

RESEARCH MATERIAL

SQINGAOWA ONON

Hulunbuir City

Evenki Banner, Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region

RP China

A Shaman's Ritual Songs

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTORY NOTE

In the summer of 2002 in a village in the grassland of Hulunbuir, Inner Mongolia, the shaman who had prepared her disciple to become a new shaman had invited me to attend his initiation ritual. However, she did not conduct the main part of the ceremony herself. Instead, she had asked a "more powerful and experienced shaman," in her words, to act as the main ritualist. By the time this shaman arrived at the candidate's house, the main preparations for the ritual were finished.

When this shaman arrived, surrounded by her assistant, several other shamans and disciples, she impressed me as a dignified woman, having something of an authoritative aura around her. When the ritual finally came to a close, almost twenty-four hours later, and everybody joined the shamans in a fine meal offered by the man who had just been initiated as a shaman, the main shaman showed quite a different aspect of her personality. Although she was visibly tired, she participated in the conversation and laughed with all the other guests. Now she was just one of them. This gave me the courage to ask her for an interview. I eagerly hoped that she would agree, because there were too many aspects of the event I had just witnessed about which I wanted to gather more information. I was truly surprised when she agreed without the least sign of hesitation. Ever since that first meeting and the extended interview that followed a few days later, this shaman allowed me again and again to attend her counseling sessions at her home or invited me to accompany her on visits to other settlements where I had the privilege to attend a variety of rituals. On a more leisurely note she shared much of her personal feelings and thinking in conversations over many shared meals.

In the three years that have passed since we first met, her activities have expanded year by year becoming the source of a considerable degree of prosperity. At the same time she allowed for my relationship with her to grow more and more familiar, to the extent that I now feel very much at home with her. This I owe not only to her but also to my faithful Mongol friend and translator, Dr. Erdemtu of the Central University for Nationalities, Beijing.

When this shaman asked me if I would accept some of her songs for publication if she had them written down complete with musical notation I almost could not believe my ears. I happily agreed to her request and am pleased to publish here what she has entrusted to me.

Sqingaowa, the shaman, is a Daur of the Onon *hala* (clan), married to a Mongol, and living in the Evenki Banner. I publish her songs in the form I received them, but with an approximate English translation. I made this translation based on the Japanese translation I made in cooperation with my translator at the shaman's house. We made it a point to discuss every item with the shaman before deciding on the Japanese translation. Therefore, I believe that the content of the songs is faithfully represented so that the readers might get at least a feeling of what the songs are about. Unfortunately the rhythm of the songs' texts are lost in the translation.

There is perhaps a problem with the Romanization of vernacular terms. In general my translator wrote them down for me, but in my experience his transcriptions do not always correspond with other published transcriptions. However, readers familiar with the local language and IPA transcription should be able to recognize the original in the texts provided by Sqingaowa.

A short note about the term *ongon* might be appropriate. It can be translated as to mean "spirit," but in Sqingaowa's usage it generally means the spirit of an ancestor who had been a shaman. It is that meaning that is contained in the texts that follow. However, it can also be a term that designates the small human figure made of felt or cloth that is enshrined on the shaman's altar and represents the spirit.

[We have reproduced the musical notation and the original Mongol text in the form the shaman gave to us. The translation was made in consultation with the shaman].

(Peter Knecht)

Songs and Their Translation

Song 1: Sung when the *ongon* of Los has entered the shaman

nəməŋ ɡɔŋ ɔ-sə ne nəmə-jaŋ ku
Xələ:r ɡɔŋ ɔ-sə ne Xadaŋ dʒɔ-rɔ

nə mə jaŋ ku nəmə jaŋ ku
nə mə jaŋ ku nəmə jaŋ ku

The water of the river Namur, *namujang ku namujang ku namujang ku*
The water of the river Hailar flows well, *namujang ku namujang ku*

(Editor's comment: *Los* is a water spirit and seems to be connected especially with the water source of a family. It is very important that it is taken care of properly lest it might avenge itself.

According to Sqingaowa the words *namujang ku* are used only for their sound and do not carry meaning.)

Song 2: Sung when Sqingaowa's own *ongon*, in the form of a bird, enters her.

də ɡuxə ɲi də ɡu də ɡuxə ɲi də ɡu
də ɡuxə ɲi də ɡu də ɡuxə ɲi də ɡu

Degoja dego degoja dego
degoja dego degoja dego

(Editor's comment: The words are used only for their sound, they have no inherent meaning.)

Song 3: Sung for an *ongon* in the form of a bird

e d=bił d=bił d=bił d=bił d=bił
 d=bił l= e alıan zadiñ arıan d=ri ne
 aǵarw dzanday m= d= tæ: u:r b=ıñ ondog te
 ju xo ǵarpi d=gi d= gi mi - ni usǵ d=uswi
 kutıfı d=ze d=rd=pu d=gi b=ı- s=ñ xud=ı d=ıpi xawar=ı tı
 ju kutıfı d=ze b=ı d=ı i t= s=ñ

E, spread, spread, spread the wings,
 Spread, spread, spread the wings, e.
 On a cliff stands a santan tree,
 There is also a nest and eggs.
 My precious bird, your wings be strong,
 Your wings be strong.
 You are able to fly.
 With a bell at its neck the bird came down [to me].

(Editor's comment: Sqingaowa says that the bird is a form of her *ongon*.
 When asked what kind of bird it was, she said she could not reveal this
 because it is her secret.)

Song 4: Sung at a purification rite for healing



1) u: bte tangari- η u: di (hihi) bæri sa- η

xa: lta tæ: (hihi) tangari- η xa: la: gi- lə bæri sa- η

ɔ- nɔ- η xa- li- η ɔ- dʒə- r ja dʒa- η

samaŋxə tæ: xa- η jəjə

gə- η ari- dʒə bæ: - na

2.

jʊsɔŋ bəlgɪŋ dɔr: sɔ:

jʊsɔŋ tʃəlɔ: g awtʃɪrdʒ

dʒalɔŋ ujə də dʒalɔ: lɔʒ ɔgɔŋ tʃəlɔ: ɣa: r

ʒriwɔxɔdʒ ɔgtʃi bæ:

3.

ka: ŋ ɔ: liŋ ɣaŋɣa: r

kɔdɔŋ dɔbɔ: ŋ arʃa: na: r arʃa: lɔʒ

kamaŋ bæjɪ tʃiɪi arʃa: lɔʒ bæ: ne

4.
Sumbur dɔ:liŋ ganɣaɪr
Su:ŋ dɔ:ɬe:ŋ arfa:nair arfa:lɔz
tʃomog bɔ:ŋ somɣi:tʃini ɛriɔtxadz oɣtʃi:bɛ:na
taway dʒusi:ŋ tɛriŋiara
taxal ɔwtʃini:tʃini ɛriɔtxadz oɣtʃi:bɛ:na

The clouded sky (*tengri*) has a gate,
 The sky has a closed gate.
 Inviting Yetogan, the ancestor of the Onon clan,
 Inviting La shaman of ten generations ago.

From nine springs
 Bringing nine stones,
 I wash with these stones.

With *ganga* from Mt Han
 And water from the sea Hatun
 I wash the whole body.

With *ganga* from Mt Sumi (*sumbur*)
 And water from the sea Sung
 I cleanse the marrow.
 With five kinds of spells I cure sickness.

(Editor's comment: Sqingaowa uses this song at a healing rite performed at her office.

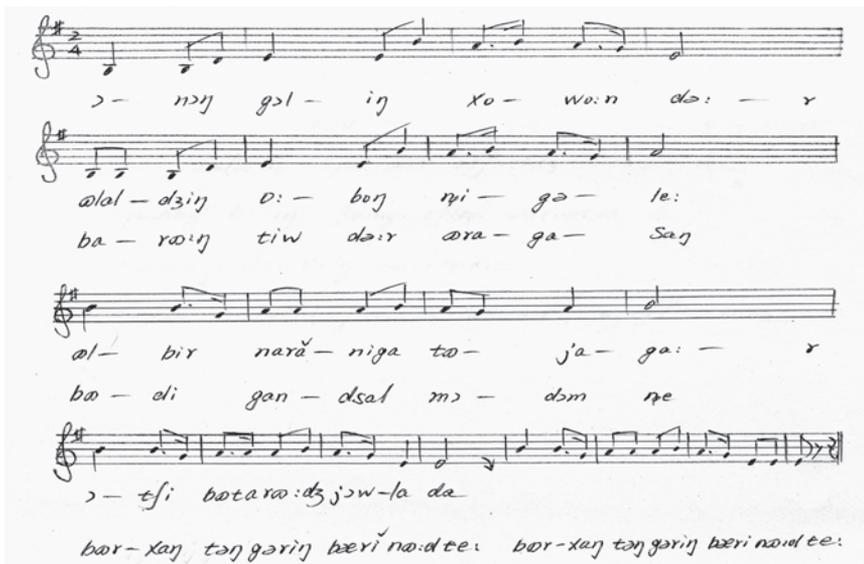
Water is heated in a cauldron, which also contains nine pebbles, specifically for the purpose. Dried *ganga* 百里香, a herb that grows in the grassland, is also added, together with some milk and liquor. The shaman then splashes the clients with this hot water. At that time she sings this song. La shaman is a shaman in the ancestry of Sqingaowa who was a lama, hence his name. His spirit is especially venerated by Sqingaowa.)

Song 5: Sung at the time of calling or returning the *ongon*


dʒa miŋa dʒandar sɛxəŋ dʒama jaŋ Ku
 dʒinsni ilga dʒandar sɛxəŋ dʒama jaŋ Ku

(Editor's comment: Sqingaowa does not know the meaning of this song's words.)

Song 6: A Buryat song



> - nɔŋ ɡɔl - iŋ xo - wɔ:n do: - r
 alal - dʒiŋ o: - boŋ ni - ɡə - le:
 ba - rɔ:ŋ tiw do:r ɔra - ɡa - sɛŋ
 al - bir narä - niga to - ja - ɡa: - r
 bə - di ɡan - dsal mɔ - dom ɲe
 > - tʃi batarɔ: dʒjɔw - la da
 bor - xəŋ tɔŋ ɡəriŋ bæri nɔ:d te: bor - xəŋ tɔŋ ɡəriŋ bæri nɔ:d te:

By the river Onon there is a tent [made] of grass
 He [the *ongon*] comes running with the rays of the sun.

On my only tree, planted in the land to the west,
 There is the place where the god of the sky stays.

(Editor's comment: Sqingaowa sings this song when her Buryat *ongon* enters her.)