowl filled with millet in the middle of the platform, he is asked what is in the southwest. If the applicant invokes the Tngri as mentioned by the examining master shamans, he is considered a "white shaman" and sent back in this direction. Keeping silent, however, is considered a sign of a "black shaman"; he is castigated with whips of willow-wood and sent back in the northeastern direction, this being the realm of evil (KÜRELBAĮATUR-URANČIMEG, 1988, 372–373).

13. Li sing *böge* (BUU YÜ-LIN 1982, 37):

Sudur ügei nom la yum e
. . .
Čaγasu ügei nom la yum e
. . .
Üǰüg ču ügei nom la yum e
Egün-i ǰiγaγsan baγsi-yin mini sülde
J̌iγaǰu ögkü ni ǰarliγ, yum e.
J̌asiγur kenggerge-yin sudur yum e
Keleǰü baraqu ni nom-un teüke
Kenggerge ǰasiγur-un sudur üsüg
. . .

14. For similar East Mongolian expressions see HEISSIG 1944b, 64–54 and MANSANG 1984, 1. There exist, however, some remarks on a written tradition, too; e.g., *yisün baγumal gedeg-i|Erten-ü teüken-eče ǰalbaridaγ*—"The *baγumal* of the nine habitations have been prayed to from ancient times."

15. In this and subsequent notes, I give transcriptions of the invocations as they have been recorded on tapes.

Kürmü boluγsan-iyar kümüskelegsen
Küreng bolbari kömüske-tei
Kögeresü subud-iyar nudülegsen
Kiling-un tabun baγumal . . .

J̌angča *böge* invoked nine tngri of anger (*kiling-ün yisün tngri*) and five tngri of wind (*kei-yin tabun tngri*) (HEISSIG 1944b, 58).

16. *Bulaγa torγan-du bosqaγsan e ši γuyu ši*
Bulaγan üsü-ber kümüskelegsen e ši γuyu ši
Siru subud-iyar bosqaγsan e ši γuyu ši
. . .

17. *Narin tala-daγan nutuγ-tai*
Noγusu γalaγun-u külüg-tei
Qalai-yin usun umda-tai
Qaliγun γalaγun-u külüg-tei
Tayiǰi qaraču nar-un takiγsan
Tabun saγuri baγumal e.

18. *Yisün saγuri e kui ki*
Baγumal tngri e kui ki ye
Taǰi torγan-daγan e kü ki ye
Tabun öngge-yin čimeg-iyen ku
Sudulaγsan yum e küi ki ye
Tayiǰi wang nar-un ye ki
. . .

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