

Mongolo-Tibetica Pragensia '08
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Special Issue
Mediums and Shamans in Central Asia

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Mediums and Shamans
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Mediums and Shamans in Central Asia
Prepared by Daniel Berounský

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Preface

With the present volume, we would like to start a new tradition of thematic issues of *Mongolo-Tibetica Pragensia*, a journal that continues in the tradition of *Mongolica Pragensia*, which has been published annually for the last six years. Past volumes have focused on a variety of topics, yet over time, the need has arisen for a special issue dedicated to a single topic, connecting the effort of specialists from various institutions. In the future, such thematic special issues will occasionally appear in addition to the regular annual edition.

The present issue is devoted to “Mediums and Shamans in Central Asia”. The papers included cover the topic from a wide range of aspects, without any claim to analyse the subject from a single shared viewpoint. On the other hand, we had one instance of good fortune in creating the issue: we were able to bring together papers on various kinds of mediums and shamans across a very broad geographical area, namely the Tibetan areas of Amdo, Mongghuls, Khorchin Mongolians and Sibes, as well as an article commemorating the life of a Hungarian researcher of shamanism. The good fortune lies in the particular topics of the research articles: as if each of them provides the reader with a natural transition into the field of reference of the preceding one. This feature accents the monographic character of the volume, despite the fact that we can by no means claim to be providing exhaustive coverage of the given area.

The papers presented here are mostly case studies touching upon mediums and shamans within the cultural world of Central Asia in the broader sense.¹ At the same time, the order of the papers proceeds from the Amdo area in a northerly direction (although different starting-points for such travels and different routes with respect to the topic would also be possible). My intention, as editor of the volume, was to undertake the task with colleagues and

1) The concept of Central Asia, as we perceive it, corresponds roughly to the cultural concept of Inner Asia defined, for example, in Denis Sinor's introduction to *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* (D. Sinor, ed., 1990, *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*. Cambridge University Press, Taipei, pp. 1–19). While the center of the area quite unambiguously consists of the high plateaus of Mongolia and Tibet, its borders are vague and fluid, shifting according to historical period and point of view.

friends which would lead each of us towards deeper implications of her/his respective field of study: be it Tibetology, anthropology, Mongolian studies or Manchu studies.

The volume opens with an article by Katia Buffetrille, dealing with a rich and colourful festival in the village of Sog ru near Reb gong, one of many special festivals celebrated by the local Tibetan inhabitants. Ms. Buffetrille had the great opportunity to be among the first foreign scholars who observed the festival called *glu rol* (musical festival) here in the years 1992, 1997 and 1999. During this festival the main role is reserved for mediums (*lha pa*), through whom the local deities are believed to participate and guide the festival. The first part of her article briefly surveys the existing Tibetan texts on the festival, after which she provides a full translation of one of the texts by Ri gdengs, himself an inhabitant of Sog ru. The translation of the Tibetan text provides the reader with the flavour of indigenous ways of treating the festival, but despite its great value certain topics are left undiscussed. Consequently, author turns her attention to the topic omitted in the translation, i.e. the mediums themselves. The next chapter is devoted to particular performances of the festival, with many first-hand observations and much information gained through tireless interviews with festival participants. The article then attempts an interpretation, arguing that during the ritual, order is restored to the specifically structured world of the villagers. In the conclusion, using Hocart's theory on kinship, she questions the possibility of the identification of the medium (*lha pa*), "a human being in a state of absence" with the king whose "*raison d'être* is not to coordinate but to be the head of the ritual".

Unlike the previous one, the second article by Daniel Berounský deals with a purely monastic community in Amdo. It introduces a Tibetan protective deity who was originally a hermit and died under strange circumstances. Successfully taming him and raising him to the status of protective deity (*rgyal po*) has played a role in the "civilizing" mission to the borderland area of Thewo which professed the religion of Bon. Several later conflicts, mostly local but also including a recent one with wider influence over the Tibetan communities, had a direct impact on the perception of the role of the deity. The deity possessed the mediums chosen by him, who were always monks, starting from around 1900. Quite recently, a new medium was ritually appropriated in Dharamsala, in India, by the present Dalai Lama, in the course of which the medium was also recognized as "reincarnated master" and "protector of the Tibetan government".

The third article concerns the Mongghul of Hawan Village in Tianzhu (Dpa' ris) Tibetan Autonomous County in Gansu. Kevin Stuart, one of the authors,

spent more than 20 years in the Gansu and Qinghai provinces. He turned his attention to a story related by the second author Ha Mingzong, a Mongghul and native of the village of Hawan, concerning the revival of worship of the clan goddess. The result is an article containing few ideas from “outsiders” in order to let local voices speak through translations of accounts that describe events of importance and their significance for local people. After a brief introduction to the village and people mediating the will of deities among the Mongghul, the text leads the reader through the narration concerning the “Heavenly Mule King”, the renunciation of belief in this deity by his medium (*fala*), and the later revival of worship of the clan goddess, Niangniang. She is believed to descend into her “body”, which is a spear made following instructions transmitted through a medium, and it is this spear that is worshipped. The village lacks its own *fala* because, as the article explains, villagers eat such foods as garlic, which are inappropriate for a *fala*. This makes the village dependent on “outside” mediums, viewed as a great inconvenience. The article provides a rare case study of highly heterogeneous, but very explicit Mongghul religious beliefs.

With the next text by Veronika Zikmundová, we head northward to the Khorchin Mongols and the Sibe people of Xinjiang. She explores some features of shamanist beliefs among Khorchin Mongols and Sibe. Although at present they live separated by thousands of kilometres, in the rather distant past (at least in the 16th century) they were much closer to each other. After introductory sections she concentrates on the main shaman’s deities who are invoked in rituals: Hovogt av (i.e. “Grandfather”) and Isanju mama (i.e. “Grandmother”). Both are late shamans and several stories connected with the introduction of Buddhism were recorded, describing their defeat at the hands of a powerful Buddhist master. Her attention is then focused on trial-rituals during which both Sibes and Khorchins put the adepts of shamans to the test (in the case of the Sibes we have to use the past tense). What concerned the Sibes was the climbing ladder with steps made of sharp swords. Climbing it symbolized the shaman’s travel through the eighteen watch-posts in an only partly imaginary landscape. This might be related to the ninth and concluding trial of the Khorchins, during which the adept climbs the ladder with machetes. The last section of the article describes the shaman images of Sibe and Khorchins. There are apparent similarities between both which are centred on their respective deities, i.e. the late shamans mentioned previously. The contribution also contains a number of translated extracts of various narrations on deities and shamans appended to the main body of her article.

The concluding text stretches between the area of Central Europe and Siberia. Among other things Rachel Mikos is a translator of modern Hungarian poetry into English. She devotes her article to the life of eminent Hungarian researcher of Siberian and Mongolian shamans Vilmos Diószegi (1923–1971). Her work was carried out with extensive assistance from Martin Tharp. Both of the authors combine knowledge of the reality of Central Europe with a certain intellectual background in the USA, a factor that makes the text particularly interesting. The life of V. Diószegi is not seen through the results of his research, but rather through excerpts from his diaries, personal letters, etc. which are translated and at the same time placed within the perspective of anthropology. Diószegi called himself a “shamanologist”, but it is natural to see him here in the light of lively discussion within the field of anthropology. On the one hand a critical approach (one that is well established) towards the connection with nationalistic feelings in Hungary and Diószegi’s interest in the search for “origins” is seen in the text. On the other hand there are also apparent results of his endeavour. These are valued as rare insights into a vanishing world in the contemporary world of the rapid loss of cultural variety. The translation of extracts shows Diószegi as a living human in a particular time and place.

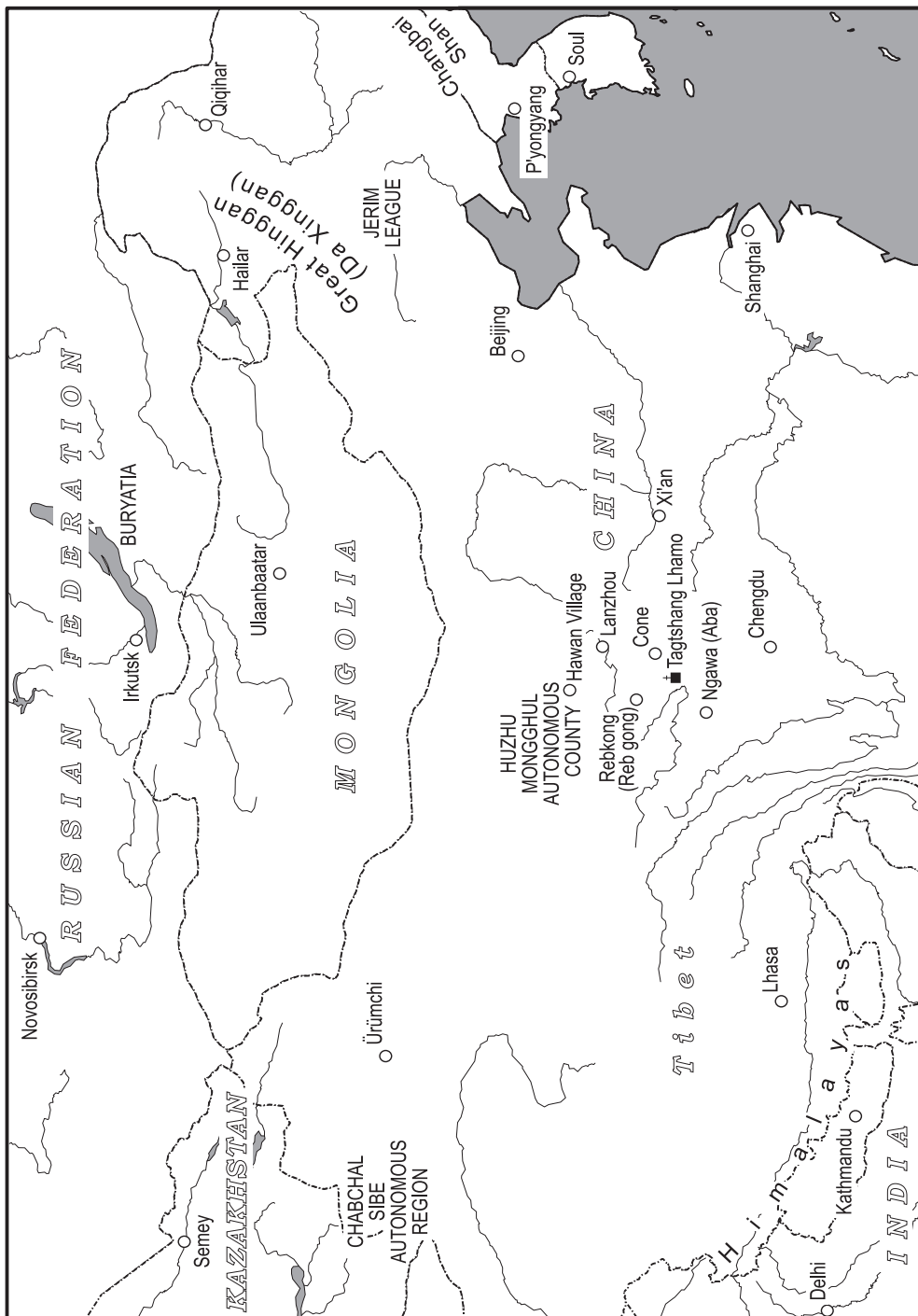
The first three articles concern persons who might be more appropriately called “mediums” rather than “shamans”. But at the same time there are differences between the mediums in each case. In the Tibetan-speaking areas we have examples of mediums recruited from the monastic community or the lay villagers. These two groups are perceived very differently by Tibetans, despite their common designation as *lha pa* in colloquial language (a term which might be perhaps rendered as “the one dealing with deities”). Another designation for them, appearing more frequently in the textual sources, is *sku khog* (“body-vessel”). It reveals more clearly the understanding of them as “receptacles” into which deities descend, as does the third frequent appellation *sku rten* (“body-support”). The article on Mongghuls brings various names for such people (*fashi, bo, kurtain, fala*), which are borrowings from Chinese, Mongolian and Tibetan. But even in this case the various designations are seen as sometimes referring to various kinds of people. Moreover, individuals known as *majoo* in the particular case of the village of Hawan are known. These people shoulder a sedan chair or a pole to carry the deity and through their movements the deity expresses its will. It is interesting that in the article on the Tibetan village of Sog ru by Katia Buffetrille, some analogy to such a case was observed, when the author refers to “divine palanquins” (*lha sgam*).

Veronika Zikmundová provides the only article dealing directly with shamans as distinguished from mediums since the Khorchin Mongolians indeed call them by the originally Manchu word *saman*. But again even in this case it appears that there exist indigenous divisions among the “shamans” into those “who passed the trial” and those who did not.

Many questions arise concerning the categories used to describe such people. Are the categories of mediums and shamans really appropriate and are they not following simply a traditional scheme of dichotomies? Could we divide them reasonably into more categories? Are these categories appropriate at all? It was not our intention to discuss the details of such questions in the present volume, but merely to raise them. Such terminological tasks and problems with classification might, with a little exaggeration, be described as dealing with the skeleton of the topic: while definitely important, it is not the same as living matter of the lives of particular persons, their stories and narrations, which cover those bare bones. And I hope that these are also plentiful in the volume.

Many people contributed to this volume. We should like to thank first of all the people inhabiting the areas we are discussing for sharing with us their often intimate affairs. Thanks should then be given to the authors, who often met with personal difficulties, but were nevertheless able to bring forth such a seemingly trivial matter as a scholarly article. Then thanks must go to both reviewers. The map roughly referring to the areas discussed in the volume was created by Tomáš Beránek. For my part thanks should be expressed to Alena Oberfalzerová and Jaroslav Vacek, whose experience with editing and also advice of other kinds were assuredly helpful in the task of presenting this volume to the reader.

Daniel Berounský, Editor



Some remarks on mediums: The case of the *lha pa* of the musical festival (*glu rol*) of Sog ru (A mdo)¹

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Summary: This paper deals with a festival (*glu rol*) dedicated to the local gods (*yul lha gzhi bdag*) that takes place every year during the sixth Chinese lunar month (July–August) in about fifteen villages in Reb gong area (A mdo, present Qinghai province). It is performed by the villagers in order to get prosperity and good fortune and to drive away calamities. The central personages of this celebration are mediums (*lha pa*). The article presents the translation from Tibetan of an article on this celebration followed by preliminary remarks on the *lha pa* and an attempt at interpretation of this festive ritual. The author argues that this ritual aims at restoring the order of the world through the activities of the *lha pa*/gods, their “servants” and their helpers.

Introduction

The *glu rol* (lit.: song-music; from now on musical festival)² is a festive ritual dedicated to the local gods (*yul lha gzhi bdag*), performed by the villagers in order to get prosperity and good fortune and to drive away calamities. It takes place every year during the sixth Chinese lunar month (July–August)³ in about fifteen villages in the Reb gong area (A mdo, present Qinghai province).

Reb gong is located around 180 kilometers south from Xining, the capital city of Qinghai. The region is populated mainly by Tibetan, but also Han, Monguor, Salar and Hui communities. If most of the Tibetans belong to the Dge lugs school, some pockets of Rnying ma pa and Bon po are found in the area. The main Dge lugs monastery is Rong po dgon chen. It was founded by Bsam gtan rin chen in the 14th century as a Sa skya monastery under the

1) I would like to thank the inhabitants of Sog ru village, particularly Ri gdengs, G.yang 'bum skyabs and Sonam Tsering, for their hospitality and their kindness in answering my numerous questions. I am also grateful to M. D. Even, F. Robin, F. Meyer for their suggestions and corrections. The teaching of and many discussions with R. Hamayon have been a source of inspiration. Of course, this does not mean that they would endorse my conclusions. If errors remain, the fault is my own.

2) Some of the information I present in this article has already been published in Buffetrille 2004, pp. 203–229.

3) The use of the Chinese lunar calendar seems quite an old custom in this area.

name Rong po tshang and was turned into a Dge lugs one by Shar Skal dan rgya mtsho (1607–1677) in the 17th century.⁴ About 500 monks live there at the present time.

The *glu rol* is the most important yearly festival for the villagers. It is composed of a many and varied offerings such as dances given rhythm by the sound of drum and gong, songs, parodies, white – or dairy – offerings (*dkar mchod*) and red offerings (*dmarmchod*)⁵ that are burnt for the most part.⁶ This celebration that is also a display of beautiful costumes and jewellery is offered to the local gods in order to please them, to “delight” them, a notion that dates back a very long time and can be already found in the Dunhuang documents (8th–10th centuries; see Macdonald 1971, p. 299). The main protagonists of this ritual are *lha pa*, “one on whom the god has descended.”

Each musical festival (*glu rol*) has its own characteristics according to the village where it is performed which prevents the making of a general study of the celebration unless one has attended all of them. For instance, if all occur during the 6th month, they do not start on the same day and do not last the same number of days (four days in Sa skyil village, six days in Sog ru village for example),⁷ do not present exactly the same performances, and at least in one case, in Gling rgyal village, has a different myth of origin (Dpal Idan bkra shis and Stuart 1998, p. 34). This is why, even if I observed a part of the festival in Sa skyil, a village just next to the city of Reb gong in 1992, I will focus only on the *glu rol* performed in Sog ru which I attended in its entirety in July 1997 and August 1999. There it lasts for six days, from the 20th to the 25th day of the 6th month.

This paper is composed of five main parts: the sociological context of the musical festival, the translation of a Tibetan account on the festival written by Ri gdengs, an inhabitant of Sog ru, remarks on the Sog ru mediums (*lha pa*), a presentation of the festival and lastly an attempt to interpret this celebration.

4) See A lo Rin chen rgyal po and Reb gong Rdo rje thar 1994, p. 14; Gruschke 2001, pp. 51–53.

5) More will be said later on the blood offerings.

6) The subject of the offerings, the substances used, their treatment, etc. is beyond the scope of this paper. I hope to deal with this in another paper.

7) In a book published recently Ermakov (Ermakov 2008, pp. 433–441) describes the *glu rol* festival based on Nagano’s article (Nagano 2000, pp. 567–649). It is not always easy to understand if the author deals with Sog ru or Sa skyil festival. For example, he seems confused on the dates, explaining that the festival lasts for ten days, from the 15th to the 25th day of the sixth month while Sa skyil festival lasts from the 16th to the 19th and Sog ru from the 20th to the 25th day of the 6th month.

I. The sociological context of the musical festival

1. SOG RU VILLAGE

Sog ru is located some eight kilometres from Reb gong, on the east of the Dgu chu river, at the foot of Stag lung mountain, the birth-god (*skyes lha*) of the people living on this side of the valley. Around five hundred farmers, all *Dge lugs pa* and linked to Rong po monastery, live in this village of eighty-nine households. All houses traditionally built in wood have one floor that opens onto a courtyard delimited by an earth wall. The whole village is itself surrounded by a wall; it is an enclosed space.



Figure 1: Sog ru village.

All the villagers belong to one of the four *tsho ba*,⁸ groups of households of which some have still kinship relationships and that are bound by ritual and mutual aid duties on various occasions such as funerals, construction of a house, weddings, etc. The four *tsho ba*, are not located in quarters, and group

8) In Western literature, the term *tsho ba* is translated in several ways: tribes, clans, federations of villages, villages, quarters, sectors, local political units (Walsh 1906, Goldstein 1971, Ekvall 1968, Karmay and Sagant 1987, Sagant 1990, Ramble 1993 and 2008, Diemberger and Hazod 1999). These various translations designate as much groups based on kinship and identity (tribes, clans) as territorial unities (federations of villages, villages, sectors). This word covers, then, different realities or realities that could have changed in space and time.

together all the villagers: A *mchod tsho ba* is composed of twenty households; Reb tsha *tsho ba* of twenty-six; Klu tshang *tsho ba* of fifteen and Dar dmar *tsho ba* of twenty-eight. The informants do not always agree on the identity of the first *tsho ba* established in Sog ru, claiming that status for either Reb tsha or Dar dmar *tsho ba*. On the other hand, according to a Tibetan text dedicated to Sog ru *glu rol*, it is said that at the time of King Ral pa can (815–838), a celebrated general, General g.Yu tsha (called also Reb tsha, of whom more will be said below) married a woman from Sog ru village whose population originated from Central Mongolia; they had four sons. The youngest one settled in the village of his mother and his descendants belong to the Reb tsha *tsho ba*. As for the Klu tshang *tsho ba*, since a Tibetan was supposed to be living “above the palace of the *klu*,” his descendants were called Klu tshang. The descendants of those coming from Central Mongolia were named Dar ma/dmar. Lastly, A *mchod tsho ba* is composed of the descendants of a monk who performed the religious services (*a mchod*) for the Reb gong’s chief (Snying ’bum rgyal 1989, p. 73.) The Dar dmar, Reb tsha, Klu tshang *tsho ba* worship the same deity Re ma ti while A *mchod tsho ba* worship Dam can (Rdo rje legs pa?).

It is said that each of the four *tsho ba* is composed of people who have had “flesh and blood relationship” (*sha khrag ’brel ba*), an expression Karmay⁹ understands simply as “kinship relationship” but which is unusual in the Tibetan world where one speaks generally of a flesh (*sha*) and bone (*rus*) relationship to name respectively the matrilineal and patrilineal descent. According to some informants, it is possible to get married in the same *tsho ba* but only after five generations while for others it is only after seven generations. This recalls the marriage rules that prohibit a marriage on the patrilineal side for seven generations while it is allowed on the matrilineal side after four or five generations.¹⁰ It happens that marriage occasionally occurs inside a *tsho ba*; this is explained by the coming of people from outside and their settling in the village which leads them to enter into a *tsho ba*. One belongs to the *tsho ba* of his father; a woman enters into the *tsho ba* of her husband and an in-marriage son-in-law (*mag pa*) joins the *tsho ba* of his wife. A *tsho ba* in Sog ru is thus an exogamic group of patrilineal descent.¹¹ The religious aspect of the *tsho ba* is also quite important, as will be shown, as are the political and administrative functions that they may traditionally have exercised.

9) Personal communication (June 1998).

10) See among others Ramble 2008, p. 113; Goldstein 1978, p. 209, n. 7.

11) Deeper research has still to be done on Sog ru *tsho ba*.

Every year two men from each *tsho ba* are appointed to be the *kha 'go ba*, an expression glossed by two informants as “those who work for the *tsho ba*.” They help the *lha pa* during the *glu rol*, are invested with some authority and maintain order; but their duties go beyond the ritual and are carried out, throughout the year in the midst of the village.

2. THE “HOUSE OF THE ARMY CHIEFS” (*DMAG DPON KHANG*)

Each village that celebrates the *glu rol* has a building dedicated to the local gods identified with Army Chiefs and called, in Sog ru and some other villages the “House of the Army Chiefs” (*dmag dpon khang*). Buddhist gods are also present but in another part of the temple which except during big events is closed.

Sog ru’s “House of the Army Chiefs” was rebuilt in 1994. It faces east and has two floors: the Buddhist gods occupy the upper part of the building while the local gods are on the first floor. Each protective deity is placed in a wooden niche. A *myes rma chen* (see Figure 3), the great territorial god of all A mdo,¹² stands in the centre flanked by two much smaller statues (the only old statues): On the left is Stag lung, the birth-god (*skyes lha*) of Sog ru whose mountain overhangs the village. On the right is Khri ka’i yul lha, also called A *myes yul lha*, the territorial god (*yul lha*) of Sog ru; it is identified with Wenchang, the god of literature in China, but also with Guan Yu, a famous Chinese General of the period of the Three Realms (220–250), generally called by the Chinese Guangong or Guandi, “Emperor Guan”.¹³ According to an oral tradition, Khri ka’i yul lha protected the Tibetans during a war between Chinese and Tibetans. Displeased the Emperor chased him away to live among the Tibetans and since that time it is said that he has been protecting them.

In the niche on the right of A *myes machen*, of the same height, is Blon po, the wrathful form of Khri ka’i yul lha and also his minister. Next to him stands Bshan pa Tsi tung, one of the acolytes of Blon po. On the left of A *myes rma chen* is Dgra ’dul dbang phyug. While the Mgo log¹⁴ call him Nu bo Dgra ’dul dbang phyug and regard him as the younger brother of A *myes rma chen*,

12) One important *yul lha* is sometimes regarded as the chief of secondary *yul lha*. As for A *myes rma chen*, it is worshipped by the inhabitants of the area as “the chief of all the *sa bdag* of the Rma country” (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975, p. 210).

13) On the subject, see Buffetrille 2002, pp. 135–158.

14) The Mgo log are nomadic pastoralists living at the present time in Qinghai, Sichuan and Gansu provinces. In pre-modern Tibet, they had the reputation of always going marauding and were famous for their raids and feuds. Many accounts show how westerners were



Figure 2: The "House of the Army Chiefs" of Sog ru (*dماغ дон ханг*).



Figure 3: A myes rma chen.

here he is named Sras mchog Dgra 'dul dbang phyug and is considered as the youngest of his nine sons. Lastly, Bshan pa Rwa mgo, the second acolyte of Blon po represented with a goat head (*rwa mgo*) as indicated by his name.

A courtyard delimited by a wall where many activities in the ritual take place stretches out in front of the House. In the centre is erected a platform on which arrows are stuck (*la btsas*) dedicated to Stag lung, the birth-god. Just below, juniper (*bsang*) is burned throughout the celebration.

Women are not allowed into the first floor of the temple in the same way as generally they do not participate in the traditional cult to the territorial god (*yul lha*). Thus, when they bring offerings to the local deities, they have to hand them to a man who puts them on the altar. Monks also were not allowed in the past. In 1992, I saw two of them expelled from the festival in Sa skyil by the *kha 'go ba*. But this has changed. In 1997 and 1999, not only were several monks welcome but they came on the third day of the ritual (but the first that occurs in the “House of the Army Chiefs”) to offer ceremonial scarves to the mediums and stayed some time on the balcony of the upper floor where the altar of the Buddhist deities is located. The presence of monks in rituals dedicated to local gods can also be observed in the cult to territorial gods and shows the progress of the phenomenon of Buddhicisation (Buffet-rille 1996, pp. 206, 209–212).

II. Tibetan accounts

1. VARIOUS ARTICLES

The musical festival (*glu rol*) has given rise to a good many articles in Tibetan, published in various magazines since the end of the 1980s.¹⁵ That proves the interest the Tibetans of this area have in this celebration that is perceived as a symbol of local and regional identity. One must add also that the authorities have encouraged research on the traditional customs of “minorities”. Although the *lha pa*'s activities are still regarded as superstition by some officials, the authorities consider them also as an excellent tourist attraction. This

terrified but also fascinated by them (See Guibaut 1947, Rock 1956 among many others. Cf. also Horlemann 2007, pp. 91–102).

15) Pema 'bum, a native of 'Ja mo, a village close to Sog ru, who escaped from Tibet in 1988, confirms that he has no knowledge of texts on the *glu rol* before the Cultural revolution (interview made in Bloomington, July 1998). To this day, I have found thirteen articles; see bibliography.

may help to “preserve” this kind of ritual but with a high risk of transforming them in order to please a foreign audience¹⁶ and to suit current political needs.

Generally speaking, these local articles – in which borrowings of one text from another are very common – recount the original myth of the ritual referring to the Imperial period, the glorious time of the Land of Snows, and underline the introduction by Padmasambhava of the custom for boys and girls to be possessed by gods. They describe mainly what Tibetans regard as the three main performances, “performance for the gods” (*lha rtse*), “performance for the *klu*” (*klu rtse*) and “martial performance” (*dmag rtse*). In reading these descriptions, it is difficult to perceive the importance of mediums (*lha pa*) and of divination in this celebration. This can be explained by two reasons: either the authors “modernized” the description in order to keep in with the official discourse that considers divination and mediums as superstition; or having received a modern education, they preferred to suppress elements of the ritual that appear in their eyes as “primitive” or “backward”.

The reading of these articles leads to discussion of some terminological problems.

The first question that has to be raised is that of the spelling of the ritual itself. Among the thirteen articles written by Tibetans (all dated between 1989 and 2005), five use the spelling *glu rol* and eight the spelling *klu rol*. Do we have to understand *glu* (songs) or *klu* (water spirits)? Generally, the authors explain their choice of *glu rol* with “g” by the emphasis put on songs and music while those who focus on the importance of the *klu* (water-spirits) write *klu rol*. As for Epstein and Peng (1998, p. 184, No. 2), they decided upon *klu rol*, mentioning only that “explanations of the name differ even between villagers”. I have chosen the spelling *glu rol*, following Ri gdengs (the author of the text translated below) but also because the role of the water spirits (*klu*) in Sog ru is not as important as it seems to be in other places, as in the neighbouring village of Gling rgyal (Dpal ldan bKra shis and Stuart 1998).

Another problem of terminology is the translation of the two main terms of the ritual, *rtse mo* and *rtse mo rtse mkhan*. In my previous article on the *glu rol* (in French, 2004), I translated these terms as “jeu” and “joueurs”. F. Robin drew my attention to the fact that in A mdo these terms can have a different meaning. After I discussed these points with colleagues and

16) In 2005, there was a poster stuck at the door of the “House of the Army Chiefs” of Sa skyil giving the rules the foreigners have to obey and advertising the price of a one day ticket (information D. Berounský 5/8/05).

informants,¹⁷ “performance” (*rtsed mo*) and “performers” (*rtsed mo rtsed mkhan*) appear to be the most suitable translation in English.¹⁸ Nevertheless, due to the polysemy of the term “jeu” in French, I think that it still can be used to translate *rtsed mo* in French.

Since none of these articles has ever been translated, I decided to present one of them before shifting to my own observations and focusing more on the role of the mediums. I chose the article written by Ri gdengs (pen-name) for two reasons: Ri gdengs, a judge at the intermediate people’s court in Reb gong, is a native of Sog ru and was my main informant; he was very eager to make this festival known and collected information from old people from Sog ru in order to give an accurate description. The second reason is that the article he wrote is, to my knowledge, the first article published on the subject apart from the three pages published in 1989 in *Bod ljongs sgyu rtsal zhib ’jug* (71–73) and composed by Snying ’bum rgyal, another native of Sog ru. For his part, Ri gdengs’s article appeared first in the famous journal *Sbrang char*, “Light rain” also in 1989 and then, in 1994, in a book untitled *rMa lho rtsom bsdus padma dkar po’i tshom bu*, “A collection of essays [from the area of] Rma lho, a bouquet of white lotus” (1994, pp. 24–39). Both texts share some parts and I suppose that Snying ’bum rgyal was one of the informants of Ri gdengs.

Despite many repetitions and a somewhat ponderous style, this first article on the *glu rol* is important in that it introduces the reader to the Tibetan perception of this musical festival. This text was composed by a Tibetan living in the People’s Republic of China. As such, he was under some ideological constraints. This appears from time to time. Indeed, the author uses sometimes communist vocabulary as when he speaks of the “working masses” (*brtson pa’i mang tshogs*), an expression that seems quite incongruous in this context. He has also to use the politically correct discourse which leads him to present some historical facts according to a communist perspective.

17) I would like to express my gratitude to F. Robin, S. Rino, K. Stuart, Snying po rgyal, ’Jig med, Sonam Tsering and the other Tibetans with whom I discussed the meaning of these terms.

18) More studies have still to be done on this subject.

2. TRANSLATION OF THE TIBETAN TEXT

THE MUSICAL FESTIVAL OF THE 6TH MONTH THAT IS WIDESPREAD IN A MDO BY RI GDENG

[24] According to ancient tradition, in some parts of Tibet, during the 6th month, there is a great performance (*rtse mo*) peculiar to Tibet [which is] an offering to the protective gods. This performance is particularly widespread in A mdo and the population regards it with high esteem.

Thus here I will discuss roughly [the development], the meaning, the progression [of the sequences], the historical conditions and the social foundations of this musical festival (*glu rol*) which is endowed with ethnic characteristics and has a historical significance.

A. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MUSICAL FESTIVAL (GLU ROL)

I have not found written sources about the manner in which the musical festival appeared apart from legends in the oral tradition.

According to some people, initially, at the time of Gnya' khri btsan po,¹⁹ there were many different gods in the religious doctrine that spread first in Tibet such as the gods of the five elements ('*byung ba lnga'i lha*), the territorial god (*yul lha*), the house-god (*khyim lha*), the god [that subdues] the enemies (*dgra lha*) and the god of the maternal uncle (*zhang lha*). [25] The tradition was to make offerings of cattle, goats, sheep and stags after having killed them. [The people] believed in these rituals and the working masses (*brtson pa'i mang tshogs*) developed [this practice]. Every year, in autumn, they used to make flesh and blood offerings of numerous animals such as the long-antlered stags (*sha pho ru rkyang*) that were killed at the same time by beheading them.²⁰ In winter, offerings of the flesh and blood of male animals were made: yaks, sheep and he-goats, three thousand each in number killed all at the same time by beheading them [as offerings of the flesh and blood of] female animals: '*bri*,²¹ ewes and goats one thousand each in number whose limbs were cut off while they were still alive. This was called "Red offering to the Bon po gods". In summer, offerings of the flesh and blood of four hinds killed after their four legs had been cut off were performed. This was called "To cut the hocks of the hinds". In spring, a fumigation made of several kinds of wood and various sorts of grains was offered; at the same time the dried hides of the sacrificed animals were struck. This was called the "Bon po festival, an offering of juniper".²² It is said that this performance is the original form of the musical festival (*glu rol*).

19) Gnya' khri btsan po is the first legendary king. He is said to have descended from the sky on the Lha ri Gyang to mountain in Kong po.

20) This reminds the ritual of the "stag with long antlers" (*sha ba ru rgyas*), a Bon po ritual that might have been performed, according to the *Bka' thang* (Padmasambhava's biographies) at the time of King Khri srong lde btsan. As the date of the longevity ritual approached, the king asked Buddhists and Bon po to perform the ritual each in their own way. The story says that the Bon po killed so many stags that the king opted for Buddhism (Blondeau-Karmay 1988, p. 134; see also Toussaint 1979, pp. 318-320).

21) The female of a *yag*.

22) In *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* (Pelliot 1961, p. 2), it is written: "Entre [le 'tsan-p'ou] et ses subordonnés, chaque année, [il y a] un 'petit serment'. On sacrifie [à cette occasion] des moutons, des chiens et des singes. On commence par leur briser les pattes puis on les tue; puis

Other persons [think that] because King Khri strong lde btsan [742–797?] wanted to suppress Bon in order to spread Buddhism while this doctrine was increasing like the rising moon, [disasters] that never happened before followed one another in several farming and pastoral areas: epidemics, frost, hail, drought, floods. Thus, a great part of the population thought that these natural disasters were brought about through the practice of Buddhism and they said: “Not only is Buddhism not able to suppress the natural disasters [26] but if we carry on with practising this doctrine, the displeased *lha*, *klu*, *gnyan*²³ will show bad signs.” In order to delight the *lha*, *klu*, *gnyan*, they organized periodically for them a great festival and different kinds of performances (*rtse rig*) such as songs and dances. [This festival] became more and more important and more and more beautiful and they decided that it would be performed in the 6th lunar month, which now is called the divine white month. Nevertheless, having not seen any book that can be regarded as a reliable source which mentions these two oral traditions, I think that both oral traditions, originally obscure, contain mistakes.

Consequently, if one asks how this tradition appeared, [this is the answer]:

At the time when the sovereign Khri ral pa can [815–838] reigned over the Empire and the Law, there were serious conflicts between China and Tibet. The kings of the two countries and some high monks such as Buddhist bla ma witnessed that in the year 821 of the Western calendar, the Nephew and the maternal Uncle (*dbon zhang*)²⁴ made peace with one another by erecting steles and by building white *stūpa* at some borders such as Dar rgyal and Khri ka. Not only did all ministers and subjects of the two sides welcome [this news], but the main border guard of Dar rgya[!], General g.Yu tsha, (also called Reb tsha) [27] arranged abundant white and red offerings, in accordance with the local custom in Tibet, during the period from the 17th to the 25th, [which are] the auspicious days obstructing the evil (*rgan gog*) of the 6th divine month of 821. He collected [offerings] of meat and beer [as huge] as an ocean, the objects of sensory pleasure; he honoured the *lha*, *klu*, *gnyan*, offered an impressive banquet to the soldiers [acting as] border guards and demonstrated a true happiness at the reconciliation between China and Tibet. Not only did the satisfied protective gods produce all kinds of marvellous indications and signs but each of them took possession of human bodies.

This custom for gods of entering into the body of human beings was introduced in the 7th century²⁵ by the Master Padmasambhava, the chaplain (*mchod gnas*) of King Khri strong lde btsan. Indeed, in the *Rba['] bzhed*, it is written: “After having really made ‘descend’ (*phab*)²⁶ into the bodies of human beings *lha* and *klu* that were wicked, Padmasambhava threatened and subjugated

on leur arrache les intestins et on les dépèce. On fait annoncer [le sacrifice] aux divinités du ciel, de la terre, des monts, des rivières, du soleil, de la lune, des étoiles et des planètes par des sorciers qui disent: ‘Si votre cœur change et que vous méditez de vous révolter par trahison, les dieux le verront et vous traiteront comme ces moutons ou ces chiens.’ Tous les trois ans, il y a ‘un grand serment’... On tue comme victimes des chiens, des chevaux, des bœufs, des ânes...” See also *ibid.*, p. 82.

- 23) The expression *lha klu gnyan gsum* is quite common in the rituals to local deities. It refers to the *lha* in the heavens, the *gnyan* in the intermediate space and the *klu* underground.
- 24) The expression *dbon zhang*, “the Nephew and the maternal Uncle” came to be used to describe the relationship between the Tibetan rulers and the Chinese emperors.
- 25) In fact, it is in the 8th century that, according to the tradition, Padmasambhava went to Tibet at the invitation of King Khri strong lde btsan (742–797?).
- 26) See Diemberger (2007, pp. 85–93) on the terme *phab*.

them.”²⁷ Also in the *Bod kyi chos srid zung 'brel*,²⁸ “The merging of religious and secular rule in Tibet”, written by Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las, it is written: “The Master Padmasambhava has introduced for the first time the custom called *pra 'bebs pa* (mirror divination),²⁹ for a few boys and girls who still have their parents³⁰ to become possessed (*khog zhugs byas*) by *lha* and [demons] *dre*. It is perfectly clear that what is called nowadays ‘the gods descend’ appeared for the first time in that epoch.” [These protective gods that manifested themselves in this way] commanded the army. More precisely, two faces and bodies, one with a tiger-head, the other one with a leopard-head, that are well-known to be the emanations of the protector 'Od dpag med [Amitābha] and the Ārya sPyan ras gzigs [Avalokiteśvara], appeared from the “Turquoise Lake” of Dar rgyal. They started to play facing each other, leaping and capering. [28] Either in order to make known to the Tibetans the story in which this main point appears, or in order for it not to sink into oblivion before the end of the kalpa, two soldiers [acting as] border guards from Dar rgya[l] put on tiger and leopard skins and performed in place of the tiger and the leopard (The origin of the history of the tiger and the leopard is clearly explained in the *Seng gzhung Annals*). The [various] performances (*rtsed mo*) developed and became more beautiful and to this day the custom has not declined; it was seen and still is seen in the life of the Tibetans. This is why I think that the origin of the *glu rol* is to be found in some Sino-Tibetan border areas such as Dar rgyal and Khri ka and that the performance of the tiger and the leopard is the first foundation of the *glu rol*.

B. THE MEANING OF THE MUSICAL FESTIVAL (GLU ROL)

The name *glu rol* was given because songs (*glu*) are sung together with the music of instruments (*rol cha*). [The ritual] is divided into three parts:

- “Performance for the gods” (*lha rtsed*)
- “Performance for the klu” (*klu rtsed*)
- “Martial performance” (*dmag rtsed*)

* “Performance for the gods” (*lha rtsed*)

In this performance, the performers hold the gong and the divine drum and, while performing [the dance called] “Satisfaction for the gods” (*lha ngom pa*) and the “performance for the gods” (*lha rtsed*), they call upon local gods (*yul lha gzhi bdag*) invoking their names. The head [of some performers] is cut with a weapon and their mouth and body are pierced with iron needles. This is a flesh and blood offering; it is mainly an offering to the gods [29] and it is a type of performance that delights the gods.

* “Performance for the klu” (*klu rtsed*)

In the “performance for the klu” (*klu rtsed*), each performer holds the [necessary] instruments such as arrows, spears and flags (*dar mtshon*). They go to the river where they make a huge offering of juniper and then wash their bodies in order to be purified and they rub their instruments, arrows, spears and flags with water.

27) This passage is p. 29 of the *Rba' bzhed* (1982). The expression *lha mi klu* in Ri gdeng's text is incorrect. The *Rba' bzhed* as the *dBa bzhed* (2000, p. 55) read *lha klu*.

28) Titre complet: *Bod kyi chos srid zung 'brel skor bshad pa*, Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, Lhasa 1983. Trad. *The merging of religious and secular rule in Tibet*. Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1991. This passage is p. 15 of the English version (I did not have access to the Tibetan version).

29) On the mirror divination, see Orofino 1994, pp. 612–628.

30) The reason why these boys and girls must have their parents alive is still unknown to me.

In the courtyard of the “House of the Army Chiefs” (*dmag dpon khang*), a square platform is prepared with several levels in decreasing order; the front part of each side is smeared with yoghurt and milk. Four men hold in their hands as many dry animals they can: skins of snakes, frogs, otters, gold fish and others creatures; they drive four long spears [into the ground] at the four corners and they display at each level a massive offering of tea, beer, yoghurt and milk, fruit (*sil tog*) and flowers, grains and fruit (*shing tog*),³¹ incense and various components for the fumigation (*bsang rtsi*).³²

It is said that at the said time the border guards of Dar rgya[l] were disguised as tigers and leopards in an exactly similar manner to the faces of 'Od dpag med and of sPyan ras gzigs that appeared [as an offering] to the *klu* of the “Turquoise Lake” (g.Yu mtsho). They were on stilts covered with tiger and leopard skins and the performance was in harmony with the sound of the gongs and divine drums; nevertheless, nowadays tiger and leopard skins are not worn anymore and only tiger and leopard designs are visible on the stilts. Be that as it may, if one observes this whole performance [30] I think that the name “performance for the *klu*” (*klu rtsed*) was given to it because it is mainly an offering to the *klu*.

* “Martial performance” (*dmag rtsed*)

In one of the main activities of the “martial performance”, the performers hold all kinds of weapons such as arrows, spears, swords, gonfalons (*dmag dar*). They perform [first] turning clockwise, then turning anti-clockwise while shouting “E ha – E E / E” (see Figure 4) and they swing their spears, gonfalons and swords towards the sky. The men are divided into two groups and they dance leaning towards the exterior and then gathering towards the interior. The eldest man or the *lha pa* stands in the middle of the performers and invokes the names of the birth-god (*skyes lha*), the territorial god (*yul lha*) and others while playing the gong or the divine drum. If one looks at the role of each [of the gods], one can think that at the time of the border guards of Dar rgya[l] all the warfare was entrusted to the gods and even today, this is a way of commemorating past events such as the war activities of the past and the protection given by the protective gods.

Generally speaking, the musical festival (*glu rol*) of the 6th month and the “performance for the gods” (*lha rtsed*) of the 6th month are [different] terms with a similar meaning. Although one is [well] aware of where the musical festival begins and where it ends, and that the musical festival of the 6th month and the “performance for the gods” (*lha rtsed*) of the 6th month are [different] terms with a similar meaning, some people understand that there are [three] different [performances]: the “performance for the gods” (*lha rtsed*), the “performance for the *klu*” (*klu rtsed*) and the “martial performance” (*dmag rtsed*); moreover, they do not write the *glu* of *glu rol* with a ‘ga’; they call it “category of *klu*” (*klu rigs*) and write it with a ‘ka’. Although in some places this performance is called “performance for the gods” (*lha rtsed*), and in other places “performance for the *klu*” (*klu rtsed*) and elsewhere “martial performance” (*dmag rtsed*), from my point of view these are unfounded remarks. Nowadays, at a time when science and culture are developing, if there is not even a single person to explain to the Tibetans the presence in A mdo of a celebration endowed with such a fundamental meaning, not to speak of a researcher [who would be interested] in the origin, the history and the forms of this musical festival, isn't this a cause of shame for young Tibetans? This is why, as [a person] of weak intelligence, I will say some words on the musical festival of the 6th month or “performance for the gods” of the 6th month.

31) The words *sil tog* and *shing tog* have the same meaning, the first one being in a *mdo skad* and the second one in *lha sa skad* (information F. Robin).

32) This sequence was performed until 1959 when the festival was prohibited but does not exist anymore.



Figure 4: *E ha* march.

When the “performance for the gods” (*lha rtsed*) of the 6th month or musical festival (*glu rol*) of the 6th month which was seen and still is seen in several places of Tibet, is performed, the “performance for the gods”, the “performance for the *klu*” and the “martial performance” are always complete. Moreover, since in some places and valleys the meaning and the progression [of the sequences] are similar and one never sees anywhere different ways of performing them, I think that the musical festival of the 6th month and the “performance for the gods” of the 6th month designate the same event and that it is a mistake to regard them as separate things. In particular in some villages people do not take into account the precise way of performing and the progression of the performances; and this way of recounting an unfounded history according to one’s own desires is absolutely inappropriate. Therefore it is a mistake to write *klu rigs*. One should write *glu rol* because whatever the progression of the performances is, there is a “performance for the gods” (*lha rtsed*), a “performance for the *klu*” (*klu rtsed*) and a “martial performance” (*dmag rtsed*). For example, in the “performance for the gods” (*lha rtsed*) [32], during [the dance] “Satisfaction for the gods” (*lha ngom pa*), the performers summon in a low voice the powerful protective gods to the beat of the gong and of the divine drum.

O Machen,
 You who has the attire of a nomad!
 You who are riding a fast white steed!
 Please, be our guest,
 With your retinue of one thousand five hundred *rma rigs*.³³

O Bya khyung³⁴
 You whose wings are made of one thousand swords!
 You who, in one instant, is going in the three thousand worlds!
 [You] the king of the territorial gods and your retinue!
 Please come as a guest to be delighted.

O Stag lung,
 You, white man on a white horse, master of a big retinue,
 You, birth-god with your virtuous adherents (*dge bsnyen*), with (Kyo mo), your queen,
 And your retinue of servants: horsemen (?) (*rta ’dzin*), masters of treasures (*mdzod bdag*), di-
 vine trees (?) (*lha shing*),
 Come today quickly as guests.

O Yul lha,
 You who are rigged out as a Chinese chief and who are riding a white mule!
 You, Khri ka’i yul lha with your butcher ministers (*bka’ blon bshan pa*),
 And the thirty servants of [each of] the four categories of great ministers!³⁵
 Come today quickly as guests.

33) The *rma rigs* are the brothers of A myes rma chen. They are generally said to be three hundred and sixty (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975, pp. 212–213).

34) Bya kyung is the main “owner of the base” (*gzhi bdag*) of Reb gong area. He “descends” on the Sa skyil *lha pa*.

35) The four categories of great ministers (*blon chen sde bzhi*) are Bshan pa Tsi tung, Bshan pa Rwa mgo, Blon po and sGo srung mi nag ’brug mgo (interview with G.yang ’bum rgyal, 22/8/99).

This song that welcomes the birth-god (*skyes lha*) and the local gods (*yul lha gzhi bdag*) to this festival of the 6th divine white month is recited while gong and divine drums [are played].

What I have explained above, namely the history of the evolution [or development] of the musical festival (*glu rol*), its meaning and its progression, shows clearly that the festival that has spread through some parts of Tibet is not a kind of popular performance that would have appeared suddenly but its historical conditions and its social foundations have extended over a very long period.

C. THE HISTORICAL CONDITIONS [THAT HAVE ALLOWED] THE PROPAGATION IN TIBET OF THIS KIND OF POPULAR PERFORMANCE CALLED MUSICAL FESTIVAL

There is a close bond between [the *glu rol*] and the history of the beginning of the first diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet, its establishment and its development:

At the beginning of the 7th century, from the time of King Srong btsan sgam po [617–649/650] until the establishment in Tibet of the first monasteries by King Khri srong lde btsan, a period that lasted a little more than hundred years, the Tibetan people had faith [either] in the Buddha's doctrine or in the Bon po's doctrine but the great majority [of the population] were followers of Bon. There were communities of Buddhist disciples, but there were no monks or monasteries separate from the dwellings these followers of Buddhism lived in. In this early period, these latter had no particular power [34] and could not compete with the Bon po. When King Khri srong lde btsan reached the [required] age, he came to power and invited numerous *paṇḍita* such as the Indian master Padmasambhava and the great abbot Śāntarakṣita [to come to Tibet]. He built many temples such as the *gtsug lag khang* of bSam yas. Many Buddhist books from India and China were translated into Tibetan. Moreover the master Padmasambhava introduced for the first time the custom called *pra 'bebs pa* (mirror divination) for a few boys and girls who still have their parents to become possessed (*khog zhugs byas*) by *lha* and [demons] *'dre*. At the time, because there was no script before [the reign of] King Srong btsan sgam po, in order to calculate they used to make knots with strings, to put marks on pieces of wood,³⁶ or to write signs on the sides of goat horns split in two at the extremity. Concerning the blood offerings of the religion of the Bon po which is the first religion of Tibet, they appeared gradually over a long period of time – two thousand years.

These are the historical conditions of the appearance and diffusion of the musical festival in some parts of Tibet.

D. THE SOCIAL FOUNDATION OF THE APPEARANCE OF THE MUSICAL FESTIVAL

[35] Some consider that the doctrine of the Buddha has been taught continuously in Tibet from the 37th King Khri srong lde btsan. Bon was totally forsaken and all the other beliefs were prohibited apart from Buddhist views and the tradition of the bodhisattva [Mahāyāna]. The great abbot Śāntarakṣita and the master Padmasambhava were then honoured just like a crown of jewels. Numerous horrifying quarrels took place generally between Buddhists and Bon po but also among Buddhists themselves. Moreover, ministers who had different beliefs used these disagreements to enter into all kinds of intolerable quarrels in order to protect their status and their

36) In *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* (Pelliot 1961, p. 1), one can read: [Les Tibétains] "n'ont pas d'écriture; ils concluent leurs contrats au moyen de bois entaillés et de cordelettes nouées." See also *ibid.*, p. 80.

own power. The opposition between king and ministers got worse; they ruled domestic affairs in this same [bad] spirit. The strength that [before] had overcome external enemies greatly weakened. Therefore, at that time the ruling class was behind numerous territorial fights [with Tang China] in which men died and horses fell [in order to save] its own political interests and there were then severe losses on every level, political, economical, cultural and military. King Khri ral pa can of Spu rgyal and the Chinese king of the Tang [dynasty] longed for peace and they [then] erected [three] steles³⁷ [inscribed] with a treaty that reconciled the Nephew and the Uncle.

The main points of the text written on the stele do not deal with the role of the Tibetan and Chinese working masses. Nevertheless, human society is created by the working masses who are the masters of their history; [36] all change in human society can be attributed to the working masses.³⁸

The populations of this time were [not only] totally overwhelmed by these civil wars but [also] wearied by these war activities. No need to specify that everyone longed only for a time [when] friendship [would prevail], and applied himself to [create] a period of stability. This is why King Ral pa can, during the iron-ox year [which is called] the 7th year of Continuous Happiness (*skyid rtag[s] lo bdun pa*)³⁹ of his reign, 821 in the Western calendar, concluded an agreement establishing harmonious relationships between Tang [China] and Tibet. That year and the following one, steles and *stūpa* were erected in each capital and at the border. An end was put to war preparations. Suddenly, the names of those who had been enemies [for reasons of] mutual hate were not anymore known and all the Chinese and Tibetan working masses, more specifically the soldiers who guarded the border in the two countries, feeling no more suspicion, lived happily and carefree lives. Such benefits were the share of all the generations and a beautiful melody that had the brightness of the sun covered everything. After having established this policy of pacification, Tibetans lived happily in Tibet and Chinese lived happily in China. In order that what had been decided would never change, the Three Jewels, the deities, the sun, the moon, the planets and the stars, all were called to witness. The content of the oath was spread everywhere. [Consequently], the soldiers who guarded the frontiers at the outermost edge of Tibet and the population [37] felt an immense joy and they restored the auspicious connections [that existed] when the faces and the bodies of the protectors 'Od dpag med and Ārya sPyan ras gzigs appeared in the "Turquoise Lake" of Dar rgya[l] and when the customs of the primitive religion of Tibet that appeared at least two thousand years before [were in practice]: blood offerings, the writing of signs to make calculations on pieces of wood and goat horns and also the custom called *pra bebs* [that consists in] gods and [demons] 'dre "descending" into the bodies of human beings.

After having embarked on various wars in the course of which Chinese and Tibetans died and horses fell, and with the help of the *lha*, *klu* and *gzhi bdag*⁴⁰ which are endowed with magical

37) Three pillars inscribed with the text of the treaty were erected: one in the Chinese Capital Chang'an (present Xian), another at the border between the two countries and the third one in front of the main gate of the Jo khang (Lhasa main temple). It is still possible to see this last one.

38) This is the kind of politically correct sentence that the author has inserted into his article. In fact, the main points of the treaty were to establish the borders and to restore "a close and friendly relationship between Nephew and Uncle" in order for Tibetans to be "happy in Tibet" and Chinese to be "happy in China" (Richardson 1985, pp. 106–143). Buddhist rites and sacrifice were performed in both Chang'an and Lhasa. For an analysis of these sacrifices, see Stein 1988, pp. 119–138; and Imaeda 2000, pp. 87–98 for another interpretation.

39) *Skyid rtag[s] lo bdun pa* is an ancient term that is attested on the stele of the 821/22 treaty. See Richardson 1985, pp. 116–117, l. 58, 62, 65.

40) The text reads *lha klu'i gzhi bdag* which I have corrected in *lha klu gzhi bdag*.

strength, power and speed, the border guards performed a big festival from the 7th until the 25th day of the 6th summer month of the 7th year of Continuous Happiness (*skyid rtag[s] lo bdun pa*) of King Ral pa can's reign, the iron-ox year, 821 in the Western calendar.⁴¹ I think that it is from that event that, progressively, the musical festival has spread through these parts, from the south to the north of A mdo.⁴² The reason why [this festival] is not widespread in all Tibet but [only] in some places in the south and the north of A mdo [is explained] in the "History of Buddhism in A mdo" (*Mdo smad chos 'byung*) [where] it is said: "When the Mongol places of meditation were looted, nine heroes who were among the best soldiers of the Army were gathered and [38] were appointed at the border of Mongolia and they multiplied. In the "White Annals," (*Deb ther dkar po*), it is written: "Most of the territories where battles with China took place are located in [some] parts of A mdo. [Moreover], in the northern areas of Rma klung [Rma chu], one finds many toponyms such as 'Plain of Chinese blood', and 'Plain of the Chinese cemetery' through which the histories of conflicts with China express themselves. Moreover, it is obvious that the populations of the north and the south of A mdo stem, in the majority of cases, from soldiers of the old times whose numbers multiplied."

It is thus easy to understand that the border guards of Tibet became the inhabitants of Reb gong and Khri ka. This is why the celebration of this festival called musical festival has spread widely in Reb gong and Khri ka. It was seen and still is seen [nowadays].

The wonderful free-flowing music with its lofty, expansive melody and its words of praise for the *lha*, *klu* and *gnyan* – both enthralling and expressive of this great and beautiful celebration [so] characteristic of the wonderful, dignified [form of] life that the festival of the 6th month or musical festival represents, [this] and the essence of its long history, [a history] full of artistic accomplishment true to the local customs of Tibet,⁴³ have always struck the rock of my emotions, given the wave of the vast knowledge [built up by these customs], [39] and currents form deep down in my heart.⁴⁴ My intention above has been to increase prosperity. Because I was strongly encouraged to look for and to find the priceless and brilliant jewel in the depths of the ocean of the popular literature, here, I expressed myself briefly according to my capacities.

May all become happiness and well-being!

3. SOME COMMENTARIES ON THE TEXT

The author of the article gives a detailed version of the myth of origin of the musical festival that is conveyed by the oral tradition. This myth clearly placed the *glu rol* in a historical framework, and a specific one indeed, namely the great Imperial period. This epoch is characterised by the creation of a vast empire endowed with a great military power that frightened China. But it was not only a time of conquest and of great territorial expansion, it was also a period of very rich cultural activity: Buddhism was introduced and became

41) Let's recall that this date is also the one of the peace treaty between Tibet and China.

42) I omitted a long ornamental sentence that is repeated on p. 38 in order to lighten the text.

43) This is the sentence I omitted.

44) This long sentence written in an ornamental style is typical of Tibetan poetry and also of the scholarly Indian style (*kāvya*).

later the state religion; a script was created; temples and monasteries were built and numerous texts were translated from Sanskrit to Tibetan. Moreover, the festival is said to have started following the famous peace treaty of 821/822 in which Tibet and China were put on an equal footing. In addition, this myth gives a particular importance to Sog ru since the great general Reb tsha, the main border guard at the time of Ral pa can, is supposed to have married a woman of the village, connecting thus this small place to the glorious past of the Imperial time.

Insistence is put in the text on the many sacrifices performed when Bon religion was prevalent in Tibet. This could be understood as a way of explaining why red offerings are still in use in the musical festival since it is said to have started at that time. This shows also the civilizing role of Buddhism. The author had not only access to the Tibetan sources he quotes but he obviously used Chinese sources too. Nevertheless, one wonders if such a description of so many sacrifices which is found also in Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las's book (1991, p. 3) is not based on Buddhist misrepresentations of Bon, a religion against which Buddhists had to compete in order to establish their own one.

Nothing is said precisely on the role of the *lha pa* during the musical festival, but the origin of the phenomenon of possession is given. Well-known sources attribute it to Padmasambhava, a prestigious origin that somehow legitimizes the presence of mediums in the *glu rol*.

III. The mediums (*lha pa*)

1. TERMINOLOGY

There is ongoing debate regarding the translation of the term *lha pa*. Since I chose to use the designation “mediums” or “spirit-mediums”, it appears necessary to give some explanation, although being totally aware of the fact that the problem will not be solved by these few words. Epstein and Peng (1998) label them shamans without any justification for their choice. In his famous book *Le chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase* ([1968] 1974), M. Eliade had set the experience of elevation of the shaman and the mastery he has of the deities (*ib.*, p. 65) against the passivity of the medium who is the “vase” (*ib.*, p. 292) into which deities enter. Since this publication, a great many books and articles have been devoted to the subject; but still the frontier is very blurred and it is not easy to distinguish what can be called

a pure ritual of possession from a pure shamanic ritual. Indeed, in many shamanic rituals one can observe sequences that could be attributed to possession (Hamayon 1990, p. 451). Another criterion that can be added in the attempt to differentiate both phenomena is the necessary presence of somebody to interpret the behaviour of the medium while the shaman can act alone. Furthermore, the direction of the mediation between the supernatural entities and the human beings is different: while the shaman represents human beings in their relation with the supernatural entities, the medium is the representative of supernatural entities in their relation with human beings (Hamayon 1990, p. 452; 1998, p. 42). In Sog ru village, Dgra 'dul dbang phyug is said to "descend" (*'bab pa*) into the elder *lha pa* while Blon po "descends" into the younger one. Each incorporates only one and always the same god. An old villager told me that before there was a third *lha pa* into whom Stag lung "descended" but this was never confirmed. The gods "descend" also into the *lha pa* during the new year (*lo gsar*) and into the younger *lha pa* only in order to cure sickness. During the time of the celebration, the mediums represent the deities and enter the service of the deities. Their body is seen to be like a body envelope, a human vessel, used by a god to express himself.

In addition, the gods are said to "descend" into two "divine" palanquins (*lha sgam*), one being the depositary of a *thang ka* of Khri ka'i yul lha, the other of a *thang ka* of Stag lung. When this happens, the men designated by the *lha pa* to carry them (four men for each) jump in a frantic way going in each of the four directions of the courtyard, starting with the east.

Therefore, while aware of all the difficulties related to the choice of term to apply to the two main protagonists of Sog ru *glu rol*, "medium" seems to me more appropriate in describing them.

2. THE ROLE OF THE *LHA PA*

Observation of the celebration brings to the fore the position of the medium as the central personage of the ritual.

In Sog ru, two *lha pa* officiate, both male as are all the *lha pa* performing in the *glu rol*.⁴⁵ The elder one (*lha pa chen po*) belongs to A mchod *tsho ba* (see Figure 6) and the younger one (*lha pa chung ba*, see Figure 7) to Dar dmar *tsho ba*. Both are farmers and live in the village.

45) When asked about the gender of the *lha pa*, all informants express their firm belief that they must be men.



Figure 5: The *lha sgam* are each carried by four men.

I never heard that the future *lha pa* goes through any physical or psychological crisis, sickness or visions, all symptoms that generally lead a future medium to consult a lama or another *lha pa* in order to get help to take on the career of medium.⁴⁶

Previously, there was a family lineage of *lha pa* which is not anymore the case in Sog ru.⁴⁷ Following the Chinese occupation, the Sog ru *glu rol* was banned from 1959 to 1978. When it was allowed again, the two previous *lha pa* were dead. It was then decided, for fear of repression from the Chinese authorities, that substitutes (*tshab*) for *lha pa* would play the role by imitating the habitual behaviour of the mediums, making sure that the ritual would be performed according to the rules. Then, in 1992, because all the villagers, old and young, thought that the musical festival without real *lha pa* would lose its true meaning,⁴⁸ they judged that the time had come to have genuine *lha pa* again. That year, all the men of the village aged between fifteen and fifty, gathered in the “House of the Army Chiefs” during fifteen days without being

46) There is a wide range of literature on the subject. See Samuel’s bibliography. Also Schrenk 1993, pp. 331–342; Diemberger 1991, pp. 137–154; Diemberger 2003, pp. 113–168.

47) The father of the present *lha pa* of Sa skyil was himself a *lha pa*.

48) And certainly also because the political situation was relaxed enough to allow such an event.



Figure 6: The elder *lha pa*.



Figure 7: The younger *lha pa*.

allowed to go back home. They made many and varied offerings. Several men started to shake. The two *lha pa* who officiate at the present time were then designated by one of the lamas of Rong po dgon chen: Mkhan chen Don yon rgya mtsho, which underlines the control exercised by the Buddhist authorities over the mediums and their integration into the Buddhist world. One can say that through this recognition, the *lha pa* receives legitimacy.

A hierarchy exists between the two *lha pa* of Sog ru, the older one having pre-eminence on the younger one. This is expressed through his much more important role in the ritual, his position at the head of all processions, and also the many more marks of respect he receives from the community. This can be explained, not by age but by the personality of the gods that “descend” into them, Dgra ’dul dbang phyug being the 9th son of A myes rma chen, the main territorial god of A mdo⁴⁹ while Blon po is the *minister* of Khri ka’i yul lha, the territorial god of Sog ru.

The Sog ru *lha pa* like those I could observe in the neighbouring villages (Sa dkyil, The bu, Rgyal bo) have a very simple attire. They wear a white shirt and a red brocade coat (*lwa ba*) tied at the waist. They often beat a “divine drum” (*lha rnga*), a drum made of a single goat-skin that is used by the villagers throughout the performance; they do not have any special ritual instruments such as the mirror of the Tibetan oracles.⁵⁰ They all behave in a similar manner during the festival. They shake, move with a jerky and asymmetric gait and very often jump (see Figures 8–9), sometimes in a way that evokes a galloping horse but that recalls also ’Od dpag med and sPyan ras gzigs when they came out from the “Turquoise lake”. They blow loudly, making their lips vibrate producing a sound similar to the neighing of a horse (see Figure 10). The incorporation of the deity expresses itself through violent leaps, and in a climax, the elder medium falls into the arms of his two “servants” (*g.yog po*). At this time, he shows a peaceful face but when the god is supposed to leave him (*lha pa btang song*), a suffering grin distorts his face and he strokes his belly, an action which he explains in terms of the pain the deity produces while leaving “as if something was going out from the stomach”. The younger one seldom reaches this climax since it is said that Blon po has been bounded by one of the previous Bla ma of Reb gong for his misdemeanours. Therefore it is believed that at the present time he only shows

49) As far as I know, A myes rma chen never “descends” into a medium which is not really surprising given that it is considered to be a god of the 10th rank “due to its spiritual progress” (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975, p. 211; Buffetrille 2000, p. 121).

50) See among others Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975, pp. 409–443; Diemberger 2005, pp. 126–127.

its peaceful side. I never could obtain detailed information from the *lha pa* themselves which is easily understandable given the political situation but above all because they are supposed not to be conscious when the god “descends”. As the elder *lha pa* told me one day: “I do not know what happens when the god ‘descends’ apart sometimes from a physical feeling.” And the younger one added that he felt pain and a strong heat in the belly at that time.

All the informants whom I asked for information about what represented or symbolized the behaviour of the *lha pa* replied that he acts “according to the custom”, which seems to express the fact that the *lha pa* has a stereotypical form of behaviour which is the one expected by the villagers and the one in conformity with its role. Everything happens as if his behaviour is the result of an apprenticeship in spite of the fact that it is said not to be necessary, since it is the god that acts through the *lha pa*. When Dgra ’dul dbang phyug “descends” into the elder *lha pa*, he can go through very violent attacks. Once, I saw him throwing a brick among the crowd at the risk of wounding somebody. The villagers reacted to this gesture by showing fear but also respect which is easily understandable since at that time he “is” Dgra ’dul dbang phyug, a god known to be sometimes very aggressive.

The observation of this ritual shows how bodily expression takes a preponderant place to the detriment of the word. Indeed, until 1999, the two *lha pa* of Sog ru village did not speak since the lama “had not opened the door of the gods” (*lha sgo ma ’byed pa*), another proof of the intrusion of Buddhism into this ritual. According to my main informant, the two previous *lha pa* were speaking the “language of the gods” (*lha skad*). For a *lha pa* to speak requires time and it is usual, it is said, that the mediums do not speak during the first years of their function. The two present *lha pa* have done pilgrimages to sacred places and to several monasteries (Sku ’bum, Bla brang, Dgon lung) in order to meet lamas which shows again the implication of the Buddhist institutions. In 1997, the third day of the first month of the Chinese year, the two *lha pa* and the *kha ’go ba* went to Bla brang in order to meet Bla ma Bse tshang but the ritual was performed only for the elder *lha pa*. Lastly, in 1999, this latter for the first time pronounced some words (in a *mdo* dialect) such as “Today is a fine day... , I came from the place...”, which made all the villagers extremely happy. Contrary to most of the other mediums in Tibet through whom the god(s) are said to express themselves through words, the *glu rol lha pa* communicate mainly through gestures which consist in orders they address to the performers. Two villagers designated to be their “servants” (*g.yog po*) and who never leave them “translate” the gestures. If the interpretation of the “translators” is right, the mediums raise their thumbs to show their agreement.



Figure 8: The *lha pa* from The bu.



Figure 9: The *lha pa* from The bu.



Figure 10: The elder *lha pa*.

IV. The Sog ru musical festival (*glu rol*) of the sixth summer month

The complexity and the richness of the festival raises the question of its exact purposes. Without expounding the whole ritual, a description of the main events is necessary in the attempt to understand it. As already said, the various activities of this ritual belong each to one of the three categories qualified by all as “performance for the gods” (*lha rtsed*), “performance for the *klu*” (*klu rtsed*) and “martial performance” (*dmag rtsed*). Another category, the “various performances” (*rtsed rigs*) although generally not cited by the informants and even not listed in the articles written by Tibetans (except by Skäl bzang dar rgyas 1992, p. 79), appear nevertheless, as an important component of the ritual.

1. “PERFORMANCE FOR THE GODS” (*LHA RTSED*)

This performance must be seen from two angles: the *lha pa*’s performance is qualified as *lha rtsed*, which means “divine performance” or “the performance *of* the god” since the deity is said to act through the medium. But when it is a question of the activities of the villagers, the expression must be understood as “performance *for* the gods.” Externally, this difference appears through the movements of the *lha pa* that seem totally spontaneous, following his own inspiration, while the performances of the villagers are directed by a well-organised choreography.

Until the beginning of the 1990s, on the last day of the celebration four goats (each offered by one *tsho ba*) were sacrificed and burnt alive, but under pressure from Buddhist monks, goats made of roasted barley flour (*rtsam pa*) are nowadays offered as a substitute (see Figure 11). Perhaps in order to deceive the gods, while the goats are carried on a platform to the “House of the Army chiefs”, all the performers bleat. Nevertheless, blood offerings (*dmag mchod*) still exist: on the 24th and 25th day of the 6th month, twelve men (*kha dmar*) under thirty-one years old, designated by the *lha pa*,⁵¹ have their cheeks skewered by two old men (see Figure 12). Then, the same number of men still designated by the *lha pa* receive ten needles stuck in two lines onto their backs (see Figure 13). Others have the upper part of the forehead cut with a knife. These blood offerings are dedicated to Stag lung, the birth-god and are classified as a “performance for the gods”. They are said to bring good fortune and remove obstacles.

51) It happens also that in case of misfortune, a man asks the *lha pa* to receive the needles.



Figure 11: A goat made of *rtsam pa* is brought to the “House of the Army Chiefs”.



Figure 12: *Kha dmar*.



Figure 13: A villager with needles in the back.

2. “PERFORMANCE FOR THE KLU” (*KLU RTSÉD*)

Two men designated by the *lha pa*, one with a *thang ka* of Dgra ’dul dbang phyug tied on his back, the other one a *thang ka* of Blon po, perform four short dances to the sound of the gong, on stilts decorated with drawings of tigers and leopards. In the first dance, they hold a stick, in the second a trident (see Figure 14), in the third they beat the “divine drum” (*lha rnga*), lastly they dance with empty hands. As explained in Ri gdengs’s article, the origin of the drawings on the stilts is said to date back to the beginning of the ritual when ’Od dpag med and sPyan ras gzigs, one having a tiger-head, the other one a leopard-head, started to dance. The importance of reciting the myth in order for the ritual to be effective has been often underlined as much in a general context (Hocart 1970, p. 45) as in the specific context of Tibet (Stein [1962] 1996, p. 164; Stein 1971, pp. 479–84, in particular 482). But the original myth is not recited during the musical festival. It is played.⁵² Several authors have noticed the opposition between “playing” in rituals of possession and shamanism and “praying” in “great” religions (Van der Veer 1992, pp. 545–564; Hamayon 1994, pp. 189–215). Would it not be because local gods are supposed to be so delighted by the beauty of the performance? It is well-known that local gods are conceived in the image of human beings with their qualities and defects and as such are said to be satisfied if they are pleased. Only then can one expect a positive answer to one’s requests.

3. “MARTIAL PERFORMANCE” (*DMAG RTSÉD*)

Another performance refers also to the original myth. One of the main activities of the “martial performances” is the “*E ha march*”, a martial march in which all men must participate and that recalls the time of the battles between Chinese and Tibetans. While standing in a circle in decreasing age order, they perform a slow dance at the sound of the gong, holding arrows, swords, spears or flags, wearing clothes said to be similar to those of the border guards of the old times: they have a white shirt, a brown coat tied at the

52) During the ritual, several villagers read texts in the “House of the Army Chiefs.” I never could see them since the people were afraid that by showing me their books, misfortune would fall on the village. I could obtain only (some?, all?) titles. They were mainly propitiation texts for local gods (*yul lha gzhi bdag*). To my knowledge, the villagers do not recite the original myth.



Figure 14: *Klu rtsed*.



Figure 15: Villagers singing *la gzhas*.

waist, white socks as a substitute for gaiters, and their heads are covered with a towel kept in place by a fake plait rolled up around the head.

Also included in this category are songs (*glu*) that are love songs typical of A mdo, *la gzhas* (see Figure 15).⁵³ They are said to be similar to those sung by the border guards at the time of the battles between the Chinese and Tibetans while, being far from their home and in a sad mood, they were calling to their wives. Since *la gzhas* must never be sung in the presence of parents, the 24th and 25th days, the villagers designated by the *lha pa* and known for their sweet voice, cover their face with a ceremonial scarf (*kha btags*) in order to “hide their shame.”

One recognizes in the “performance for the gods”, the “martial performance” and the “performance for the *klu*” the three vertical divisions of the territorial space with the gods above, men in the middle and the water spirits underground (see Figure 16).

53) See Rossi 1992 on the subject.



Figure 16: Correspondences between the performances and the three vertical divisions of the territorial space.

4. "VARIOUS PERFORMANCES" (*RTSED RIGS*)

Another performance we have to deal with, the "various performances" is based on the principle of imitation. The work of Hocart (1970, pp. 43–44) gives us a clue to understanding the importance of this episode of the festival in which the villagers play an important role. The scenes that compose this category are full of humor and obviously one of the goals is to entertain the audience: the performers imitate the *lha pa*'s behaviour and the most dramatic events of the celebration like the piercing of the cheeks. But something else is at stake in what can appear as a mere distraction. Indeed, the villagers designated by the *lha pa* have to play scenes whose themes are always the same from one year to another but with a total freedom of interpretation which leads them to invent funny discourses, and to make jokes in order to divert the audience. The performers play situations as they would like them to be in order to compel the gods to cause their realization: they imitate scenes of a good harvest (see Figure 17), scenes that belong to a time where forests were dense and full of wild animals, scenes in which a pregnant woman gives birth to a child, etc. These imitations are much more than a drama; they are "creative actions" whose aim is the control of the gods, the control of nature.



Figure 17: A villager performing one of the “various performances” (*rtseḍ rigs*).

5. GYĀ DPA'

Another performance must be dealt with for its role in the establishment of the relations between gods and human beings. On the 24th et 25th days of the 6th month, the two last days of the ritual, a knowledgeable old man designated by the *lha pa* entrusts clearly the gods with their tasks through the recitation of a text called *gyā dpa'*. According to my main informant, this term is a translation from Chinese for “discourse”. The man in charge of this function holds a gong and stands in the courtyard, just below the “House of the Army Chiefs” with, in front of him, all the performers in two lines (see Figure 18). While he strikes the gong once, he shouts “*gya dpa' le gya dpa'*” to which the performers answer “*be'u*”. He then calls by name all the protective gods, describes their garb, their mount, their retinue and invites them to come. He thus lists all the offerings which were made: white and red offerings, tea, beer (*chang*), incense, flowers, but also dances as well as all the performances (*rtsed mo*) and piercing. Only then does he entrust the gods with their tasks in the following words:

“You must protect the doctrine,
 You must grant a long life to those who hold the doctrine,
 You must protect the monasteries [where] the monks [live],
 You must spread teaching and practice,
 You must stop the decay of the world,
 We request you to increase the happiness of the sentient beings!

If there is in Sog ru a physical enemy who is angry with the eighty families, if there is a non-physical *bgegs* [demon] that harms them, we request you to put an end to all the internal and external obstacles. In particular, do not let fall the four *tsho ba* from above; do not let them collapse from below. If sicknesses strike the men, if calamities strike the livestock, if there are slanders, if there are gossip and disputes, we request you to put an end to them from the realm beyond appearances.

We want our good fortune equal to [the height] of the sky. We want our life as solid as the mountain. We request that the sun of happiness and joy may shine over the three countries China, Tibet, Mongolia.”⁵⁴

54) *Sangs rgyas bstan pa srung dgos gi / bstan 'dzin kyi sku tshe ring dgos gi / dge 'dun kyi 'dus sde skyong dgos gi / bshad sgrub kyi bstan pa dar dgos gi / 'jig rten rguad pa yod na gso dgos gi / sems can gyi bde skyid spel rgyu'i skyabs 'jug / sog ru du kha brgyad bcu la sdang bar byed pa'i gzugs can gyi dgra yod na / gnod par byed pa'i gzugs med kyi yod na / bar du gcod pa phyi nang gi 'gal rkyen thams cad rdzogs rgyu'i skyabs 'jug / khyad par du sog gi tsho ba bzhi bo kha nas 'pho ru ma 'jug / zhabs nas 'dzar gi ma 'jug / mi thog na na tsha yod na / phyug thog na god kha yod na / phur kha yod na mi kha kha mchu yod na mi mngon dbyings nas rdzogs rgyu'i skyabs 'jug / rlung rta dgung dang mnyam dgos gi tshe srog ri ltar brtan dgos gi / rgya bod hor gsum yul gru thams cad la bde zhing skyid pa'i nyi ma 'char ba'i skyabs 'jug / rgya chen po gong nas gong du zhu gsung dgos gi / (recorded in 1997).*



Figure 18: *Gyā dpa'*.

If we except the first lines related to the doctrine that I think to be a late addition, the local gods are charged to bring prosperity and well-being, to give victory over enemies, to maintain internal solidarity, to protect villagers and cattle, to drive away sickness and calamities – in short they are asked to give and preserve life, life being “conceived as vigour to win in battle or success in cultivation, or recovery from lowered vitality or mental health” (Hocart 1970, p. 245).

V. A ritual to restore order to the world

The observation of the musical festival (*glu rol*) shows that it aims at restoring order in this microcosm organized according to four concentric squares. The innermost square is represented by the “House of the Army chiefs”, the house of the deities/*lha pa*; the second one by the household; the third one by the whole village of Sog ru and the most exterior one, by the neighbouring area where the villages linked with Sog ru are located, a schema that refers to the Tibetan conception of the earth in its horizontal extension (Stein [1962] 1996, pp. 15–17; Meyer 1983, p. 39).



Figure 19: Organization of the space according to concentric squares.

1. RESTORING ORDER OUTWARDS FROM THE “HOUSE OF THE ARMY CHIEFS” (*DMAG DPON KHANG*)

During the six days of the celebration that constitutes the sacred time, dances, songs, offerings, almost all ritual activities take place in this enclosed and square place that is the “House of the Army Chiefs” and its courtyard. Like the tent of the king in old Tibet (Stein [1962] 1996, p. 73; Meyer 1983, p. 43) and similar to the royal estate in old China (Granet [1934] 1968), this sacred place is the centre of the ritual, the centre of the world. It is the place where, on this occasion, the whole community meets, is confronted with its diversity, its hierarchy, and where it manifests its cohesion and its strength. It is from this innermost square that order will be spread through the activities of the gods/*lha pa*. Moreover, the cohesion of the village community is asserted and strengthened once again when the villagers add in the courtyard, on the last day of the ritual, a single arrow higher than the previous ones in the name of the whole village to the *la btsas* of Stag lung, the birth-god.

2. RESTORING ORDER IN THE HOUSEHOLD

Early in the morning on the second day of the ritual (*lha chang kha*), each householder (in the name of the household) brings offerings to the “House of the Army Chiefs.” When all the men are gathered in the courtyard, they perform one single dance. On this day, one of the *lha pa*, followed by all the villagers and by the two palanquins (*lha sgam*), goes into each house of the village according to an unchanging order. The Stag lung’s palanquin is left in the first house, in which an altar is dedicated to him but the palanquin of Khri ka’i yul lha is carried into each house where white offerings are already prepared and displayed on a table in the courtyard (see Figure 20). All the members of the household come to greet the *lha pa* and its party. It is a very important day for them during which divination plays a preponderant role. After having spread yogurt and alcohol on the floor, the *lha pa* throws two goat-horns (*rwa mo*) onto the floor. One side of these half-crescent shaped horns is slightly convex, the other one flat. If they fall one on the flat side and the other one on the convex one, the divination is said to be good. In the case where, after three times, the result is mediocre (the two rounded sides towards the sky) or bad (the two rounded sides towards the ground), the *lha pa* gives appropriate rituals to perform to the members of the household in order to divert obstacles and calamities which shows that the divination can

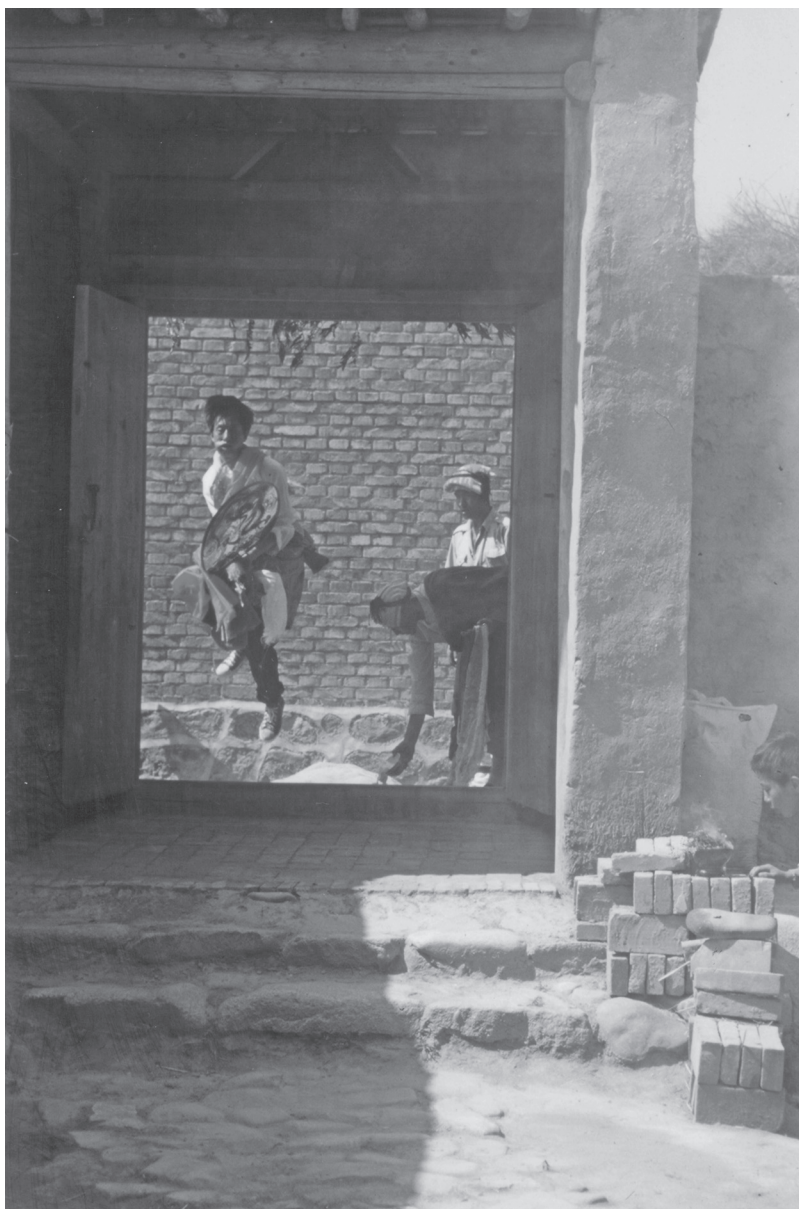


Figure 20: *Lha chang kha*: The elder *lha pa* arriving in one of the houses of Sog ru.

somehow be “manipulated” since it is possible to influence, to play on the future.⁵⁵

Because it is pointless to act on the exterior when the interior is not in order (Karmay-Sagant 1998, p. 147), only when order has been restored in all the households can the *lha pa* act on the village itself. This explains why the *lha chang kha* ceremony occurs on the second day, the first one being dedicated to the purification of the villagers, the palanquins and the various instruments of the ritual.

3. RESTORING ORDER IN THE VILLAGE

The participation of all the men of Sog ru between fifteen and sixty years is compulsory, since they belong to the group for which the ritual is performed. They participate in the festival not only by performing the numerous sequences of the ritual but also because they have to help the deities to “descend” through their shouting and beating of the divine drum (*lha rnga*).

During the six days of the ritual, the attention paid by the *lha pa* – helped by his “servants” and the eight *kha 'go ba* – to a good realization of the celebration emphasises the importance of performing according to the rules which is the necessary condition to ensure the efficiency of the ritual. The mediums attend to the proper accomplishment of the performance, supervise the proper appearance of the performers and also observe whether they respect the specific rules of the ritual: not to drink, not to gossip, not to fight in the area of the “House of the Army chiefs” and to show respect to the *lha pa* and the *kha 'go ba*. The mediums generally hold a whip which they do not hesitate to use in the event of incorrect behaviour. Indeed, to restore order in the village, the gods must be honoured in the right way, the law must be respected, everything should be in its proper place.

Throughout the several days of the celebration, the elder *lha pa* (sometimes, but rarely the younger one) designates the villagers who must participate in such and such a performance and it is impossible for anyone to escape from the order which, in fact has the characteristic of divine designation since it

55) In the last text published on the Reb gong *glu rol* and written by 'Brug thar and Sangs rgyas tshe ring a long chapter (2005, pp. 608–737) is dedicated to all the *glu rol* of the Reb gong area, among them the Sog ru *glu rol* (2005, pp. 645–661). As in the other publications, the importance of the role of the *lha pa* is underestimated and the divination during the *lha chang kha* is even not mentioned. (I am grateful to D. Berounský for having brought this book to my attention).



Figure 21: The elder *lha pa* in the courtyard of the “House of the Army Chiefs” with the goat-horns in hand.

is the deity that is supposed to speak through the *lha pa*. The beginning and the end of each performance, or whether one of them is cancelled, are things determined by the throw of the goat-horns. At that time, a great number of the performers gathered around the *lha pa*, calling by name the local gods (*yul lha gzhi bdag*).

Through all these activities, the community look to placate the gods in order for all the village to receive their protection. But other sequences of the ritual show that it is still necessary to act on the external square: the neighbouring area.

4. RESTORING ORDER IN THE NEIGHBOURING AREA

The musical festival has also to restore the links between the neighbouring villages. Sog ru, The bu and 'Ja mo called "villages of the shaded northern side" (*srib mtha' sde ba*), are said to have traditionally links "similar to those between father, mother and son". On the fourth day, the *lha pa* followed by all the performers leads the procession to the neighbouring village of The bu (see Figure 22). Arriving at the village's front gate, the The bu *lha pa* into whom "descends" A myes Gnyan chen greets Dgra 'dul dbang phyug [*lha pa*] and Blon po [*lha pa*] and invites them and the villagers to the "House of the Army chiefs" of The bu where they perform all the performances only once apart from the blood offerings (see Figure 23). Food is offered, and only then do the Sog ru villagers go back to their village. On the fifth day, it is the turn of the *lha pa* and the villagers of The bu to come to Sog ru, and on the sixth day, the *lha pa* of several neighbouring villages (Sa skyil, Rgyal po, etc.) accompanied by some villagers come to Sog ru (see Figure 24). The meeting of the *lha pa* is in fact a meeting of the gods and on this day where all the *lha pa*/gods gather in the courtyard of the "House of the Army chiefs", the sacred place become a world that transcends all the distinctions established by relationships and residence (Scubla 2002, p. 215).

I realized the importance of this meeting of gods in 1997 when I learned that following a fight that occurred some years ago between two men, one from Sog ru and one from The bu, the Blon po [*lha pa*] decided not to go to The bu for the next festival. Only Dgra 'dul dbang phyug [*lha pa*] went there with some villagers but they were not received as they should have been. From that time, the Dgra 'dul dbang phyug [*lha pa*] decided not to go anymore. But in 1997, some days before the beginning of the ritual, four men from The bu came to Sog ru with many offerings requesting the Dgra 'dul dbang phyug



Figure 22: The elder *lha pa* followed by the performers leads the procession to the neighboring village of The bu.



Figure 23: The *lha pa* of The bu welcoming the elder *lha pa* of Sog ru.



Figure 24: The *lha pa* of Sa skyil in the courtyard of Sog ru “House of Army Chiefs” burning *klu rta*.

[*lha pa*] to come again; he accepted. On the way to The bu, all the villagers from 'Ja mo came to greet him and several old ladies, quite overcome by his presence were crying, so moved they were to see him again. During this year, the offerings the Sog ru *lha pa* received in The bu were much more numerous than usual.

5. THE FINAL ACT: RESTORING ORDER IN THE "HOUSE OF THE ARMY CHIEFS" (DMAG DPON KHANG)

As has already been pointed out, during the six days of the celebration, the reordering of the world is performed from the "House of the Army Chiefs". Throughout this period, the sacred space is opened to many people, insiders but also outsiders and consequently it can be affected by impurity and defilement. When the ritual is over, the place must recover its purity. "The world is in order" said Granet about traditional China "only when it is enclosed as a house" (Granet [1934] 1968, p. 80ff). On the last day of the ritual, while the palanquin of Stag lung is brought back to the courtyard, after the end of all performances, the younger *lha pa* performs a ritual of purification outside the gate of the courtyard of the "House of the Army Chiefs". Holding a ritual spear and followed by the elders of the village playing cymbals and reciting *sūtra*, by the two palanquins (*lha sgam*), and by all the performers holding spears, standards and banners, he goes along the path, sticking the spear into several places. When the spot is chosen, he makes symbolic gestures (*mudrā*) while men lay a pile of straw in front of him to which they set fire. They then give him two willow sticks on which hang sheets of paper (*klu rta*)⁵⁶ with drawings of *klu* which he throws into the fire. Back in the courtyard, the *lha pa* purifies all the performers who bend by waving the spear over their heads.

Internal organs and fruits are then offered by the *lha pa* to all performers on the balcony of the "House of the Army Chiefs". No outsiders are present. Through this act of commonality among insiders, the community strengthens again its cohesion. The "House of the Army Chiefs" is then closed until the next event now that the order that has spread from the centre has come back to the centre.

56) *Klu rta* are said to remove obstacles. On the last day of the ritual, two willow sticks adorned with *klu rta* are put on each side of the *la btsas* of Stag lung.

Conclusion

The musical festival (*glu rol*) is a total social fact as developed by Mauss (1980, pp. 145–279) in which villagers and local gods are engaged in a system of reciprocity. This celebration is at once religious, mythological, political, economic; it is a phenomenon of the social structure since it brings together all the families of the village.

This celebration is also, to use Hocart's famous model (1970, p. 245), a life-giving ritual. It allows at once the revival of the environment and of the society which depends on it. It aims at restoring the order of the world that is this miniature image of a cosmos perceived as centred, stratified and oriented towards the four cardinal points. As in traditional China, this festival aims to renew between men and nature an harmony on which the fate of all beings depends (Granet [1934] 1968, p. 56).

The musical festival at once represents and creates the world as it is conceived by Tibetans: a square and oriented schema in its horizontal extension combined vertically with a triple division (Meyer 1983, pp. 39–40).

It is wellknown that in traditional Tibet the king stands ideally in the centre of the country in the same way as his tent is erected in the middle of the camp (Stein [1962] 1996, p. 16; Meyer 1983, p. 43); this organization has persisted throughout Tibet's history as is shown by the picture of the camp of the 14th Dalai-Lama near Lhasa (Stein 1962, p. 80). During the whole celebration, the place of the *lha pa* is also in the innermost square that is the "House of the Army Chiefs". Could this mean that the *lha pa* is identified with the king?

Hocart offers a clue for an attempt at interpretation (Hocart 1970, pp. 99–136). He describes the king or the chief as "the depositary of the gods, that is of the life of the group", the one who "dispenses prosperity to that group and to that group only". This can be applied also to the *lha pa* who is in charge of the socio-cosmic order. As such, he is regarded as a good *lha pa* if the ritual he leads brings prosperity, posterity, or in one word "life" in the same way as a Yavulu chief (Fidji) is considered a good one if under his reign the country is prosperous (Hocart 1970, p. 135). The king or the chief is the central personage of the ritual whose function traditionally is not to govern but to reign. In other words "the king's *raison d'être* is not to coordinate but to be the head of the ritual". In fact, what matters is kingship, not the king, this latter being not necessary to royal power. The king can be a child, he can be away from the country for years or he can even be dead (Hocart 1970, pp. 99–136). On his part, the *lha pa* is not the master of the ceremony. He is just an underling, the real master of the ceremony being the "servants" of the *lha pa* and the *kha 'go ba*.

If this is so, would it not be logical that a king could be personified in the person of the *lha pa*, a human being in a state of absence? Would this be the reason why the younger medium (like the ones from The bu, Sa skyil and other villages)⁵⁷ has a long fake plait, a plait that is reminiscent of King Ral pa can, “One who has plaits” under whose reign the musical festival is supposed to have had its origin?

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57) In the old times, it is said that all *lha pa* had this plait.

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Powerful Hero (*Dpa' rtsal*): Protective Deity from the 19th century Amdo and his mediums

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Summary: The text follows the history of the protective deity from North-Eastern Tibet (Amdo). It starts with the story on his origin, which explains how hermit Sangye Yeshe became a demon after his passing away and was then ritually tamed by the 8th Kirti master in the late 19th century. The taming is described as “raising him to the rank of deities” and after then he became personal protector of Kīrti masters. At the same time he played a significant role in converting the local people from the Bon religion to the Gelugpa version of Buddhism. His forceful nature surfaced in connection with the local conflict between Gelugpa monasteries in Amdo. But recently he also became involved in the so-called “Shugden affair” and used as antidote to this deity, which was recently banned by official circles in Dharamsala. From the beginning of the 20th century he possessed mediums in the Kirti monasteries of Ngawa and Tagtshang Lhamo. To the last medium “the door of the deity was opened” only in the year 2000 and the process during which the medium of the deity was recognized as a “reincarnation” is traced back in this paper in some detail.

1. Introduction

It is some four years ago that I was for the first time travelling through the Kirti Tagtshang Lhamo (“Kirti –Tiger Den [and Goddess] Lhamo”) monastery in Amdo. The Kirti is the name of the lineage of reincarnated masters of its founders and the rest in the name of the locality. Having interest in the traditions of local deities, it was surprising to me that monks of the monastery apparently do not have a negative attitude towards the cult of local and thus “worldly” deities. This is in general not very typical for monasteries of the Gelugpa tradition in Amdo. Many monks in Amdo consider the local deities to be dealing with “simple lay people” these days.

In contrast to such an attitude, Kirti monastery has some four “monastery labtse” (*la btsas*, etc.); cairns of the local deities, which are annually propitiated

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by monks through the “fumigation ritual” (*bsang*) and the festive action of adding huge arrows to the cluster of the older ones at the cairn. Three of the monastery cairns are dedicated purely to the local deities. But the fourth one; connected with a deity called Powerful Hero (*dpa' rtsal*); is somehow exceptional and surpasses the usual class of local deities. The cairn is situated on the top of the hill above the monastery itself. A grove and a small temple of the deity are located below the cairn. The role of protector of the monastery and local deity are thus both present in him at first glance. This is an interesting case of a deity who is partly ritually treated as a local deity (*gzhi bdag*) and partly as a protector of Doctrine (*chos skyong/ srung ma*).²

The name of this deity typically varies and in different sources he is mentioned as Dorje Pawotsel (“Powerful Hero of Vajra”, *Rdo rje dpa' bo rtsal*), in a shortened way as Patsel (“Powerful Hero”, *Dpa' rtsal*), Delnagcen (“One with Black Mule”, *Drel nag can*), or Karmavajra (“Vajra of Activity”, *Karma ba dzra*). The variety of names reflects his basic features. It stresses his power and fierce nature (“Hero” in his name might be understood also as “warrior” or translation of Skt. *vīra*, a name of a class of beings within Tantras), his connection with Tantric practices (vajra), or his appearance as a warrior riding a black mule. For the sake of lucidity, in the following lines the deity will be mentioned throughout the text as Patsel, i.e. “Powerful Hero”.

My sudden interest in the Powerful Hero was then cooled down by a strange silence on the part of the monks, from whom I tried to learn more details. It took me next three years full of surprises and accidents, to learn the stories presented here in the paper. It is a story about the origin of a new protective deity, his subsequent manifestation through the mediums he possessed and his recent acknowledgment as a protector of the Tibetan government in exile.

2) Monks of Tagtshang Lhamo monastery had no problem with calling him *gzhi bdag* (“Lord of the base”, i.e. a particular designation of a local deity). The ritual dedicated to him and taking place at labtse does not differ much substantially from those dedicated to the local deities, but is accompanied by larger rituals taking place inside the monastery. On the other hand, one would not find such a designation in the textual sources, where he seems to be always treated as “protector of Doctrine” (*chos skyongs*) or *rgyal po*. Such ritual dealing with the deity was also the topic of my older article (Berounský 2006), yet at that time I had no idea about the origin and background of the deity and some of the hypotheses presented there are now seen to be mistaken in the light of the present paper. Still, the article contains the fumigation text used during the ritual of “praising the cairn” (*la btsas stod pa*) demonstrating his role as local deity.



Figure 1: Temple of Powerful Hero in Lhamo Kirti monastery. The cairn of the deity is on the top of the hill with the grove below it. Down the slope is the temple itself; called *rgyal khang* – “temple of the king” (photo: author 2004).



Figure 2: Monks of the Lhamo Kirti monastery are adding their arrows to the cairn of Powerful Hero. The ritual honoring of the deity is not significantly different from that of lay communities in the given area (photo: author 2005).

2. The origin of the deity

Narrations about the origin of the deity survived in two textual sources and both of them will be presented here in the translation below. But first, the story about the creation of the deity will be summarized; both with the help of the textual sources and with comments from contemporary informants living in the area.

It is said that the origin of the deity is bound up with the past disciple of the 5th Kirti Tenpay Gyaltsen (*Bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan*, 1712–1755), the founder of the Lhamo Kirti monastery (he founded it following the year 1748). One of his disciples was monk Sangye Yeshe (*Sangs rgyas ye shes*). The monk later became a hermit and practiced assiduously the Tantra of Vajrabhairava not very far from the Lhamo Kirti in the area of so-called “Upper Thewo” (*the stod*).³

There is a small temple there nowadays with a single monk performing daily rituals to the deity Powerful Hero. During my visit to the temple in 2006 the monk showed me a stūpa containing relics of the hermit monk Sangye Yeshe inside the temple. As a share of the belongings of the past hermit he presented there a copy of Prajñāpāramita in 8000 verses written in gold, believed to be his own work. Another curiosity was a painted chest which also allegedly belonged to the past hermit Sangye Yeshe. It is believed that the hermit painted his self-portrait on its side.

This hermit Sangye Yeshe repeated many times the so called “root-mantra of Vajrabhairava”⁴ but still he did not succeed in practising the tantra of this tutelary deity. His teacher, the 5th Kirti, once told him, that before he died, he wanted to be blessed by him; his disciple-hermit. When Sangye Yeshe grew old and felt that death was approaching him, he sent his servant to the Kirti master with an invitation to come for blessings. For some reason it happened that Kirti did not come. Sangye Yeshe got angry and died at that moment. At the same time the mule he used to ride died as well.

The monk performing daily rituals at the location of the former hermitage showed me a place near the temple which was, according to him, the place of the death of the hermit. Two juniper trees were growing there and according to the monk these resemble the horns of buffalo-headed Vajrabhairava, the tutelary deity of the former hermit.

3) The sources call the hermitage *Nyin shug*. The location of his hermitage is few kilometers from a famous pilgrimage place called “Hot Waters” (*chu tshan/ chu khol*), in the valley behind the western mountain of this holy place.

4) The root-mantra (*rtsa sngags*) runs: *Oṃ Yamarāja sadomeya Yamedorunayodaya Yadayonirayakṣeya Yakṣeyacchaniramāya hūṃ hūṃ phaṭ phaṭ svāhā*.



Figure 3: The alleged self-portrait of the hermit Sangye Yeshe, who became a demon and later the deity Powerful Hero. It is painted on the side of the chest deposited in the temple which is also the location of his former hermitage; not far from holy place Hot Waters (photo: author 2006).



Figure 4: Masks of peaceful and wrathful appearances of Powerful Hero in the temple which is also the location of the hermit Sangye Yeshe (photo: author 2006).



Figure 5: The temple of Powerful Hero which is also the location of the former hermitage of Sangye Yeshe. It is kept up by Serthi Lhamo monastery now as an attempt to appease the anger of the deity towards its monks (photo: author 2006).

After his death unfavourable things started to occur in the area. Many people were killed under strange circumstances and a rumour that the former hermit became a demon after his death started to circulate. The land became depopulated.

More than a hundred years passed then without much change until the 8th Kirti Lozang Thinley (*Blo bzang 'phrin las*, 1855–1900) was invited to this area by local reincarnated master Mogru Rinpoche (*Rmog ru rin po che*) to ritually tame the demon here. This event took place not at the former hermitage, but at the nearby holy place “Hot Waters”, where a small stūpa now marks it according to local informants. Kirti tamed him successfully in 1883. During the ritual process of taming he ordered a painter to depict the wrathful and peaceful appearance of the deity following his instruction (i.e. following his “seeing” /*gzigs*/ the deity-demon) on small painted cards (*tsa ka li*), which were then placed in the local village temple. One of the texts describes the taming also as “raising him to the rank of deity”.



Figure 6: The place where the hermit Sangye Yeshe died. Two juniper trees to the left resemble the horns of his bull-headed tutelary deity according to the temple-keeper (photo: author 2006).

Kirti composed ritual texts with *sādhana* dedicated to the deity, which survived among his collected works.⁵ He appointed him to be his personal protector and later he built his temple (*rgyal khang*) in Lhamo Kirti monastery as well as in the new monastery founded by him in Ngawa (*Rnga ba*). The deity became protector of Kirti masters and his cult spread in the villages and monasteries of Upper Thewo.

To let the sources speak themselves both of the brief texts mentioning the origin of the deity will be presented in translation here. The first description

5) There are three ritual texts dedicated to the Powerful Hero, who is called also Karmavajra here, in the collected works of the Eighth Kirti: *Srog bdag rdo rje dpa' po rtsal kyi drag bskul dus mtha'i me dpung la* (5folios), *Bstan srung karma ba dzra yi gsol mchod bka' rgya ma* (3folios), *Rgyal chen karma ba dzra'i rjes gnam la* (4folios). All are included in the last volume of his collected works (marked as *ithi*). See Lhag pa tshe ring 1990, p. 816 and <http://www.tbrc.org> (Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, "works created by Blo bzang 'phrin las bstan pa rgya mtsho").



Figure 7: Holy place “Hot Waters”, where the demon of the former hermit was tamed according to local people (photo: author 2006).

of the process of taming the deity by the 8th Kirti appears in his large biography from the 19th century (Zhwa dmar paṇḍita dge ‘dun bstan ‘dzin rgya mtsho, Cang lung khri rgan ‘jam dbyangs thub bstan rgya mtsho, 2007, pp. 159–160):⁶

During the second (month of the year 1883) he made preparations for his visit to the (holy place) “Hot Waters” in (the locality called) Kyangtsha. Several visions appeared to the (local master) Alag Mogru Rinpoche (revealing that) the time had come for the King of Kyangtsha (i.e. spirit of the locality) to be raised to the rank of deity. Following this he thought that he himself was not able to do it. He turned to Alag Dorjechang (i.e. Kirti master) and asked whether he, through his great kindness, would do it during those days and he offered him a very long strip of silk. (Kirti) went to the “Hot Waters” on the eleventh day (of the second month). During the night there appeared the howls of wolves at the four points of the compass from his encampment and he considered this to be an omen. He ordered each of the three villages of Kyangtsha to prepare substances for the fumigation ritual. And after composing a new fumigation text “The Sole Refuge of the Land of Snows” during the fifteenth day (of the second month) he performed

6) For the original Tibetan text see appendix 2. 1.



Figure 8: Stūpa commemorating the place where the demon was tamed by 8th Kirti, who “raised him to the rank of deity” here; inside the holy place “Hot Waters” (photo: author 2006).

the fumigation ritual, offering sacrificial cakes, and empowered (the spirit) to be a Protector of Dharma. Creating small picture-cards with the wrathful and peaceful (depiction of) the New King (*rgyal gzar*), these were then placed in the “temple of the king” (*rgyal khang*). This “King with Black Mule” was a master; one of the disciples of accomplished (5th Kirti) Tenpay Gyaltshe. He was then born as demon (*dre*), dwelt at the hermitage Nyinshug and was harming others very cruelly. He was of such a kind that not even his name was uttered in the surrounding areas. But since the time when he was raised to the rank of deity, he calmed down and became gentle. When he later acted in accordance with orders (of Kirti master), it was as if all the previous (harmful deeds) returned to him in his frequent timidity. But from time to time it seemed that this Protector of Dharma had to come to forceful and violent feeling. (The Kirti master) thought that in the times of his great violence it was impossible to change his mind. Thus he meditated Avalokiteśvara as his family-lord and compassion was invoked as much as possible. It is said that it happened in such a way.

It seems that the story is somehow related to the introduction of the cult of Avalokiteśvara to Thewo. The second text translated here appears in the recent autobiography (*rtogs brjod*) of Jigme Rigpe Lodo (1910–1985), to whom it was allegedly said by a scribe of Kirti master. General outline of the story is in agreement with the previous version. But it adds interesting notes on

the doubt of local people ('Jigs me rigs pa'i blo gros 1987, pp. 634–6; 'Jigs me rigs pa'i blo gros 2007, pp. 146–147):⁷

A disciple of (the Fifth) Kirti Tenpay Gyaltsen, who is known also as Unequalled Kirti, once dwelt in this part of the valley called Kyangtsha. The name of the disciple was Sangye Yeshe and he was purifying his defilement. He repeated a hundred billion times the Yamarāja mantra (i.e. the root-mantra of Vajrabhairava). It is also known that he three times attempted to offer a large maṇḍala, but it became damaged.

When he grew older, Precious Kirti told him: “When you come close to passing away, you will have to call me to your pillow upon any terms.” Later, when his body was weakening, he called his master, but (the master) did not come. The disciple got angry in his heart and at that moment he passed away. The mule he used to ride had a swollen belly and it also died at the same moment. Immediately after that talks about a murderer who was actually seen here spread in the area and all people left the country.

The Eighth Kirti Lozang Thinlay learned that the time for taming him had come. On the deserted plain he pitched his tent for staying. Through the ritual of the protective circle he actually summoned the subject of his visualization; he empowered him, instructed and made him his servant. Meanwhile the artist started to make his depiction. The deity was steadily nose-bleeding; rode the white-legged mule and had tools in his hands. He was given the name Protector of Teaching Karmavajra or Powerful Hero. He is also called Protector of Kirti, one on the black mule from Kyangtsha. Kirti composed sādhana of him, ritual text of “instructing”, “satiation”, “praying”, etc., which are in his collected works.

This history I have heard from the scribe of Kirti Khewang Lozang Sangye, as he heard it from the Precious Master (Kirti) himself. Later I thought that people who know even roughly this history are rare, so I wrote it down as an offering pleasing to the Protector of Teaching himself.

Those who do not know the history, mix up erroneously (this deity) with the deity known as Grandfather Thewo (*A myes the bo*). Grandfather Thewo was a harmful demon 'byung po in the time of Padmasambhava and the building of Samye. When master Padmasambhava expelled him to the margins of the country, (the demon) broke his leg, so he was known as “Demon (dre) with lifted leg”. He escaped and hid himself in the eastern area of Thewo, near the Tagtshang Lhamo monastery. Stories about his harming were numerous and passed on through generations. It is said that his club is in the mother Kirti monastery,⁸ it is a club similar to those kept by Chinese Taoists; twisted in the form of a snake. I saw it myself...

3. The background to the story

There are two existing versions recorded in the texts. The second version contains an allusion to an alternative story, when stating that some people consider the deity to be in fact Grandfather Thewo, i.e. the grandfather of

7) For the original Tibetan text see appendix 2. 2.

8) Mother Kirti monastery is in Kāla hermitage not very far from Ngawa, it was founded there by First Kirti.

this particular region. My search for some information on such a deity both in the textual sources and among the people of the given area was in vain. However, there were evidently more stories on the origin of the deity. One of them, probably connected with the older history of this area called Thewo ("Grandfather Thewo") and known from oral tradition, disappeared without trace to be replaced by a story displaying the power of the Kirti masters and their monasteries.

Local deities are of enormous importance for lay communities in Amdo. They are an immediate source of the identity and independence of a particular clan and are often bound up with a past hero. Here we witness the elimination of the older deity of the area through replacing him with a newly-introduced one. Through the story the new deity is connected with miraculous powers of Kirti masters and this means also the change of identity of the local people. They became closely bound up with the Buddhist monastery. The deity is a source of well-being for the local people. With the change of their principle deity into Powerful Hero, their new deity is not anymore approached directly by the villagers of the area. Exclusive access is now reserved for the Kirti masters, who now start to mediate matters of importance between the lay communities and the deity. That such development met with success is proved by the fact that both Powerful Hero and Kirti masters are worshipped by most Buddhist communities in Upper Thewo these days. As an illustrative case might be mentioned the village of Lower Nomad Zaru (*'Brog pa gza' rus og ma*) in the Thewo area. Inside their village temple there is a central statue of Powerful Hero deity with a smaller statue of the local deity of the village beside him. It is as if the Powerful Hero was the principle one, who checks and oversees both the dealing of the community and their local deity of lower rank.

When coming back to the older historical events, it would become apparent, that the deity and the introduction of his cult played an important role in Buddhist missionary activities in this particular area. In this region called Thewo, Bon religion flourished at least from the 12th until the 17th century, when Buddhism started to be introduced here. Only from fragmentary notes can one learn that in 1671 a military expedition was led to Upper Thewo (the place of later taming the demon-monk) by the Buddhist ruler from Cone. According to one source he killed the village leaders and appointed new ones here (Dkon mchog rin chen 1995, p. 135). Buddhism of the Gelugpa order was introduced in such a forceful way here and it does not seem that killing the traditional village leaders would be praised by the local people at that time. That the conversion to Buddhism was not smooth is proved by another fragment from histories speaking about another military

expedition, which was led here following the uprising of local people in 1683 (Mgon po dbang rgyal 1997, p. 39).

After the founding of Lhamo Kirti monastery in 1748 at the western border of Thewo area and beside the partly forested holy place of Tagtshang Lhamo surrounded by a predominately nomadic settlement, Kirti masters became also involved in the missionary activities in Thewo and continued the missionary work started by the rulers of Cone. From the point of view of the Buddhist monastic authorities the Thewo was seen as “wild” territory which should be tamed and civilized. As an illustration of their attitude there is this extract from a much later text; a hagiography of 8th Kirti master from the late 19th century. It is not surprising that the extract does not mention numerous ancient Bonpo sages who once lived in the area and were venerated by local people.⁹ Instead it praises the Buddhist mission of his predecessor, the 5th Kirti master and the founder of the Tagtshang Lhamo monastery (Zhwa dmar paṇḍita dge 'dun bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho mchog, Lcang lung khri rgan 'jam dbyangs thub bstan rgya mtsho, p. 169).¹⁰

This valley of Thewo was similar to a dark barbarian place with no great holy person arriving here in the past. Through the power of great siddha (5th Kirti) Tenpay Gyaltsen and his great compassion arisen on the lotus of his hand, particular villages of the Thewo valley started to make a depiction of Avalokiteśvara at that time and regularly perform the fasting retreats with chanting mantras. And savage humans and non-humans from this part of land became led to the white side. And since that time also the non-humans ceased to obstruct the Doctrine and among most of the subject people the habits of performing and aspiring to virtue spread.

That the “savage humans and non-humans became led to the white side” concerns also the deity under the spotlight. From another brief extract it is made

9) These were mostly two Bonpo sages living probably in the 12th century and known under the names *Skyang 'phags* and *Gtso 'phags*. Today a large number of hand-, foot- and other imprints in the stones of the Thewo area are ascribed to them. *Skyang 'phags* is intimately tied to the holy place called *Brag dkar bya rgod* (White Vulture Rock) in Thewo, where he revealed treasure-text and by local Bonpos he is also credited with the “opening” of the holy place. Most of the Bonpo monasteries claim their origin from these two masters or their sons. For references see Berounský 2007, pp. 169–170, note 7.

10) The Tibetan text reads: Sngon the bo rong 'di skyes chen dam pa su yang mi 'byon pa'i mtha' 'khob mun gling lta bur yod tshe grub dbang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan gyis 'phags mchog phyag na padma'i thugs rje bskul ba'i stobs kyis the bo rong gi sde so sor 'phags pa spyen ras gzaigs kyi sku bzhengs pa dang/ ma ni smyung gnas kyi rgyun 'dzugs pa sogs mdzad pas/ phyogs de'i mi dang mi ma yin gdug rtsub che ba rnams kyang blo rnam dkar gyi phyogs la gzhol ba byung/ de phyin chad mi min rnams kyis kyang chos la bar chad mi byed pa dang/ ser skya phal cher gyis kyang dge ba re byed pa'i srol dar ba yin stabs/.

evident that even some 200 hundred years after the military expedition of the lord of Cone, by the end of 19th century the 8th Kīrti still had to heal older wounds connected with the introduction of Buddhism to the “barbarian” Thewo. One finds several allusions to the ritual pacification of leaders once killed here in his hagiography, such as, for example, the following sentence in the text, dealing with the area a few hours’ walk from “Hot Waters”. It is the locality where the taming of the monk-demon took place (Zhwa dmar paṇḍita dge ‘dun bstan ‘dzin rgya mtsho mchog, Lcang lung khri rgan ‘jam dbyangs thub bstan rgya mtsho, 2007, p. 211):¹¹

For the sake of the past ruler from the time when he was converted to Buddhism, he (i.e. Kīrti) carried out the purification ritual and the ritual of transfer of his consciousness through the Vairocana root-rituals.

Such rituals were performed here to redeem the killing of the traditional leaders in the rather distant 17th century past. And it is thus made clear that the local inhabitants in the 19th century still felt in a lively manner the mischief accompanying the forceful spread of Buddhism here in the past. But in the 19th century the soil was fertilized enough here for more effective conversion of the local inhabitants. The story on the origin of Powerful Hero must be seen as a part of this.

Summing up, the cult of Powerful Hero played an important role in the conversion of the local people from Upper Thewo to Gelugpa Buddhism and their subordination to the Kīrti monastery. Nowadays, after the storms of communist experiments in the 20th century, only the narrations about the deity from the side of the Kīrti masters survive. With the highest probability the Powerful Hero replaced older deities and played an essential role in promoting the authority of Kīrti masters and the Gelugpa order. It met with success, the position of Kīrti master among the local people is unshakable these days in the particular area and the older deities and narrations surrounding them have left almost no trace.

The Powerful Hero plays an ambiguous role and it is not easy to definitely determine his position. In him, features of three kinds of deities are present simultaneously. Firstly, there is the deity of the *rgyal po* class. This kind of deity evolves from a powerful individual after his death. Thus his temples in monasteries are called *rgyal khang* – “temple of *rgyal po*”. His second feature

11) The Tibetan text reads: Dpon tshang du snga mo dpon rgan dus chos su gyur pa'i don du kun rig rtsa ba'i cho ga'i sgos sbyangs chog dang 'pho ba sogs gnang.

does not clash with the first one. Through the ritual of taming he became personal protector of Kirti masters and “protector of Doctrine”. But the third feature makes him exceptional. He is clearly worshipped also as a “local deity” (*gzhi bdag*) through the fumigation ritual (*bsang*), having his cairn (*la btsas*), where he dwells. It is this feature which points to the interests of local people.

Besides all this he became also a deity possessing his chosen deity-mediums from the beginning of the 20th century. This also might be seen as an additional feature strengthening his influence over the local people.

4. The local conflict of Gelugpa monasteries

Before coming to the deity-mediums of Powerful Hero, his other features will be introduced here in relation to the conflict in the particular area in Tagtshang Lhamo. When it was mentioned that in 1748 the Fifth Kirti established the Tagtshang Lhamo monastery, this was not altogether accurate. Another monastery was founded here beside it by Gyaltsen Sengge (*Rgyal mtshan seng ge* 1678–1756), former 53rd abbot (*serthi* / golden throne holder/, *gser khri*) of Ganden monastery near Lhasa in the same year. This title of its founder gave the name to this particular monastery called Lhamo Serthi as distinguished from Lhamo Kirti. Both monasteries were those of the Gelugpa order and at the time of founding them there did not seem to be any conflict here and probably both were also considered to be one unit.

The following second Serthi master (*Blo bzang rgyal mtshan seng ge*, 1757–1849) spread Gelugpa teachings widely in the area, mostly through a number of new monasteries in this part of Amdo. The nomadic pastures surrounding them were far from being peaceful land and among the nomad tribes there were frequent expeditions by bands of robbers. The story goes that he fell out with the local chief, who exercised some power over the Serthi Lhamo monastery. At the same time he started to prefer his new monastery in Hezuo (*Gt-sos*) as his main residence. According to the notes left in the hagiography of Serthi masters, the local leader connected with his Serthi Tagtshang Lhamo monastery became jealous. He distributed weapons to the monks of Serthi monastery and during one night he burnt down the Karmoele (*Dkar mo'i klad*) monastery, one of the quickly enlarging monasteries founded by the second Serthi in the nomad area near Dzorge. The intention is explained as an attempt to force the Serthi master to come back to Lhamo. The monks of the burnt monastery were dispersed and some of them moved to the Hezuo monastery, which was also later robbed and destroyed. The Serthi master was lucky

enough to escape.¹² Although some details of the event remain dubious; what is important in this story is the fact that the future monk-demon and later the protective deity Powerful Hero is reported to be originally a monk of Karmoele monastery burned down by monks and lay people connected with Lhamo Serthi monastery. And according to the sources he very well remembered this wrong-doing. Through this incident the local narrative explains his anger towards the later Serthi monastery after becoming deity by the end of 19th century.

These (or other conflicts somehow summarized in the single story) led eventually to animosity between the monks of Kirti Lhamo monastery and the Serthi one; an animosity which continues to these days. It seems that only with the 4th Serthi master, somehow not accepted by the neighbouring Kirti monastery, did such rivalry between these two monasteries start. More armed conflicts between them have happened since that time. There are references to armed conflict between the villages subordinated to Kirti and Serthi monasteries even from the 1940s (Dkon mchog rin chen 1995, pp. 142–3).

With Chinese armed intervention following in the 1950s and the later destruction of both monasteries the older conflict did not cease and only took on a new form.¹³ The 11th Kirti master (*Blo bzang bstan 'dzin 'jigs med ye shes rgya mtsho*, born 1946) fled to India in 1959 following the uprising in Tibet. In 1992 he founded the new Lhamo Kirti monastery in Indian Dharamsala and in 1997

12) The sources are not very explicit about these events. Here, the way of description of the conflict follows 11th Kirti's speech (translated in the next chapter), but concerning the dating of the conflict this is given in brackets in the original text as 26. 7. 1754, which cannot be connected with second Serthi, but the first one. He speaks clearly about second Serthi master in his mature age, but he was born only three years later after the given year of the conflict; in 1757. "History of Doctrine in Amdo" mentions conflict between the second Serthi master and the local chief named *Dpon po dpal ldan seng ge*, which resulted in the stay of the second Serthi in Hezuo (Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, 1982, p. 725). This probably later led to the conflict mentioned here and is vividly described in the autobiography of the second Serthi (see Anonymous a, fol. 20a–21a, which here is extensively cited from the autobiography of the second Serthi called *Rang rnam nyi mo'i 'od*), during which Hezuo was invaded by "those in whom the demon settled", burned the monastery in Hezuo and killed 16 monks there. Yet, no monastery Karmoele is mentioned in these sources. To make the whole matter rather confusing, some conflict is mentioned in the hagiography of 5th Kirti as happening in 1754, but it is connected with some unnamed hermitage and is given only in a very allusive way (Hor sprul sku 'jam dbyangs mkhas grub 2007, p. 63). It is possible that these various conflicts were somehow mixed up in the speech of the contemporary Kirti master. Later, the lineage of Serthi masters split into those of Hezuo and those of Tagtshang Lhamo, starting with the 4th Serthi.

13) Since the older sources are typically not very straightforward, one must take into account also the possibility of highlighting only some features of the older conflict once happening here and perhaps maturing with the passing of time.

he became minister (kalon) of the exiled Tibetan government in India (Minister for Religion and Culture in the years 1997–1999). This rather contrasts with the development surrounding the Lhamo Serthi monastery since its reopening in the 1980's. The Serthi master (*Blo bzang rnam rgyal lung rig seng ge*, born 1938) is, unlike the Kirti master, married and since 1992 has been a member of numerous political committees in the Kansu province. His monastery is not seen as problematical and receives support from the local government.

The past conflicts and controversies of these two monasteries still play a significant role in the area now and influence the everyday life of the villages connected with them. Very recently there was a conflict between the two villages Jika (*Rgye khags*) and Bo (*Bhos*) near Tagtshang Lhamo in September 2007. Each of the villages is connected with a different monastery. According to my informants a man from Bo lost his yak. He found it in the pastures of Jika village and took it back. Another man from Jika village understood this as stealing and went to Bo village and while arguing he killed the man from Bo. Both villages armed themselves with all possible weaponry waiting for the fight. Life in Tagtshang Lhamo became paralyzed with closed shops and drivers refusing to do their work. While staying there myself during the second half of October the conflict was still not solved. One of the main problems was that each of the villages was connected with a different monastery and due to the discord between them a suitable religious authority for both sides could not be found to settle the conflict as is the traditional rule in the area. Bizarrely enough, a Chinese living in the area commented upon the whole event significantly to me: "Tibetans do not have a sense of economics, the economic loss during the conflict is more than 100 000 yuans."

5. Reshaping of the conflict

It might be probable that the conflict between the monasteries has already been perceived somehow as a conflict between their protective deities (*srung ma*) in the past. It is said (for correctness one must add that only in recent sources) that the monk-hermit, who later became Kirti's protective deity Powerful Hero, was in the past a monk of the Karmoele monastery. There are narratives circulating today about enigmatic deaths of several monks of Serthi monastery ascribed to the anger of Powerful Hero. These past events also make understandable the fact that the small temple, built at the place of the hermitage of the monk Sangye Yeshe (the monk, who became protector Powerful Hero), is kept up by the Serthi monastery. The explanation is that Powerful Hero

caused the deaths of number of monks of Lhamo Serthi and thus through daily worship by an appointed monk the anger of the deity is to be appeased. But it also might point to the fact, that the conflict was viewed only as the anger of Powerful Hero against the Serthi monastery, not the other way round.

The protective deity of the Serthi Lhamo monastery is important still. It is a problematic deity, also of *rgyal po* class, called Shugden (Dolgyel). And since the controversy concerning this protective deity became, rather recently from the 1990's one that concerned one of the most sensitive issues touching upon the "highest circles" of Tibetans and the Dalai Lama himself, it is rather natural that the conflict between the two monasteries took on a new character recently.¹⁴ Firstly, the conflict between the monasteries became viewed in

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- 14) Although rather well known, the events connected with Shugden might be briefly summarized in the following way. The cult of Shugden appeared first in the time of the fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682) and is closely related to the life of a scholar named *Grags pa rgyal mtshan* (1619–1655), who was unsuccessful candidate for the 5th Dalai Lama, but later won recognition in Depung monastery as a scholar and was recognized as the reincarnation of the Panchen Sonam Dagpa (*Bsod nams grags pa*, 1478–1554), the teacher of the third Dalai Lama. As both of them were from Depung monasteries, some discord appeared among its monks. According to some sources, he was killed after defeating the fifth Dalai Lama in debate, but other sources mention his suicide committed after unending quarrels. Be it so or not, soon various calamities and diseases fell upon the area. His *post mortem* existence was recognized as the main cause of the disasters. He was ritually tamed and appointed the protector of the monastery.

Although since that time some suspicion has appeared towards the cult of Shugden on the part of several high-ranking monks, much controversy has been added since, starting from the 19th century. The deity resumed the nature of the guardian of the pure Teaching of the Gelugpa order as a reaction to the ecumenical movement known as Rime (*ris med*). One of the scholars of the Gelugpa order known as Phabongkhapa (*Pha bong kha pa*, 1878–1941) spread the cult clearly with such an intention behind it.

The present Dalai Lama was educated within such a tradition and he worshipped the deity until 1975. This was the time when suspicion arose in him towards the cult, but the decisive reason for rejecting the deity seems to be predictions uttered by the state oracle as a mouth-piece of deities Pelden Lhamo and Nechung. In 1978 he for the first time publicly rejected the cult, but this was done in a not very strict way when compared to his much later steps.

His rejection of the cult gave rise to resistance from the side of some of the worshippers of Shugden and in some of their apologies of the cult even the authenticity of the present Dalai Lama was disputed. This is particularly connected with Labrang monastery in Amdo and mainly its founder known as first Jamyang Zhepa (1648–1721/2). In one of the fundamental works of this renowned scholar, the "History of the Doctrine of Vajrabhairava" (*Rdo rje 'jigs byed chos 'byung*), he denies the authenticity of the 6th Dalai Lama (the well known problematic Dalai Lama and poet *Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho* 1683–1706/?) and his work became used as an argument by opponents of the present Dalai Lama.

The escalating situation led the present Dalai Lama to much stricter public rejection of the cult of Shugden in 1996. Following the decision of the parliament in exile, a number of high-ranking Tibetan officials in India had to sign a resolution strictly forbidding the

terms of the animosity of their protectors against each other; as a conflict of Powerful Hero and Shugden. In addition to this, the once local conflict was raised to the much more general level of Tibetan religious and at the same time political authorities and as a consequence it is seen as a struggle between supporters of the Dalai Lama and his opponents recruited from followers of Shugden. And of course, the China-controlled governments on various levels became involved in the conflict as well.

While the Chinese authorities tend to see such conflict as a political issue, from the side of Tibetans it remains to some degree a religious one. At least some of them are inclined to see it so. Such a view can be characterized by citing a speech of 11th Kirti from 2000 year, who makes allusions on the non-celibate status of Serthi master, who is married and so disobeys the vinaya rules (Anonymous b, pp. 66–67):¹⁵

cult. On the other hand there were several organizations supporting the cult established both in India and abroad. Among the Tibetan masters operating in the West, probably the best known apologist of the cult is geshe Kelzang Gyatsho residing in Great Britain, whose father was medium of Shugden and who thus had an intimate relationship with the deity. And this situation did not remain in the domain of prescriptions and apologies. In 1997 three opponents of the cult of Shugden close to the Dalai Lama were ritually murdered, the head of the Institute of Dialectics in Dharamsala and his two students. The murderers were identified as six Tibetan newcomers to India; originally from Amdo. Of course, there is suspicion that these murderers were employed either by Chinese authorities, or by one of the organizations from Delhi supporting Shugden. A valuable study of G. Dreyfus convincingly argues that the roots of the conflict lay in a clash of vision of the present Dalai Lama, who follows the “ecumenical” approach of the 5th Dalai Lama, and conservative circles stressing the purity of Gelugpa tradition (see Dreyfus 1998). For the rather detailed argumentation from the side of Dalai Lama see Thub bstan lung rigs 1998.

- 15) The Tibetan text reads: Ngo bo gdon 'dre'i ngo bo skyes pa yin dus/ ma dga' sa la gnod pa skyel ba dang dga' sa la grogs dang 'phrin las sgrub pa de kho'i gshis ka yin dus/ ma dga' sa zhig byung na gnod pa skyel gyi red/ mi la gdon bzhag zer ba de tra bu'i gnod pa skyel gyi ma red/ lhag par du dam tshig nyams chag yod pa'i rigs la blo bzang 'phrin las tshang gis/ ngan spyod rgyan du ngom zhing khyad gsod kyis/ zhes sogs bka' gngang ba bzhin ngan spyod rgyan du ngom nas bla ma grwa tshang la khyad gsod kyis bsdad yod pa de tsho sgrib med ye shes kyi spyan gyis nye bar gzigs nas bka' chad nan po thog mda' bzhin rgyag dgos pa red ces bka' gngang yod pas/ de tshe'i gras la srung ma 'dis ma dga' ba byas nas gnod kyi red/ lam la 'gro 'jug gi ma red/ khos gnod pa gtong gi red/ gnod pa gtong dgos pa kho'i las 'gan red/ spyir srung ma zhes pa drag po'i 'phrin las sgrub pa'i ched skur bzhengs pa zhig dang gdug pa can rnam tshar gcod pa'i ched yin dus gnod pa yong gi red ma gtogs lha gzhan pa nang bzhin gdon pa de 'dra rtsa ba nas yong gi ma red/ nges pa don gyis ni gnas chung dang ngo bo gcig red/ dkar phyogs skyong ba'i lha zhig tu bla ma tshad ldan zhig gis bka' bsgos pa'i srung ma yin dus/ mi la gdon pa dang gnod pa sogs yong ba'i dogs pa rnam rtog sbye dgos kyi ma red/ kha shas kyis chab srid dang 'brel ba'i thog nas de 'dra bshad 'dug mkhan re zung yong srid/ de tsho la rna bas nyan dgos pa ma red/.

When his nature as a demon arose in (Powerful Hero), he was sending harm to the places he disliked and befriended those whom he liked. This was his character when he was accomplishing his holy deeds. When something he did not like appeared, he was sending harm. He did not harm in the way which is described as "demon entering men".

And in addition to this, Lozang Thinlay Tshang (i.e. the 8th Kīrti) instructed him concerning those who broke their vows: "You should especially disrespect those who show off with bad behaviour." In such and other ways he was instructed and so he disrespected those masters of colleges who were boasting with their bad behaviour and when closely observing them with his pure eye of primordial wisdom, a strict punishment came as if lightning would strike. He was instructed in such a way. This protector disliked and harmed those of such kind. But not those who were following the path (of Doctrine). He was sending harm. To send harm was his duty. Generally, when one says protector, this is such a one, who rises in his body in order to accomplish fierce holy deeds and to annihilate those evil ones. And only in such (cases) does harm come. Among other deities such harm is never caused. In the ultimate sense he is of one nature with (the protector) Nechung. When there is a protective deity guarding the white side, who is instructed by a competent master, there is no need to be concerned about his harming or not harming and in such way to give rise to discriminating thought. There appeared several people, who explain this in such a way (of discriminating thought) and through the connection with politics. There is no need to listen to them...

Further in the speech of the present Kīrti master the core of the story about the conflict is placed into a framework which only recently became of great importance. It is now viewed as a conflict against controversial Shugden from its beginnings, although one cannot support this through evidence from the older texts (Anonymous b, pp. 67–70):¹⁶

- 16) The Tibetan text reads: Dol rgyal dang 'brel ba med par ma zad dol rgyal dang mi mthun pa zhiḡ rang bzhin gyis chags yod/ khri rgyal mtshan seng ge (dga' ldan khri thog nga gsum pa) lha mor phebs nas lha mo gser khri dgon pa de phyag btab (1748) pa de'i srung ma shugs ldan red/ de'i sku phreng gnyis pa gtsos gser khri sku phreng dang po de lha mo gser khri'i dgon pa dang thugs ma mthun pa red/ mdzod dge'i 'brog gi sar dkar mo'i klad kyi dgon pa zer ba'i mtshan nyid dgon pa zhiḡ btāb pa de lo kha shas kyi nang grwa pa stong kha ma zin tsam zhiḡ byung ste ha las pa'i 'phel rgyas byung ba red/ gtsos gser khri ni rgya dang bod sog la mtshan snyan grags ha las pa zhiḡ rgyas nas dkar mo'i klad kyi dgon pa bskyangs pa yin dus/ lha mo gser khri' yod pa'i dbon po ma dga' nas nga tshor bdag po rgyag gi mi 'dug dgon pa de med par bzos na tshur phebs yong gi red zer nas mtshan mo lha mo'i gser khri'i grwa pa tsho'i lag tu mtshon cha bzhaḡ nas dkar mo'i klad kyi dgon pa me bsregs (1754 hor zla 7 tshes 26) btang dus gtsos gser khri nyal sa'i nang nas dmar hreng mar phyag mdzod lhan du rta gcig la zhon nas brots te lā sgo'i nags nang la nyin gnyis ring yib nas bsdad dgos byung ba'i skabs ma gtogs/ khong gi mi ser dang grwa pa tshos dgong mo mtshan la dmaḡ brgyab pa zhiḡ yin pa ha go yod pa ma red/ bla slob tshang ma bsdad ma thub par bla ma gtsos la mar phebs pa red/ de nas bzung shugs ldan dang 'brel ba chad pa 'dra/ dpa' bo rtсал gyi sku phreng dang po de dkar mo'i klad kyi dgon pa de'i grwa pa red/ dkar mo'i klad kyi dgon pa'i bla ma dang grwa pa gnyis ka med par bzos mkhan gser khri dgon grong gnyis yin dus gser khri dgon grong dang de'i srung ma dang bcas pa la 'khon byung ba'i dḡang gis ma dga' ba zhiḡ rang bzhin gyis chags pa red/ rjes su lha mo'i nang dpa' rtсал de lha la bkod dus phar phyogs gser khri la shugs ldan gyi dgon knang dang tshur phyogs la dpa' rtсал gyi

Not only that (Powerful Hero) has no connection to Dolgyel (i.e. Shugden), he became even discordant with him. When the /53th abbot of Ganden monastery/ Gyaltsen Sengge came to Lhamo and founded Lhamo Serthi monastery /in 1748/, its protector was Shugden. The second reincarnation (of Lhamo Serthi master) is the first reincarnation of Serthi monastery in Hezuo. His mind was in discord with Lhamo Serthi monastery. In the nomad's land near Dzorge he founded a monastery with college of characteristics called Karmoele. It happened that within a few years there were almost one thousand monks in this monastery and in such a surprising way the monastery was enlarging. And at the time when the Serthi monastery in Hezuo gained renown in China, Tibet and Mongolia and when the Karmoele monastery was prospering, the Lord (*dbon po*) of Lhamo Serthi monastery became displeased. He said that (the Lhamo Serthi monastery) has no lord and if he destroys the (Karmoele) monastery, (the Serthi) will come back. During the night he distributed weapons to the monks of Lhamo Serthi monastery and burned down the Karmoele monastery /26th day of the 7th month 1754/ (see note 12). At the same time the Hezuo Serthi escaped from his sleeping place naked; riding a horse together with his treasurer. They were hiding for two days in the forest of Lago waiting there. Moreover, it is not surprising that his subjects together with monks did not understand what night fighting meant. All masters and disciples (from Karmoele monastery) could not stay there and they went down to the Hezuo. In Hezuo, there was no habit of adhering to Shugden. It seems that since that time the connection with Shugden has been interrupted. The first "miraculous manifestation" (i.e. Sangye Yeshe who was in his next life born as demon) of Powerful Hero was a monk of the Karmoele monastery. At the time when (Lhamo) Serthi monastery and its villages caused the decline of both masters and monks of the Karmoele monastery, there appeared malice towards Serthi monastery, its villages together with its protector. And naturally a dislike was established in him. Later, Powerful Hero was made a deity. On the one side of the Serthi monastery there was a temple of Shugden and on the other side there was a temple of Powerful Hero. It was a habit to explain this as if they were facing each other, deciding (the matter between them) while staying in this position. Who knows if it was so or not? And sometimes it happened that in the open place near the monastery there was a painted scroll of Powerful Hero coming there thrown down...

The speech of Kirti master must be taken as a part of the reinterpretation of the older and merely local conflict through the recent events connected with Shugden. From his perspective the stress on the conflict between the two protective deities assumed a central importance. But there is evidence that Shugden was also propitiated by 8th Kirti, who stands behind the origin of his protector Powerful Hero, in the form of the propitiation texts dedicated to Shugden, which were composed by him and can be found among his collected works (Lhag pa tshe ring 1990, p. 816).

Besides it, it is also evident how the contemporary Kirti master views the conflict purely on the religious level as a conflict between pure "monkhood" (represented by strict adherence to vinaya rules) and a deviant form of monastic life. The role of Powerful Hero is to protect the first and to harm the second.

lha khang yod pa red/ de gnyis kyang kha sprod lta bu zhiḡ khel bsdad yod ces bshad srol
yod kyang yin min gang shes/ lha mo'i dgon pa'i 'dabs kyi sa stong der mtshams mtshams
su dpa' rtсал gyi thang ga g.yug bzhag pa yong gi yod/.

6. Past mediums of Nechung and Powerful Hero

After discussion of the origin and nature of Powerful Hero, a further step towards investigating the mediums of him will be undergone in this brief chapter. Most of the rather fragmentary sources used here are of recent origin.¹⁷ Kirti monasteries, both of Lhamo and Ngawa, have two principle protective deities. Besides the Powerful Hero, Nechung (*Gnas chung*) was propitiated there in the times prior to the “raising of Powerful Hero to the rank of deity”.

There is no space for dealing with this interesting deity in detail. There is much confusion and a vast jungle of number of narratives connected with him. He somehow represents the whole family of deities known under their specific names. When saying “Nechung”, this refers primarily to the name for a temple, where the ancient deity Pehar, bound up with with the first Tibetan monastery in Samye, has been propitiated from the time of the 5th Dalai Lama. In fact, according to the narrative account of the Gelugpa order, only his “chief minister” appeared there, known under the name Dorje Dagden (*Rdo rje drag /grags/ ldan*) and spoke through the mediums he possessed. Thus the appellation “Nechung” means in most cases Dorje Dagden and he is considered to be a “manifestation of the speech” of Pehar (*gsung gi sprul ba*).

The general designation of the whole family of deities is known as Gyälwo Kunga (*Rgyal po sku lnga*, “The king – five bodies”). Although Kunga is depicted as a single deity, the deity at the same time consists of a fivefold group. Pehar is usually listed as the last among them, besides Gyajin (*Brgya byin*), Monbu Putra (*Mon bu pu tra*), Shingjacen (*Shing bya can*) and Dalha Kyecigbu (*Dgra lha skyes gcig bu*). Among this fivefold group, Shingjacen had his famous oracle in Gadong (*Dga' gdong*) temple in Central Tibet and thus is known under the name Gadong as well, similarly to the case of Nechung. According to another classification, the above-mentioned Dorje Dagden is not minister of Pehar himself, but particularly of Dalha Kyecigbu (who rides a black mule with white legs similarly to Powerful Hero). These deities; Kunga, Gadong and Dorje Dagden; frequently possess mediums.

17) Here, the recently recorded memoirs of *Ja tshogs sprul sku Blo bzang don grub* from *Rnga ba* will be used in most cases (Re mdo sengge, 2002). Several notes on mediums by contemporary Kirti master (Anonymous b) serve as another source. Invaluable, but still fragmentary information on the mediums connected with Kirti monasteries and more generally with Amdo are represented by hagiographies of 8th and 5th Kirti masters (Zhwa dmar paṇḍita dge' dun bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho mchog, *Lcang lung khri rgan 'jam dbyangs thub bstan rgya mtsho*, 2007; *Hor sprul sku 'jam dbyangs mkhas grub* 2007).

Besides these deities there exists another deity called Tshangpa (*Tshangs pa*). He is said to be in fact a “miraculous manifestation” of Pehar himself. He has both peaceful and wrathful appearances. While Tshangpa is his peaceful manifestation, the wrathful one is called Sethabcen or Sethabpa (*Bse khrab can/ Bse khrab pa*). His famous medium resided in Lamo (*La mo*) monastery to the east of Lhasa.¹⁸

Among all these deities with various names, the Tshangpa and Gadong had a special relationship with the 5th Kirti master, the founder of Lhamo Kirti monastery. It is said that prior to founding Kirti monastery in Amdo, he asked mediums of these deities for revelations in Central Tibet and established friendly relations with them. After founding Lhamo Kirti monastery, he brought the mirror and spear of the Tshangpa deity from Central Tibet and these were used by local mediums of the newly-established Lhamo Kirti monastery (Anonymous b, p. 71–72). And as has already been seen from the extract translated above, it is astonishing how easily Powerful Hero later entered this family of deities. It is said now that in an “ultimate sense” (*nges don*) he is identical with Nechung. On the other hand, this might be seen as a process influenced by the fact that mediums are usually possessed by a number of particular deities. Powerful Hero would be only one specific and newly introduced deity among various forms of Nechung deities possessing mediums. Given the prestige of the Nechung family of deities among Tibetans, it is not very surprising that he became considered a member of this larger family (see Fig. 9). On the other hand, it is claimed that each of the particular deity of this larger group of Nechung, when possessing the body of the medium, has its own particular form of behaviour. Thus, for example, the contemporary Kirti master reveals that in his monasteries Gadong was fond of the ritual drink called “golden drink” (*gser bskyems*) as his specific feature. The voices of the deities differ after “coming to the body” (*sku phebs*) as do their movements, some of them are timid, some fierce, etc.

The first medium of Nechung, contemporary of the fifth Kirti, was named Konchog Nyima (*Dkon mchog nyi ma*), but there is not much information on him left in the sources as well as about his successors both in Lhamo monastery and in Ngawa. Until the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries the mediums remain mostly anonymous. The hagiography of the 8th Kirti contains brief,

18) For the perplexing and rich family of deities related to Pehar see De Nebesky-Wojcikowitz 1996, pp. 94–133. For brief accounts of legendary narrations on Nechung and Tshangpa see Cha ris bska! bzang thogs med 2001, pp. 236–239, for detailed legends see Le'u lung bzhad pa'i rdo rje 2003, pp. 302–366.

but valuable information on various mediums in Amdo. Besides the favourable medium possessed by the Tshangpa deity and the medium of Nechung in his own monastery, several cases of ritual elimination of “village mediums” are mentioned there as well.¹⁹ But no single note on the medium of Powerful Hero appears there.

A bit more information is available on the medium from Ngawa, who was a monk with the name Chagchub Sethoma (*Byang chub sre tho ma*) and lived at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. In the text translated below he is introduced as a medium of Powerful Hero as well (Re mdo sengge, 2002, p. 118), but the present Kirti master does not mention him as such (Anonymous b, p. 6).

According to the contemporary Kirti master, the first mediums possessed by Powerful Hero came later. They were stepbrothers; one residing in Ngawa monastery and one in Lhamo Kirti and both were living in the first half of the 20th century. In the case of the medium at Lhamo Kirti monastery very little information is known besides his name Chokho or Chopel (*Chos kho*, *Chos 'phel*). His stepbrother medium in Ngawa Kirti monastery was a monk known under the name Kurten Dargye (*Sku rten dar rgyas*), but his proper name was Talo. There are still stories about his power circulating among local people. According to them he was a very fierce medium and when curing people in the state of possession, he pierced them inside out with his spear and no blood appeared.

Both of them died following the events of 1959. For introducing the previous mediums let see a translation of rare testimony by reincarnated master Lozang Dondhup from Ngawa Kirti monastery (Re mdo sengge, 2002, pp. 117–121):

When I first entered the assembly (of monks) there was no medium (*sku rten*, “support of the body”). Before that there was one called Dzati. He was a disciplinarian of the tantric college and once it happened that he kicked the monk official; or something similar. He explained to that monk official that when he was kicking him, he was possessed by a deity. But it was said that this is not in accordance with monastery rules and he was not allowed to stay in the monastery. He

19) According to this textual source, there was a medium near Dzorge called *Lcang lung Sku rten* (Zhwa dmar paṇḍita dge 'dun bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho mchog, *Lcang lung khri rgan 'jam dbyangs thub bstan rgya mtsho*, 2007, pp. 156, 230, 236, 238, 265), who was possessed by *Tshangs pa* deity and very frequently visited by 8th Kirti master. There are also mentions of mediums of Nechung (p. 253) and false oracles among Gologs “cured” by him (p. 249), a madman (i.e. “false medium”) in Zamtsa cured by him (p. 231), mad girls possessed by demons cured by him (p. 203), ritual appropriation of a medium and complaints about the false ones in *Btsan dkar mgo* (p. 173) and the “binding with vows” oracle of Nechung in his own monastery (p. 148), etc.



Figure 9: Pehar to the left and the wrathful appearance of Powerful Hero to the right. Murals from Ngawa Kirti monastery (photo: author 2006).

went to Chame. Later he became a monk again and came back to Thawa. His own son with the name Changchub Sethoma was a monk in the Kālacakra college. He was of large body, brown and handsome face. And something like possession by a deity happened to him. He insisted that he himself is only a pure monk. He was living together with Akhu Zopa. When the deity possessed him, it was very unusual. Firstly, at that time when he acted so, unbearable pain ran through him. (Following his first possession he said): “Thanks that you brought me back. When the possessing deity was approaching, he could not enter inside through the door. He was the one riding the lion.”²⁰ The door was obstructing his legs and hands. This was the one possessing me. Thanks that you brought me back.” And it is said that when they drove him slowly from the door, the possession disappeared. He was a truly miraculous manifestation (*sprul ba*). He said: “Although the door was little and unsuitable for entering (the deity), it was really a wonder. I thought that revelation ‘Hari on the blue creeping sandalwood tree ...’ is praising all the parts of the sky and the sound of it is produced in all the places above the earth. On the sides of the space above the earth there were many (beings) residing...”

Then, when he was possessed, foam was coming from his mouth. Some said that at that time he was sometimes chewing rice. When Tshering’s turn came and he was working as helper in the classes of Akhu Lotha, Akhu Lotha said that even if he chewed rice, he would be a pure monk of merciful awakening. And that he once said to him: “Keep some rice aside.” But it does not seem that he did so.

One day he took a piece of something similar to gold shaped like a quadrilateral and said to the Akhu Zopa while offering it to him: “This I offer to you, the great geshe.” But Akhu Zopa told him: “I don’t need gold.” He did not accept it. And it is said that (the medium acted) then as if he would always remember it.²¹

20) The lion is riding-animal of several deities from the Nechung family.

21) The translation is only hypothetical; the text literally reads “as he would put it into ear”.



Figure 10: Kirti monastery in Ngawa. To the right, outside the monastery itself, is a grove and temple dedicated both to King-Five Bodies (*Rgyal po sku lnga*) and Powerful Hero. To the left is a part of the town of Ngawa (photo: author 2006).



Figure 11: Temple dedicated to King-Five Bodies (*Rgyal po sku lnga*) and Powerful Hero in Ngawa Kirti monastery. Note the cairns with arrows stuck to them. These are added by the monks annually (photo: author 2006).

Sometimes he carried a mirror. The surface of the mirror was made from gold and silver and silk strips of five colours and other things were tied to it. Some said that at the time when he was speaking (with the mirror) it was as if he had stretched his hand into his box, where he kept his butter for nourishing.

The beings entering him were not arbitrary. It was not so that he would be a medium (*sku khog*) for anybody settling in him.

One day when I was sitting in the assembly in the college-temple performing the ritual for overcoming obstacles of the week (?) he entered (the temple) running, few attempted to catch him and they did so without success. He came through the main entrance (to the temple) and he was speaking many things. But since the assembly was chanting, what he said was not understandable. When he then again "came off" (*shor*) during one night, (he said:) "Hey, look now! Protector of Teaching Woden Karpo ('*Od ldan dkar po*)²² has come! Hey you, listen to me! When speaking through insight it is not false insight!"

This Woden Karpo is also called Nechung and this one is also called Powerful Hero: "I pray to the power of the one who was appointed the fierce protector of Teaching, being connected with him through the strength of deeds and prayers from a long time ago, the noble king of warrior-deities Woden Karpo."

In these verses the name of this Woden Karpo is mentioned. Powerful Hero and Nechung are probably the same. Later, when one of the previous Kirti reincarnations went to Rongwo (monastery),²³ (the medium) followed him there on his behalf. (Kirti master) asked him with weeping: "Masters and disciples do not care about their vows, when no descending of deity is performed." And he also said: "This would improve if the (deity) would descend there; there is nothing wrong in it." But as he urged him, it happened that since that time the descent (of the deity) ceased to occur.

After that (a deity) started to descend into Dargye. His own name was Talo. One day tulku Donyo Dorje said to me: "There is some Talo and either something descends into him or he is mad." I asked him about the reason (for thinking so and he answered:) "Yesterday he was shaking surprisingly. Many people were trying to keep him steady. I thought that I should check his senses. I had a needle and many times I stuck it into his arm. He did not shout 'a tsha' from pain, he even was not in 'meditative equipoise'. Something really descended into him."

Later, he accepted suppression (*mnan blangs*) at the place behind the monastery; on the circular path leading between the cairn and the "fumigation altar" of Padmasambhava. In this way it was ascertained that he is "support-body" (*sku rten*) and later "the gate of the deity was opened" (*lha sgo phye ba red*). From the beginning he was not able to manage the descent (of the deity) well, but after he chanted (texts for) "approaching" (*bsnyen*) Hayagriva, it improved step by step. He uttered many revelations after he became 'support of the body'. Once, he said in his revelation:

"The roar of five faces resounds from the midst of heaven in the east,
At the same time to the western soul-lake of the king with seven horses,
The drop with the colour of blood falls down."

He said many revelations similar to this. We did not know that there was a conflict of settlements and governments between China and Tibet at that time. But he said: "The fort of enemies is built besides the Red Rock in the west." When later thinking about this revelation, it came to my mind whether it did not mean the Red Hill of Potala, etc.

22) Probably another name for Dorje Dagden.

23) I.e. the Kāla hermitage not far from Ngawa and founded by the first Kirti.



Figure 12: Picture of former medium of Powerful Hero, Kurten Dargye (the picture was kindly provided by a monk of Ngawa Kirti monastery).

At these moments when he was speaking as mantras; I once asked Akhu Jamyang: "Please, if you are able to translate it, translate it." But he was not able to do it. "To join front with front is not allowed-allowed (*thad ka thad kar sbyar chog chog cig ma red*) – Due to such allusive words there are many ways of understanding and the words might be render also in an opposite way. So I do not see myself to be able to translate it." That's what he said.

He and Chokho /this was "support of the body" of Lhamo monastery called Ngathug Chophel/ were stepbrothers. When the deity descended into Chokho and he performed libation during the fierce homa ritual, he was chanting a ritual unknown to us. He performed a ritual through so-called Haygriva with nine heads and eighteen arms and when he performed libation during the homa ritual and dedication of the offering substances, there was not even a slight disturbance present in him and he performed it in a very decisive way. When saying that he performed it in such a good way, one which world has never seen, this means that this Chokho was not one whose knowledge relies on his own imagination.

7. The present medium

The story of the contemporary medium possessed by Powerful Hero started in 2000, some 40 years after the death of the previous ones. In the deity all the background mentioned previously is present now. His original role in the conversion of followers of Bon being forgotten, the local discord between the two monasteries was reinterpreted to face the recent controversy concerning Shugden. This became clearly dominating circumstance directly shaping the role and the destiny of the deity and his medium now.

A very unusual text printed by Nechung monastery in Dharamsala and circulating among the monks of Kirti monasteries serves as a main source for the following lines (Anonymous b). It records in detail the speeches uttered by the deity-medium in the state of possession and through this it attempts to describe the "history" of recognition of the new medium. It is supplemented by recorded speeches of the Kirti master on the topic during solemn occasions and altogether it is part of an unprecedented genre of Tibetan literature. It is the only source for dealing with the contemporary medium of Powerful Hero since my informants referred to it as a detailed and authoritative rendering of events.

7.1. HAZY BEGINNINGS

According to the text, there were several attempts at possessions of the monks of Kirti monastery by Powerful Hero, reported from the 1980's, yet none of them resulted in the approving of the new medium. In Ngawa Kirti monastery

there were three monks “slightly possessed” (*sku phren bu phebs*) subsequently in the years 1988, 1989 and 1998. In Lhamo Kirti monastery another monk experienced similar possession in 1992. It was prescribed to them to repeat mantras and ritual texts to Hayagrīva and Vajrabhairava (*bsnyen grangs gsog byed*). Some of them were examined as potential mediums, but the possession vanished in all cases except for the monk called Lozang Zopa who started to be possessed in 1998.

The further story will concentrate on the monk Lozang Tashi (known in his homeland only under the name Thumpe /*Thum bhe*/), who is the present medium of Powerful Hero. He was originally from the Ngawa Kirti monastery and after leaving his homeland he has been residing in Indian Dharamsala since the end of the 1990's. He was experiencing troubles through liver disease. His state was worsening and in June 2000 he went to the medium possessed by the female deity Yudonma (*G.yu sgron ma*) to seek advice. Her answer was that some deity is going to enter his body and he should perform purification rituals (*byabs khrus*). Through the extensive *sādhana* of Vajrabhairava the purification ritual was then performed by an experienced monk from Kirti monastery near Dharamsala. It lasted for seven days and on the last day, at one o'clock in the morning, Powerful Hero entered the body of Lozang Tashi. That day in the morning he, in a state of possession, knelt down after prostrating himself and uttered the following revelation:²⁴

“I am the great king Powerful Hero. It is necessary to perform ‘opening the door of the deity’ to this medium (*rten khog*) very quickly. There are great difficulties, since this medium is the reincarnation of Eastern Yonten Gampo and through this (performing the ritual of ‘opening the door of the deity’) obstructions might be repelled. This must be done by some of you, noble persons; I am not able to do anything with it. I beg you; let me come to the ear of Lord-Refuge (i.e. Dalai Lama).”

In any case it might sound strange; deity Powerful Hero claimed the status of reincarnated master for his medium through the mouth of the very same person. He announced that the medium is not an ordinary one but a miraculous manifestation (*rnam sprul*) of Eastern Yonten Gampo.²⁵ For this reason he asked also for a meeting with the Dalai Lama.

24) Anonymous b, p. 8: Nga rgyal chen rdo rje dpa' bo rtsal yin/ rten khog 'di'i lha sgo mgyogs por phyed dgos pa dang/ rten khog de shar yon tan mgon po'i rnam sprul yin pas bar chad shin tu che/ de bzlog pa'i thabs khyed skyes bu dam pa rnam kyis mdzad dgos pa las ngas gang yang byed mi thub/ gong sa skyabs mgon chen por snyan seng zhu dgos/.

25) This master was personal disciple of Tsongkhapa and one of the renowned “four scholars of Amdo” (*mdo rong chen mkhas pa bzhi*). He is known also by his nickname “Black tongued”

One week later, he was possessed again and the deity spoke through his mouth in much greater detail. Powerful Hero repeated again through the medium Lozang Tashi that it is necessary to meet His Presence Dalai Lama²⁶ quickly and that the medium is no ordinary one, but a reincarnated master.

Then on the 14th day of the fifth month of the Tibetan lunar calendar Kirti master asked His Presence Dalai Lama through his personal office what to do if the next day the Powerful Hero were to appear in the body of his medium; the monk Lozang Tashi. The 15th day is considered to be “the day of Powerful Hero” (*Dpa' rtsal lha tshes*) and usually it is the date when labtse of Powerful Hero in front of his temple is worshipped in Amdo and the festival of praising and renovating the labtse is performed both in the Ngawa and Lhamo monasteries. During it the deity might come to the medium.

His Presence Dalai Lama, being in retreat, sent through his office his “personal grains of barley” (*phyag nas*), that is the barley blessed by himself, and the *kha btags*, a strip of silk accompanied with the instruction that if the medium will be possessed, the barley should be thrown over him and the strip of silk offered.

7.2. RITUAL OF RESTRICTION AND UNEXPECTED RECOGNITION OF POWERFUL HERO TO BE “PROTECTOR OF TIBETAN GOVERNMENT”

The medium was indeed possessed next day and a ritual aimed at subordinating the deity was performed by the Kirti master. When in the state of possession, the barley from the Dalai Lama was thrown over him. The possession ended, but he was far from still. When being offered the strip of silk, he was jerking and then became possessed again. To the deity the “oath-water” (*mna'*

(*ljags nag pa/ lce nag pa*) or under another name Gendun Gyaltshen (1374–1450) and is believed to be the founder of the Kāla hermitage, an original seat of Kirti masters before the founding of the monasteries in Tagtshang Lhamo and Ngawa. He is considered to be the first Kirti and founder of the lineage of Kirti reincarnations, albeit it seems that the lineage as such has been recognised only retrospectively since the time of the fifth Kirti. For details on him see Dkon mchog chos 'phel 2007; Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas 1982, pp. 714–716.

26) In the attempt to follow the Tibetan text which, of course, the Dalai Lama would not use straightforwardly, the translations of the Tibetan appellations will appear here. Dalai Lama is called “His Presence” (*sku mdun*), “Lord-Refuge” (*skyabs mgon*), “Precious Lord” (*rgyal ba rin po che*), “Beneficial to behold” (*mthong ba don ldan*), etc. Only sometimes do I add Dalai Lama to make the text clearer for a reader not acquainted with such rich and confusing Tibetan appellations. Kirti master is usually called simply “Precious one” (*rin po che*).

chu) was poured into his mouth, against his head the ritual dagger (*phur bu*) of Padmasambhava was placed and he was instructed not to do any harm to sentient beings through his revelations, but to work for their benefit. Powerful Hero agreed with all that. After a while another monk being examined for mediumship, Lozang Zopa, became slightly possessed (*sku phren bu tsam babs*). Powerful Hero dwelling in Lozang Tashi made a gesture of warding off (*sdig mdzub*), placed his gesturing hand on his head and said: "From now on, you do not need to come to this vessel-body (*sku khog*). I am instructing you as Powerful Hero. You are one of my 'gate protectors' (*sgo srung*)."

Few days later the medium Lozang Tashi asked for a meeting with the medium of Nechung in Dharamsala and became possessed by protector Powerful Hero in front of the medium of Nechung. Monks of the temple were chanting *sādhana* of Nechung, who meanwhile possessed the state oracle. They performed the ritual of consecration of the medium (*rab gnas*) following the ritual of expelling obstructing demons (*bgegs skrod*). Then they firmly tied a strip of silk around the neck of the medium of Nechung, and while holding him firmly he jerked several times and pronounced in the state of possession that Lozang Tashi should repeat *sādhana* of Yamāntaka many times, then the ritual of "washing" (*khrus*) should be performed and then he should be instructed by deity Pelden Lhamo (*bdod khams bdag mo*) and step by step the matter will be clarified in this way.

The same afternoon medium Lozang Tashi became possessed by Powerful Hero again and surprisingly the Nechung in his medium invited protector Powerful Hero among the group of protectors of the Tibetan government (*dga' lden pho brang ba'i bstan srung*). At the same time he announced that the next day the ritual of thanksgiving (*gtang rag*) to the Pelden Lhamo should be performed. The next day the ritual was indeed performed and both Nechung and Powerful Hero were fumigated (*bsangs*) during it.

The next events and number of comings of Powerful Hero to the body of his medium seem to be focused on a single thing: the meeting with Precious Lord Dalai Lama. So, on 27th July Lozang Tashi was subsequently possessed by three deities: Sethabcen (*Bse khrab can*), Dorje Dagden (*Rdo rje dragsl grags ldan*) and Powerful Hero. All the deities announced through his mouth again that he is a reincarnated master and that Dalai Lama should recognize him.

And again on 28th July in the morning he was subsequently possessed by Dorje Dagden, Sethabcen and Powerful Hero and the deities repeated their demand through his mouth. The same day one hour later he became subsequently possessed by Dorje Dagden and Gadong, they repeated their request and in addition Gadong asked for the "water of vajra-oath" (*rdo rje*



Figure 13: Contemporary medium of Powerful Hero and at the same time reincarnated master Lozang Tashi (or Thumbhe) in his residence (photo: author 2006).

mna' chu) and when the drink was offered, he drank it and became greatly satisfied.²⁷

Again, at noon, he was possessed by Dorje Dagden and the deity announced through his mouth that the medium Lozang Tashi should immediately be sent to the Nechung temple and meet with Kirti and His Presence (Dalai Lama). They took him to the car, where Dorje Dagden possessed Lozang Tashi again and they reached the Nechung temple. After some time Powerful Hero entered the body of Lozang Tashi. The state oracle invited Nachung into his own body and became immediately possessed by him. Powerful Hero in the body of Lozang Tashi offered a strip of silk to Nechung. Nechung performed rituals of expelling “demons of obstruction” and consecration (*rab gnas*), and put the strip of silk around the neck of Powerful Hero. While keeping the silk

27) The contemporary Kirti master explains that such fondness for “golden drink” was traditional feature of the Gadong deity when possessing his mediums of Kirti monasteries in the past. The contemporary medium would hardly know about it. See appendix 1.

in one hand and beating the chest of the medium of Powerful Hero with the other hand, he uttered the following surprising speech:²⁸

Hriḥ! For the swift well-being and benefit of Teaching and beings the name Powerful Hero of Vajra is to be praised. Hriḥ! If the ambrosia of the speech of the Master Beneficial to Behold will be placed in heart and the orders fulfilled with joy, Teaching and beings will be placed into great benefit.

This seems to be another key decisive moment for the further events. It does not seem that there were many people trusting monk Lozang Tashi's claim that he is indeed the medium of Powerful Hero and reincarnated master. But honour paid by Nechung to him changed the whole matter.

7.3. RITUAL PERFORMED BY PRECIOUS LORD – DALAI LAMA

He received an invitation from His Presence the same day. Arriving at the residence of the Precious Lord Dalai Lama, monk Lozang Tashi was after a while possessed by Powerful Hero. He came in front of His Presence and placed his head into the lap of His Presence. Then Powerful Hero pronounced the following speech through his lips:²⁹

I am the manifestation of Ra locāwa, great king Powerful Hero of Vajra. I was instructed by great King-Five Bodies (*Rgyal po sku lnga*) and Pelden Lhamo to come here. In this period of time when Teaching is feeble I indeed offer my services with all my power. From the Dolgyal (i.e. Shugden), the general enemy of Teaching, the personal enemy of my noble master (Kirti), many obstacles to the virtuous deeds of Noble Lord-Refuge (Dalai Lama) come. I beg you; give me a clear sign when the time to rise in the playful body of Tamchog (*Rta mchog*, a form of Hayagriva) and tame him will come. Please, be friendly to me and give me your support. It is necessary to instruct me after rising in the state of Playful Tamchog.

28) Anonymous b, p. 17: Hriḥ bstan dang 'gro bar phan bde myur ba'i phyir/ rdo rje dpa' bo rtsal gyi ming du bsnags pa yin lags/ hriḥ ngos kyi slob dpon mthong ba don ldan mchog gi gsung gi bdud rtsi snying du bcags te bka' yi spro ba mdzad na/ bstan dang 'gro la phan nges che bar gnas pa 'di lags so/.

29) Anonymous b, pp. 18–19: Nga rwa lo tsā ba rdo rje grags kyi rnam sprul rgyal chen rdo rje dpa' rtsal yin/ rgyal po chen po sku lnga dang dpal ldan dmag zor gyi rgyal mos bka' bsgos pa ltar 'dir yong ba yin/ bstan pa nyag phra ba'i skabs 'dir gang nus kyi zhab phyi zhu nges yin/ sangs rgyas bstan pa'i spyi dgra/ dpal ldan bla ma'i sku dgra dol rgyal nas gong sa skyabs mgon chen po'i mdzad 'phrin la bar chad byed bzhin yod pas/ nga dpal rta mchog rol ba'i skur bzhangs nas 'dul ba'i dus la babs yod pas ngas rtags mtshan thon nges zhu gi yin/ nga la sdong grogs dang rgyab rten mdzad rogs/ khyed rta mchog rol ba'i ngo bo'i ngo bor bzhangs nas nga la bka' bsgo mdzad dgos/.

His Presence (Dalai Lama) gave a strip of silk to Powerful Hero and a protective cord with a knot. He took his neck firmly into his hands and instructed him in the following way:³⁰

Precious (Kirti) came with a request concerning you, protector. I am really pleased that you came here. You are a protector with a loving attitude and sympathies towards the Tibetan Teaching and governance (*bstan srid*). As a full monk following the Teacher Buddha I am trying to do the best I can. But it is difficult for me to be alone. Since the time of the 5th Dalai Lama people and gods have both been united in maintaining the Teaching and governance. Today, it is a time of very poor state of the Teaching and governance, people and gods must be united in their acting. When observing it from various sides, it seems to me that we are approaching the moment when the truth about Tibet will be clearly manifested.

Except for a few deities, all the rest was instructed by precious acārya (Padmasambhava), tamed and subjugated and all the protectors were united in their task. I have performed *sādhana* of “Hayagrīva subjugating demons” (*Rta mgrin dam sri zil gnon*) today. In the past I relied on Dolgyel (Shugden). This was my mistake. A few years ago, I was closely focused on Dolgyel through the practice of “Hayagrīva taming the demons of the three spheres” and at that time good signs appeared.

It is because of the Dolgyel that many noble persons did not come to the achievement of the path and inside the religion there appear many mutually unfriendly oaths. And the time came for you, protectors, to show what your power is. When should you show your power if not now; during such a poor state of the Teaching as exists in the present time? Now the time to show your power has come.

At this moment he placed his finger on the crown of the head of Powerful Hero.

30) Anonymous b, pp. 20–22: Srung ma khyed kyi skor rin po ches zhush song/ khyed rang ‘dir yong ba nga zhe drag dga’ bo byung/ bod bstan srid kyi don du sha tsha dang zhen khog yod pa’i srung ma zhig red ‘dug/ nga ston pa shākya thub pa’i rjes ‘jug dge slong zhig yin dus nga’i ngos nas nus pa gang yod bton gyi yod/ nga gcig pus nus pa thon thub pa khag po ‘dug/ gong sa lnga pa chen po’i sku dus nas bzung lha mi zung ‘brel byas nas bstan pa chab srid bskyangs pa red/ deng sang bod kyi bstan srid ches nyag phra ba’i skabs ‘dir lha mi zung ‘brel byas nas las don sgrub dgos/ phyogs gang sa nas bltas na’ang bod kyi bden mtha’ gsal la nye ba’i dus shig tu slebs yod/ lha re zung ma gtogs de min slob dpon rin po ches bka’ bsgos dam bzhag gnyer gtad mdzad pa’i srung ma thams cad rdog rtsha gcig tu bsgril nas bsdad yod/ ngas deng sang rta mgrin dam sri zil gnon gyi bsnyen sgrub byed bzhin pa’i skabs yin/ ngas sngon ma dol rgyal bsten pa red/ de ngas nor ba red/ lo shas sngon rta mgrin khams gsum zil gnon gyi sgo nas dol rgyal la dmigs su bkhar nas sgrub pa byas pa’i skabs mtshan ma yag po byung/ dol rgyal gyis rkyen pas skyes chen dam pa mang po zhig gi mdzad ‘phrin lam lhong mi yong ba dang chos lugs nang phan tshun dam tshig ma mthun pa yong gi yod dus khyed rang tsho lha srung rnam kyis nus pa ci yod bton pa’i dus la babs yod/ bstan pa nyag phra ba da lta’i dus tshod ‘dir nus pa mi bton na ga dus nus pa bton gyi yin nam/ da nus pa bton pa’i dus la babs yod/ (de’i skabs phyag mdzub kyis dpa’ bo rtсал gyi spyi bor bzhag ste) khyed rang tsho gzugs can dang gzugs med/ dkar phyogs pa yul lha gzhi bdag gnyan dang bcas pas nus pa ci yod bton dgos/.

All you with body and without body! You local deities, lords of base together with gnyan:³¹ you have to show the power you have!

In such a way the “calling for service” (*gnyer gtad*) was carried out. His Presence took Powerful Hero around his neck and continued calling the protector Powerful Hero to service for Kirti master. And then Powerful Hero requested through the mouth of monk Lozang Tashi:³²

I want to kindly ask you to recognize this medium (*sku khog*) of mine as the reincarnated master, the reincarnation of the disciple of Tsongkhapa and one of the “four scholars” – The Eastern Yonten Gampo. The sole mother Pelden Lhamo and Five Bodies (*Sku lnga*), both of them urged me to settle in this medium and that is how it happened. I ask you for dedication of the merit and prayer to this support for not being born in hell from that moment despite whatever evil he accumulated.

His Presence replied:³³

If it is so, be it so. You said that this medium of yours is a reincarnated master. This was examined by the highest reincarnated master (i.e. Kirti) and the examination resulted in agreement with it. I have recognized him as the newly-born body of Yonten Gampo. Now, what is to be done in the monastery by masters, may it be done.

From the monk Lozang Tashi's mouth then spoke protector Sethabcen (*Bse khrab can*) and announced:³⁴

“I am Sethabpa.”

His Presence: “Really?”

- 31) Beings called *gnyan* are hard to render in English. These are beings bound by the intermediate space between sky and earth (which is also the living space of human beings) and their name might be rendered as “fearful” besides other possible meanings such as wild sheep, etc.
- 32) Anonymous b, pp. 22–23: Ngas re ba zhu rgyu gcig la nga'i sku khog 'di 'jam mgon bla ma tsong kha pa chen po'i dngos slob rong chen mkhas pa bzhi'i ya gyal shar yon tan mgon po'i rnam sprul yin pas sprul sku ngos 'dzin gnang bar zhu/ ma cig dpal ldan lha mo dang rgyal po sku lnga rnam gnyis kyis yang yang sku khog 'dir zhugs dgos pa nan gyis bskul ba la brten zhugs dgos byung bar brten sdig pa bsags yod pas phyin chad dmyal bar mi skye ba'i bsngo ba dang smon lam gnang rogs/.
- 33) Anonymous b, p. 23: De yin dang yin/ khyed kyi sku khog 'di khyed rang nas sprul sku yin zer gyi yod la/ gtso che rin po ches brtag pa gnang bar brtag pa rtse mthun byung ba bzhin ngas yon tan mgon po'i sku skyer ngos 'dzin byas pa yin/ de ga grwa tshang nas bla ma'i byed sgo ga re yod pa de byos/.
- 34) Anonymous b, p. 23–24: Nga bse khrab pa yin/ zhes snyan seng zhus par/ gong sa mchog nas/ yin pas/ (...) mthong ba don ldan mchog gis rdo rje dpa' bo rtsal gyi sku khog 'di nga'i rtsa ba'i bla ma yin pas sprul sku ngos 'dzin gnang bar thugs rje che/.

Medium: "Thank you for recognition of this medium of Powerful Hero as reincarnated master, you 'Beneficial to Behold', my root-master."

His Presence placed his finger on the crown of the head of the medium and said resolutely:³⁵

There is a history of some connection between Dolgyel and Sethabpa.³⁶ I act in agreement with opinions of the fifth Dalai Lama, when I was on the throne as a fifth Dalai Lama. You did not act in agreement with the opinions of the fifth Dalai Lama and you gave support to Dolgyel. Think about the benefit and harm to the general Teaching of Buddha, to the particular Teaching of Tsongkhapa and sentient beings. It is poor to be satisfied with weakening those offering fumigation, "golden drink" and praying to you. Now, when the state of Teaching and governance is desperate, it is necessary to act in union for people and deities. This is the time for approaching the clear truth. You decide yourself whether to repent of past deeds and what then will be your main task concerning Dolgyel. Now the time has come, when deities have to show their power.

Then His Presence repeated three times:

"If you do not care about what I said, you will break your oath."

And added:

"To break an oath is not good."

Then the voice of Sethabpa became weaker, becoming similar to the sound of cat, and he repented his previous deeds and promised to support the Powerful Hero.

35) Anonymous b, p. 24–25: Bse khrab pa dang dol rgyal bar 'brel ba yod pa'i lo rgyus shig yong gi 'dug/ nga gong sa lnga pa chen po'i khri thog la bsdad nas gong sa lnga pa chen po'i bka' dgongs dang mthun pa sgrub kyi yod/ khyed rang gis gong sa lnga pa'i dgongs pa dang mi mthung pa dol rgyal gyi rgyab rtse byas pa des spyir sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa dang yang sgos 'jam mgon bla ma'i bstan pa dang sems can la phan 'dug gam gnod 'dug khyed rang gis bsaam blo thongs/ khyed rang la bsangs dang gser skyems/ gsol mchod byed mkhan phran bu byung bar 'dod pa tshims nas bsdad na thabs skyo bo red/ bod kyi bstan srid nyag phra ba'i skabs 'dir lha mi thams cad rdog rtse gcig tu bsgril nas las ka byed dgos/ bden mtha' gsal la nye ba'i skabs red/ khyed rang gis sngar byas la 'gyod bshags byas nas da phyin chad dol rgyal skor dang 'brel ba'i las 'gan gtso bo khyed rang gi thog la babs yod pa red/ lha mi zung 'brel gyi thog nas nus pa bton pa'i dus la babs yod/ khyed rang gis ngas bshad par ma btsis na dam tshig 'gal gyi red/ (ces lan gsum gsung/) dam tshig 'gal na yag po yong gi ma red/.

36) There is a narrative that claims that before taming Dolgyel (or Shugden), Sethabpa attempted to help the spirit and escape the taming. See De Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996, p. 135.

7.4. POST SCRIPTUM

In such a way the “door of the deity was opened” (*lha sgo phye*). One day later, on 29. 7. , a festive celebration was held in the Kirti monastery during which the deity entered the body of Lozang Tashi and pronounced another revelation. A number of speeches was delivered by Kirti Rinpoche, the daughter of the former king of Ngawa, and officials related to the Kirti monasteries. Besides other things he was advised to return to Tibet and was presented with a strip of silk by all.

He indeed returned to Ngawa in Sechuan rather soon after the described events with a message written by Kirti to the people connected with the Kirti monastery in Ngawa. The text listing mostly his previous reincarnations was composed and among several monks in Ngawa I encountered also a poster with his photograph taken during the possession by the deity. The picture on the poster is designed by a computer, as is the rule. He speaks into a microphone held tightly to his head and attendants are around him.

During 2006 I was able to meet the medium of Powerful Hero in Ngawa. He resided outside the monastery in a large house in the town of Ngawa. It took some time, because he spends quite a lot of time in the hospital in Chengdu, where his older liver disease has been cured. When the time eventually came, after my entering the gate I met several guards with transmitters – very probably employees of the local government. During the meeting, lasting not longer than half an hour, the talk was very unspecific from his side. He apologized for having not much time and promised to record his answers to my many questions on the tape recorder. When I later got the tape from his brother, it was recorded so silently that it was of no use...

8. Concluding remarks

The story of Powerful Hero touches upon rather a lot of specific topics which were not discussed in detail in the paper. Its basic aim was simply to retell the story with extensive use of Tibetan sources. Instead of a conclusion, several points might be highlighted here.

The tradition of mediums was widespread in Amdo before Chinese intervention. The extent and nature of such a tradition remain mostly hidden to us. This is due to both its sudden decline and its non-literary character. In the case of Powerful Hero, there are rather exceptional explicit textual sources which might be used to partly fill this vacuum. It was not stressed in the



Figure 14: Poster circulating in Ngawa depicting a possessed medium and styled by computer (Ngawa, 2006).

narrative itself, but the terminology used in the sources and description of the rituals used for “opening the gate of deity” (*lha sgo phye*) is not always in agreement with secondary Western sources and one of the intentions was simply to make them available.³⁷

The tradition of deity-mediums receives no support from the side of Chinese-controlled governments in Amdo, which tend to view it as superstition. But it is also not very popular among the young generation of Tibetans, both monks and lay people, to whom it clashes with ideas accompanying their visions of modern Tibet. One of the monks from Kirti monastery in Indian Dharamsala revealed to me that he does not believe the medium to be a genuine one. His claim for himself of the status of reincarnated master in fact was suspicious, among other reasons, from the very fact that the medium once did not predict the right sex of a baby to be born in India. At the same time it was seen that his previous attempts to avoid this topic during our discussion were also partly a matter of its incompatibility with the vision of a successful Dharma-teacher frequenting Buddhist communities all around the world. Such traditions are endangered and although this might be seen as a result of a rather natural process, still it is worthy of attention as a part of Tibetan religious ideas strongly rooted in Tibetan history.

Another topic touched upon through the story might be seen as revealing something from the hidden part of the Tibetan problem. The Dalai Lama, as he acts in the story, is not very similar to the author of numerous texts for western audiences. The story reveals that the principal questions connected with the situation of Tibet are seen as primarily religious and as such also involve Tibetan deities of various ranks. To see it through western secular concepts of law, nation and others would be as over-simplifying as another point of view, which tends to organize everything around economic profit and as a part of such a game to fossilise incomprehensible ideas under the rubric of “cultural relic”.

37) In fact, “opening the gate of deity” might designate different rituals. For reference see Diemberger 2005, pp.132–133.

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Appendix 1

Speech of Kirti master on the present medium of Powerful Hero (Anonymous b, pp. 56–65)

1.1. TRANSLATION

I think that I should briefly discuss the way the medium appeared. Most of you know it roughly; some of you do not understand it clearly. Approximately four times it happened that there were subsequently people who underwent "slight possession" (*sku phran bu phebs*) in our homeland. In some cases they were (prescribed to perform rituals of) "approaching" (*bsnyen*) Vajrabhairava or Hayagrīva. Some of them were examined and eventually (the decision was that the deity) should not descend into them. Around one year ago it was as if the medium Tashi had liver disease and thus his state became uncomfortable. He was sick for one year. It happened to him as if he would not be able to reach the place of relaxing and abiding with an elevated mind. He came up to Dharamsala, but his mind did not become comfortable. He was afraid to come to me for divination. He came to the presence of the "body" (i.e. medium) of the goddess Dorje Yudonma (*rdo rje g.yu sgron ma*) and she performed the divination. Dorje Yudonma said:

"Some deity dwells in you. Purification ritual (*byabs khrus*) should be performed for seven days." She uttered such advice. Uncle Gendun³⁸ then performed purification ritual for seven days. By the end of the seventh month, on the 28th day, at 1 o'clock in the morning, the deity came for the first time (to his body). He said the following: "I am Powerful Hero. Both wrathful and peaceful Powerful Heroes are able to come. His vessel-body is good. Ask me about it tomorrow, please."

Later in the morning, uncle Gendun came to me and turned to me in order to discuss it. Not long after that (the medium) was approached (by the deity) and as he came into my presence he said: "I am Powerful Hero of Vajra and I came here at the request of both Pelden Lhamo and King-Five Bodies (*Rgyal po sku lnga*). Please, give me support when the time will come. And this 'vessel-body' is a miraculous manifestation of bodhisattva. He is a miraculous manifestation of Eastern Yonten Gampo and there is a great obstacle. It is necessary to quickly recognise him as a reincarnated master. This should be done by holy persons of Precious Lord (Dalai lama) and you, and if not, there is no way forward for him. Turn upon the Precious Lord yourself. Protective deity of this 'vessel body' is Sethabpa (*Bse khrab pa*)."

Then he came every day to the body (of medium) several times and insisted on requesting Precious Lord (Dalai Lama). And I explained that Precious Lord is now in retreat and it is impossible to turn to him. But slowly it will be possible. Meanwhile I myself performed divination concerning each of these things and each time the results turned out well. I also asked the abbot to perform the divination and he answered that it would be good to "open the door of the deity" and also it would be good to recognize him as a reincarnation after some time. The 14th day, during the break of Precious Lord from seclusion, I turned to the Precious Lord to discuss all the previous events. This was because I was not able to predict what might happen and the next day, the 15th, fell on the day of Powerful Hero. Through his office I sent him all the history written in letters and asked him what I should do. His Presence (Dalai Lama) examined all the accounts and sent a strip of silk and "personal barley" (*phyag nas*) with instructions. "If the deity will come (to the body of the medium) next day throw the barley (on him) and offer him the strip of silk." It is understandable by all that the next day, being the "deity day", the deity came. When the Precious Lord's personal barley was thrown and the strip of silk presented it is usual that the possession of the deity comes to an end and disappears. But he could not stand it; he was not able to stay still in one place. At the moment when the barley was thrown and the strip of silk presented to him, his lustre and power of his body increased. I did not say that the "door of the deity was opened". But I told him that from this time on he is not allowed to pronounce revelation which would harm and endanger sentient beings.

When I examined the results concerning the reincarnated master, the divination turned out surprisingly well concerning the recognition and the time suitable for it. On the 26th day of the 4th Tibetan month the Dorje Dagden descended (into the medium) and said that it is necessary to recognize the "vessel body" of Powerful Hero as reincarnated master and also to hearken to the ear of Precious Lord. And by all means this must be done tomorrow.

In the morning when even the sixth hour had not passed, Dorje Dagden went (to the body of medium) and said: "There is no other means than to go right now to the presence of the Precious Lord. Today is the extraordinary holiday of the Fifth Mighty Lord (Fifth Dalai Lama)." Following that Gadong went (to the body of the medium) and said: "You must help." Then Sethabpa went (to the body of the medium) and said: "There is need of a request to the holy one." After that Powerful Hero went (to the body of the medium) and as in the case of all the previous ones he again said that it is necessary to request the holy one (*yar zhu dgos*).

38) "Uncle" (*a khu*) is common expression for monk in Amdo.

All the events of the day were truly put into letters to be presented (to Dalai Lama), but that morning His Presence (Dalai Lama) did not come to his office and there was no chance to pass it up. So it remained for the afternoon.

Before the noon time, Dorje Dagden again went (to the body of the medium) and said: "Right now it is necessary to go to Nechung. Please, invite there offering-master Tashi-la." It was said that when telling it to Tashi in the moment when (the deity) did not dwell in him, also the representative of the private office (of Dalai Lama) Jamtshul-la must go (to Nechung). And also I should by all means go there. I was not able to go there and instead of me I sent Alag Monlam, but it looked as though he didn't agree. The official Jamtshul-la and Alag Monlam went with others to Nechung. They called for the official of Nechung temple (i.e. the medium) and when the ritual of "entrusting virtuous deeds" (*phrin bcol*) was performed inside the temple, Powerful Hero descended into the body (of Tashi). As he stayed there, a chair for Powerful Hero was placed there. But he did not sit on it. After completing the ritual of "entrusting deeds" the official of Nechung (i.e. medium) sat on the chair and the deity had to come at that very moment. Something from the situation at the time of the Fifth Mighty Lord (Fifth Dalai Lama) was spoken about. (Nechung deity) was urged to come (to the body of medium) in the way in which it would be impossible not to come. After a very short invitation (of Nechung) when all was done very quickly, immediately (the deity) came into the body. After saying something about the necessity of retreat (of the Dalai Lama) he pronounced the following revelation: "Hrih! For the swift well-being and benefit of Teaching and beings the name Powerful Hero of Vajra is to be praised. Thus for the swift well-being and benefit of Teaching and beings your name Powerful Hero of Vajra is praised." He said so. "Hrih! If the ambrosia of the speech of the Master Beneficial to Behold will be taken to heart and the orders fulfilled with joy, Teaching and beings will be placed in great benefit." If the meaning of this revelation would be summarized he said that if the instructions of Precious Lord would be followed accordingly, it will be beneficial for Teaching and beings. Such was the instruction.

This instruction was surprising and great praise. Prior to this they met in Namgyel Datshang during the ritual of summer prayers to Nechung in his temple (*pho brang*). He asked for a meeting with Nechung in Namgyel Datshang and he for the first time met with "Presence of Nechung". At that time the Protector of Doctrine (Nechung) came (to the body of the medium) and performed rituals of "warding off obstructing demons" and "consecration" (of Powerful Hero). Then a "meeting silk" (*mjal dar*) was put on the neck (of Powerful Hero). By the ends of the strip of silk (the neck) was tightened and as such he was made to jerk. If this would concern people, this would probably indicate their becoming friends. That night he came to me and said that this day he was included among the protectors of Tibetan government (*dga' lden pho brang gi bstan pa bsrung ba'i chos skyong*) by Dorje Dagden. And that he will ask for (permission) to serve the government (*dga' ldan pho brang*) and Precious Lord (the Dalai Lama). Besides that, he promised to befriend me and to accomplish his virtuous deeds (*phrin las*) as he did before.

Yesterday, when we went to the temple of Nechung, I was called to the Precious Lord (Dalai Lama) from there. I went there as an ordinary man, he did not know about visiting Nechung and my situation. This was because my letter did not come up; it was blocked, waiting at the bottom. As is well known, Precious Lord did not know about it. When I met with him, I reported about the situation. When he asked about their coming to Nechung at that very moment and similar things, he called for the official Jamtshul. He then reported thoroughly and in detail about Nechung's revelations and the situation to His Presence's ear. (As) His Presence (learned that) he is Protector of Teaching who is greatly loyal to the Tibetan Teaching and governance (*chab srid*), it was according to his wish when he said I should go there. Immediately the "support of the

body" (i.e. medium Tashi) was called for. Dressed in religious robes His Presence set down on the throne in the reception hall. I also sat down beside him.

Before the deity went (to the medium) inside the reception hall I asked (Tashi) whether it would be good if Powerful Hero were to come first and then Sethabpa (into his body). Thus Powerful Hero came first. He turned to (the Dalai Lama) with reasons why he needed to address him and in detail he explained that it is the time to tame the so called Dolgyel and similar things.

His Presence said that he performed and still is performing (the ritual) of "approaching" (*bsnyen*) "Hayagriva suppressing harming demons" (*Rta mgrin dam sri zil gnon*). He (i.e. Powerful Hero) then asked for necessary "instructing" following (His Presence) arising as "Excellent Horse" (*Rta mchog*) and other things. His Presence then gave thoroughly and very carefully surprising instructions. He said that the general interests of Tibet are in a critical state. From the side of Dolgyel complications are coming to the Tibetan Teaching and governance.

When he practiced sādhanā of Hayagriva with regard to Dolgyel, there appeared positive signs. But some of the followers of Dolgyel are stirring up trouble now. "From yourself there is a need of friendship and accomplishment of 'virtuous deeds'", this was his surprising instruction. He placed his hand on the neck (of Powerful Hero) and said: "You must act diligently!" From time to time, he took his neck and shook with him, so surprisingly did he act. I regret that I was not able to record the instructions on a tape. Indeed, if someone else would listen to that he would necessarily be surprised. When his instructing finished, His Presence took my hand in his and with his other hand he took the neck of the Protector of Doctrine (Powerful Hero) and said: "The ways of teaching and studying in the Jépa Kirti Dratshang is good from all sides. You are an extraordinary protector of Kirti masters. And you must accomplish your 'virtuous deeds' and befriend him in accordance with the inner desires of Rinpoche. This is your responsibility." In such an astonishing way he was instructed and "entrusted with virtuous deeds". Protector of Doctrine Nechung and Precious Lord (Dalai Lama) performed "instructing", "binding him by oath" and "charging with service" (*gnyer gtad*). Among those (deities) who were able to become higher Protectors of Doctrine, such a quick (recognition as protector) almost did not occur. Not including the first possession of "Five Relatives of Long Life" (*Tshe ring mched lnga*, i.e. the medium's coming to the medium of Dorje Yudonma first), such fast events had never been witnessed before in history. From the moment of the deity's (first) coming (to the medium) until now not even one month has passed. Within it Precious Lord (Dalai Lama) was able to come together with Protector of Doctrine (Powerful Hero). It is important to clearly understand the situation...

1.2. TIBETAN TEXT

sku bsten byung stangs skor rob tsam zhig bshad na bsam byung/ mang che bas rob tsam zhig ha go yod pa red/ kha shas kyis gsal bo ha go yod rgyu ma red/ sku phran bu re phebs mkhan pha yul phyogs nas snga phyi byas nas thengs bzhi tsam zhig slebs pa red/ kha shas la 'jigs byed dang rta mgrin bsnyen pa re gsog tu bcugs pa dang/ kha shas la brtag dpyad byas nas mtha' ma 'bab mi dgos pa chags pa red/ sku bsten bkra shis lo gcig tsam gyi gong nas mchin pa na ba'i bzo lta bu sems khams mi bde ba zhig chags nas lo gcig gi ring na ba red/ sems yar bkyag bsad nas bag phebs nas gnas ma thub pa de 'dra byung ba red/ rda ram sa lar yar yong nas kyang sems pa bde bo ma chags par nga'i rtsar mo rgyag par yong ba 'tsher nas/ rdo rje g.yu sgron ma'i sku mdun du bcar nas mo brgyab bcug pa red/ rdo rje g.yu sgron mas khyed la lha zhig zhugs ya red/ nyi ma bdun ring byabs khru byed dgos gsung nas bka' lung gnang ba ltar/ a khu dge 'dun gyis nyin bdun ring byabs khru gnang ba red/ nyin bdun gyi mtha' ma tshe 28 dgong mo

mtshan gyi chu tshod 1 thog lha dang po de phebs pa red/ nga rdo rje dpa' rtсал yin/ rdo rje dpa' rtсал zhi drag gnyis ka phebs thub kyi yod pa dang/ kho'i sku khog de yag po yin/ sang nyin de rnams nga la zhu rogs zhes gsungs 'dug/

phyi nyin zhogs ka a khu dge 'dun nga'i rtсар yong nas de rnams zhus song/ de nas cung ma 'gor bar sku phebs nas nga'i rtсар yong nas nga rdo rje dpa' rtсал yin pa dang/ dpal ldan lha mo dang rgyal po sku lnga gnyis kyis bskul ba la brten nas 'dir yong ba yin/ dus la babs yod pas rgyab rten gnang rogs/ sku khog de yang byang chub sems dpa'i sprul pa yin/ shar yon tan mgon po'i sprul pa yin/ bar chad chen po yod/ myur du sprul sku ngos 'dzin byed dgos/ rgyal ba rin po che dang khyed skyes bu dam pa rnams kyis gnang dgos pa zhig red ma gtogs kho bo la thabs shes ci yang mi 'dug/ khyed rang gis rgyal ba rin po che la zhus/ sku khog de'i srung ma bse khrab pa yin zhes gsung nas/ nyi ma rtag par lan 'ga' shas re sku phebs yong nas rgyal ba rin po cher zhu dgos zhes u tshugs rgyag gi 'dug/ ngas rgyal ba rin po che sku tshams la bzhugs yod pas da lta zhu sa mi 'dug/ ga ler zhus chog ces bshad pa yin/ de'i bar la nga rang gis kyang mo re brgyab nas brtag pa byas pa'i skabs mo ni yag po zhig 'bab kyi 'dug/ mkhan po tshang la yang phyag mo gzigs rogs zhus par/ lha sgo phyas na yag po 'dug/ sprul sku ngos 'dzin de yang phar 'gyangs tsam byas na yag po 'dug ces bka' gnang 'dug/ rgyal ba rin po che'i sku mtshams kyi bar gseng bod tshes 14 nyin yin dus/ sngon byung gi gnas tshul cha tshang rgyal ba rin po cher zhus nas/ ngas tshod tshod byed shes kyi mi 'dug/ sang nyin tshes 15 de dpa' po rtсал gyi lha tshes shig khel yod pas ji ltar byed dgos zhes lo rgyus tshang ma yig thog la phab nas sku sger yig tshang brgyud nas phul ba yin/ sku mdun gyis gnas tshul cha tshang zhib gzigs gnang nas/ mjal dar zhig dang phyag nas shig gnang 'dug/ sang nyin lha phebs song na phyag nas de gtor la kha btags de phul zhes bka' gnang 'dug/ phyi nyin lha tshes nyin lha phebs stangs tshang mas ha go go ba de red/ rgyal ba rin po che'i phyag nas gtor te mjal dar phul ba'i skabs lha thebs chag cig yin na sku yal 'gro gi red/ khos bzod kyi ma red/ bsdad thub kyi ma red/ phyag nas gtor mjal dar phul ba'i skabs gzi brjid che ru dang sku shugs drag du 'gro song/ ngas lha sgo phyas pa yin zhes lab ma red/ yin na'ang da nas bzung khyed kyis lung bstan bshad pa'i skabs sems can la gnod cing 'tshe ba'i rigs bshad chog gi ma red ces lab pa yin/

sprul sku skor brtag pa byas pa'i skabs la mo yag po ha las pa zhig dang sprul sku ngo 'dzin byed pa'i dus la babs zhes 'babs kyi 'dug/ bod zla 5 tshes 26 dgong mo rdo rje drag ldan babs nas dpa' po rtсал gyi sku khog de sprul skur ngos 'dzin byed dgos/ rgyal ba rin po cher snyan seng zhu sgos kyi yod/ sang nyin yin gcig min gnyis zhus dgos zer/ zhogs pa chu tshod drug ma zin tsam la rdo rje drag ldan sku phebs nas da lta rang rgyal ba rin po che'i sku mdun du ma 'gro thabs med yin/ de ring gi nyin mo 'di rgyal dbang lnga pa'i thung mong ma yin pa'i dus chen zhig yin pa dang da lta rang 'gro dgos yod zer/ rgyal ba rin po che chu tshod 10 tsam ma gtogs las khungs la phebs kyi ma red ces bshad pa yin/ de'i rjes la dga' gdong phebs nas khyed rang gis rogs pa byed dgos zhes gsungs song/ de'i rjes su bse khrab pa phebs nas yar zhu dgos yod gsungs song/ de nas dpa' bo rtсал phebs nas khong rnams kyis gsungs pa bzhin yar zhu byed dgos zer/ nyin de'i gnas tshul dngos byung rnams yig thog la phab nas phul bcug pa yin te de'i zhogs pa sku mdun las khungs la ma phebs pas yi ge de yar phul ma thub par 'og la nyin gung rgyab bar lus sdad 'dug/

nyin gung ma zin tsam la yang bskyar rdo rje drag ldan phebs nas da lta rang gnas chung la 'gro dgos/ mchod dpon bkra shis lags skad gtong rogs gsung kyang bkra shis la bzhugs mi 'dug zhus dus sku sger yig tshang gi sku tshab sku ngo byams tshul lags phebs dgos/ nga la yang yin gcig min bnyis 'gro dgos yod zer/ nga 'gro thub kyi mi 'dug nga'i tshab du a lags smon lam gtang gi yin zhes bshad pa yin te khas len la ma len 'dra bo zhig byed kyi 'dug/ sku ngo byams tshul lags dang a lags smon lam sogs gnas chung la phebs nas gnas chung sku ngo gdan 'dren zhus te lha khang nang 'phrin bcol gnang ba'i skabs dpa' bo rtсал sku babs bsdad yod tsang dpa' bo rtсал la rkub stegs shig bzhag pa red/ de'i thog la kho rang bsdad yod ma red/ 'phrin bcol gnang tshar

ba dang gnas chung sku ngo rkub stegs de'i thog la bzhag nas da lta rang phebs dgos yod/ rgyal dbang lnga pa'i skabs kyi gnas tshul sogs gsungs nas ma babs thabs med ces u tshugs brgyab nas spyen 'dren thung thung zhig btang ba dang dus rgyun las shin tu mgvogs par lam seng gnas chung sku phebs pa red/ sku mtshams la 'dug dgos pa sogs kyi skor gsungs rjes lung bstan du/

hrih: bstan dang 'gro la phan bde myur ba'i phyir/ rdo rje dpa' bo rtсал gyi ming du bsngags pa yin lags/ zhes bstan pa dang 'gro ba la phan bde myur ba'i phyir na khyed rang gi ming la rdo rje dpa' bo rtсал zhes bsngags pa yin lags zhes gsung ba red/

hrih: ngos kyi slob dpon mthong ba don ldan mchog gi/ gsung gi bdud rtsi snying la bcags te bka' yi spro ba mdzad na bstan pa dang 'gro ba la phan che bar gnas pa 'di lags so/ zhes pa'i bka' lung de'i don bsdus na rgyal ba rin po che'i bka' gsung ji bzhin sgrub pa yin na bstan pa dang 'gro ba la phan bzhin pa 'di yin/ zhes bka' gnang ba red/

gnas chung gi bka' lung de ha las pa'i bstod pa chen po red/ de'i gong rnam rgyal grwa tshang gi gnas chung dbyar gsol pho brang nang gnang ba'i skabs bcar thub na zhes rnam rgyal grwa tshang dang gnas chung la snyan seng zhus nas gnas chung gi sku mdun la thog dang po bcar pa red/ de dus chos skyong phebs nas bgegs skrod dang rab gnas gnang/ de nas mjal dar zhig ske la g.yog/ kha btags de'i nas dam du bzung ste gsig gsig btang ba red/ mi yin na grogs po sgrig pa yin sa red/ de'i dgong mo nga'i sar yong nas/ de ring nga rdo rje drag ldan gyis gzhung dga' ldan pho brang gi bstan pa srung ba'i chos skyong gi gral du bkod song/ dga' ldan pho brang dang rgyal ba rin po che'i zhabz phyi zhu gi yin/ lhag par du khyed rang la sngar bzhin sdong grogs dang 'phrin las sgrub kyi yin zhes zhal bzhes gnang song/

kha sang gnas chung la phebs pa'i skabs de la pho brang nas rgyal ba rin po ches nga shog ces bka' btang song/ skye bo phal ba'i 'gro stangs ltar yin na sku bsten gnas chung la 'gro ba dang ngas gnas tshul de yar zhus yod pa rnam mkhyen yod pa ma red/ gang yin zhe na nga'i yi ge de yar phul ma thub par 'og la 'gags nas bsdad yod dus yongs grags ltar na rgyal ba rin po ches ma mkhyen pa'i tshul red/ nga bcar ba'i skabs la gnas tshul ga 'dra red ces bka' gnang gi 'dug/ da lta rang khong tsho gnas chung la 'gro song sogs zhus skabs/ gnas chung la gnas tshul ga re byung 'dug ces sku ngo byams tshul lags skad btang shog gsungs byung/ sku ngos gnas chung gi bka' lung gnang stangs sogs yongs rdzogs zhib phra sku mdun la snyan seng zhus song/ sku mdun gyis bod bstan pa chab srid la sha zhen yod pa'i bstan srung zhig red 'dug kho rang gi 'dod pa bzhin yar khrid shog ces gsung song/ lam seng sku bsten skad gtang du bcug/ sku mdun tshoms chen gyi bzhugs khri la sku chos bzhes nas bzhugs/ nga yang sku'i 'khris la bsdad bcug song/ chos skyong tshoms chen nang ma phebs gong la ngas dang po dpa' rtсал babs de'i rjes la bse krab pa phebs na yag po 'dug ces zhus pa yin pas sku mdun du dang po dpa' rtсал phebs song/ khos yar yong dgos pa'i rgyu mtshan dang dol rgyal zer ba de 'dul ba'i dus la babs yod tshul sogs zhib phra yar zhus song/

sku mdun gyis ngas rta mgrin dam sri zil nnon gyi bsnyen pa gtong dang gtong bzhin pa yin zhes gsungs byung/ khos dpal rta mchog rol pa'i skur bzhengs nas bka' bsgo gnang dgos yod ces sogs zhus song/ sku mdun gyis zhib cing phra ba'i sgo nas bka' slob ha las pa zhig gnang song/ bod spyi ba'i don deng sang gnyan 'phrang du yod pa/ bod kyi bstan pa chab srid la dol rgyal nas rnyog dra yong gi yod pa/ dol rgyal skor rta mgrin gyi sgrub pa gnang ba'i skabs mtshan ma yag po byung/ yin na'ang dol rgyal rjes 'brang kha shas kyis deng sang mda' dkrugs byed kyi 'dug/ khyed rang nas grogs dang 'phrin las sgrub dgos sogs kyi bka' slob ha las pa zhig gnang song/ phyag gi mjing pa nas bzung ste khyed rang gi hur thag byed dgos gsungs/ mtshams mtshams su ske nas bzung ste gsig gsig btang gnang ba sogs ha las pa zhig gnang byung/ bka' slob kreb nang la bcug ma thub pa der blo 'gyod 'dug/ dngos gnas de mi gzhan gyis go ba yin na ha las dgos pa red/ bka' slob gnang tshar nas nga'i lag par sku mdun gyi phyag gyis 'jus/ phyag gcig gi chos skyong gi ske la 'jus nas kirti'i bjes pa grwa tshang gi 'chad nyan slob gnyer gang ci'i cha nas yag po yod/ khyed kirti tshang gi thun mong ma yin pa'i srung ma red/ rin po che'i thugs

bzhed la yod pa nang bzhin khyed rang gis grogs dang 'phrin las sgrub dgos pa khyed rang gi las 'gan red ces bka' phebs te 'phrin bcol ha las pa zhig gnang song/ gnas chung chos rgyal chen po dang rgyal ba rin po ches bka' bsgos dam bzhag gnyer gtad gnang ba red/ bstan srung yar phebs thub pa'i nang nas de 'dra'i myur mo zhig phal cher byung med/ tshe ring mched lnga dang po phebs pa red ma gtogs lo rgyus thog byung myong yod pa ma red/ lha phebs nas de ring bar zla ba gcig kyang 'gro gi mi 'dug/ de'i nang la rgyal ba rin po che chos skyong dang bcas pa rub rub gnangs thub pa byung song/ gnas stangs gsal bo zhig shes rgyu gal chen po red/

Appendix 2

Tibetan texts on origin of Powerful Hero

2.1. ZHWA DMAR PAṆḌITA DGE 'DUN BSTAN 'DZIN RGYA MTSHO, CANG LUNG KHRI RGAN 'JAM DBYANGS THUB BSTAN RGYA MTSHO, 2007, PP. 159–160

gnysis pa'i nang rkyang tsha'i chu tshan du phebs rgyu'i gra sgrigs byed bzhin pa'i skabs a lags rmog ru rin po cher rkyang tsha'i rgyal po 'di lha sar 'god pa'i dus la bab pa lta bu'i ltas 'ga' zhig byung bas de ltar bgyis chog min gyi dgongs bstun zhus par/ a lags rdo rje 'chang nas de bka' drin che bas cis kyang da lam de ltar gnang dgos zhes lha dar srid du ring ba zhig 'bul bar mdzad/ bcu gcig gi nyin chu tshan du phebs/ mtshan mo sgar kha'i phyogs bzhi nas spyang ki ngu zug byas ba'ang ltas shig tu dgongs rkyang tsha'i sde ba gsum so sor bsang rdzas bsgrigs bcug ste/ bsang yig gangs can skyabs gcig ma gsar rtsom gnang zhing/ tshes bco lnga'i nyin bsang dang gtor ma phul te chos skyong du mnga' gsol ba gnang/ rgyal gsar zhi drag gi tsa ka li bzhengs pa rgyal khang du bzhag/ rgyal po drel nag can 'di grub dbang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan gyi slob gras bla ma zhig 'drer skyes nas nyin shug mgo'i ri khrod du gnas pa gzhan gnod kyi gdug rtsub shin tu che bas/ nye 'khor du ming nas kyang 'bod mi phod pa lta bu zhig yin yang lha sar bkod tshun chad nas bzung su la'ang mi gnod pa'i zhi 'jam can du song/ phyis su bka' las sngon chad thams cad kyis sems chung byed rgyu mang song bas lan pa 'dra/ skabs 'ga' zhig tu chos skyong 'di tshor drag btsan re dgos pa lta bu red mod/ ha cang btsan ches na mgo lo mi thub snyam nas rigs bdag tu spyan ras gzigs sgom khul gyis thugs rje bskul gang thub la 'bad pa des cig byas song gsungs/

2.2. 'JIGS ME RIGS PA'I BLO GROS 1987, PP. 634–6; 'JIGS ME RIGS PA'I BLO GROS 2007, PP. 146–147

rkyang tsha zhes pa'i lung khog 'dir sngon dus kirti bstan pa rgyal mtshan nam kirti thogs med du grags pa'i dngos slob sgrib sbyong mdzad mkhan sangs rgyas ye shes zhes pa zhig bzhugs/ ya ma rā dzā dung phyur gsum bton pa dang/ maṇḍal rkyang ba phul bas kyang lan gsum brtol bar grags/ dgung lo mthon por song dus kirti rin po ches gsung rgyu/ khyod gshegs khar nga rang cis kyang sngas mgor 'bod dgos/ zhes gsungs yod pa la/ phyis su sku bsnyung nas 'da' nye skabs nye gnas la bla ma gdan drongs zhes par/ nye gnas kyis gsung ma brtsis/ de nas thugs khros bzhin du sku gshegs pa dang mnyam du/ chibs drel sug bzhi dkar po can zhig yod pa'ang lto bos nas shi/ de 'phral sa cha der shi gshed kyi lab gleng 'bar zhing mngon sum du mig gis mthong rgyu byung bas sa cha kun stongs bar thug/ kirti sku phreng brgyad pa blo bzang 'phrin las kyi sku ring la gdul ba'i dus la bab par mkhyen nas thang stong zhig tu gzim gur phub ste mtshams

bcad dam po'i sgo nas dmigs yul mngon sum du bkug ste dbang bskur zhing bka' bsgos gnyer du gtad/ thun gseng du lha bzo bos nas sku brnyan bzhengs su 'jug dus shangs khrag mi chod pa dang bcas drel nag sug dkar la bcibs pa bla chas can/ bstan srung karma badzra'am dpa' rtse/ du mtshan btags kirti sku phreng gi srung mar bsten/ kirti'i sring ma rkyang tsha'i drel nag can yang zer/ zhi drag gnyis ka'i sgrub 'phrin bskang gsol sogs cho ga cha tshang ba brtsams pa gsung 'bum du bzhugs/ lo rgyus 'di tsam ni kirti'i drung yig mkhas dbang blo bzang sangs rgyas kyi ngag las gsan pa ltar bla ma rin po che'i zhal las thos pa rags rim tsam zhig ste phyis su 'di tsam yang shes mkhan dkon bsam nas yi ger bkod pa la bstan srung chen po nyid dgyes pa'i mchod par 'bul lo// lo rgyus mi shes pa tshos 'di dang the bo a myes su grags pa gnyis gcig tu byas pa ni 'khrul ba ste/ the bo a myes ni slob dpon padma'i sku ring la bod kyi bsam yas bzhengs dus gnod pa byed mkhan gyi 'byung bo zhig slob dpon padmas sa mthar bkard dus rkang ba chag nas 'dre rkang to zhes par grags/ de nas bros te stag tshang lha mo'i shar phyogs ha cang mi ring ba the bo khog tu yibs nas bsad de/ gzhan la gnod 'tshe btang rabs kyi ngag rgyun mang/ de'i dbyug pa yin zhes pa kirti'i ma dgon du yod pa rgya do'i si tshos 'dzin pa'i dbyug kyog sbrul 'khyil ba 'dra ba zhig ste bdag gis kyang mthong myong/

Appendix 3

Memoirs of Jatshog Tulku concerning past mediums of Powerful Hero – Tibetan text (Re mdo sengge, 2002, pp. 117–121)

nga dang po tshogs la 'dug dus sku rten mi 'dug/ de'i sngon la dza ti zer ba zhig yod pa des/ rgyud pa'i dge bskos yin nam las sne zhig la rdog tho zhig brgyab pa 'dra/ kho rang gis lha babs nas rdog tho brgyab tshul las sne la bshad kyang sgrig lam gyi stabs kyi 'grig gi med gsungs pas dgon par bsad ma thub par byams me la song 'dug/ rjes nas grwa pa log te yar mtha' pa'i nang la slebs song/ kho rang gi bu byang chub sre tho ma zer ba'i dus 'khor pa zhig yod/ sku gzugs chen po ngo sre bo dang rdzig po zhig yin/ de la lha 'dra bo zhig babs song/ kho rang grwa rkyang grwa rkyang red/ shag a khu bzod pa'i ltarg gar yod/ kho la lha 'bab dus khyed mtshar bo zhig yin dang po gzer rgyugs nas ma zod pa de 'dra byes dus/ kha dro nga phyi log la skyel rogs/ nga la 'bab mkhan de yong gi 'dug na'ang sgo nang la mi shong gi/ des seng ge zhig zhon pa bsad 'dug/ rkang pa lag pa de tsho sgos bkag bsad 'dug de nga la 'bab mkhan red/ nga phyi log la khrid rogs zer ga ler khong tshos sgo la phud pa na 'bab 'jog gi zer/ dngos gnas byas na sprul pa red/ sgo chung rung shong dgos pa red mod kyang/ de 'dra'i mtshar po zhig 'dug zer/ ha ri tsan dan sngon po 'khri shing la/ zhes sogs lung bstan nam gnas bstod cig e yin bsam pa zhig sa sgang tshang la 'don rgyu yod/ sa sgang tshang de'i 'khri la mang po bsad yod pa red/ de nas lha babs dus/ kha nas phu byed kyi red/ de dus kha nang nas mtshams mtshams su 'bras gtorg gi zer/ tshe ring gi dge rgan a khu blos bkra can po'i 'dzin grwa tshos g.yog rgyur red mod byas nas 'gro dus a khu blos bkra de 'dra'i 'bras 'thor rgyu yod na byang chub snying rje grwa rkyang red/ de'i zur zhig tu spungs zhog gsungs gi zer/ de 'dra'i spungs rgyu cang med pa 'dra/ nyin zhig/ gser lta bu gru bzhi zhig blangs nas 'di dge ba'i bshes gnyen chen mo khyed la phul gsungs nas a khu bzod pa la phul skabs a khu bzod pas nga la gser mi dgos gsungs nas ma bzh-es zer/ de nas rna nang la phar bsodus bzhag pa 'dra byas song zer/ bar bar la me long zhig khur yong gi 'dug/ me long gi ngos la gser dngul sbrags ma dang dar tshon sna lnga sogs btags yod/ kho rang gi mar sos gsog sa'i sgam zhig yod pa de'i nang la snyobs dang cig yod gsung dus yod gi zer/ der 'jog mkhan su gang yod pa ma red/ sku khog kho rang ci yang yod sa zhig ma red/ snyin zhig grwa tshang gi nyi bzlog bdun sgrub 'tshogs bsad dus/ brgyugs yong ba re zung gis bzungs kyang ma thub par yar sgo chen nang la yong nas mang po zhig bshad kyi 'dug kyang/

grwa tshang gi tshogs 'don gsung gi yod pas go yi mi 'dug/ mtshan mo zhig la yang shor yong nas/ 'o de ring ltos dang/ chos skyong 'od ldan dkar po phebs yod/ khyed rang tshos ltos/ e rig gi gsung dus rgyab la bltas kyang rig rgyu mi 'dug zer/ 'od ldan dkar po de gnas chung la yang zer sa red de dpa' rtsal la'ang zer/ dpal ldan dgra lha'i rgyal po 'od ldan dkar// ring nas las smon zhugs kyis yong 'brel ba'i// sgos kyis bka' srung gnyan por mnga' gsol lo// zhes 'od ldan dkar po'i mtshan de 'dug/ dpa' rtsal dang gnas chung gcig yin sa red/ rjes nas skyabs mgon kirti sku gong ma rong dgon la phebs dus kho rang ched du rong dgon la song nas/ nga la lha 'bab rgyu de med par ma byas dus bla slob kyis dam tshig la ma dgongs pa yin zhes ngus nas zhus dus/ de babs na drag gi/ de la skyon med mod gsung gi zer/ yin na'ang kho rang gis u tshugs zhus pas/ de nas bzung 'bab rgyu med pa bzahag pa red/ de'i rjes su dar rgyas la babs yong ba red/ dar rgyas kyis ming la rta lo zer/ nyin zhig sprul sku don yod rdo rjes nga la rta lo la cig babs pa yin nam smyo ba yin nam gcig red zer/ ngas rgyu mtshan dris par/ kha sang ha las pa zhig 'phag gi 'dug/ mang po zhig kho la 'tham bsdad 'dug/ ngas nyams tshod zhig blta dgos bsams nas der khab cig 'dug pa dpung ba'i nang la mang po zhig deng bzahag na'ang a tsha mi zer ba ma zad mnyam mi 'jog gi/ cig babs babs 'dugs zer/ rjes su dgon pa'i ltag ka'i pad 'byung gi lab rtse dang bsang khri gnyis kyis bar la yod pa'i skor lam de nas mnan pa zhig blangs/ de 'dra zhig gis sku rten yin shag byas te rjes su lha sgo phye pa red/ dang po de tsam gyi yag po zhig 'bab thub kyis med kyang rjes nas rta mgrin yin nam bsnyen pa kha shas bton nas yag tu yag tu 'gro song/ sku rten ngo ma chags rjes lung bstan mang po zhig gsungs yod/ thengs gcig lung bstan du/ shar gdong lnga'i ngar skad dgung nas sgrogs// nub rta bdun rgyal po'i bla mtsho la// dus rang mdangs khrag gi thig le 'bab// ces sogs lung bstan mang po zhig yod/ rgya nag dang bod sde pa gzhung bar gyi 'khrugs pa sogs gang yin mi shes te/ nub brag dmar gyi 'gram du dgra mkhar brtsigs/ zer ba de 'dra gsung pa yang yod/ lung bstan de'i nas rjes nas bsam blo 'khor dus po ta la'i ri dmar po ri yin pa sogs la dgongs pa min nam bsam/ skab rer sngags skad gsungs kyis yod pas thengs shig ngas a khu 'jam dbyangs la de khyed kyis bsgyur thub na sgyur rogs zhus kyang/ bsgyur thub kyis ma red/ thad ka thad kar sbyar chog chog cig ma red/ tshig grogs dang de 'dra'i dbang gis go stangs mang po zhig yod pas sgra log par 'khyer rgyu yang yod/ de ngas bsgyur e thub lta rgyu min gsungs/ chos kho (lha mo'i dpa' rtsal sku brten rnga phrug chos 'phel zer ba de red) dang kho gnyis bu spun red/ chos kho la lha babs nas drag po'i sbyin bsregs blugs dus nga tsho la ma dar ba'i cho ga de 'dra 'don rgyu yod pa 'dra/ rta mgrin dbu dgu phyag bco brgyad can zhig 'dug zer de'i sgo nas drag po'i sbyin bsregs blugs dus rdzas bsngo stangs de cung tsam 'khrugs mi 'jug par gu dog po gnang gi yod 'dug/ dpe mi srid pa'i yag po gnang gi zer ba go myong chos kho yang de 'dra shes mkhan zhig min/.

The return of the Goddess: Religious revival among Hawan village Mongghuls

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Summary: Revival of religious practice related to the clan goddess of the Mongghul (Tu) of Hawan Village, Tiantang Township, Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County, Gansu Province, PR China is examined, chiefly by giving detailed accounts from the villagers. Specifically, we describe the movement of the Hawan Mongghul from the contemporary Huzhu Mongghul Autonomous County, Haidong Region, Qinghai Province to their current home; Heavenly Mule King (Luozi Tianwang) and his deity-medium (*fala*) Ha Chengshan (Ha Nangsuo (1880/ 1881–1948) who thus could meet many of the spiritual needs of the local people; Ha Chengshan's refusal to willingly be a medium for this deity; and Hawan villagers a half-century later, building a shrine for their clan goddess – Niangniang.

1. Introduction

Revival of religious practice related to the 'Goddess of the Ha Clan' is explored in an initial attempt to relate what Jinshan Niangniang, a clan female deity, represents in the lives of the Ha Clan Mongghul living in Hawan Village in the early twenty-first century.

The Mongghul (Monguor,¹ Tu) and Hawan Village have been recently introduced elsewhere (Ha and Stuart 2006, Ha 2007, Schram 2006 [1954–1961]²). Briefly, the Mongghul are part of the Tu population, which China recognizes as one of its fifty-six official ethnic groups. Most, but not all (Janhunen et. al. 2007) of those classified as Tu speak Mongol-related languages, are not Muslim, are much influenced by Tibetan Buddhism, and live in Qinghai and Gansu provinces.

1) The term 'Monguor', first introduced by Albrecht De Smedt and Antoine Mostaert and later corroborated by Schram, has been alternatively used to designate the Tu people (Janhunen et. al., 2007, p. 178).

2) We cite this version of Schram because of its up-to-date introduction providing population data and other information about the Tu population.

The Hawan Mongghuls dwell in Hawan Natural Village,³ which in 2008 was home to twenty-five households (105 people of which all were Mongghul except two or three Tibetans and four or five Han Chinese).

The ancestors of the Hawan Mongghul fled to the current location in Tianzhu County from what is now Halazhigou (Mongghul: Haliqi ghuali) in the Huzhu Mongghul Autonomous County.⁴ The distance between the two places could be covered by bus in about three hours in 2008. The move to the present locality began in the 1920s in reaction to famine and mandatory military servitude in Ma Bufang's⁵ army.

Veneration of the clan goddess (Niangniang) was common in Halazhigou before certain village residents moved to the current Tianzhu County. In their new homeland they did not build a shrine to their clan goddess because of poverty and social turbulence. Another factor was the fact that their basic spiritual needs were sufficiently met by another deity, 'Heavenly Mule King'⁶ (Luozi Tianwang) that possessed the body of his medium (*fala*) Ha Chengshan, (1880/1881–1948), better known as Ha Nangsuo.⁷ In time however, the *fala* Ha Nangsuo renounced his belief in Heavenly Mule King and thus this spiritual resource for satisfying religious needs was no longer available to local residents. Years passed and eventually there was consensus that a village

- 3) Hawan is part of Chagan Administrative Village, Tiantang Township, Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County, Gansu Province.
- 4) Huzhu County is located in Haidong Region, Qinghai Province.
- 5) Ma Bufang (1903–1975) was a prominent warlord in China during the Republic of China era, ruling the modern northwestern province of Qinghai, which became a province in 1928. Ma Bufang and his brother, Ma Buqing (1898–1977), played a key role in annihilating Zhang Guotao's (1897–1979) army that crossed the Yellow River in an attempt to expand the Communist base. Later, Ma Bufang, with the help of the Kuomintang, became governor of Qinghai, with military and civilian powers. He kept this position until the Communist victory in 1949. Later, he fled to Saudi Arabia with more than 200 relatives and subordinates. See for example: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ma_Bufang; http://www.generals.dk/general/Ma_Buqing/_/China.html; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhang_Guotao (accessed 24 September 2008).
- 6) Known as Lamusang in such areas of Huzhu as Darimaa. Villagers often used 'mule' and 'horse' interchangeably.
- 7) *Nangsuo* (Tib. *nang so*) 'internal minister' is a reference to an administrative system common to monasteries that managed local religious affairs while maintaining close ties to local tribal leaders. According to Dr. Limusishiden there were three *nangsuo* in Huzhu areas-Tughuan *nangsuo* (Tughuan Village) and Xewarishidi *nangsuo* (Xewarishidi Village) in what is now Wushi Town, and Zhuashidi *nangsuo* (what is now Zhuashidi Village, Danma Town). Tughuan *nangsuo* was the most powerful. Rgulang Monastery granted the above mentioned three *nangsuo* in the Huzhu area. The *nangsuo* system was hereditary. Ha Chengshan's *nangsuo* title was conferred by Tiantang Monastery (Tib. *mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling*).



Figure 1. Hawan/ Ha Valley Village (Ha Mingzong, summer 2008).

Niangniang shrine was needed. The new shrine was built in 1999. After some time the 'body' of the deity was created in the shape of a spear and located in the central place of the shrine.

Detailed accounts of the above briefly-outlined events are presented below by villagers themselves, and are prefaced by a brief introduction to people mediating the will of the deities. The informants are introduced in Appendix 1. Ha Mingzong, a village native, personally participated in certain of the events relevant to this paper and his observations and interpretations also appear here; he also interviewed the villagers whose voices appear here. Stuart assisted Ha in imagining and shaping the paper.

2. People mediating the will of deities

Several terms for the people who communicate the will of the deities are employed by various groups of Tu people. These terms reflect the influence of Chinese, Tibetan, and Mongolian, as is the case in the language and culture

of the Tu people. The deities with whom Hawan villagers communicate with are called *pirgha* ([bərɣa] < Mo. *burqan*), a term that signifies a deity – celestial and divine beings. It has an etymological connection to the Khalkha Mongolian expression *burqan* and is used as an equivalent of the Tibetan expression *lha*. In this paper, both Niangniang, and Luozi Tianwang are *pirgha*.

2.1. MAJOO

In certain areas inhabited by the Tu people poles or sedan chairs, onto which deities are believed to descend (*pram* or *jiaogan*)⁸ are used. Often these are held by people chosen for this purpose. The deity expresses its will by moving the pole. These persons are called *majoo* in Hawan Village.

Ha Mingzong only remembers the *jiaogan* ‘pole’ used one time as described in Account Ten. Later, when the villagers made a spear for Niangniang and the spear was consecrated, Niangniang descended into the spear, which was only held by a *fala* and the *jiaogan* was no longer used. In Account Ten, Niangniang expressed her will by moving backwards and forwards (see Limusishiden and Stuart 1994 for a more detailed case study).

2.2. FASHI AND BO

Schram (2006 [1957], p. 396) writes that “The Mongols call the shamans *BŌ*, the Monguors call them *BŌ*, on account of the lack of the vowel *Ö* in their dialect. *BŌ* and *BŌ* seem to be a genuine Mongol term. The Chinese of Huangchung call them *Fa-Shih*, ‘Master of Magic.’” The term *bo*, related to the Mongolian term for ‘shaman’, is used by the Huzhu Mongghul (Limusishiden, personal communication August 2008). Relatedly, *fashi*⁹ who practice among the Minhe Monguor (Mangghuer) generally are classified as Han Chinese, do not speak any Monguor dialect, and sing, dance, and drum during ritual

8) *Jiaogan* is a Chinese word meaning ‘sedan pole’. The origin of the word *pram* remains unclear. It may relate to the Tibetan *pra mo* used for divination and attested to in old Tibetan sources.

9) The wide embrace of this term may be seen in Davis’ (2001) meticulous examination of spirit-possession and exorcism in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in his larger study of society and the supernatural in Song China. Davis writes (52) “...the term *fashi* is sufficiently flexible and overextended that it should be understood to refer to a master (*shi*) or practitioner of exorcistic technique (*fa*), and such a person may not have been a priest at all.”



Figure 2. Minhe Mangghuer *majoo*.

performances.¹⁰ However, this term (*fashi*) is not used in Hawan Village to describe any local practitioner.

2.3. THE KURTAİN AND THE FALA

Schram (2006 [1957], p. 417) devotes a small section of his second volume to the *kurtain*, though his initial definition is vague: “Among the Monguors there is yet another type of possessed man whom they call a *Kurtain* (Tibetan, *Skurgdien*),¹¹ and whom the Chinese call *Fa-la-shih* or *Ku-wai-tien*. He is

10) For such ritual in Minhe see <http://virtualreview.org/china/zoom/800201/fashi-in-mujiashi>, accessed November 2008.

11) Tib. *sku rten*, cf. Mongolian *gürtem* /?/.



Figure 3. *Fashi* at Sughuanghuali Mongghul Village, Danma Town (Jugui, Kunchok Gelek, eighteenth day of the third lunar month, 1999).

found most frequently in genuine Monguor families, and plays an important role in the religious life of the Monguors.”¹²

The *fala*¹³ summoned deities who directly entered their body and, in the case of Hawan, entered the spear. To Ha Mingzong’s knowledge, Hawan Niangniang has never possessed a person. Villagers of Hawan believe that a *fala* is most familiar with the ritual summoning Niangniang and that communicating with Niangniang is much easier with a *fala*.¹⁴ Because Hawan Village lacks their own *fala*, they must invite one from a nearby village.

12) Stuart et. al. (1989) described the *fala* among the Minhe Mangghuer. Ha Mingzong has never heard the term *kurtain* used in Hawan Village.

13) There are no certain Chinese characters for *fala* and, in fact, the term may be borrowed from the Tibetan term *lha pa*.

14) Ha Mingzong is only aware of Hawan villagers summoning Niangniang once, as described in Account 10.

3. Accounts by Hawan people

In this main part of the paper, accounts from Hawan villagers are presented, along with general information on the shrine's condition in 2008, and information concerning the shrine-keepers. Niangniang's importance to villagers is added in subsequent subchapters.

3.1. FALA

ACCOUNT 1 (HA SHENGYU)¹⁵

A *fala* is a person who communicates between deities and ordinary people. Hawan villagers believe that there are two types of *fala*. The common *fala* summons the deity to possess them like in our (village's) case; first in the *jiaogan* 'sedan pole' and, later, after the *shenjian* 'divine spear' was completed, then in the spear (explained in detail later). The *fala* communicates between the deity and the people. The *shege* ([ʃgə] < Mo. *yeke*) *fala* 'great fala' is more powerful than the common *fala*. People ask certain deities who have such *fala* to enter the *fala*. They are then possessed and are no longer themselves; they are not aware of themselves. People ask them questions directly, and they reply directly.

3.2. THE HEAVENLY MULE KING

Heavenly Mule King was held in high esteem in many Mongghul areas in 2008 and was the deity consulted through his *fala* by Hawan villagers following their move to their present home after the 1920s. Three accounts presented here, all exhibiting Buddhist influence, concern Heavenly Mule King's character and origin.

ACCOUNT 2 (KONG QINGSHAN)¹⁶

My great-great-uncle was once a big *fala*. Not only did all our clan members believe that he was possessed by Heavenly Mule King, but many people from other clans and places also believed in Heavenly Mule King and in my great-great-uncle.

Heavenly Mule King was once a very barbaric and undefeated ordinary man, who often rode a black mule. He liked to kill people, especially children, and eat their flesh. People hated him,

15) Ha Shengyu gave this account when Ha Mingzong mentioned Niangniang in October 2005 during Ha Shengyu and Ha Shengzhang's visit to Kevin Stuart's home in Xining City.

16) Kong Qingshan (b. 1936, classified as Han Chinese, *fala* of Grandfather Dragon King in Chagangou Village, which is very near Hawan Village) gave this account when Ha Mingzong visited his home in January 2005.

but couldn't stop him, because he fought so well that nobody could defeat him. Even many gods would leave when people beseeched them to control Heavenly Mule King.

Finally Guanyin Pusa¹⁷ concluded that he couldn't be defeated, only tamed. Luozi Tianwang had nine children. Guanyin Pusa took one of them and hid him. Luozi Tianwang worriedly searched for a long time, and then came to Guanyin Pusa and pleaded: "Pusa, please help me find my child!"

"Why should you look for your child? You still have eight at home," Guanyin Pusa said.

"But it is my child, my own child," he said.

"Okay, but it is just one of your children so what did you think when you killed thousands of people and children? Did you consider that their sorrows were thousands of times worse?" Pusa said. This was what Guanyin Pusa had in mind when she first hid his child.

Heavenly Mule King was shocked for he had never before considered the feelings of others.

"I didn't think about this before, but it is too late. I must be terribly sinful," he said.

"No, not if you stop killing people," Pusa said.

"I will make amends by helping them," he said, then stopped killing people and, instead, protected and helped people. Slowly, people believed in him. After his death, he was empowered with fighting abilities and people began worshipping him.

ACCOUNT 3 (KONG QINGSHAN)

Heavenly Mule King resides in monasteries because he originally had no place to stay and wandered from one place to another. Once, when he came to a monastery, the monastery master noticed a spirit flying around the monastery and immediately understood that it needed a place to stay. He then performed a ritual, inviting Heavenly Mule King to stay in monasteries. Later, Heavenly Mule King became one of the four most important judges of the law in monasteries. The two deer on the Buddhist monastery buildings were originally the mules of Heavenly Mule King, but because of their odd appearance, they were later replaced by two deer.

ACCOUNT 4 (ZHUNMAA)¹⁸

Luozi Tianwang is called Lamusang in Mongghul. He always rides a horse, and was thus called Luozi Tianwang. He is worshipped in most Mongghul places. There is often a tangka in monasteries showing him riding a horse.

Long ago, Lamusang had 108 children, was very nice to them, and loved all of them dearly. But he ate others' children one by one. Then, one day, a lama stole one of his children and hid him under a bowl. Lamusang looked for him everywhere but couldn't find him. He was terribly worried. The lama asked, "What are you looking for?"

"Oh, I am looking for one of my children," said Lamusang.

The lama said, "Your child is under my bowl. I return him to you now. Please no longer eat other people's children. You love your own children so much, but you eat other's children. Did you think about those people's feelings? This is wrong. You should go and live in the monastery now and repent of your past misdeeds."

Afterwards, he lived in the monastery and was known as Lamusang.

17) I.e., the female form of bodhisattva (Ch. Pusa) Avalokiteśvara (Ch. Guanyin).

18) This information was provided by Limusishiden who repeated what his father, Zhunmaa, told him.

3.3. RENOUNCEMENT OF THE HEAVENLY MULE KING BY FALA HA NANGSUO

The following account describes the events that led to the *fala*'s no longer wishing to be Heavenly Mule King's medium because the deity assisted the *fala* in stealing a knife some time between the late 1930s and the early 1940s.

ACCOUNT 5 (KONG QINGSHAN)

Ha Nangsuo was drinking at twilight with some of his friends in Qiaji Village when Heavenly Mule King possessed him. He suddenly jumped up from the *pai*¹⁹ and began shaking. Soon he jumped off the *pai* and rushed to the door without a word. His bewildered friends gazed at him curiously. They noticed Ha Nangsuo wasn't even wearing his coat and only had a pair of socks on his feet. He had disappeared by the time the others got near the door. They thought he might have gone to the toilet. They waited, but he didn't return.

"He must have run away. But how could he have just disappeared without a word? Let's go after him. He must be near, since he's nearly drunk," his friends decided.

How could ordinary people catch Ha Nangsuo? They didn't even see so much as Ha Nangsuo's shadow along the road! They went to his home, but he wasn't there. They became very worried and asked many people to help look for old Ha Nangsuo, but he was nowhere to be found.

Actually, he had left Qiaji Village and headed for Shancheng Village in Huzhu because the villagers there needed Ha Nangsuo to prevent hail. Their own deity had told them Ha Nangsuo would be there for the ritual, and had further indicated that the shrine-keeper should wait for him. No one knows how he crossed the Daitong River.²⁰ There was no bridge and no one knows how he went to a place about a hundred kilometers away within several hours without even wearing shoes.

The shrine-keeper was in the shrine that night and around midnight, he heard a knock on the door. He opened the door and found Ha Nangsuo standing there, yelling that he was cold. The shrine-keeper gave him a pair of shoes and a coat he had prepared because when he and his villagers asked their deity to prevent the impending hailstorm, they were told that Ha Nangsuo would help them and that they should wait for him with shoes and coat at the ready. (Their deity had foreseen that Ha Nangsuo would come from afar without shoes and a coat.) To his amazement, he noticed that Ha Nangsuo's socks were in perfectly good condition.

Ha Nangsuo said that he should be drinking with his friends in the village.

The next morning, Ha Nangsuo helped the villagers stave off hail and thus saved the villagers' crops.

Another time, when one of Ha Nangsuo's neighbors was ill and asked him for help, he went to the sick person's home in Huzhu and noticed a very nice knife hanging on the wall of a room in the house. He immediately wanted the knife but did not let anyone know this. Subsequently, he summoned Luozi Tianwang to possess him, took the knife from the wall, brandished it around the patient, and then swallowed the knife. After finishing the ritual, people were afraid that he would suffer from swallowing the knife and quickly took him to his sister's home. She found him very well, except that he said that there was something hard and painful in his stomach. He then asked Heavenly Mule King to possess him again and help him with the pain. After he was possessed, he drank some water and vomited up the knife.

19) *Pai* = a hollow sleeping and eating platform made of adobe bricks. Smoldering grain husks and straw are put inside to keep it warm.

20) The Daitong/ Datong River is the boundary between Tianzhu (Gansu) and Huzhu (Qinghai).

He then realized that Luozi Tianwang had helped him steal the knife and was unhappy with his deity. He wondered how a deity could allow and assist a man fulfill his greedy desire. His belief in his deity then declined and afterwards, he refused to be Luozi Tianwang's *fala*.

His disbelief and rejection of Luozi Tianwang caused him to suffer tremendously. For example, once Luozi Tianwang possessed him and made him crawl under the *miangui*.²¹ He suffered greatly from the weight of the *miangui*, and it was not until his family members lifted it up that he could finally get out from under it.

This marked the suspension of much religious practice in the village for villagers lacked a Niangniang image, access to Luozi Tianwang, and the services of a *fala*. They then relied on Tiantang, a Gelug monastery several kilometers from the village. But later, after a number of villagers experienced illness and the death of their livestock, there was a revival of religious practice related to Niangniang.

3.4. THE HAJIA NIANGNIANG

Niangniang, in Chinese, is a general term for goddess in Chinese Taoism. In the sphere of Taoist influence the worship of the highest female deity, Wangmu Niangniang (the Queen Goddess), is widespread.

Kong Qingshan, a *fala* living in nearby Chagangou, told Ha Mingzong that the Ha Clan Niangniang was Jinshan Niangniang, 'Golden Mountain Goddess', one of Wangmu Niangniang's three daughters. Kong further suggested that Jinshan Niangniang was the West Ha Clan's *pirgha* 'deity' and that her two sisters were the *pirgha* of the Dong Clan and the East Ha Clan. Hawan villagers, however, did not link their Niangniang to Wangmu Niangniang, nor were they familiar with Jinshan Niangniang. Kong also stated that the equivalent of *niangniang* 'goddess' in Mongghul was *limu*, a borrowing from the Tibetan *klu mo*, which he said was a term for all female deities. It is more likely that *limu* derives from the Tibetan *lha mo* that also means 'goddess'. Villagers believed Niangniang was a female clan ancestor and referred to her as Hajia Niangniang 'Ha Clan Goddess' or simply 'Niangniang'. It is for this reason that we employ the terms 'Niangniang' and 'Ha Clan Niangniang' in this paper. Relatedly, Li and Li (2005, p. 118) write that "in Mongghul areas people also worshipped Niangniang and Longwang ('Dragon King'). Niangniang and

21) A large wooden box in which country people keep their flour. It is often placed next to a wall facing the door. The legs are ten to twenty centimeters high, making crawling under it painful and difficult.

Longwang, in the eyes of the Mongghul, are deities commanding rain. They can assure favourable weather for crops.”

3.5. DECLINE OF THE WORSHIP OF NIANGNIANG IN THE PAST

ACCOUNT 6 (HA SHENGLIN)²²

Three generations ago the first Ha family got ready to move to Hawan from their original home in Huzhu. My uncle, Ha Nangsuo, took a *shdel*²³ from Niangniang’s statue to build a shrine of our own later in the new settlement. Unfortunately, during those years our forebears experienced great difficulty. They had no peaceful place to live and decided to wait and build their shrine later. To make things worse, before Niangniang’s shrine in Hawan could be constructed, the *shdel* was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution,²⁴ as was the Niangninag statue in Halazhigou. After this, Ha Clan people in Halazhigou worshipped a large tree in front of the old shrine site for years while we, the Ha Clan people in Hawan Village, remained without our own Niangniang shrine. Later, a copy of the old Niangniang statue was made in Halazhigou, but it was much less ornate than the original.

3.6. CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE REVIVAL

ACCOUNT 7 (HA SHENGYU)²⁵

At first, Ha Shengku lost his only mule, which was a great loss for a farmer. He thought this was just an accident and bought another one. But, not long afterwards, his mule slipped down a mountain slope on a rainy day. He found it dead the next day. Again, he thought this was just more bad luck.

This kind of bad luck, however, did not end. Ha Shengku fell ill and consulted a renowned doctor in the township town, who told him that he had a joint disease that could be cured with the medicine he prescribed. However, he saw no improvement after several visits to the doctor. He then decided to visit our Niangniang worshipped in Dakeshidan Village, Zhucha Township.²⁶ Unexpectedly, the *fala* told him that our Niangniang was unhappy with the clan people’s attitude towards her – they did not worship her and she had no place to stay when she visited us. The *fala* also said that our Niangniang had something in the village that people neglected and that Ha Shengku should search for it in a five-member-household in our village. After returning, Ha Shengku visited all the five-member-households, including that of Ha Shenglin. Ha Shengku learned from him that Niangniang had a mirror that my great-great-grandmother brought with

22) Interview by Ha Mingzong in Ha Shenglin’s home, 18 January 2005.

23) *Shdel* = a red cloth offered to deities. This term is seldom used, other than by *fala* and people familiar with religious rituals.

24) Wenhua da geming (1966–1976).

25) Ha Shengyu gave this account when Ha Mingzong mentioned Niangniang in the course of a visit to Kevin Stuart at his home in Xining City in October 2005.

26) Zhucha Township became part of Tiantang Township in early 2005. Members of the Ha Clan that lived in this village also worshipped Niangniang.



Figure 4. The *shqiongghul* 'incense burner' and the shrine (Ha Mingzong, November 2005).

her when she left Halazhigou and then later had given it to a *fala* named Zhanjiang, who kept it in his home in neighboring Shangjialong Village,²⁷ because she was afraid she would defile²⁸ the mirror if she kept it in her home. Ha Shengku then went to the *fala*, asked for the mirror, and brought it back to our clan.

3.7. BUILDING THE NEW SHRINE

ACCOUNT 8 (HA MINGZONG)

With the reappearance of the mirror, Ha Shenglin and Ha Shengku decided to encourage and mobilize everyone to do their utmost to satisfy our Niangniang. Soon, villagers found themselves building a shrine for our Niangniang. Ha Shengku and Ha Shenglin were in charge. But money was a problem. Where would the money come from? From the men working in town? No, because they were all either Communist Party members and would not support such things or were people who were uncaring about religious activities.

When this bubble of hope vanished, fifty kilograms of wheat grain were collected from each village household and sold for about 800 RMB, which bought bricks, wood, and cement. Finally, construction began at the location where the first Ha house was built. Soon, however, the money was gone and the project was far from complete. Ten *yuan* was then collected from each family and shrine building resumed. People were willing to contribute since, after many years, they believed that they truly needed a spiritual power to rely on.

The construction was at last completed after several months of intermittent work. Niangniang's body needed to be built next – the most important and difficult part of the project.

Ha Shengku then took around seventy RMB and such religious articles as *pan* 'small round steamed bread' and lamps and went to Halazhigou, where our Niangniang was traditionally worshipped. He communicated with Niangniang through the *fala* there and brought back a *sh-del* from Niangniang's image.

27) Shangjialong Village lacked a Niangniang shrine and consequently, Ha Clan members living there visited the Niangniang shrine in Hawan Village.

28) Hawan Mongghul believed that items closely associated with a deity, such as this mirror, should be kept in a high, clean place to avoid being mistakenly used for something inappropriate or laid somewhere low and exposed to unexpected accident. For example, a mirror was defiled if it was placed on the ground and people stepped over it. When such items were defiled, even if done unintentionally, bad fortune came, forcing the defiler to visit Niangniang to be informed of the cause. If people were aware of what they had done, they cleaned what had been defiled with the smoke of burning juniper or visited a monastery and asked a lama to purify it.

3.8. MAKING THE “BODY” OF NIANGNIANG IN THE FORM OF SPEAR

ACCOUNT 9 (HA SHENGYU)

A *shdel* or *hong*²⁹ inside the shrine was inadequate; everyone knew that we should make a body for her. On account of our poor condition, she didn't ask for a body like the one in our ancestral home, instead she told us to make a *shenjian* 'deity arrow' that resembled a two-ended-spear. People explained that she asked for a spear because it was her weapon when she was once an ordinary person.

Ha Shenglin and Ha Shengyu collected a total of about fifty kilograms of iron from village families, and went to a blacksmith, who made a one-meter-long, two-ended-spear with a forty centimetre long sandalwood-handle between the two spear ends, which is what Niangniang had requested when we (Ha Shengku and Ha Shengyu) asked her in Dakeshidan Village.

Ha Shengyu made a stand for the two-ended-spear.

After Niangniang's 'body' was completed, we invited Kong Qingshan to help us summon her. On the appointed day, all the villagers came with *pan*, oil and butter to fuel lamps, new lamps, juniper, and incense. Although the *fala* pleaded for some time for Niangniang to come, he finally said our Niangniang would not come that day, but added that she would come to the shrine on the third day of the New Year period.

3.9. FIRST SUMMONING THE GODDESS

ACCOUNT 10 (HA MINGZONG)

The third day of the first lunar month of 2001 came. Male clan members, including Grandfather, who was a stubborn progressive and had largely ignored religious matters, and I, went to the shrine early in the morning to await Kong Qingshan's arrival. But we soon learned that he had gone to town on business and would return only in the afternoon because the town bus had been delayed. Without any other choice, we could only summon Niangniang by ourselves.

There were only clan men there. Sister had wanted to come and observe but older village men ordered her to stay away from the ritual. I thought that was odd and wondered why. At the temple, people knelt in four lines that corresponded to the four generations in the village.

Grandfather didn't say anything. He knelt to the side of the second line, though as the fourth eldest in his generation, he should have been in the middle beside Ha Shenglin, since the elders in the generation are in the middle of the line. He watched two of his nephews act as *majoo* 'pole carriers' who held the sedan pole on their shoulders. We also observed Ha Shenglin as he knelt at the very front, chanting under his breath. Others burned juniper, prostrated, and prayed with their hands clasped together in front of their chests.

Looking at the serious expressions on everyone's faces, and the people's total devotion to the invisible Niangniang, I periodically burst into laughter.

"Niangniang has come!" Ha Shenglin said excitedly. When I looked at the pole they held across their shoulders, I was startled. My two great-uncles were shaking. They were going here and there, backwards and forwards, with uncertain steps. Sometimes they just, in my mind, stupidly turned in circles with the pole on their shoulders. The pole was moving forwards and backwards, pulling them forwards and backwards. Everyone stared at the pole and at every movement of

29) *Hong* = the term generally used in Hawan Village for *shdel*. *Hong* is a term widely used by Qinghai/ Gansu Han Chinese and probably derives from the Chinese word for red.

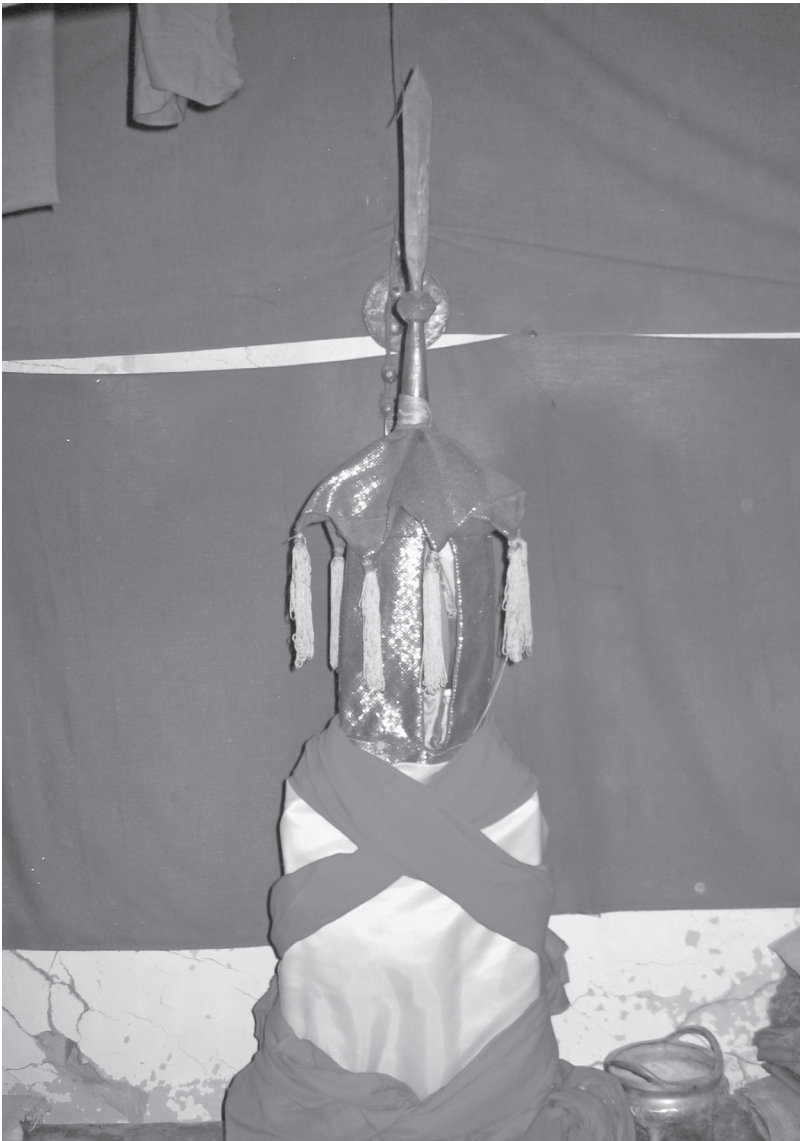


Figure 5. Niangniang. A spear end is at the top (Ha Mingzong, November 2005).

the two *majoo*. It was the first time, or at least the first time in a long while, that most observers had beheld such a scene.

Again, looking at the astonished people and my two great-uncles totally out of control under the pole, I burst into laughter and was then told to shut up by one of my uncles kneeling in the front line.

"We can do it without a *fala*," Ha Shenglin said and began asking questions. Because the shrine had just been completed, Ha Shenglin and Ha Shengyu (mainly) first asked if there were any problems with the shrine and if the shrine had been built correctly.

Ha Shenglin said, "Niangniang, at first we asked a *fala* to come for today's ritual, but the *fala* went to town and cannot return until this afternoon. So without any other choice, we are here trying on our own to invite you. Please, be tolerant of our ignorance of the ritual. This shrine has just been built. Are you dissatisfied with anything?"

My two great-uncles, who were originally standing only shaking a little with the pole on their shoulders, moved forwards suddenly to indicate positive and negative answers. I didn't understand this at first. I was mesmerized by all that was going on. I wanted to ask someone kneeling in front of me, but seeing that everyone was so quiet and paying full attention to Niangniang, I dared not disturb anyone. I waited.

"Is something wrong with the shrine's back wall? It is a little out of shape after being hit by a small landslide," Ha Shenglin said.

My two great-uncles moved back.

Was it a problem or not? I still couldn't figure it out.

"If it is not a problem, then, is this shrine too small? Is it not built according to your instructions?" He asked.

Niangniang had my granduncles moved back again.

Did this mean 'no'? I kept guessing.

Ha Shenglin continued asking questions, attempting to guess what problems there might be with the shrine using the question, "If it is not..." several times. I then realized that Niangniang indicated 'no' by moving the pole backward and 'yes' was expressed by the pole moving forward.

Ha Shenglin spent some time guessing the problem, but couldn't hit on the right question, as a result of lacking experience reading Niangniang's mind. Eventually, he was at a loss and glanced around for help. No one came up with the right question.

"Niangniang, please forgive us for we cannot guess, since we all have no experience. Now, we all are asking you to indicate the problem on your own," Ha Shenglin pleaded.

Niangniang did. She moved straight forwards and hit a tree with one end of the pole and stopped.

Ha Shenglin understood at once. There was something wrong with the tree. "If it is the tree, shall we cut it down?"

Niangniang moved quickly backwards indicating 'no'.

"We should not cut it down?" He asked.

Niangniang moved forwards.

I forgot what exact conclusion they came up with, but finally they tied a *hong* in the tree, and told us not to harm the tree and the things in the tree, because that tree protected the shrine.

Next, Niangniang indicated that the shrine courtyard gate was in the wrong place, so they chose another location for the shrine courtyard gate.

"Those are the problems outside the shrine. Are there any problems inside the shrine?" Asked Ha Shenglin.

Immediately Niangniang moved forwards and then backed up, turned, and directly entered the shrine. No one had expected this. She indicated two *hong* in the shrine and communicated that they were unclean and should be burned, which we did.



Figure 6. Niangniang's copper mirror that Ha Mingzong's great-great-grandmother brought with her when she left her home in Halazhigou, Huzhu (Ha Mingzong, November 2005).

Next, she wanted to visit some homes. No one in the village however, had expected that Niangniang would visit families. They asked if she could do this next time, since no one in the village was prepared. Niangniang moved forward in agreement.

Later she wanted to thank the *fala* who had helped her keep the copper mirror for such a long time. She was brought to a place about one hundred meters from the shrine in the direction of the *fala*'s home, which was in a neighbouring village south of Hawan. We made a *szang*³⁰ there. We all prostrated and released a rooster, which was considered to be a gift to the *fala* from Niangniang and to have Niangniang's protection. No one from our clan could own or kill it. That was the first and last time I saw that rooster.

There were children, including me, following Niangniang hither and thither with curiosity.

At last, it was time to ask about our own *fala* and *majoo*. Everyone looked very serious and eager to hear the names. Grandfather did not say anything, just gazed at the unbelievable things happening right in front of his eyes.

Ha Shenglin began: "Niangniang, the only things we need now are a *fala* and *majoo*, since we can't always ask a *fala* from another clan to come and help us. Can you help us choose these people?"

Niangniang was very efficacious, just as it is said in Halazhigou, "Our Niangniang is very powerful and efficient. She comes whenever you call." The temporary *majoo*, my great-uncles, stepped forward immediately. "Yes," she was willing and happy to choose these people for herself.

"OK. Are the two *majoo* shouldering you now okay, or should they be changed?" Ha Shenglin asked.

Niangniang pulled the two *majoo* back, indicating that they should be changed.

"So long as you believe so, we must say all the men's names from the clan one by one. How about Ha Hushan?" Ha Shenglin asked.

Niangniang moved back indicating "no".

"How about Ha Baoshan ..." The questions went on and on for a long time before Niangniang moved forward for the first time, indicating Ha Shengjin. He became a *majoo* and at once replaced one of the temporary *majoo* on duty. The other *majoo* was later replaced by Ha Fushan, who was picked after another dozen candidates.

We weren't able to select the most important person, the *fala*, on that day. No one knew why, and I was told later that we would have our own *fala* in the village, but he was as yet unborn. Later, when I visited Kong Qingshan, he told me that it was because the people in our clan in the village ate things a *fala* couldn't eat, such as garlic and so on. After that, no one knew what to do. They just wished that Niangniang would pick a *fala* soon so that we could take him to Rgulong Rgongba (Tib. Dgon lung dgon pa) and do the *rami* 'consecration' ritual.³¹

Later that day, Niangniang indicated that we must take her to Rgulong Rgongba to empower her. She also selected the people who should go, the time they should leave, and when she should be empowered at the monastery.

It was not until then that Grandfather, who likes to control and lead every situation, and who had kept his mouth shut for almost the entire ritual, stood and made arrangements. We all would provide the people with what they needed to complete this mission. He ordered, for he was highly respected among the people, which family should provide their tractor, and which families should provide food, money, and so on. Grandfather's sudden change of heart and support for such rituals and beliefs was a marvel to everyone.

30) *Szang* = incense-burning ritual during which roasted flour or wheat is placed on juniper and burned as an offering. *Szang* refers both to the ritual and the materials burned.

31) From Tibetan *rab gnas*.

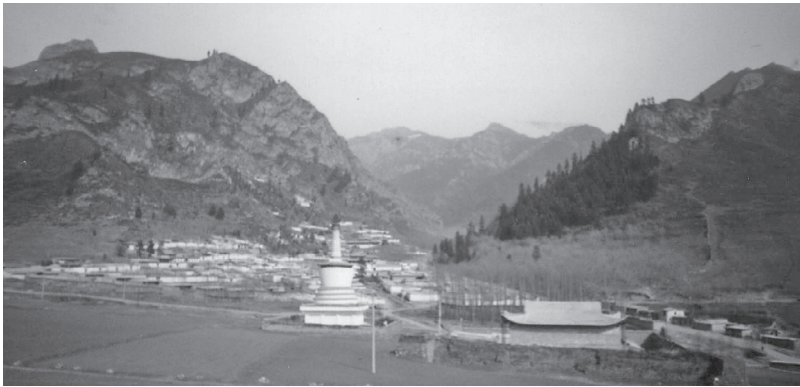


Figure 7. Rgulong Rgongba (Limusishiden and Jugui, the eighteenth day of the first lunar month, 1995).

3.10. CONSECRATION OF THE SPEAR IN THE BUDDHIST MONASTERY

*ACCOUNT 11 (HA SHENGYU)*³²

Two months after the first gathering in front of the shrine on the third day of the first lunar month of 2001, when I was at the Tianzhu Nationalities' Middle School, four people from my village, including Ha Shenglin and Ha Shengjin, set off for Rgulong Rgongba (Tib. Dgon lung dgon pa) with the new two-ended-spear and gifts for the monastery with them. Incredibly, when the four arrived, they found that the only lama who could empower our Niangniang had just recovered from an illness, and that day was his first day at the monastery after recovering. This event profoundly impressed the villagers, since it showed that Niangniang could choose such a suitable time.

It took four days before they returned with the two-ended-spear wrapped in new *hong* and *zang*,³³ 'scripture written in Tibetan' that are considered to be Niangniang's heart.

Village clan members warmly welcomed their return with *szang* burning in everyone's home courtyard, firecrackers crackling in front of the shrine, and people crowded around the shrine.

3.11. THE STATE OF THE SHRINE IN 2008

A number of trees grew outside the one-roomed shrine made of bricks in 2008. *Hong* were tied in some of the trees. A *shqionghul* 'incense burner' was in front of the shrine.

32) In October 2005, Ha Shengyu and Ha Shengzhang visited Kevin Stuart at his home in Xining City. Ha Shengyu gave this account when Ha Mingzong mentioned Niangniang.

33) Tib. *gzungs*, Skt. *dhāraṇī*.



Figure 8. Niangniang's *malgha* 'hat' (Ha Mingzong, November 2005).



Figure 9. Shrine interior. Niangniang is in the center. *Hong* hang in front of Niangniang on the wall and wrap Niangniang. The pole is on the left. The spear is inside Niangniang and wrapped in *hong*. Juniper, butter, bread, and kettles of oil are under the table (Ha Mingzong, November 2005).

A curtain-like *hong* about a meter wide hung from the back wall. Niangniang was considered to be the two-ended-spear described above with a sandalwood handle wrapped first with scriptures, and then *hong* on the outside. These *hong* had been religiously purified by a lama from Rgulog Rgongba (Tib. Dgon lung dgon pa). The spear sat vertically in a wooden stand. A cloth tassel dangled from each of the eight corners of the eight-angled hat on the spear handle.

Under the spear stand was a dark-brown varnished table about two and a half meters in length near the back wall. A pole, wrapped with many *shdel*, was considered to be a pole of a deity sedan chair. This pole was where Niangniang first came before the two-ended-spear was made. It lay across the table along with bread, butter, lamps, incense, and bottles of oil left by visitors.

Hong, brought when people visited the shrine, were hanging at both sides of the room from metal wires nailed to the ceiling.

Against the walls were bags of flour and cooked wheat that were offered to Niangniang by the shrine-keeper on the first and fifteenth days of every lunar month. There were also kettles of oil, juniper, butter, and bread under the table.

3.12. SHRINE-KEEPERS

The village had no *fala*, whose duty it would have been to be the shrine caretaker in 2008. Villagers needed to have the shrine open to offer *szang* on such days as the first and fifteenth days of every lunar month. Niangniang selected Ha Cunlai to be the shrine-keeper. He lived near the shrine and was one of the few clan elders familiar with Niangniang rituals. He conscientiously opened the shrine for people until his sudden death in 2001 from a cerebral haemorrhage.

Niangniang then chose Ha Zhanku, a widower, as his replacement. His wife had killed herself after a quarrel with him long ago. His only son had left home at an early age and had never returned. Unlike other village men, he could not leave the village to earn cash income because he had to look after his house. Consequently, he had time to frequently offer Niangniang *szang*.

In 2008, he cleaned the shrine regularly and kept things neat after offerings were presented. Villagers deemed him careful and responsible.

3.13. SIGNIFICANCE OF NIANGNIANG FOR THE VILLAGE

Ha Clan members believed that every difficulty and every achievement in their lives were pre-ordained. Simultaneously, they believed that the deities they worshipped would help them, and make difficulties less severe. Whenever they were in trouble or celebrated, they visited their deities for help, or to show appreciation. People believed that Niangniang was always with her devotees. Villagers went to the shrine, offered *szang*, and prayed to her. Without a *fala*, villagers could still ask for blessings from Niangniang by praying to her.

People linked Niangniang to their daily life and asked Niangniang for help in the event of illness; when choosing spouses; to prevent heavy rain; to exorcise evils from their home; to select a good location for a new house, gate, and pig sty; for a good harvest; and a safe journey if they planned to leave the village.

Sometimes a children were believed to have lost their soul when they became ill, in which case their family visited Niangniang and asked in what direction the soul had gone and how it should be called back. Next, all the family members went a certain distance in the direction Niangniang had indicated, called the child's name, and repeated, "*Hariji ire!*" "Come back!" while slowly walking back home. This ritual was commonly repeated for several days.

As for the role of the goddess in selecting a partner for marriage, when a boy reached marriageable age and had no idea where to locate a future wife, his family went to Niangniang and asked in which direction he should look for a suitable spouse, her age, what her Chinese zodiac sign was, and, sometimes they asked for a particular day on which to visit the girl's family and propose. Later if the girl's family agreed to the proposal, the boy's family visited Niangniang again and asked for an appropriate date to hold the wedding. Niangniang was also asked to indicate the Chinese zodiac signs of people the bride should avoid at the wedding.

A *fala* was needed when summoning a deity. Ha Clan members in Hawan had no *fala* in 2008 and asked *fala* from other areas to help. But such 'outside' *fala* were never really trusted. It was believed, for example, that such *fala* might violate the Ha Clan Niangniang by deliberately chanting incorrectly in revenge if the *fala* had problems with local people. Thus Niangniang was summoned only with the help of a credible *fala* on such special days as the third day of the first lunar month, the Hawan Ha Clan's Niangniang's birthday.

3. 14. AN ACCOUNT ON HEALING ILLNESS THROUGH CAOLIAN

Common sources of illness included problems with *xiruu gudiligha* 'haphazard digging around a home or graveyard' and with ghosts. When someone suddenly fell ill, their family went to Niangniang and asked why the person was ill and what should be done to cure the person through the agency of a *fala*.

If the problem was that the ill person had encountered a ghost, Niangniang commonly communicated that the ill person should walk a certain number of steps from their home in a certain direction and burn papers of a specific colour, usually yellow, with a dough image (about the size of an adult's fist) of the person in the context of a ritual referred to as *caolian* by Hawan and local Han residents. It was usually done at night. The ill person's family prepared the dough image and the paper as instructed by Niangniang speaking through the *fala*. Before family members went to bed, a family member (any adult member, male or female), took the papers and moved them around the sick person's head clockwise three times and then anticlockwise three times while scolding the evil responsible for the illness and ordering it to return to the place from where it had come, spat on the dough image, walked to the house gate, and began counting his or her steps. When this family member reached a certain step number as earlier communicated by Niangniang, he or she burnt the dough image with the papers.

ACCOUNT 12 (HA MINGZONG)³⁴

Great-uncle, formerly a Communist Party member who had little concern for his clan deity, became ill in 2002. The doctors said that he had diabetes, and gave specific instructions about what he could and could not eat and drink. Time slowly passed but he still suffered. His wife cooked two different meals when she cooked; one for Great-uncle was prepared carefully according to the doctor's instruction and the other meal for the rest of the family.

Great-uncle continued taking medicine but there was no real improvement in his condition. After years of suffering he doubtfully turned to what he considered 'superstition'. He first went to a local *pirgha* 'deity' and was told that his illness was because he did not believe in his own clan deity and that he should visit Niangniang, delight her, and ask for her forgiveness.

Thinking there might be some hope, Great-uncle then visited Niangniang with all his family members. They prostrated; burned deity money, *hong*, and juniper; and lit lamps as they explained their reasons for being there.

A year later, Great-uncle brought his family members again from the county town. This time, he not only brought deity money, fruit, butter, *hong*, and bread, but also a sheep, which he had promised to give Niangniang if he improved. It worked. In the end he was almost completely cured. Afterwards, Great-uncle visited Niangniang annually, even though he lived far away. He also gave money to the shrine and repaired whatever belonged to Niangniang.

3.15. AN ACCOUNT OF DETERMINING THE POSITION OF A GATE TO THE HOUSE**ACCOUNT 13 (HA MINGZONG)³⁵**

Ha Shengyu is one of two sons. After he and his brother had lived together for some years, he decided to move out, soon found a place, and began building a house. But before he could even build the courtyard walls, he encountered difficulty. He was afraid that he might build his gate in the wrong place – people believe that the gate of a house decides the family's fortune.

He then asked help from Niangniang. His father-in-law, who is from Qiaji Village and the *fala* of the Li Clan Deity, came. They decided to ask Niangniang for help at night, for he wouldn't be able to see anything other than the precise location Niangniang indicated in the dark and thus would not doubt her choice.

They went to the shrine that night where they prostrated and offered bread, fruits, butter lamps, and *szang*. The *fala* held Niangniang's body (the *shenjian*) in his arms and chanted:³⁶

You walked on the clouds,
 You landed on the mountaintop,
 You did good things for the people.
 (Because of) the lama's instructions,
 (You) must listen to the lama's words,
 Don't take offense at the ordinary people ('s simplicity).

34) Based on Ha Mingzong's great-uncle's recollection.

35) Ha Shengyu gave this account when Ha Mingzong mentioned Niangniang in October 2005, when Ha Shengyu and Ha Shengzhang visited Kevin Stuart at his home in Xining City.

36) In original: Ulon tolghuaira yuuja, ula tolghuaira booja, hanaladu sain warija, lamani ugua booja, lamani uguani qianglagu xija, harararooni kunni bii jianjiula.

Niangniang arrived and he explained why he had summoned her. They were then led in the dark by the spear to the location where Great-uncle was about to build his home. After they arrived with the *fala* holding the spear vertically, the *fala* started shaking more than usual. A short while later, the spear fell, making a mark on the ground. Grand-uncle immediately marked this place with a stick. Then the *fala* moved several steps forward, the spear fell, and Grand-uncle marked this second place with a stick. Then the *fala* stopped shaking, and they knew that Niangniang was gone.

They took the spear back to the shrine and went to Ha Shengyu's home. The *fala* said: "Your Niangniang is much more powerful than our deity. When she came, she was very strong. The spear beat me hard and my chest is now painful. I hope it won't be swollen tomorrow."

The next morning Great-uncle got up and found the two poles he has stuck in the ground the night before on either side of the line where he had planned to build the south wall of the courtyard. It was clear that his gate should face south and that the indicated place was the best gate location.

Great-uncle is careful and wanted to check with a *luopan*, a device used to determine auspicious directions. He used it and checked the direction of the gate according to the location of the main room of his house. It was exactly identical to the place Niangniang had chosen.

"But, how did you know that the gate was really in the right place?" I asked.

"You know that Zhanying's mother was suddenly ill and dying, right? There was no way to cure her in the hospital, so she just waited for death at home. They, too, had built a new gate, and they also visited a deity but they doubted him. They were not told the right place, because deities do not like people who doubt them but still ask them for help."

"How did you know that her illness was because of the gate?" I asked.

"I checked with my *luopan* and I found that the gate they have now is in a place that would bring them the most difficulty. I actually told them to go to see our Niangniang, but they just ignored me," he said in a pitying tone.

4. Conclusion

Two points may be made regarding the nature of the Hawan goddess. First, the Chinese term Niangniang³⁷ is a general appellation for a female deity. In areas which Chinese folk religion (generally known as "popular Taoism") has penetrated, male and female deities of the Taoist pantheon are worshipped, often merging with deities of a local nature that may also be part of a different religious tradition. The most often encountered deity Niangniang is Xiwangmu – 'Western Empress' or Wangmu Niangniang (Queen Niangniang), a powerful celestial female deity.

37) The Chinese term *niang* has been used at various times to express such meanings as: woman, young woman, girl, daughter, mother, grandmother, aunt, female servant, nanny, empress, female ruler, female deity. According to Li and Stuart (1994), the term Niangniang, used as a polite term for a deity, is perceived as meaning "Aunt" by certain contemporary Huzhu villagers.

Secondly, many Tu clans have clan deities worshipped mainly (but not always exclusively) by members of their clan, and whose task it is care for their own clan people.

As related above by an informant, Niangniang of the Ha clan is one of the daughters of Wangmu Niangniang, known in the Huzhu area as Jinshan Niangniang, the deity of the Jinshan/Gold Mountain, while her two sisters are clan deities of other Mongghul clans. This background is, however, not common knowledge among Hawan villagers.

The ritual practices related to Hajia Niangniang should be seen in the context of the religious life of the broader Tu area. For example, Li and Stuart (1994) presented research based on Tughuan (Tuguan) Village, located fifteen kilometers east of Weiyuan. They described the *pram* 'deity', a pole or sedan deity that was believed to be, when called, possessed by once brave generals, skilled physicians or competent officials who, based on their respective merits, became local deities. Among them also appears Tughuan Niangniang. More deities called Niangniang are also reported from other places.³⁸

Hawan Niangniang religious practice experienced a revival in the early part of the twenty-first century that resulted in building a village shrine with a full-time caretaker and where Niangniang was often visited in 2008. Modernity was very much apparent in Hawan Village in 2008. Most village homes owned satellite dishes for receiving a multitude of television channels, a telephone signal tower atop a hill behind the village betokened soon-to-come access by mobile phone to the world, more villagers were leaving the village for paid employment, and there was ever-improving access to better transportation, education, and health care (for a price) options. Why, then, was Niangniang religious practice revived?

There are several possible answers. One involves the still great importance of farming, which provides people with food and Niangniang has some influence on rain. Another involves illness. People sometimes get ill, e.g., after returning home after staying in a far place for a long time and postponing a visit to the local graveyard. If medical treatment brings no relief, Niangniang is typically consulted.

38) In addition to the Niangniang worshipped in Dakeshidan Village mentioned above, Mr. Zhu Yongzhong of Minhe Hui and Tu Autonomous County, Haidong Region, Qinghai Province, reported Niangniang deities in Sangburia Temple, Zhongchuan Township and the Chenjiaola (Chen Family Mountain) Temple, Luanshitou Administrative Village, Xing'er Tibetan Township in Minhe County. Schröder (1952/1953, e.g., p. 146)¹ and Schram (2006 [1954–1961], pp. 408, 409, 411, 431, 435) also mention Niangniang, but very briefly.

Hawan villagers consider Hajia Niangniang as the primordial ancestor and their graveyard and the shrine are symbols of clan-wide solidarity. This can be seen by the ritual in the fourth lunar month when villagers gather to clean the graveyard. In this context of pan-village/ clan identity, revival of Niangniang religious activity strengthened a sense of community and helped people re-identify with their roots as evidenced in the trips needed to the ancestral homeland in Huzhu in order to empower Niangniang.

A village Niangniang presence has also meant convenience. Before the construction of the Niangniang shrine, villagers went elsewhere to seek help from other clan and village deities but often with doubt in those deities. Now they feel more comfortable because they have their own village Niangniang to ask directly for help or through a *fala*. Ha Clan members from such villages as Shangjialong and Dakeshidan also visit the shrine on occasion, which also brings Ha Clan members closer together.

This study has documented, on one hand, details of village ritual related to Niangniang, and its revival, and, on the other hand, it is the first study in the last half-century we know of that has focused on a specific Mongghul village deity in Gansu Province. Nevertheless, there are a number of questions that remain unanswered. What, for example, is the historical and current situation of Niangniang religious practice among Huzhu Mongghul, Han, Tibetan, and mixed ethnicity communities? How does Niangniang religious practice in Hawan and Huzhu compare to the larger Gansu-Qinghai border area? We hope other researchers will address these questions further, enriching our knowledge of the rich religious traditions in these areas.

Finally, during the course of writing this paper, Ha Mingzong commented that Hawan villagers expressed disbelief and surprise when he asked questions about Niangniang and related practices and beliefs. When asked to explain, Ha replied: "Villagers are influenced by the nationwide notion that calls for technology and science, rather than belief in, and the practice of, the supernatural or superstitions. Local people also believe that village religious beliefs are unrelated to the success of young people who, in their eyes, should learn something practical, something that can bring an obvious positive result in their career, which is something they believe you can't learn at home; it has to be learned outside or in a foreign country."

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Appendix 1: List of informants

Ha Mingzong, b. 1987, Mongghul, a native of Hawan Village and student of Charles University in Prague, personally participated in some of the events relevant to this paper and his observations and interpretations also appear here; he also interviewed the villagers.

Kong Qingshan, b. 1936, Han Chinese, *fala* of Grandfather Dragon King, lived in Chagangou Village, and was often invited to perform rituals by Tibetans, Han Chinese, and Mongghul. Kong Qingshan was Ha Mingzong's mother's father's cousin.

Ha Shenglin, b. 1942, Mongghul, took charge of such clan activities as building the Niangniang shrine. He was born in Halazhigou, Huzhu County.

Ha Shengyu, b. 1968, Mongghul, was the successor of the Ha Clan's carpentry tradition. He designed the shrine, did most of the shrine carpentry work, and was very familiar with shrine rituals.

Ha Shengzhang, b. 1945, Mongghul, was Ha Mingzong's father's father. He was born in Hawan Village, was unfamiliar with Niangniang religious practice and, at first, was indifferent to such practice.

Ha Zhanku, b. 1946, Mongghul, was the shrine-keeper in 2008.

Zhunmaa, b. 1942, Limusishiden's father, was from Tuguan Village, Danma Town, Huzhu County.

Appendix 2: Monasteries

Established	Tibetan (Wylie)	Chinese Name	Township/ Town	County
1647	Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling	Tiantang si 天堂寺	Tiantang Township 天堂乡	Tianzhu 天祝
1604	Dgon lung dgon pa	Youning si 佑宁寺	Wushi Town 五十镇	Huzhu 互助

Appendix 3: Names of deities

Mongghul	<i>pinyin</i>	Chinese	Tibetan (Wylie)	English
	Guanyin Pusa	观音菩萨	'Phags pa spyan ras gzigs	Avalokiteśvara (Sa.)
	Hajia Niangniang	哈家娘娘		Ha Clan Goddess
	Jinshan Niangniang	金山娘娘		Golden Mountain Goddess
	Longwang ye	龙王爷	'Brug gi rgyal bo	Grandfather Dragon King
	Wangmu Niangniang	王母娘娘	Gnam rgyal po'i bzhun mo	Queen Goddess
Lamusang	Luozi Tianwang	骡子天王		Heavenly Mule King
limu	niangniang	娘娘	lha mo (?)	goddess

Appendix 4: Place names

Mongghul	<i>pinyin</i>	Chinese	Tibetan (Wylie)
	Hawan	哈湾	
	Tiantang	天堂	Mchod rten thang
Wuzen	Huzhu	互助	Zho tshang
	Tianzhu	天祝	Dpa' ris

Appendix 5: Names of ritual items and religious specialists

Mongghul	Mongol	<i>pinyin</i>	Chinese	Tibetan (Wylie)	English
		pan	盘		small round steamed bread
		shenjian	神箭		divine arrow/spear
Bô (bao)	бөө	fashi	法师	lha ba	deity-medium/shaman
pirgha	бурхан			lha	deity
szang				bsang	fumigation ritual/ substances for fumigation
tangka				thang ka	painted scroll

Appendix 4: Deities in selected Mongghul villages in Tiantang Township, Tianshu Tibetan Autonomous County
天祝县天堂乡

Temple Deity	Temple	Temple Location	<i>fala</i>	Title	Note
Longwang Ye (Grandfather Dragon King) 龙王爷	Chagan Valley Grandfather Drag- on King Temple 查干沟龙王爷庙	Chagangou Village 查干沟村	Kong Qingshan 孔 庆善, b. 1936, Cha- gangou Village		
Dongjia Niangniang (Dong Clan Niangni- ang) 东家娘娘	Chagan Valley Dong Clan Niangniang Temple 查干沟东家 娘娘庙	Chagangou Village 查 干沟村	Dong Danzhu 东 旦, 1925 – 2007 Dong Shouying 东 寿英, b. 1972, (<i>fala</i> from 2007) Cha- gangou Village	Yinxiao Niangni- ang 银小娘娘 (Silver Small Niangniang)	One of Sanxiao Ni- angniang 三小娘娘 ¹ (Three Little Ninangniangs)
Hajia Niangniang (Ha Clan Niangni- ang) 哈家娘娘	Dakeshidan Ha Clan Niangniang Tem- ple 大科什旦哈家 娘娘庙	Dakeshidan Village 大科什旦村	Ha Chengxue 哈成 学, b. 1955–8 Dake- shidan Village	Niangniang 娘娘, Hajia Niangniang (Ha Clan Niangni- ang) 哈家娘娘 Jinxiao Niangniang 金小娘娘 (Golden Small Niangniang)	One of Sanxiao Niangniang

39) The Ha Clan, Hawan Village venerated Jinshan/Jinxiao Niangniang, who was regarded, depending on the informant, as either the eldest or sec-
ond eldest of the three sisters. The Dong Clan, Chagangou Village venerated Yinxiao Niangniang, locally considered the eldest or second eldest.

Temple Deity	Temple	Temple Location	<i>fula</i>	Title	Note
Three Small Grandmothers 三小娘娘	Chagantai Three Small Grandmothers' Temple 查干台三小娘娘庙	Chagantai Village 查干台村	Zhang Jinbao 张金宝, b. 1936, Chagantai Village		One of Sanxiao Niangniang ²
Wuliang Shen (Infinity) 无量神	Chagantai Infinity Deity Temple 查干台无量神庙	Chagantai Village 查干台村	Wang Shenghua 王生化, b. 1936 Chagantai Village		
Huanglong Shen (Yellow Dragon Deity) 黄龙神	Shangjialong Yellow Dragon Deity Temple 上加龙黄龙神庙	Shangjialong Village 加龙村	Ye Zhanjiang 叶占江, b. 1936, Shangjialong Village		
Sanwang Ye (Grandfather Three Kings) 三王爷	Qiaji Grandfather Three Kings' Temple 卡吉三王爷庙	Qiaji Team, Xuelong Village 雪龙村卡吉队	Ye Xingweibao 叶兴, b. 1966, Qiaji Team, Xuelong Village		

40) Zhang Jinbao, the *fula* from Chagantai Village, stated that the deity worshipped at the temple he looked after was Sanxiao Niangniang – he could provide no other name.

Walking on the edges of swords: Notes on analogies in shaman rituals of the Khorchin Mongols and the Jungarian Sibes

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Summary: Before the 17th century the Sibes lived as vassals of the Khorchin Mongols. Both Khorchins and Jungarian Sibes are known as ethnic groups with living shamanic practices. When comparing their shaman traditions, it is useful to refer to the numerous and intertwined analogies between the two cultures. This idea is further supported by linguistic material. Using mainly the available folklore materials the present paper draws a comparison between different parts of the traditions, in particular those connected to the ritual-rituals and deities important in the rituals. Generally, many 'enigmatic' features in the Sibe shaman tradition (as well as other parts of the culture) can be explained through Mongolian influence, and sometimes Mongolian culture can also be explained through Sibe tradition.

0. Introduction

The present text attempts to compare certain parts of the religious traditions of the Khorchin Mongols and the Jungarian Sibes. The Khorchin Mongols inhabit the South-West of Manchuria, while the Manchu-speaking Jungarian Sibes¹ have lived for more than two centuries in the Ili Valley in the North-West of Xinjiang – two locations which are separated by a distance of almost 3000 kilometers. However, the religious practice of the two ethnic groups reveals numerous analogies. The sources of the analogies cannot be easily established. The Khorchins have, from the 14th century on, lived among various ethnic groups of Manchuria – in particular the Manchus – and under their strong cultural influence. On the other hand, the Khorchins are not the only Mongol group with which the Sibes have come into contact.² Still,

- 1) Whatever their genetic affiliation and historical roots, the present-day Jungarian Sibes are, by their language, life-style and culture, closely related to the Manchus. The spoken Sibe language even seems to be closer to Literary Manchu than some other Manchu dialects.
- 2) The history of the Sibes has been recorded from the 16th century on. During that time, parts of the ethnic group had lived as garrison men in some Mongol areas (e.g. Hohhot), and the Jungarian Sibes, after having resettled in Xinjiang, had maintained contacts with the Oirat (mainly Torghut) Mongols of Ili, and with the Chakhar garrison men in Bortala. An oral tradition also maintains that a non-Sibe (presumably a Chipchin-Barghu) group was assimilated by the Sibes.

however, certain parts of the religious practice seem to be characteristic of the Khorchins and the Sibes par excellence.

The historical records confirm that in the 16th century the Sibes lived in some type of vassalage to the Khorchins. Opinions differ regarding the time during which this relationship between the Sibes and the Khorchin Mongols lasted.³ While no written records seem to give details about it, the evidence born by language⁴ and culture of the two ethnic groups suggests a rather intensive and presumably long-lasting cultural exchange.

In this paper I pick several examples of tradition connected to two shamanic deities (*Hovogt aav*⁵ and *Isanju mama*⁶) and trial rituals, in which these deities seem to play central roles.

Most of the material concerning Khorchin shamanism used here comes from the book *Qorčin böge mörgül-ün sudulul* (further abbreviated as QBM)⁷. A minor part is a result of my brief stay in Jerim in summer 2006. The data gathered then, however, in most cases correspond to the information given in QBM.

Khorchin shamanism has been subject to intensive research by Inner Mongolian (mostly native Khorchin) scholars since 1980s. The above-mentioned work, together with other more recent publications, contains the results of more than 20 years of fieldwork – a collection of shaman ritual texts, legends and stories, description of the rituals and tools used during them, biographies of famous shamans etc.

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- 3) For example, Lebedeva (1985, p. 24, quoted in: Gorelova 2004, p. 35, estimates that the Sibes were under Khorchin rule from the 13th century onwards, while Stary (2000, p. 81) or Harris (2004, p.19) suggest that Khorchin domination of the Sibes did not much precede the Manchu expansion.
 - 4) Some examples of language analogies are mentioned in Zikmundová 2006. In general, the language evidence supports the idea of intensive contacts between the Sibe and the Khorchins over a certain period of time.
 - 5) Since there is no internationally acknowledged transcription of the Khorchin dialect, I use a Latin transcription of Khalkha Mongolian to record colloquial Khorchin. Despite the great difference in pronunciation between the two dialects, Khalkha is the only codified spoken variety of Mongolian.
 - 6) For the Sibe terms I mostly use the standard transliteration of the written Manchu forms. Forms of the spoken language are in square brackets.
 - 7) From field research carried out by the Inner Mongolian scholars, numerous materials were collected, and the most comprehensive work based on these materials is the QBM. A specific part of the Khorchin shamanic tradition, the *andai* healing rituals, have been studied in more detail by Načinšongqor 2001 and others. In the West, materials of Khorchin shamanism have been published by Walther Heissig and field research among the Khorchin shamans was carried out by Elisabetta Chiodo and, recently, by Matyas Balogh.

So far as the religion of the Jungarian Sibes is concerned, among the works published in China, at present the most comprehensive information can be drawn from two sources – the *Sibe uksurai an tacin* (The Sibe ethnography, abbreviated as SUAT) and *Saman jarin* (The shaman prayers). The latter is a publication of an authentic text written by a Sibe shaman, containing texts of prayers and some important advice for later shamans, and has been translated into German by G. Stary (1992). A survey of the present state of Sibe shamanism was published in the revue *Shaman* (Qi 1997). Several books by Sibe scholars, which promise to bring a large amount of valuable new material, are announced as forthcoming. In the West Sibe shamanism was studied mainly by G. Stary (1985b), A. Pozzi (1992, 1993) and T.A. Pang (1994). Part of the material used in this paper comes from interviews conducted by myself between 1994 and 2007.

1. The Khorchin Mongols and the Jungarian Sibes

1.1 THE KHORCHINS

1.1.1 GENERAL REMARKS

The Khorchins used to be one of the most powerful Mongol groupings after the fall of the Yuan dynasty (Qurča 2001, pp. 55–66). Even at present they are by far the most numerous Mongol tribe of Inner Mongolia. Although the recent history of the Khorchins is well documented, some questions of their origins and developments leading to the present picture of Khorchin culture seem to remain beyond most scholars' concern.

Khorchins are a native Manchurian Mongol tribe (Janhunen 1996, p. 44). Together with some other Manchurian Mongols they claim the steppes along the river Ergu'ne in Northwestern Manchuria to be their homeland. The Khorchins believe themselves to be the heirs of the people given by Chinggis khagan to his younger brother Khasar as appanage (Qurča 2001, p. 83). During the centuries following the fall of the Yuan dynasty the Khorchins were gradually spreading southwards and by the time of Manchu expansion in the 16th century they had become a numerous, rich and powerful tribe. One of the reasons for their growth in power was probably the fact that they took only a minor part in the exhausting struggle for leadership in the 15–16th centuries, in which the tribes of Khalkha, Southern and Western Mongolia were exterminating each other (Qurča 2001, pp. 64–65).

In the 16th century the bulk of Khorchins joined voluntarily the Manchu tribal confederacy led by Nurhaci and thus changed significantly the balance of power between the Manchu army and the armies of the other Mongolian tribes, which were not willing to join together even in the face of growing Manchu power. This act of “treachery” by the Khorchins (which is often viewed as a crucial moment in the Manchu conquest of all the Mongolian tribes) may have been a result of their geographical, cultural and genetic proximity to the Tungusic world. The contemporary Khorchin in the Jerim league live settled in villages of the typical Manchurian type, breeding poultry in addition to small cattle and oxen, keeping more mules than horses and tilling fields of corn, kaoliang and other Manchurian crops. It is difficult to decide when precisely the Mongol nomadic lifestyle gave way to a settled one. People moving around with their herds lived in parts of the Khorchin area until the Cultural revolution, and the change in their way of life has been generally ascribed to the forcible colonization of the Mongol lands by the Chinese. On the other hand, there are signs showing that at least part of the Khorchins led a life different from typical steppe nomadism long before the massive Chinese colonization.

It is also probable that the Khorchins, expanding south and east from their original dwellings, assimilated parts of local Manchurian tribes, who were hunters, fishermen or half-agriculturalists, or at least came into close contacts with these peoples. Be that as it may, the contemporary Khorchin culture, the phonetic shape of their language and even their physical appearance strikingly resemble those of the Jungarian Sibes.⁸

Present-day Khorchins are centred around the Jerim League (Mo. *Z'irim aimag*) with its capital, the city of Tongliao. The Khorchin Mongols, however, live in great numbers over the whole Eastern-Mongolian area.

According to the views of Inner Mongolian scholars, two geographical units within the territory whose religion is designed as “Khorchin shamanism” should be discussed separately – the Gorlos and the Hu'ree banners. Southern Gorlos banner, one of the most eastern-situated Mongol administrative units, is almost identical with the Khorchins in language and culture, its special position being probably the result of its administrative autonomy

8) After my visit to Jerim in 2006, when I noticed the external similarity of the Khorchins to the Sibes, I consulted the Sibe scholar Mr. Zhonglo, who confirmed my impression, saying that when he himself visited Khorchin families, he felt “exactly like among the Sibes, even the sound of the language was similar to Sibe, except that it was uncomprehensible”. (Zhonglo, personal communication, February 2007). I heard more statements about the similarity of the Sibes to the Khorchins from Inner Mongolian scholars (e.g. Gereljav in 2008).

within the Manchurian province of Jilin (Janhunen 1996, p. 45). The oral tradition of the Khorchin shamans says that “The (real) shamans are in Gorlos”.⁹

At present, however, as my visit to the Gorlos area in September 2007 ascertained, unlike in the Central Khorchin area the knowledge of the last shamans has not been handed down in this area and the Gorlos shaman traditions have terminated.

A more specific case is that of the Hu’ree banner. As indicated by its name, this banner was established as a property of the first and greatest of the Khorchin Buddhist monasteries, the *S’ireet hu’ree*. The inhabitants are partly Khorchins who moved there from various places, but a significant proportion of the present-day inhabitants have come from different parts of Inner and Outer Mongolia. In the Hu’ree shaman beliefs various Mongolian traditions merged into a system, which, under a Buddhist influence that was stronger than in other Khorchin areas, developed some unique characteristics (QBM pp. 391–395).

1.1.2 SOME SPECIFICS OF THE KHORCHIN SHAMAN CULTS

According to the materials presented in QBM, and also to my personal experience, it seems that three major traditions have merged into what is the modern Khorchin shaman religion.

The basis of the Khorchin religion is undoubtedly the general Mongolian religious tradition. The shaman invocations often refer to the shaman *Ho’hc’u*, known from the Secret History as the court shaman of Chinggis Khagan, and recall toponyma of present-day Khalkha Mongolia. In the invocations the 99 *tengers* – Heavenly beings are addressed, and some of the *tengers*, such as the *Hurmast tenger*, *Buumal tenger* or *Zayaac’ tenger*,¹⁰ are of particular importance (for the legend about *Buumal tenger*, see Appendix 1). Other deities known from different Mongolian traditions as the 13 Northern lords (*ariin arvan gurvanz ezen*), also occur.

9) The shaman Muunohoi relates that his great-grandfather studied in Gorlos, because it was the homeland of the greatest shamans, but a pupil who studied with a Gorlos teacher was supposed to stay in Gorlos and so his grandfather had to escape. (Muunohoi, personal communication, September 2006.)

10) *Hurmast tenger*, the ruler of all *tengers*, often occurs in the Khorchin shaman legends. Of other *tengers* *Buumal* and *Zayaac’* are particularly important. The *Zayaac’/Jayayač’i* is one of the ancient Mongolian deities. As his name (*jayayan* – fate, good omen) suggests, originally he was a deity connected with children and prosperity. At present, among the Tuvans *Ot-čayaač* is worshipped as a powerful deity of the fireplace (Klára Boumová, personal communication 2006), and the Khorchin *Zayaac’* is regarded as a guardian of cattle, welfare and prosperity.

Another term employed for deities is *ongod*.¹¹ In the context of the Mongol shaman traditions the *ongod* are regarded as guardian deities of the shamans. By the Khorchins virtually all deities that possess the shamans may be called *ongod*. The Khorchin *ongod* are of various origins – some of them, like the *tiireng* or the *elee*¹² are even beings that in other Mongol traditions have a rather evil nature. *Tiireng*¹³ is known to other Mongolian traditions as a demon of a pronouncedly evil character¹⁴. In the Khorchin tradition *tiireng* is one of the important *ongod*¹⁵ of the shamans, and is characterized as a *naadmiin ongod*, which may be translated as “funny” or “amusing” *ongod* and refers to the fact that a half of *tiireng*’s body is crippled (see Appendix 2).

Among the *ongod* beings of animal form are mentioned, which are simply addressed as “bird *ongod*”, “bee *ongod*” etc. As follows from the material published in QBM, no legends are attached to this type of *ongod* and invocations to them are rather simple and less numerous. An interesting feature, which is not noted in the written materials, is, that in colloquial language the Khorchin shamans call the *ongod* “*sidker*” – the Khorchin dialect’s pronunciation of the word “*c’otgo’r*” – demon. One possible explanation may be an influence of Manchu.¹⁶ The Khorchin shamans keep figures of *ongons* at their

11) The word *ongon* in Mongolian has two basic meanings – 1. pure, consecrated, virgin 2. spirit of an ancestor, tomb, shamanist guardian spirit. The worship of *ongons* has been described by the 14th century missionaries to the Mongols, Rubruck and Plano Carpini. Although the word itself is not mentioned by them, the description of worshipping of felt figures of the ancestors leaves no doubt that they speak about the cult of *ongons*.

12) The word *elee* is known in two meanings – a buzzard and a kind of demon or evil spirit. Although some scholars imply a connection between the two meanings, according to J. Lubsangdorji they are not etymologically connected and the word *elee* may be an ancient and important denomination of a deity or a demon. Although in Khakha culture *elee* is usually mentioned only among other evil beings, an interjection *elee mini* – Oh my *elee* – is frequently used along with *burhan mini* – Oh my Buddha. (J. Lubsangdorji, personal communication May 2008). This view is corroborated by the fact that in Huzhu Mongghul, a marginal Mongolic language from the Gansu-Qinghai border, the word “*ile*” is the main one used for a demon (Ha Mingzong, personal communication, January 2006).

13) *Tiireng* comes probably from the Tibetan (Tib. *the’u rang/ the rang*).

14) J. Lubsangdorji, personal communication, May 2008.

15) The term *ongon* is often honorifically used in its plural form *ongod*, even when referring to a single deity

16) When I visited Jerim in 2006, the word *sidker* was used by all shamans I encountered for the *ongons* that possess them, particularly in the context of trance. The fact that this word is never found in the written records of the Inner Mongolian researchers suggests that it is interpreted as “demon” by them (and is therefore improper in the given context). This was confirmed by an Inner Mongolian (Chakhar) scholar, who explained the use of the word as a mistake caused by the defective state of the Khorchin Mongolian language. However, an alternative explanation might be that we are dealing with a corrupt form of the word *s’uteen*

homes and sacrifice to them. These figures are said to have been originally made of felt, but at present they are mostly of molten bronze.

The second, somewhat misty source of the Khorchin Mongol religion are the local, pre-Mongol traditions of the present-day Khorchin area. Since for many centuries this had been the domain of the Khitan and Shiwei tribes, the heritage of their traditions is likely to be present in Khorchin shamanism (Qurča 2001, p. 3) This layer of Khorchin religion is virtually unexplored, but a clear testimony to its presence is provided by the Khorchin legend about the 10 000 *ongod* – *Tu'men ongodiin domog*. As in the case of other Khorchin legends, more varieties are found within the Khorchin and Gorlos area. All the varieties speak about the Tang Emperor Taizong¹⁷ invading Manchuria (presumably the Khitans). Part of his army perished by accident and the dead soldiers became *ongod*, which, according to some versions, were later installed in the Khorchin shamans (see Appendices 3 and 4).

It seems that we are dealing here with an old local tradition, the substance of which was lost with time and replaced by another, which made sense to the Mongols. In any case it is one of the clearest available illustrations of the mixing of Mongol beliefs with the local traditions of the areas where the Mongols had expanded after Chinggis Khagan's times.

The third important factor, which undoubtedly took part in forming the present-day Khorchin cults, was the shamanism of the Manchu type, with which the Khorchins had been in close contact since the time of their expansion to their present abodes in Southern Manchuria. Even at first sight some features of apparently Manchu origin are visible, like using the Manchu word *saman* along with the Mongolian *bo᠔*, using a Manchu-type drum. Traces of Manchu influence on the Khorchins are also present in Khorchin language and material culture.

Several kinds of shamans are recognized in the Khorchin area. According to QBM, the terms and their content slightly vary between the different parts of

(Mo. *sitügen*) 'deity'. This word is generally analogical to the Manchu word *weceku* 'deity' or *wecen* 'deity possessing the shaman' – both the Mongolian and the Manchu expressions are derived from a verb meaning 'to venerate' and, moreover, the spoken Sibe expression *uĭk* (<*weceku*) is used specifically for falling into a trance. There is a possibility that the word was used due to Manchurian influence, and in modern times, when the Khorchins are no more surrounded by the Manchurian ethnic groups, the reason for its use has been forgotten and it has been replaced by a similarly sounding Mongolian word.

17) The memory of the second and most illustrious emperor of the Tang dynasty, known also by his personal name Li Shimin (599–649), has survived in the folklore of some Mongol ethnic groups of Northern China, apparently as a heritage of the culture of the local peoples who were absorbed by the Mongols after the 14th century.

Jerim and Gorlos, but generally the main kinds are: the *boò* and the *udgan* (shamans in the proper sense), the *honden*, who is called the “Grandson of Heaven/*tengers*” and whose task it is to sacrifice to the *tengers* (see Appendix 6), the *cagaan elee* (‘white elee’),¹⁸ also known as *duuc* (‘singer’), who mainly deals with mental illnesses caused by evil beings,¹⁹ and the *laic’ing*, who uses some Buddhist ritual tools and recites Buddhist texts during his rituals (QBM pp. 54–56)

1.2 THE JUNGARIAN SIBES

1.2.1 GENERAL REMARKS

The origin and history of the Jungarian Sibes have been dealt with in many works by Western, Chinese and native Sibe authors.²⁰ Part of the Sibes, a Manchurian tribe, which may be regarded as profoundly Manchu in their language and culture, was moved to the present-day Ghulja area in Xinjiang after the Manchu conquest of the area in 1764–6. Living isolated as Imperial border garrison men and being of different culture and religion to the local inhabitants, they did not mix with them and preserved their Manchu language and

18) The *cagaan elee* are mostly known from the Hu’ree banner, and even there they were less numerous than other types of shamans. The *cagaan elee* are women, whose guardian deity is called *zavsariin cagaan elee* (‘The White elee of the interspace’) or *yerto’nciin cagaan elee* (‘The White elee of the world’). The only specialization of *cagaan elee* is healing mental illness in women by performances of melodic, rhythmical songs and brisk dances, dressed in white clothes and waving white scarves (QBM p. 409). In this context it should be said that in the Hu’ree banner *udgan* is not a female equivalent of *boò* – a shaman in the narrower sense, but a midwife, whose guardian deity is called *ongon cagaan elee* (‘The Virgin White elee’), or *ogtorgu’in cagaan elee* (‘The Heavenly White elee’). The notion of the *elee ongod* is also connected to the *andai* rituals, whose center is the Hu’ree banner (QBM p. 408).

19) Elsewhere (Zikmundová 2006) I have mentioned the connection of the performance of the Sibe *dooči* to the Khorchin *andai* rituals and the rituals performed by *cagaan elee/duuc*.

20) The main work by native scholars concerning the Sibe history is the book “Sibe uksurai šolokon suduri” by An Jun, Wu Yuanfeng and Zhao Zhiqiang (1985). Another publication by two of these authors was translated by G. Stary into German (Stary 1985a). In the West, Sibe history was dealt with in the works by P. Crossley, E.P. Lebedeva, L.M. Gorelova and others.

Two main opinions have been expressed regarding the early history and genetic affiliations of the Sibes. According to the first one, the Sibes are a Jurchen tribe, which for some reason was alienated from the Manchus. The second one, represented mostly by the Sibe scholars, claims that the Sibes are descendants of the Xianbi, who have lost their own, presumably Mongolic, language in favour of Jurchen. Lebedeva (1994, quoted in Gorelova 2004) suggests that the Sibes were a part of the Shiwei confederation – the part which is said to have led a sedentary life.

culture intact until the Cultural Revolution. The question of the origin of the Sibe people has been raised repeatedly. More for political than other reasons, native scholars claim that the Sibes are a non-Jurchen tribe. Although their arguments are not convincing, the question of why the Manchu-speaking Sibes were always treated as ethnically distinct by the Manchus, has never been sufficiently answered. At the time of the Manchu expansion the Sibes were a vassal tribe of the Khorchins. It has never been made clear how and when precisely this vassalage came about, but some authors believe that it lasted for several centuries. A closer examination of Sibe language and culture reveals a layer strongly influenced by a Mongolian, presumably Khorchin, language and culture.²¹ This layer has apparently been overlain by the intentional “manchuisation” of the Jungarian Sibes, which took place after their movement to Xinjiang. The shaman cults, as one of the most intact parts of Sibe traditional culture, preserve probably the richest evidence of one-time cultural closeness to the Khorchin Mongols.

1.2.2 THE “POPULAR” RELIGION OF THE SIBES AND THE WORLD OF THE SHAMANS

The pantheon of Jungarian Sibes basically reminds us of that of the Manchus.²² The general expression for a deity is *enduri*. A number of deities, called mainly *mama* (Grandmother, progenitress), *mafa* (progenitor), *eyi* (Grandfather) or *ejen* (Lord) were venerated as lords of various aspects of life. The most prominent were *Siri mama*,²³ the Goddess of offsprings) and *Hairakan mafa*,²⁴ a deity responsible for cattle. There are lords of infectious diseases, a deity of hunters, lord of the crops, lord of the kitchen, deity of the threshold, deity of the fire and many others (cf. SUAT 138–161). The case of *Geri mama*, whose task it was to protect small children but who also caused them suffer from smallpox and therefore had to be “seen off” every year, is described in SUAT pp. 147–150 (see also Appendix 7). These deities, as well as some others,

21) In this respect, the language evidence is by far the most evident. In particular Mongolian loanwords of the spoken language, which do not exist in Literary Manchu, often display phonetic characteristics that suggest Khorchin (or another, closely related Eastern-Mongolian dialect) as the donor language.

22) The Sibe shaman religion has been subject to numerous studies by both native and Western scholars. Of the latter Alessandra Pozzi's (1992) work is of particular importance.

23) The name of *Siri mama* is connected with the word *sirin* – a fibre, a blood connection, as well as the verb *sira-* to continue.

24) The name of *Hairakan mafa* seems to be a Mongolic loanword, connected with the Mongolian word *hairhan*, used for deities. The “specialisation” of *Hairakan mafa* corroborates this idea.

like the fox deity, were mostly worshipped directly by the people themselves and rarely occur in the shaman invocations or on the “shaman image”. The “popular” deities of everyday life do not form any kind of system and, at least in the consciousness of the modern Sibes, are not connected with any idea of a special world they would inhabit.

The deities of the shaman rituals, besides being called *mama* and *mafa*, are addressed as *weceku* or *wecen* (<*wece*- ‘to venerate’).²⁵ The deities have a strict hierarchy and are always presented within their realm – a mythological landscape²⁶ of great plains, mountains and rivers. Eighteen *karūn* – watchposts – are found in the realm, along the way to the Shaman city, every watchpost being guarded by a *manggin* – guardian deity. The highest shaman deity *Isanju mama* rules the realm from her Shaman palace in the Shaman city, surrounded by guardian deities and great shamans of the past (cf. e.g. *Saman jarin* pp. 16–20; Stary 1992, pp. 22–25).

This “shaman world” is vaguely reminiscent of the Realm of the dead, ruled by *Ilmun han* – the ruler of the dead, which is described in the Legend of the Nišan shamaness. In Sibe consciousness, however, the “dead realm” – known as [*Nilmayūn*]²⁷ or *Yin jalan*,²⁸ is reflected separately as situated to the north of the “shaman realm”. In the Daghur version of the Legend of the Nišan shamaness a High Tengri is mentioned as a ruler of the Heavenly realm, which is opposed to the Dead realm. The notion of 18 watchposts might be connected to the 18 frontier posts on the Xinjiang-Kazakhstan border manned by the Sibes.²⁹ All this, together with some other features that seem to originate from Xinjiang³⁰, suggest an idea that the “shaman realm” of *Isanju mama* might

25) In the modern spoken language the colloquial form of *weceku* – [*učk*] – is used mainly in the expression [*učk doži-*] lit. ‘the deity enters (the shaman)’ – for being possessed by the deities. This expression corresponds precisely to the Mongolian expression *ongod or-* ‘the deities enter’).

26) Some of the names which occur in descriptions of the shaman realm are toponyma of Manchuria (e.g. the river Nonni or the river Nisiha, which is important for the Legend of the Nišan shamaness), while others are of Mongolian origin (e.g. the river *Ijili* – Volga, which has probably been borrowed from the Xinjiang Mongols, or the *Sumbur holo* – probably a corruption of the Mongolian expression for Mount Meru). Some of the toponyma have not (yet) been related to a particular place.

27) The word [*Nilmayūn*] is probably a corrupt form of the Manchu *Ilmun han* – the ruler of the dead.

28) *Yin jalan* comes from the Chinese word *yin* – the female and shadowy principle, and the Manchu word *jalan* – generation, world.

29) Guo Qing, personal communication, November 2007.

30) E.g. the notion of the watchpost named *Ijili bira* – the river Volga, which is most probably a cultural borrowing from the Xinjiang Torghuts, who have returned to Xinjiang after having lived in the Volga region.

be a creation of the Jungarian Sibes, which does not have a direct equivalent in the Manchurian religion.

There are four main types of Sibe shaman. The *saman* is the shaman in the narrower sense, and the only one who has to go through a trial ritual. The *dooči* specializes in curing mental illness caused by evil beings and his performance has apparent connections to the Khorchin *duuc'i* or *cagaan elee*. The *elči(n)*, whose appellation is also of Mongolian origin, mainly cures children's diseases and performs the ritual "seeing off" the Lord of smallpox. The *siyangtung*, whose guardian deity is the fox deity, are women, whose way of life and performance are veiled in a kind of mystery – they are said to stay apart from the community, they do not attend public feasts etc. The *siyangtung* is usually asked for help when the rituals of *dooči* or *elči(n)* are not efficacious. One of the methods of healing used by *siyangtung* is the ritual cutting of paper, which is also known from the Khorchins.³¹

2. Examples of parallels in Jungarian Sibe and Khorchin mongol shaman practice

In the section below I try to point out, mainly on the basis of published materials, some of the main features which distinguish the Khorchin and Sibe shaman systems in the context of Mongolian and Manchurian shaman beliefs, and to show some remarkable analogies between them, which seem to bear witness to the otherwise poorly documented historical contacts between the two tribes. The main sources, which allow this speculation, are the shaman legends³² and the votive images which were used by the Sibe shamans during rituals, and which are documented in the Khorchin areas as well.³³

2.1 THE DIVINE SHAMANS

Both for the Sibes and the Khorchin Mongols there are deities, which seem to play a special role in the rituals, mainly those connected to the shaman trials. Unlike the other deities, they are connected to particular events in

31) The types of Sibe shamans were described in great detail by T.A. Pang (1994).

32) QBM, Sibe uksurai an tacin and accounts given by informants.

33) According to Sibe uksurai an tacin the votive images were an important part of the shamans' practice. While the same practice is not known in the case of the Khorchins, the existence of such an image is noted in QBM.

history – to the introduction of Buddhist teaching in Eastern Mongolia. Both of the mentioned deities – the shaman *Father Hovogt* of the Khorchins and the shamaness *Isanju mama* of the Sibes – were fighting against Buddhism, but could not prevent its spread.

2.1.1 HOVOGT AAV

Hovogt aav (Father *Hovogt*) was a historically documented personage of a powerful shaman, who had struggled against the spread of Buddhism in the 17th century. Apart from the Khorchin shaman legends (the story about Father *Hovogt* and his fight with *Burhan gegeen* – the famous Buddhist missionary Neiji Toyin – is known in several versions and *Hovogt* occurs also in legends attached to other deities, cf. Appendix 1) the competition of the Buddhist monk with a shaman named *Hovogtai* is described in the Biography of Neiji Toyin (QBM p. 45) *Hovogt's* mother *Bintuu avai*, father *Narangonc'ig* and sister *Sarilj* are also mentioned in the legends and invocations. While worshipping souls of powerful shamans seems to be a common feature of all Mongol shaman traditions,³⁴ the moment of strong conflict with Buddhism, to which the origin of some innovations is ascribed, is particularly important in the Eastern Mongolian area. The main legend, of which *Hovogt* is the principal hero, is different from most Khorchin legends in that it is attached to the period of the spread of Buddhism among the Eastern Mongols and explains the origin of some, real or fictional, innovations in the Khorchin shaman cult as a result of *Hovogt's* defeat in his struggle with the Buddhist missionary Neiji Toyin.³⁵

According to the version told by the shaman Ganjuurjav in 1982 (QBM p. 180):

Before the spread of Buddhism *Hovogt* had become a powerful shaman. *Hovogt* was a pupil of the descendants of the ancestor of all Mongol shamans – the *zaarin*³⁶ *Ho'hc'u*³⁷ of the Chinggis khagan's time. After having struggled with Lamaism for seven years and being defeated he had

34) Cf. for example Su'ibat 2007, pp. 37–40 and others.

35) According to Prof. Buyanhishig from the National Mongol University in Tongliao, versions in which *Hovogt* defeats Neiji Toyin also exist (Buyanhishig, personal communication, July 2006).

36) The expression *zaarin* is most often used for powerful male shamans.

37) *Ho'hc'u* was an influential personage of the Chinggis khagan's time. According to the Secret History he had foretold the Chinggis khagan's great victories and this gained him the position of "court shaman" to the Khagan. As his power was growing, he attempted to plant a conflict between the Khagan and his younger brother Khasar by his intrigues. He nearly succeeded in setting the two brothers against each other, but was exposed by Chinggis khagan's mother and killed.

In Khorchin mythology, however, he is always mentioned as the "ultimate ancestor" of *Hovogt*.

to give up the position of *taiz'*³⁸ and he came among the ordinary people. From that time, there are no shamans among the *taiz'*. *Hovogt* had three miraculous objects: One was the red two sided drum, when he rode this red mount, he could reach any place he wished in a while. The second was a shaman skirt with sixty-four fringes. Whenever he put the winged skirt on, he could fly up to the Ninth Heaven. The third were the eighteen bronze mirrors, the mirrors were his protectors. Because of these three miraculous things *Hovogt* did not fear anything and could do what he wanted. *Burhan gegeen* came with his seven pupils to punish *Hovogt*. At that time *Hovogt's* mother *Bintuu avai* became ill and *Hovogt* was not able to cure her. When *Hovogt* was out of his home, *Burhan gegeen* cut his mother's body in two with the spear which was lying on the altar, put the upper part of the body to the west of the door and the lower part of the body to the east of the door, cleaned the bad blood by a tantric ritual, put the body back together and thus healed her. When *Hovogt* came back home and asked his mother what happened, he decided to ascend to Heaven and suppress *Burhan gegeen* by throwing ninety-nine thunderbolts at him. *Burhan gegeen* had known by divination that *Hovogt* would throw the thunderbolts at him. He searched through the ten banners and found a blue deer. He made drums of its skull and bells of its antlers, he let five of his pupils enter the drums and with the other two he himself entered the bells. *Hovogt* was throwing the eighty-one thunderbolts for seven years, and when he had finished, *Burhan gegeen* with his seven pupils came forth from the drums and the bells. When *Hovogt* came back from Heaven, he saw that *Burhan gegeen* was still alive. He decided to throw three big mountains onto him, but as he hurriedly mounted his drum and flew. *Burhan gegeen* hit him with his *vajra*. *Hovogt* could not endure any longer and fell onto a sandalwood tree on a snow-white mountain. Of his sixty-four fringes only twenty-four were left and his two-sided red drum became a one-sided drum. *Burhan gegeen* tamed *Hovogt*, made him his own pupil and confiscated his blue shaman book. From that time the Khorchin shamans have had no scripture.

According to J. Lubsangdorji, another Inner Mongolian version of the legend speaks about the shamaness *Hovog eej* (Mother *Hovog*), whose son had become a lama. The shamaness struggled against *Neiji Toyin*, was defeated and committed suicide.

2.1.2 ISANJU MAMA

The main deity of the Sibe shamans is called *Isanju mama*. This deity is generally known from the shaman invocations and plays an important role in the trial ritual "climbing on the [*čaḡūr*]". As the ruler of the Shaman realm and the head of all shamans, she is the supreme authority who must be consulted regarding the initiation of new shamans (adepts).

The Sibe folklorist Prof. Zhonglo told me, that he had long been searching for a legend attached to this deity before he found the following story:

38) The Mongolian title *taiz'* referred to the hereditary aristocracy, the descendants of the Chinggis Khagans family.

At the time of the spread of Buddhism among Khorchin Mongols and other tribes of Western Manchuria many Sibe people became Buddhist monks. In one Sibe family there was a girl called *Isanju*. Her brother had become a Buddhist monk. *Isanju* decided to fight against Buddhism and to become the head of Sibe shamans (at that time every Sibe clan had its own highest deity – the “*da mafa*” – the ultimate ancestor, but there was neither a high deity venerated by all Sibe people, nor any head of all Sibe shamans).

Isanju therefore told her mother that she would fall asleep for ten days, during which she would ascend to Heaven in order to become the strongest shaman. She asked her mother to wake her after ten days had passed. But her mother made a mistake by trying to wake her up on the 10th day, before the whole ten days had passed. *Isanju*'s soul was still in Heaven and her mother, being unable to wake her, in despair called the whole family, who decided that *Isanju* was dead and buried her body. When *Isanju*'s soul came back from Heaven, she could not find her body to enter and had to remain a soul. But though she did not succeed in becoming the head of the living shamans, she did gain enough power to become the highest of all Sibe shaman deities.³⁹

The question of the relationship between *Isanju mama* and the *Nišan* shamaness has been raised. According to Heling⁴⁰ a connection is possible, while Zhonglo⁴¹ opposes this opinion.

Versions of the legend of the *Nišan* shamanes have been found among several Manchurian ethnic groups – the Manchus, the Daghur, the Evenki and the Oročon. The main storyline of the legend – the journey of the great shamaness into the Realm of the Dead in order to fetch the soul of the deceased son of the rich man *Baltu Bayan*, is similar in all the versions (for the Daghur version see Appendix 4).

Apparently the legends of the Sibe *Isanju mama* and the *Nišan* shamaness have little in common beyond the fact that both *Isanju* and *Nišan* were powerful female shamans. According to Mr. Zhonglo, *Isanju* and *Nišan* are two different persons, mainly because *Isanju* became a deity while *Nišan* was a human being and there is no mention of her becoming a deity.

While the “identity” of *Isanju* and *Nišan* does not show many connections, it is much easier to identify the two names, either regarding the regular phonetic changes in Tungusic languages or through the evidence of the Daghur version (the suffix *-ju* is a common suffix of Sibe female names).

One interpretation may be that the notion of the *Nišan* shamaness, which was known also to the Manchurian Sibes, changed under the influence of the Khorchin Mongols.

The Story of *Isanju mama* has apparent connections to the Khorchin legend about the shaman *Hovogt*. In both Sibe and Khorchin shaman culture the

39) Zhonglo, personal communication, February 2006.

40) Personal communication, February 2006.

41) Personal communication, February 2006.

clash between the shamans and the Buddhist missionaries left such a deep impression, that new traditions are ascribed to it: In the case of the Khorchins these involved changes in shaman dress and ritual tools, loss of the legendary “shaman books” and the fact that the role of shamans moved from the aristocracy to ordinary people, and in the case of Sibes the emergence of a new deity, possibly by changing the whole meaning and role of *Nišan* shamaness.

2.2 THE TRIAL-RITUALS

In both the Sibe and Khorchin shamans’ profession a ritual, which may be termed an “examination” or “trial”, played a crucial role. This ritual is held⁴² when the shaman adept completes his “study” with the teacher. Although one may call it “initiation”, there is another ritual of “initiation” which takes place when the teacher accepts the new adept as a pupil. These examinations were held to prove that a shaman adept was really elected by the deities and was given the power to overcome physical pain that would be unbearable for ordinary people. Since many of the adepts failed the examination, but did not give up their profession, two “degrees” of shamans existed both among the Sibe and among the Khorchin – those who successfully completed the ritual (in Sibe *iletu saman* – the “manifested saman”), who were trusted as powerful by the people and summoned for help in the most difficult cases, and those who failed (in Sibe *butu saman* – the hidden/veiled shaman, in Khorchin *baalai boō* – according to QBM a Chinese word meaning “incomplete” (QBM p. 407), who dealt with common problems.

Among both Sibes and Khorchin Mongols the examinations were great public events. People gathered from afar to witness them and all the shamans were present to help the adepts by “shamanizing”. From the Khorchin accounts it is known that initiations of several adepts took place at the same time, which is also common at present. The Sibe ritual, after its public part, was continued at night by the adept and the teacher, while there is no such evidence for the Khorchin.

42) Among the Jungarian Sibes these rituals do not take place any more, while among the Khorchins they are continually professed.

2.2.1. THE TRIAL-RITUAL AMONG SIBE

The Sibe ritual is commonly known as [*čaqūr tavenem*] – climbing the birch /sandalwood⁴³ tree. In the “shaman terminology” a term [*bilghir yavm*] (in the literary language *bilheri yabumbi*) or [*jūan jaqūn qaren bilghir yavm*] is used. This term describes the inner content of the ritual. The meaning of the word *bilheri* is not clear,⁴⁴ but the whole expression means “passing the 18 watchposts”.

While the ritual climbing a tree⁴⁵ is a common to more shaman traditions, the notion of the 18 posts is, according to some native scholars, connected with the history of the Jungarian Sibes: After having come to Ili they were put in charge of 18 frontier posts built by the Qing government.⁴⁶ This would place the formation of some important parts of the ritual in the time after the Sibe re-settlement in Xinjiang. Although surprising at first sight, this idea seems to be corroborated by the fact that the life as frontier soldiers became an important part of Sibe life and self-consciousness only after their arrival in Ili.

The climbing of the ladder of swords, as seen from the ritual text attached to it but chanted separately, symbolizes the shaman adept's travel through the shaman realm to the palace of *Isanju mama* in order to get her blessing. The ladder itself, through the difficulty of climbing, corresponds to passing through the 18 watch posts, which are guarded by deities of both human and animal forms, and could not be passed except with the help of the teacher.

Among the Jungarian Sibe the ritual of “climbing on the [*čaqūr*]” does not take place any more. It is said that a shamaness who successfully completed

43) The word *čaqūr* originally means the Siberian black birch, but has been used for the sandalwood tree. Since the word is no more a part of the common language knowledge of contemporary Sibes, the expression is usually understood in the sense of the shaman ritual.

44) Stary cites Krotkov: “All the Sibes, whom I have asked for an explanation of this expression, told me, that ‘*bilhir*’ or ‘*bilhir*’ was a Mongolian word, but no one was able to tell me what it meant.” (Stary 1992, p. 26). If this were so, a relationship to the (Turko) Mongolian word “*bilig*” (wisdom) may be considered. This word has a broad semantic field connected also to the Buddhist notion of “awakening”, which in popular Mongol belief is close to “gaining miraculous power” (Lubsangdorji, personal communication, 2005).

45) The Siberian black birch is said to be one of the trees venerated by Siberian shamans. On the other hand, the notion of a sandalwood tree would show another connection to the Khorchin shaman traditions – in the shaman invocations the *šastir-un gagča modu* (The Solemn tree of the šastra) or *zandan modu* (the Sandalwood tree) often occurs as the sacred shaman tree, on which the souls of the future shamans grow.

46) Guo Qing, personal communication, 2007.

the ritual in the 1930s was the last *iletu saman*.⁴⁷ A vivid description of the ritual, based on accounts of eyewitnesses, is presented in SUAT:

On the day of climbing the [*čaqûr*] in the afternoon (the climbing takes place in the evening) all the people from the village and people from the surrounding villages eat their dinner early and gather in the yard of the [*čaqûr*]. Already before that the teacher has summoned all the shamans from the neighbouring villages and seated them on the seats to the north from the [*čaqûr*] which he had prepared. After it gets dark, bright lights are lit all around and the ritual starts. The teacher leads his pupil out of the house and first gives thanks to the shamans for having come to illuminate the ritual. Then he thanks all the village people for coming. In front of all he puts the shaman garments on his pupil, while three shaman helpers (*jari*) are lightly beating drums. The members of the pupil's family bring a white goat and a white cow into the yard and tie them to the south and west of the [*čaqûr*]. When the pupil has put his garments and utensils on, the teacher starts to dance. The three *jari* are following and accompanying him in dancing. After a while the teacher lays down his drum, takes the divine spear and thrusts in all directions to chase away the ghosts and demons which have entered the yard. After another while he takes his drum again, stands next to the [*čaqûr*] and prays to all the deities: The grandson of such and such clan, born in such and such year –

for the sake of his pure blood
for the reason of his white bones
if you indeed took a liking in him
and chose him,
I pray to all of you:
Relate (it?) clearly
tell the name of the Ultimate ancestor
put down his name and clan.⁴⁸

After that he takes a spear prepared next to the [*čaqûr*] and stabs the throat of the goat tied to one side so that it bleeds. At that moment the pupil steps close, kowtows and touching the stabbed place with his mouth, drinks a draught of blood. Then he stands up and walks to the [*čaqûr*]. When he gets close, the teacher gives him two pieces of the yellow (sacrificial) paper and he turns to the [*čaqûr*] and climbs step by step.

At this time the teacher takes his drum and dances (*samdambi*) wildly, and from time to time takes the spear and thrusts it in every direction to drive the evil ghosts off. He also takes a cup with liquor and sprinkles it towards Heaven. The three shamans – followers are also dancing and drumming. ... Sometimes, when the pupil gets scared and can not move on, the teacher starts crying and shouting, making a threatening appearance, in the same way sprinkling liquor towards the Heaven and casting the cup upwards. The other shamans sitting on their seats are also reciting protective mantras and praying to the deities for help. When the pupil reaches the top of the [*čaqûr*], he holds on to the transverse wooden stick and takes a short rest. His teacher holds the [*čaqûr*] and asks: "What do you see in the South?" The pupil responds: "The shaman court of *Isanju mama*". Then he is asked about East and West, but not North. He is not allowed

47) Guo Yuzhen, personal communication, 2000.

48) Stary translates as follows: "auf Grund des reinen Blutes/wegen der weissen Knochen/nach aufrichtig ersehnter Prüfung/auserwählt und angenommen werden!/Klares und Gutes werde ich erzählen/Ursprung und Anfang werde ich melden/(Meinen) Namen und Clan werde ich zurücklassen."

to turn back and look to the north, because according to the shaman belief in the north there is the Shadowy realm and if he looks there, the souls of the dead could come and obstruct the ritual, or even cause his death.

... Climbing is still easy in comparison with descending. One does not descend step by step, but has to throw oneself straight down. If the pupil hesitates to jump, the teacher shouts, pours liquor, casts the cups and tries to encourage the pupil. When he jumps down, thanks to the fishing net he is not harmed. All the people come, lay him a quilt upon him and take him inside the house. After a short rest he follows his teacher out, and treats the all gathered there to fried bread which he takes with his bare hands out of a pot of boiling oil. The teacher then announces to everyone that his pupil has been accepted by all of the deities and has become an “*iletu saman*”. Then he takes a mirror out of his bosom, dips it in the blood of the goat and hangs it on the pupil's neck.

The climbing is followed by another ritual to complete its meaning. At night the teacher and the pupil sit facing each other on the northern *kang* of the pupil's home and together chant the text named : [*juan jaqūn karen bilghir yaver jarin*] or “The prayer of Travelling through the 18 posts”. The recitation is opened by the teacher introducing his pupil to the deities and followed by 18 dialogues at every watchpost, in which only the names of the posts and the guardian deities change. At the end the pupil, again helped by the teacher, enters the Shaman city and the Palace of *Isanju mama*, receives her blessing after being recorded in the shaman annals, and returns to the human world.

juwan jakūn karūn bilheri yabure jarin

Nara hala muduri aningge beye

mafari wecen be alifi

saman seme sarkiyafi

geyen seme tacifi

šaldan temen de tengnefi

šayan ihan de yalufi

elben booci tucifi

murhu farhūn yabuha

dele wecese de jalbiraha

juhu jugūn be joriha

yabuhai genehei niohūn tala de isinaha

ninggun niohe jugūn be heturefi dulemburkū

ilihabi, adarame dulembi?

sefu gisun

The Prayer of Passing the 18 watchposts⁴⁹

The one who was born in the year of the Dragon, from the *Nara* clan

have received the deities the ancestors

was noted as a shaman

studied as a shaman adept

having mounted on an (unsaddled) camel

riding on a white cow

left the straw hut

and travelled in darkness

prayed to the high deities

set forth on his way

As I was travelling, I arrived at the Greenish steppe

Six wolves are barring the way and do not let me through, how shall I pass?

The teacher's words

49) When translating the text, I consulted the German translation by Prof. Stary (Stary 1992). In a few places I propose alternative translations.

niohuri manggin muduri aningge be niohūn
tala ujui karūn be dulembuki

yabuhai genehei emu sahaliyan bujan de
isinaha

sunja bigan i ulgiyan jugūn be dalime ilifi he-
turefi dulemburkū ilihabi adarama dulembi
sefu gisun

aiduha manggin muduri aningge be sahaliyan
bujan jai karūn be dulembuki

yabuhai genehei emu amba bira de isinaha
duyin sula morin jifi jugūn be dalime ilifi he-
turefi dulemburkū ilihabi adarama dulembi

sefu gisun

surulu manggin muduri aningge be nisiha
bira ilaci karūn be dulembuki

yabuhai genehei emu amba alin de isinaha

emu suru morin yaluha jebele dashūwan
ashaha niyalma jifi heturefi dulemburkū ili-
habi adarama dulembi

sefu gisun

selei sayin janggin (manggin) muduri aningge
be bongko alin duici karūn be dulembuki

yabuhai genehei emu fulahūn tala de isinaha
emu suru morin yaluha jebele dashūwan
ashaha niyalma jifi heturefi dulemburkū ili-
habi adarama dulembi

sefu gisun

wehei salin manggin muduri aningge be
fulahūn tala sunjaci karūn be dulembuki

yabuhai genehei emu uli moo-i bujan de
isinaha

emu amba giyahūn jugūn be dalime ilihabi
adarama dulembi

sefu gisun

anculan manggin muduri aningge be uli
moo-i bujan ningguci karūn be dulembuki

Wolfish deity, please let the one who was born
in the Dragon year pass through the First
Post, the Greenish Steppe.

I travelled on and on and reached a black
forest.

Five wild boars are standing in the way blocking
it and do not let me through. How can I pass?

The teacher's words

Wild boar deity, please let the one who was
born in the Dragon year pass through the
Second Post, the Black Forest.

I travelled on and on and arrived at a great river.

Four free horses came and obstructed my way,
and are not letting me through, how shall
I pass?

The teacher's words

The deity *Surulu*, please let the one who was
born in the Dragon year pass the Third Post,
the River *Nisiha*.

I travelled on and on, and arrived at a big
mountain.

A fully armed man riding a white horse came
and obstructed my way, and is not letting me
through, how shall I pass?

The teacher's words

Good Iron Janggin, please let the one who
was born in the Dragon year pass the fourth
post, Mount *Bongko*.

I went on and on and arrived at a reddish steppe.

A fully armed man riding a white horse came
and obstructed my way and is not letting me
through, how shall I pass?

The teacher's words

Good Stone Manggin, please let the one who
was born in the Dragon year pass the fifth
post – the Reddish Steppe.

I went on and on and reached a forest of flow-
ering cherries.

A big falcon keeps obstructing the way, how
shall I pass?

The teacher's words

Hawk deity, please let the one who was born
in the Dragon year pass the sixth post, the
Cherry forest.

yabuhai genehei emu amba bira de isinaha,
emu suwayan funiyehengge jaka jugūn be dalime ilihabi, adarame dulembi

sefu gisun

ayulu manggin muduri aningge be nun bira nadaci karūn be dulembuki

yabuhai genehei emu amba alin de isinaha,
emu suwayan funiyehengge niyalma jugūn be dalime ilifi heturefi dulemburkū ilihabi, adarame dulembi

sefu gisun

kurulu manggin muduri aningge be jongko alin jakūci karūn be dulembuki

yabuhai genehei emu sohon tala de isinaha

emu sahaliyan funiyehengge niyalma jugūn be dalime ilifi heturefi dulemburkū ilihabi, adarame dulembi

sefu gisun

sahaliyan manggin muduri aningge be sohon tala uyuci karūn be dulembuki

yabuhai genehei emu šulhe moo-i bujan de isinaha, emu amba daimin jugūn be dalime ilifi heturefi dulemburkū ilihabi, adarame dulembi

sefu gisun

daimulin manggin muduri aningge be šulhe moo juwaci karūn be dulembuki

yabuhai genehei emu amba bira de isinaha, emu amba yarha jugūn be dalime ilifi heturefi dulemburkū ilihabi, adarame dulembi?

sefu gisun

yarhai manggin muduri aningge be semur bira juwan emuci karūn be dulembuki

yabuhai genehei emu den hada de isinaha, emu gida jafaha niyalma jugūn be dalime ilifi heturefi dulemburkū ilihabi, adarame dulembi?

sefu gisun

I went on and on and arrived at a great river, a yellow-haired being is obstructing my way, how shall I pass?

The teacher's words

The deity *Ayulu*, please let the one who was born in the Dragon year pass the seventh post, the River *Nonni*.

I went on and on and arrived at a big mountain. A man with yellow hair is obstructing my way and does not let me through, how shall I pass?

The teacher's words

The deity *Kurulu*, please let the one who was born in the Dragon year pass through the eighth post – Mount *Jongko*.

I went on and on and reached a yellowish steppe.

A man with black hair came and obstructed my way and is not letting me through, how shall I pass?

The teacher's words

Black deity, please let the one who was born in the Dragon year pass through the ninth post, the Yellowish steppe.

I went on and on and arrived at an apple tree forest, a big eagle is obstructing my way and does let me through, how shall I pass?

The teacher's words

Eagle deity, please let the one who was born in the Dragon year pass the tenth post, the Apple tree forest.

I went on and on and arrived at a great river. A big leopard is obstructing my way and does not let me through. How shall I pass?

The teacher's words

Leopard deity, please let the one who was born in the Dragon year pass through the eleventh post, the River *Semur*.

I went on and on and arrived at a high mountain peak. A man with spear is obstructing my way and is not letting me through. How shall I pass?

The teacher's words

aine dede manggin muduri aningge be yehur
hada juwan juweci karūn be dulembuki

yabuhai genehei emu šahūn tala de isinaha,
emu esheliyen tasha jugūn be dalime ilifi he-
turefi dulemburkū ilihabi, adarama dulembi

sefu gisun

tashūr manggin muduri aningge be šahūn
tala juwan ilaci karūn be dulembuki

yabuhai genehei emu nimalan mooī bujan
de isinaha, emu ajige niyalma jugūn be dal-
ime ilifi heturefi dulemburkū ilihabi adarama
dulembi

sefu gisun

šaci manngin muduri aningge be nimala moo
juwan duici karūn be dulembuki

yabuhai genehei emu amba den hada de isi-
naha, emu jangkū jafaha niyalma jugūn be dal-
ime ilifi heturefi dulemburkū ilihabi adar-
ame dulembi

sefu gisun

aki manggin muduri aningge be sehur hada
tofohoci karūn be dulembuki

yabuhai genehei emu sunja šeri de isinaha,
emu uyunju da golmin meihe jugūn be dal-
ime dedufi heturefi dulemburkū ilihabi, adar-
ame dulembi

sefu gisun

mušuru manggin muduri aningge be sunja
šeri juwan ningguci karūn be dulembuki

yabuhai genehei emu amba holo de isinaha,
emu uyunju da golmin jabja jugūn be dalime
dedufi heturefi dulemburkū ilihabi, adarama
dulembi

sefu gisun

jabja manggin muduri aningge be sumbur
holo juwan nadaci karūn be dulembuki

The deity *Aine dede*, please let the one who
was born in the Dragon year pass through the
twelfth post, the Peak *Yehur*.

I went on and on and arrived at a whitish
steppe. A fearful tiger is standing in my way
obstructing it and does not let me through,
how shall I pass?

The teacher's words

Tiger deity, please let the one who was born
in the Dragon year pass through the thir-
teenth post, the Whitish Steppe.

I went on and on and arrived at a mulberry
tree forest. A small man in standing in my
way obstructing it and not letting me through.
How shall I pass?

The teacher's words

The deity *Šači*, please let the one who was
born in the Dragon year pass through the
fourteenth post, the Mulberry tree forest.

I went on and on and arrived at a big high
mountain peak. A man with a sword is ob-
structing my way and is not letting me
through, how shall I pass?

The teacher's words

The deity *Aki*, please let the one who was
born in the Dragon year pass through the fif-
teenth post, the Peak *Sehur*.

I went on and on and arrived at five springs.
A ninety fathom long snake is lying on my
way obstructing it and is not letting me
through, how shall I pass?

The teacher's words

The deity *Mušuru*⁵⁰, please let the one who
was born in the Dragon year pass through the
sixteenth post, the Five springs.

I went on and on and arrived at a big val-
ley. A ninety fathom long python is lying in
my way obstructing it and is not letting me
through. How shall I pass?

The teacher's words

The python deity, please let the one who was
born in the Dragon year pass through the
seventeenth post, the *Sumbur* Valley.

50) A fish deity according to *Saman jarin*.

yabuhai genehei emu amba bira de isina-
ha, emu biren tasha jugūn be dalifi heturefi
dulemburkū ilihabi, adarama dulembi

sefu gisun

biren tashūr manggin muduri aningge be ijili
bira juwan jakūci karūn be dulembuki

yabuhai genehei emu amba hoton de isinaha
emu duka jafaha niyalma duka be dalime ilifi
heturefi dosimburkū ilihabi adarama dosimbi

sefu gisun

geren manggin se muduri aningge be saman
hūwaran hoton de yarume dosimbuki

yabuhai genehei emu amba fulgiyan duka de
isinaha, emu amba kurin tasha duka be dal-
ime ilifi heturefi dosimburkū ilihabi, adarama
dosimbi

sefu gisun

geren vecen se muduri aningge be isanju
mama amba duka de yarume dosimbuki

yabuhai genehei emu jai duka de isinaha emu
amba muhan tasha duka be dalime ilifi he-
turefi dosimburkū ilihabi, adarama dosimbi

sefu gisun

dele wecen se muduri aningge be jai duka
yarume dosimbuki

yabuhai genehei geli geren wecen se be da-
hame dolo dosifi tuwaci aisin cakūran ilibufi
ilan saman samdame ilihabi geleme šurgeme
bisirede musei jashūr hala nara hala dele
soorin i mafa se yarume dolo dosimbumfi
isanju mama de acabuha

isanju mama hese wasime hendume

ya hala i enen sehede musei jashūr hala i sa-
man mama wesimbuhenge nara hala i mu-
duri aningge meni sonjohongge ere aniya
juwan jakūn se oho saman seme sarkiyabuha
geyen seme tucibuhe

aisin i wan be ayabufi

menggun i wan de mukdebui

I went on and on and arrived at a big river.
A tigress is obstructing the way and is not let-
ting me through. How shall I pass?

The teacher's words

Tigress deity, please let the one who was born
in the Dragon year pass through the eight-
eenth post, the River *Ijili*.

I went on and on and reached one big city.
A man in charge of the gate blocks the gate
and does not let me in. How shall I get in?

The teacher's words

All manggins, please lead the one who was
born in the Dragon year into the city of Sha-
man court.

I went on and on until I reached a big red
gate. A big spotted tiger blocks the door and
does not let me in, how can I enter?

The teacher's words

All the deities, please lead the one who was
born in the year of Dragon into the big gate
of *Isanju mama*.

I went on and reached the second gate, a big
male tiger is barring the gate, not letting me
enter, how can I get in?

The teacher's words

The High deities, lead the one who was born
in the Dragon year into the Second gate

I went on and, following all the deities, en-
tered and saw a golden *čaqūr* around which
the Three shamans were dancing. While I was
fearing and trembling, the Ancestors of the
high seats of our *Jashūr* clan and *Nara* clan
took me in and led me to meet *Isanju mama*.

Isanju mama deigned to say:

Which clan's offspring is he? The Shaman pro-
genitress of our *Jashūr* clan said: He is from
the *Nara* clan, born in the year of Dragon,
elected by us, this year eighteen years of age.
He was noted as a shaman and chosen as an
adept.

We let him to ascend the golden ladder

We made him climb the silver ladder

juwan jakūn karun be dulembume dele
 acabume gajiha sehe manggi isanju mama
 ilan saman de hese wasime hendume
 erei aniya se gebu hala be dangse de eje, dang
 an de dedubu seme dedubufi ici gala i adise
 bufi yang ni jalan de amasi bederebu seme
 hese wasifi bederebuhe

We led him through the eighteen posts and
 brought him to meet You.
Isanju mama ordered the Three shamans:
 Note down his year of birth, age, name and
 clan in the Annals. So they wrote everything
 down, *Isanju mama* gave me blessing with her
 right hand and ordered me to return to the
 human world.

After the initiation, the new shaman used to visit all the families, announcing that he had become a shaman, and collect pieces of cloth for a new shaman skirt.

2.2.2 THE TRIAL-RITUAL AMONG THE KHORCHINS

The corresponding Khorchin Mongol ritual is known as *yeso'n davaa davah*, or 'overcoming the nine passes'.⁵¹

The following is an account given by a Khorchin shaman Buyanhishig (10. 9. 1984) (QBM p. 241):

The Nine Passes have nine lords. Before surmounting the passes the teacher cuts the fetters of the pupil. Only after that does (the pupil) stand on his feet⁵² and is able to step and walk on the passes. Two good deities are needed at the time of surmounting the passes. Only after he summons the deities and they possess him is he able to go through. A false shaman is not able to surmount the passes. A shaman has to be led by the lords of the passes and by his teacher when overcoming the Pair Pass or the Nine Passes.

When I was overcoming the Pair Pass, I went bravely as the first among all. I jumped several times but the soles of my feet were cut through and started bleeding. My teacher was blowing on them but could not help. He called an old man who was drinking liquor nearby. He healed my feet and encouraged me: 'Now step again!' and I went over.

The Pair Pass includes the Pass of the machetes and the Pass of the spikes.

The Nine Passes are described as follows:

1. The Pass of the poles: *Khadags* are tied to both ends of two poles. The teacher and the pupil hold the *khadaks* from each side and rotate. The first pass is said to open the mouth of the pupil, only after this can he speak.

51) The Mongolian expression *davaa* means a 'mountain pass', but is frequently used figuratively to mean "problem, obstacle, step". It is difficult to decide which translation is the most suitable here, so I use the original meaning as a source. The expression *davaa davah* originally means "passing over a mountain pass". It is often used figuratively with the meaning of overcoming hardships.

52) The expression *ho'd oroh* is used for children with the meaning "to start walking"

2. The Pass of the nine awls: The adept has to roll on a piece of felt in which nine awls are stuck with points upwards.
3. The Pass of the nine irons: The adept has to lick nine irons heated red in hot ashes.
4. The Pass of the nine spikes: The adept has to touch nine iron spikes heated red in fire with his bare feet.
5. The Pass of the nine fires: The adept has to quench nine small fires made of rotten wood with his bare foot, or by rolling over them naked.
6. The Pass of the nine brass coins: The adept takes nine brass coins out of boiling oil with bare hands.
7. The Pass of nine ropes: The adept's body is corded with nine lassos, which he has to loosen by saying a mantra.
8. The Scrambling pass: The adept nine times creeps through a rim with knives stuck in it.
9. The Pass of the machetes: Two carriage beams are propped against a wooden platform and nine machetes are placed between them with their edges upwards. The shaman adepts have to get on the platform by stepping or jumping on the machete edges.

The Ninth pass is considered to be the most important one. It is the last one and the new shamans who have climbed on the platform have to choose their "direction".

According to the account of the shaman Gombo (October 1984. QBM p. 243):

When passing the Ninth pass, a high platform, on which 50–60 persons can stand, is made. Three 'Pass teachers,' holding tamarisk scourges, force everybody onto the machetes and drive them onto the platform. They beat the shamans who get scared and are not willing to climb. The shamans who have passed the pass are forced to throw up and vomit all they have in their stomachs. Those who are to become shamans of the white direction are led to get down on a white cloth, those who are to become shamans of the black direction have to get down on a black cloth.⁵³

After the examination those who have passed successfully take on a new shaman skirt made of pieces of cloth collected from "a hundred of families" and sewed by the best embroiders.

53) *Qorčin böge mörgül*, p. 243.

dabaya dabaqu dayudalya (QBM p. 568)

sabayan dabayan iruyar door-a
 šabi bayši-yin jarliy bui
 sandoo kituṣa-yin ir deger-e
 sanal-un ejed-ün damjiy-a bui
 tasiyur dabayan yuyidayan door-a
 tangyariytu bayši-yin jarliy bui
 tebene jegüü-yin üjügür deger-e
 toytaju yabuqu tarni bui
 ileü dabariṣan šatu büri-du
 yisü yisün ir-üd bui
 yisü yisün ir deger-e
 yilvi nom-un бүтүгелге-tei
 qalturiju unabal qubin-u mayu
 qay-a gisgibel öbür-ün šoru

 qasiraju jayilbal bey-e-dü mayu

 gangginatal-a dayulabal dabaqu-du sayin

Prayer used when passing the passes

Under the bottom (after passing) of the Pole Pass
 the fate of the teacher and the pupil⁵⁴ is awaiting
 Upon the edges of the scythes ad knives
 the Lords of (fulfilling) desires will be met
 Beneath the lashing of the scourges
 there is the advice of the teacher bound by a vow⁵⁵
 Upon the tips of the puncheons and needles
 a *tarni*⁵⁶ of holding and walking on them exists⁵⁷
 In surmounting every step
 there are nine edges
 Upon the nine edges
 the magic power is found
 If you slip down, it is a fault of your own fate
 If your soles are cut through, it is (because of)
 a sticker in your own chest
 If you hesitate because of fear, it will cause you
 illness
 If you sing loudly, it makes you pass easily.

dabayan-u ejed-tü daydaqqu (QBM, p. 308)

ider-i idergelejei *kö-küi*
 selem-e-tei-yi siryaṣayar *kö-ki-ya*
 jöng talbijai ongyod *a-qai-ya*
 delgerejü inaysi-yan bayuju ir-e *kö-ki-ya*:
 subdag siryulju bayiqu *kö-küi*
 sulbaraday-i čirayuluyṣayar *kö-ki-ya*
 činadu bungqun-u oron *a-qai-ya*
 činu-a-yin mergen ongyod *kö-ki-ya*:
 sili-yin keger-iyen kölgelejei *kö-küi*
 siuwajin quwa-ban adquṣayar *kö-ki-ya*
 sanayan mergen degeji *a-qai-ya*

Placing oneself under the protection of the Lords of the passes.

You have assumed the power!
 Suppressing the (enemies) with swords
 you have shown us the way, oh deities
 please descend to us
 Suppressing the villains whose depravity
 squeezes out everywhere
 in the land of souls in the rear
 The powerful Wolfish deity!
 You have mounted the wild bay horse!
 Holding a *šuaajin hua* (?)
 you, the peak of wisdom,

54) According to J. Lubsangdorji this is a Buddhism-influenced notion of a pre-destined tie between the teacher and the pupil.

55) Again a Buddhist concept of a vow given in previous births.

56) A specific formula, from Skt. *dhāraṇī*, meaning “retaining (power)”.

57) According to J. Lubsangdorji this may be understood in the direct sense – “a *tarni* exists to enable you to walk on the tips...”, but also as a hint of a Buddhist idea which is popular in the Mongol areas, saying that to be born as a human being is as rare as a grain of rice resting on a needle tip.

sabayan dabayan ongyod <i>kö-ki-ya</i> :	the deity of the Pole pass.
čayan mori-ban unučiqajai <i>kö-küi</i>	You are riding a white horse!
yar-tayan dalbay-a adquysayar <i>kö-ki-ya</i>	Holding a flag in your hand
yal degesü-yi sibturčai <i>kö-küi</i>	you are holding a burning rope
yar-dayan dalbay-a ergigülügeger <i>kö-ki-ya</i>	swinging a flag in your hand
yal-un dabayan ejelegči <i>e-kö-köi</i>	you, the Lord of the Fire pass.
.....
qoyar quwa mori-tai-ya, <i>kö-köi</i>	Riding two chestnut horses
bolud temür quyay-tai <i>kö-ki-ya</i>	wearing iron and steel armour
qous dabayan ejed <i>köi-a-qai-ya</i>	the Lords of the Pair pass
qoyar jadoo-yin bayatur <i>kö-ki-ya</i>	the Heroes of the two machetes
yisün čayan mori-tai <i>kö-küi</i>	Riding nine white horses
erdeni mönggün quyay-tai <i>kö-ki-ya</i>	wearing armour of diamonds and silver
ideregün-ü ejed <i>a-qai-ya</i>	the Lords of power
yisün dabayan ongyod <i>a-kö-ki-ya</i>	the ongod of the Nine passes.

2.3 THE “SHAMAN IMAGE”

2.3.1 THE SIBE VOTIVE IMAGE

Use of a votive image (*suru nirugan* – lit. ‘the image of souls’) depicting the shaman “pantheon” has been known to be an important part of the Sibe shaman tradition. The images were painted on scrolls and carried by the shamans to the place where a (healing) ritual was to be performed. Most of the images were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, but several have survived. I had a chance to see one briefly (the owner, a shaman, was extremely reluctant to show it) in 1994 when following my Sibe teacher Su Chengzhi in his research. (The colour scale of the image resembled that of the Tibetan Buddhist tangkas, while the style of the painting was closer to the Chinese-Manchurian style).

A scheme of another shaman image has been published in *Saman jarin*. According to the scheme, the image is divided into three main spheres, which seem to represent Heaven, a space between Heaven and Earth, and Earth. A [*čaqür*] (painted as a ladder) is based on the earth but does not reach the highest sphere. In the highest sphere Sun and Moon are painted on two sides and between them the Buddha, two deities named Merciful Grandmother and Compassionate Grandfather, and several female deities (*enduri gege*) are depicted. From the scheme it is clear that the heavenly sphere is of lesser immediate importance than the middle sphere. In its highest place, on the top

of the [čaqûr], *Isanju mama* is seated. Along the [čaqûr] the *manggins* of the Eighteen Posts dwell together with the shaman ancestors of the clan. Generally (with the exception of two) the *manggins* are seated higher than the clan deities. The lowest sphere, the Earth, functions mainly as the base of the [čaqûr], with the cow and the shaman depicted.

2.3.2 THE VOTIVE IMAGE AND THE KHORCHINS

In the present-day Khorchin tradition a shaman image does not seem to be used in any kind of rituals. Instead, shamans use bronze figures of *ongod* as their votive images. The existence of a painted image is, however, noted in QBM (p. 241):

“One votive image is in the possession of the shaman Serinčin. The original owner of the image was the famous shaman Li Liang of the Darkhan banner. On this votive image, in the Upper world, in the upper row there are five *tenger* (the *tengers* of five cardinal points), followed by ninety-nine *tengers* in three rows, then separately seated ninety-nine *tengers*. In the centre of the Middle world there is the tent of *Hovogt*, the seats of the Lords of the Nine Passes with flags stuck in, the Pass Teacher and the Solemn tree of the *šāstra*⁵⁸ with the souls of shamans. On the side there are shamans and shamanesses surmounting the Nine Passes. On the image there are also a tiger, a snake, a wolf, a black dog, an eagle and other animals.”

3. Conclusion

The Khorchin Mongols and the Jungarian Sibes are two tribes of different origin, at present living in distant locations. However, once in history they had probably been in close contact.

In this paper I compared three interrelated features, which exist in both Khorchin and Sibe tradition and display certain similarities: The three features were the shaman deities called Father *Hovogt* and Grandmother *Isanju*, the trial rituals proving the genuineness of the new shamans, and the votive image.

The comparison may be briefly summarized as follows:

The deities: Both *Hovogt* and *Isanju* are, according to the legends, historical shamans who had lived in the time of the introduction of Buddhism to

58) In the Khorchin terminology *šastir-un ganča modu* is the name for the divine tree on which the souls of shamans grow.

Eastern Mongolia, had struggled against Buddhism, but could not win in the struggle. Both are, however, important deities. *Isanju* is clearly the highest Sibe shaman deity. While no such explicit definition is available for *Hovogt*, he is mentioned in many Khorchin shaman texts, often as the first deity invoked, (and, what may also be indicative, in the QBM he is dealt with in first place among the deities). At any rate, *Hovogt* is regarded as the “founder” of the present-day form of Khorchin shaman religion. On the votive image both *Isanju* and *Hovogt* are depicted in the center of the Middle world, which is the most important sphere of the image.

Furthermore, *Isanju* reveals interesting connections with the Manchurian *Nišan* shamaness. While their names are almost certainly identical, the content of the legends and the role of the two personages have virtually nothing in common. Speculation could certainly be made that the character of *Nišan*, being a famous and powerful shamaness, was used by the Sibes to create a parallel to the Khorchin *Hovogt*.

The rituals: Even the names of the rituals may imply an analogy: in Sibe the expression “passing the 18 watch posts” recalls the most important aspect of the traditional life of the Jungarian Sibes – guarding the 18 fortresses on the China-Russian border. The Khorchin ritual is called “passing the nine mountain passes” (or, figuratively, “overcoming the nine obstructions”). Surmounting mountain passes is one of the commonest hardships in the life of the Mongolian nomads. It should also be noted that the term *yeso'n davaa* – ‘nine passes’ – is widely used in Mongolian culture as a synonym for the most difficult trial or examination.

Comparatively more can be said about the Sibe ritual thanks to the accompanying text, which describes the goal of climbing, the Shaman realm and the deities. The names of the posts are of great interest and call for further research. Some of them are Manchurian toponyma, while others, like the Volga river, indicate contact with the Xinjiang ethnic milieu. No such extension is known from the Khorchin tradition – the ritual is presented only as a physical trial, in which the adept is attended by the deities. However, mention of the lords of the passes, scattered in the ritual texts, supply some interesting hints, as does the mention of the *čoniin ongod* – Wolfish deity – as the lord of the first pass (cf. the Wolfish deity of the first watch post by the Sibes).

The analogy in the concrete form of trials is itself not surprising – enduring high temperatures and injuries by sharp objects belongs to common methods of demonstrating magical powers. However, the numerous resemblances – the ladder of knives and the boiling oil, the new shaman skirt made of pieces of cloth collected among villagers etc. support the general idea of a similarity.

Some parts of the Sibe ritual seem to be of relatively recent origin (e.g. writing the adept's name in the annals, the notion of the 18 watch posts itself, the traces of Western-Mongolian influence and some other things). It is likely that the ritual received its present shape only after the Sibes had moved to Xinjiang. While the "shaman journeys" play an important role in the Manchurian and Siberian shaman cultures,⁵⁹ they do not seem to be frequent in the Mongolian context. One is tempted to assume that the "spiritual extension" of the ritual was either lost by the Khorchins, or made up by the Sibes according to their "Manchurian" needs.

The image: Votive images had been in the possession of all Sibe shamans, but most of them were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and at present two or three are reported to exist. The images were kept at the most honoured place in the shaman's house and were hung on the wall during rituals.

The QBM mentions the existence of one image of such a kind among the Khorchin shamans. No use of such images during rituals is noted and guessing from the description given in QBM, the meaning of the details of the image is less clear to the contemporary shamans than in the case of the Sibes.

The images supply slightly different information about the shaman pantheon than other materials. The setting of the Sibe and Khorchin shaman image seems to be analogical: The middle and lower spheres are united by a vertical ([*čaquŕ*] or the Solemn tree of the *śāstra*) and the main shaman deities – *Isanju* and *Hovogt* – are seated in the central position of the Middle world, with deities connected to the trial ritual (manggins or Lords of the Passes) seated around them. In the Upper world heavenly beings are depicted and the lower sphere seems to be the earthly world (on the Khorchin image shamans undergoing the trial ritual are said to be depicted). A point of interest is the mention of animals depicted on the Khorchin image. In the Sibe tradition the manggins of the 18 fortresses are described either as armed riders on horseback or as animal deities (tigers, wolves, eagles, snakes etc), animals which used to be worshipped by the Manchus and probably other Manchurian ethnic groups as well. While the Khorchin Lords of the Passes are mostly described as riders, the "animals" reported on the Khorchin image may therefore be the result of a once stronger Sibe influence.

The mentioned analogies between the Khorchin and Sibe shaman religion are by no means the only ones. Apart from those mentioned there are other connections in rituals, terminology, "classification" of the shamans, names of sacred and mythological places and other things, which, after careful

59) cf. also Xenofontov 2001.

examination, may throw more light on the common history of the Sibes and the Khorchin Mongols.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1

THE LEGEND OF BUUMAL TENGER (QBM PP.187–189)

The daughter of the Heavenly *Hurmast haan* became a lover of an earthly man and gave birth to a boy and a girl. She took her children and returned to Heaven. Somebody told *Hurmast haan*: “Your daughter descended and gave birth to a son and a daughter. If you do not care about this, how can you rule us?” *Hurmast haan* said: “Is this true? The man said: “If it were not true, why should we slander *Haan’s* daughter?”

“If it is true, bring *Wang mu niang niang*”. *Hurmast haan* asked *Wang mu niang niang*: “Are all of our daughters here?” She pretended not to know: “Yes, they all are.”

Hurmast haan became angry: “How can they all be? People say that one of them has descended to the earth and brought two children. Are you lying to me?”

Niang niang had no other answer and said: “One of them might have gone down.” *Hurmast haan* flew into a rage and *Niang niang* had to tell the truth. The *Haan* then asked: “*Niang niang*, what do you think we should do?” She said: “What can I, grandmother, do? Grandfather, you look at them and make a decision.” *Hurmast haan* summoned his daughter, watched the children for a while and ordered: “Take them and throw them on some hard and high rocky mountain of the Lower world.”

Two servants went out of the southern gate of *Haan’s* palace and looked down. They saw that the mountain *Do’l Do’s* was the biggest and the highest of all (At that time people were saying “The *Do’l Do’s* mountain, the *Do’roo cagaan*⁶⁰ lake”). So they threw them

“between the two hard columns,
towards the flat rock peak
above the black and white clouds,
between the two diamond columns
on the peak of the saddle-formed rock
above the coloured clouds.”

Suddenly two yaks appeared in the *Do’l Do’s* mountains and started to butt and eat people. They could not be caught and killed by an ordinary man. In the end they clashed with the *Darhan Wang* and *Wang’s* son became ill. The *Darhan Wang* asked the *taiz’* of his own *Boo* clan⁶¹, the shaman *Hovogt*, and the shamaness *Sarilz’*: “What is the cause of this, what should I do?” The shaman *Hovogt* said: “If you summon the *Buumal tenger* and make an offering to him, peace will come and your son will recover.” The *Darhan Wang* became angry and said: “Why should I make offerings to these two cows? How can beasts become a *tenger*? You shamans are saying what comes to your mind.” The shaman *Hovogt* said: “If you do not believe, just go and see, if I go there and make a (meat) offering, the two yaks will surely die.” The *Darhan Wang* followed the shaman’s words and prepared everything for the offering. Then he went with the shaman to

60) The *Do’roo cagaan* lake means The white horseshoe-shaped lake.

61) During the Qing dynasty all the Eastern Mongols had to assume a Chinese clan name. According to a tradition, the clan name *Boo* (Chin. *Bao*) means the *Borjigin* clan, i.e. the descendants of Chinggis Khagan.

the *Dol Do's'* mountains. When they arrived, the yaks, having drunk water from the lake, were lying on a mountain slope. The shaman *Hovogt* prepared the sacrificial altar, put his coloured shaman kilt on and seized his full⁶² black drum and the magic stick and, facing to the north, started shamanizing. He presented⁶³ the three hundred sixty parts of the living sheep, then once more when the sheep was cooked. He sang:

"I am presenting the five pieces of raw meat
in five pairs.
The pupils chosen by fate
are showing it to let you know.
I am presenting the eight parts of cooked meat
naming precisely the eight-times-eight pieces.
The infant pupils
are showing it to let you know".

As he finished presenting the meat piece by piece, both of the yaks died. The *Darhan Wang* was astonished and understood that the shaman *Hovogt* had great knowledge. He asked: "Should I worship the dead cattle?" *Hovogt* said: "There is a way to worship them. Bring me silk of five colours, gold and silver, ink, brushes and sable fur, and I will make an image. If you worship the image, it will be enough." Since *Buumal* is a *tenger*, people would laugh if he had made it in the form of a yak. Therefore he made it rather in a human form, his body of the five-coloured silk, his eyebrows of the sable fur and his eyes of pearls (if pearls are not available, corals may be used). Only after they started to worship this image, did the *Buumal tenger* come into being.

APPENDIX 2

THE LEGEND OF THE 10000 ONGGOD (QBM P. 117)

In olden times, the *Tamiin cagaan* was not a sand dune, but a bottomless great river, which was drawing people and animals into itself. When the Taizong of Tang came here to conquer the state of Northern Liao, he was not able to cross it and asked his counsellor, who said: "When the "mang grass"⁶⁴ seeds and becomes a sea of sand dunes, only then will you be able to cross it." The Emperor then kept sending one man every day to see whether the river had become a sand sea, and when the messenger came back saying "it has not changed", the Emperor executed him. One

62) The present-day Khorchin shaman drum is covered with leather on only one side. The Khorchin legends hold that before *Hovogt's* struggle with *Burhan gegeen* his drum was full, i.e. covered with leather on both sides, and in the course of the struggle it was broken into halves.

63) The most important part of the Khorchin sacrificial rituals seems to be the description of every part of the offered animal's body, recited or sung by a shaman. The list of body parts may be repeated two or three times, every time with different laudatory epithets which should assure the deity about the perfection of the offered animal.

64) *mang o'vs*, Ma. *mang orho*, Chin. *mang cao*, a kind of anise (*illicium anisatum*). The term *mang ebesü ürelekü* – seeding of the *mang cao* is taken from the agricultural calendar used in Northern China by both Chinese and non-Chinese ethnic groups.

day the man who was sent to check the river thought: "Whatever happens, I will die anyway, so I can tell a lie," and he said: "The *mang* grass has seeded and turned into a sand dune sea." When he said that, the river indeed dried and turned into sand dunes. The Emperor forgot his counsellor's warning that he must not look back, and turned back to check whether all his army had crossed. As he did so, the sand dune collapsed and the adjutant of the Prospector-General *Wu di wang*, with his troops, fell in. Of the ten thousand soldiers who fell in, those who fell bending forward became shamans, those who fell turning became *elee*, and those who fell with swirling movements became the *ongod*.⁶⁵

APPENDIX 3

When the *Taizu Chinggis khagan* came with his army, he, following the words of the (*Ho'hc'u*) *zaarin*, made them possess Mongol shamans and ordered them to be worshipped (QBM p. 117).

APPENDIX 4

LEGEND OF THE NISHAN SHAMANESS (ENGKEBATU 1985, PP. 187–219)

Long ago there was a rich man, *Baltu Bayan* by name. He had one son whose name was *Sergudai Piyangu*. He studied from his childhood, learned the Eighteen skills and was an excellent shot. He killed everything he aimed at and would not lose even a willow leaf. One day he went hunting, taking with him his two servants *Agaldai* and *Sagaldai*, two bathorses, one hunting eagle and a spotted dog. He killed an enormous amount of animals including young animals. After killing so many animals he became sick. In that place there was a ghost, who saw his sickness, tore his intestines into pieces, killed him and took his soul away to his cave where he kept him and made him hunt (for him) every day.

The two servants were weeping like his own brothers. Then his body was brought back and the servants said: "His intestines were suddenly torn into pieces and he died." *Baltu Bayan* was crying and fainting, they took the body inside, immediately made a mat curtain in the middle of the yard, brought a beautiful coffin and on a table at the head of the coffin they prepared a sacrifice, killed cattle, sheep and pigs and prepared a great funeral. All the relatives and friends came, and they decided to sacrifice his favourite horse. On the evening before the funeral they wrote a sacrifice text, many people together performed the sacrifice ritual, brought the horse, put the saddle and all the gear on it and killed it.

After the sacrifice an old man came to the gate, started crying and sat there with his deel inside out. The old man was making oblations with liquor and started singing (like a shaman):

65) Mo. *Böküjü orugsan ni /böge bolju/*
ergildejü orugsan ni /eliye bolju/
ongqoliju orugsan ni/onggod bolba.

As seen from the Mongolian text, the ways of falling in have been chosen only for the purpose of alliteration.

"*Hoguye, yeguye*, why do you faint and weep in this way when a man of this world has died? In this world there is a shamaness, who can bring him to life again. Her name and address is, the *Isen* shamaness, who is staying in the valley of the river *Nisiha*. If you go and bring her, she can fetch a soul of a dead person, so you quickly go and bring her!"

When *Baltu Bayan* heard this, he quickly led the old man in and asked: "How do you know that? Is it true?" – "Yes, it is, she lives at such and such a distance, you have to hitch up nine carts and go, if you go there with nine carts, she will bring the soul. Quickly hitch the carts!"

So the rich man prepared nine fine carts and sent an able man to bring the shamaness. When he got to the *Nisiha* River valley and entered the village, he found the shamaness house, a house with two rooms. In the outer room a young daughter-in-law was cooking a meal. He entered the inner room, there was an old woman sitting on the *kang*. He directly asked the old woman: "I have come from such and such place to ask you. I have heard that there is a shamaness here who can bring a dead person to life, so I came to ask you."

The old woman said: "I do not know, my daughter-in-law is a shamaness." – "Oh, even so, how could she go without your order?"

The young woman came forth and asked: "How did the man die?" – "He was hunting and suddenly he got an acute disease and died." – "Mother, what shall we do?" Mother said: "You have to go, when people come to ask you in such an insistent manner, how can you refuse to save a soul?" Then the young woman sat on the *kang*, summoned her *ongod* and put the shaman garments and utensils on the nine carts, she herself sat on one cart and the carts went home without their wheels touching earth. The rich man came out to meet her, seated her at the table and offered her liquor saying: "I had only one son, he went hunting and died like this. I have heard about what you can do, so I ask you to bring my son's soul back."

The shamaness immediately returned his politeness by accepting the liquor and said: "Do not worry, I can (bring him), if only you do what I tell you. If you cannot prepare what I tell you, I will not be able to do it."

– "I am rich. I can prepare whatever you ask."

– "In your home there are nine white pigs, outside your home there are nine white cows, outside the village there are nine white roosters, I will need them when I will be dancing and calling my *ongod*. Thus I can fetch your son and visit the *Haan* of the dead."

Then all the village people gathered and she asked: "Is there anybody who can be my helper, follow my praying and accompany my singing? I cannot do without it. Somebody who can do the asking after my *ongod* have come."

They brought a man (*baksi*) who was considered able to do this in the village and several people who could accompany a shaman in singing. They killed the pigs, cows and others, made an offering of nine white pigs in the house, an offering of nine white cows in the courtyard and of nine white roosters next to the village gate. When they came back, the shamaness said: "Now I will dance". She danced, summoned the *ongod*, the other people accompanied her singing, but were not able to follow. Therefore she said: "Fifty miles from here there lives the *šangkung Nari*, if you bring him, he can follow me. He can accompany me in singing and drumming. If you do not bring him, I can not do it."

They brought the *šangkung Nari*, and he was indeed excellent in following prayers and drumming. The shamaness said: "Now I will get into a trance. I will lie down on the floor, when I do so, cover me with a quilt." They brought a big quilt and covered her. She said: "I will be a long time, may be a day and a night, maybe two days and two nights, I will bring your son. When I am coming back, one of my jingle bells will sound. Then you have to hit the drums and everything and lift me, and I will bring your son."

She finished speaking and got into a trance, and died, and the dead shamaness was without a movement, she even stopped breathing. Two days and two nights passed and now the third day and night came.

The shamaness having died, her soul went to the place where the boy was. When she got there, oh, a great, great court it was, and he was playing there, flipping golden and silver bones as dice. She says: "I have come for you, how can you stay here playing, your father has been fainting because you have died." The boy said: "Oh, I cannot go, this demon would not let me go, it is a strong and terrible demon, I am staying here because I have fear of him. This demon is very greedy."

"If he is greedy, let us give him what he wants!"

She asked the demon: "Why do you keep another's son here? His parents are about to die of grief, let him go!"

The demon said: "But I like this boy, he is excellent at shooting, I keep him in my service."

"No way," the shamaness said, "at any rate you have to let him go."

"I will not give him up for free."

"What do you want?"

"I want thus and thus many cows, horses, hen and dogs."

"That is easy."

The shamaness brought the cows, pigs, hen and other things: – "Take this!"

"All right, you can take him. But now I have got these many things and I do not know how to use them. What should I say to make them go out and come back?"

"Call the horses with *ju ju*, the cows with *huai huai*, when calling the hen say *huaaš huaaš* and chasing them say *gu gu*, calling the dogs say *ču ču*, chasing them say *mue mue*."

So she took the boy and went to check the annals of *Irmuhan*,⁶⁶ to see at what age should he come back. As she checked it, (she found that) he had come back at the right time. Then she again led the boy to *Irmuhan*. They entered the city of *Fengdu*.⁶⁷ He was sitting on a high place, his mouth on his neck, and two counsellors were sitting at either side of him and men with bull and horse heads asked:

"What are you coming for, shaman?"

"I am coming to ask about the age of this boy. He died because of bad luck. I came to make it clear."

"Look into the annals!" The men on his sides turned the pages of the annals and said: "He should come back young because of an accident."

The shamaness pled: "Oh, *Haan*, add him some more years. These nine pigs and nine cows were sacrificed to express gratitude to you. If you do not add some age to him, he will have to come back immediately, and what use will that be?"

So, having talked, the boy received ninety years of age.

– "Now give him children!"

– "Well, two sons."

– "No way, how can he live with only two sons, give him more!"

and he was given nine sons, all to become high officials.

– "Now you go back!"

66) *Irmuhan* is a corrupt form of the Manchu term *Ilmun han*, which designates the ruler of the world of the dead, and is translated into Mongolian as *Erlig haan*. In the text two expressions are used – the *Ukdul han* (Daghur, Mo. *üküdel-ün qan*) – the Khan of the dead, or *Irmuhan*. At least in the Manchu notion of the *Ilmun han* the ruler possesses annals in which the fate of all people is written.

67) *Fengdu*, in the *Nišan* shamaness *Funtu*, the capital of the Realm of the dead of Chinese mythology.

They left for home and on the way the shamaness showed the boy all possible punishments – what will happen if he does bad things and what will happen if he does good things. They left *Fengdu*.

Her husband had died several years before that. He heard about it and thought: “She does not need me since I am dead. She saves the lives of other people and does not save me. I will go and request her”. First he went to the *Haan* of the dead and said:

– “*Isen saman* has come. She saved the life of the boy, why does she not save mine?”

Then he went to ask the shamaness: “Why are you saving other people and not me?”

She said: “I can not, you have been here a long time, and you came back at the right time.”

“What does it matter, that I have been here long? If you do not save me, I will go and tell of it.”

His wife got scared and said: “All right, if your body has not yet decomposed, I can save you. Let us go!”

The three of them, the husband, the wife and the boy, went to the grave and opened the coffin. The body was completely rotten, nothing left and there were only worms.

– “How can I save you this way? If I bring your soul, where will it go? No way!” And she left.

Thus they quarrelled and the man went and complained about his injury.

The two came back and one jingle bell sounded. All the people were saying: “They are back!”

She let the boy’s soul enter his body and all the people lifted her, she gave an account about how she went and how she brought him back, and said: “Now open the cover of the coffin, your son has come back with a fate to live up to ninety years and to have nine sons, all to become high officials. You will live for a long time and be rich.”

When she finished giving her account, she took off her shaman garments and all the people took care of her. They lifted the cover of the coffin and the boy sat up and said: “Oh how long did I sleep!” And they all helped him out of the coffin.

Then they changed the funeral banquet into a great feast in honour of the shamaness and for nine days and nine nights they were feasting. They presented the shamaness with horses, cattle, gold and silver, silk and brocade.

The shamaness said: “I will not accept it, I do not deserve such an honour.” Then they took her home.

But in the meantime her husband had complained to the *Irmunhan*, and also to the High *Tengri*. The High *Tengri* went to see the *Irmunhan* to discuss it.

– “Her husband died at the proper time and his body was all rotten – it is true that she could not save him. But we cannot leave this shamaness in the human world – she would be bringing dead people to life and there would be too many people on the earth. We have to put her on the bottom of the Nine hells.”

They forged an iron chain, the High *Tengri* summoned her and threw her into a deep bottomless cave. When she was entering the cave, she seized her hair, tore it (off) and said: “Let there be born as many shamans as my hair.” And in the next generation many shamans were born.

APPENDIX 5

THE LEGEND OF TIIRENG (QBM P. 115)

It is said that the original name of *Tiireng* was *Garbo*. His teacher knew that he was clever and wise and feared that he would surpass him in knowledge one day. He did not teach him knowledge but made him do housework every day. One day, when the teacher was out, he (*Garbo*) entered his teacher’s house and secretly read his books and mastered all the shaman skills. Later

he left his master and went home. His teacher got very angry and when he thought about how the boy stole his knowledge he became even more furious. Before (*Garbo*) could reach his home, the teacher sent a rainfall of arrows after him. When *Garbo* heard the noise in the sky, he quickly drew a circle and jumped inside. The arrows did not get inside the circle and could not hurt him. When the noise in the sky calmed down and the rainfall stopped, he went on. But the rainfall of arrows followed him and started falling again. No matter how quickly he ran, the thunder was after him and there was lightning. When he understood that he could not escape from his teacher, he put his left arm and left leg out of the circle and let them be hit by the thunderbolt. Only after that did his teacher stop pursuing him. Thus he became a lame and crippled *ongod*.

APPENDIX 6

(*QBM P. 234*)

When a thunderbolt strikes a man, a beast, a tent or a house of the Khorchins, they say that “the *tenger*/Heaven has descended” and they call a *honden* to remove it. They, however, do not invite the *honden* reverently, but, instead, ride a bulky horse to the *honden*’s gateway and swear at him: “Your grandfather has come down, what does it mean? You are the grandson of *tenger* and you do not know?!” and so on, and leave without saying where it happened. As soon as the *honden* hears the swearing, he starts shivering and trembling, mounts a bulky horse and rides straight to the place, which was hit by the thunderbolt. When he gets there, he sticks his spear into the ground and by licking it finds out whether “it was a benevolence of a Black side *tenger* or a White side *tenger*”. Then he prays in the (corresponding) direction holding the blue flag for praying to *tenger*, and, reciting prayers and mantras (*tarni*) treats the wounds and injuries caused by the thunderbolt. Praying in the North-western direction, he cures the wounds and seams favoured by the *tenger*. He then makes a rope and ties it onto the fence or wall of the house and, leaves with many curses and swears. If the thunderclaps still go on, he stops them with curses.

APPENDIX 7

Geri mama is the goddess of smallpox. According to Prof. Zhonglo, “normally she protects small children. But she loves children so much, that she plants flowers on their skin and the children get ill with smallpox. So it is necessary to see her off every year, the ritual is performed publicly by an *elci*. But this event is very controversial in the minds of the Sibe people – they know that it is necessary to see the deity off in order to get rid of the disease, but during the time she is not present the children would be without protection. Therefore the people, especially women, feel sad and cry during the ritual “seeing off”.⁶⁸

68) Zhonglo, personal communication, February 2000.

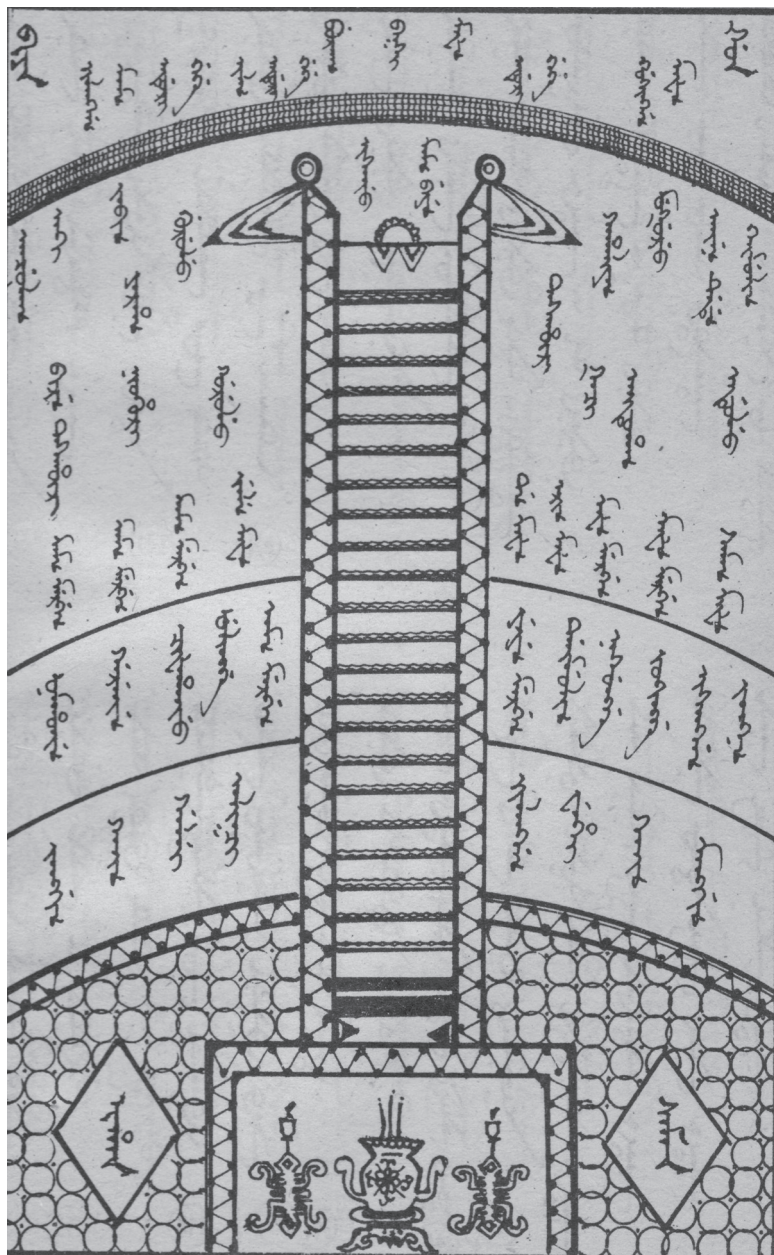
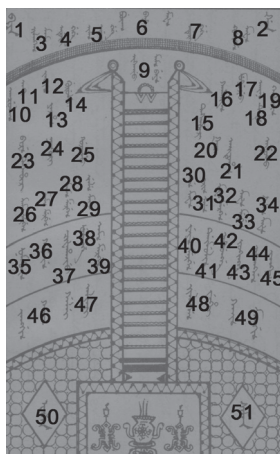


Figure 1. A scheme of the votive image of a Sibe shaman. The scheme was first published in *Saman jarin* (p. 33) and then, with transliteration and partial translation into German, by G. Stary (1992, p. 44). According to Zhonglo (personal communication February 2006), the original image is no longer in Chabchal.



Description of figure 1.

Nos. 1–8: The Upper sphere seems to be the domain of the Buddha and several deities of unclear origin, some of which may be Taoist deities: 1. Sun; 2. Moon; 3. Pitiful Grandmother; 4. Divine maiden; 5. Three Divine Maidens (possible connection with the “*san xiao niangniang*” – three little goddesses of Chinese taoism?); 6. Grandfather Master Buddha; 7. Divine maiden; 8. Compassionate Grandfather; **No. 9:** *Isanju mama* herself (the highest deity of the Sibe shamans), seated on top of the ladder (*čaqır*).

Nos. 10–25: Except for *adulu* (22) deities of the 18 watchposts: 10. Hawk; 11. ?; 12. Python; 13. Leopard; 14. ?; 15. Tiger (deity); 16. Black; 17. Fish deity?; 18. Aunt *Aine*; 19. Eagle (deity); 20. ?; 21. Wild Boar; 22. ?; 23. Tigress (deity); 24. Wolfish (deity); 25. ?

Nos. 26–45: Shaman ancestors of the clan. Although it is not entirely clear from the scheme, it is possible that the titles in the first row (26–34) belong to the particular personal names in the second row (35–38, 40–44), so it might be read as *mama mergen nomhonje* (the Wise Grandmother *Nomhonje*), *mama mergen serenje* (the Wise Grandmother *Serenje*), *mama mergen cifahanju* (the Wise Grandmother *Cifahanju*), *jele mafa ulingge* (the Grandfather Shaman helper *Ulingge*), *ama mergen* (Wise Father), *da mafa yeye mergen?* (the Ultimate Ancestor the Wise Grandfather?), *erin mafa daimulin* (the Time Ancestor *Daimulin*), *mafa mergen nasungge* (the Wise Grandfather *Nasungge*), *mafa mergen jokingge* (the Wise Grandfather *Jokingge*), *jengne*.

Nos. 46–49: These are not clear.

Nos. 46 and 49: The Good Iron *janggin* and The Good Stone *manggin* (49) are the deities of the watchposts, while 47 and 48 seem to be names of ancestors.

No. 50: Cow (probably connected with the white cow which is required for the trial-ritual).

No. 51: Shaman.

In the original: 1. *šun*; 2. *biya*; 3. *jilangga mama*; 4. *enduri gege*; 5. *ilan enduri gege*; 6. *burkan baksi mafa*; 7. *enduri gege*; 8. *gosingga mafa*; 9. *isanju mama beye*; 10. *anculan*; 11. *aki*; 12. *jabja*; 13. *yarha*; 14. *kurulu*; 15. *tashūri*; 16. *sahaliyan*; 17. *mušuru*; 18. *aine dede*; 19. *daimulin*; 20. *šaci*; 21. *aituhan* (*aiduhan*); 22. *adulu*; 23. *bire tashūr* (*biren tashūri*); 24. *niohuri*; 25. *surulu*; 26. *mama mergen*; 27. *mama mergen*; 28. *mama mergen*; 29. *jele mafa*; 30. *da mafa*; 31. *erin mafa*; 32. *mafa mergen*; 33. *mafa mergen*; 34. *saman mafa*; 35. *nomhonje*; 36. *serenje*; 37. *cifahanju*; 38. *ulingge*; 39. *mama mergen*; 40. *yeye mergen*; 41. *daimulin*; 42. *nasungge*; 43. *jokingge*; 44. *isangga*; 45. *jengne*; 46. *selei sayin janggin*; 47. *alicki*; 48. *jilangga*; 49. *wehei sayin manggin*; 50. *ihan*; 51. *saman*.



Figure 2. The *ongod* of the Khorchin shaman Muunohoi (Ganjuga county, Jerim league).

From the English Garden to the Ob: The life and work of Vilmos Diószegi

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Summary: The present article concerns the scholarly work and life of Hungarian anthropologist Vilmos Diószegi (1923–1971), one of Europe's foremost researchers on shamanism in northern and central Asia. In particular, emphasis is placed on the relationship between personal experiences and intellectual legacy within Diószegi's career, focusing on the theoretical questions of hermeneutic suspicion with regard to the observer in the social sciences, as well as the vexed question of anthropological and ethnographic investigation within the systems of European nationalism and Soviet communism. Based largely on Diószegi's quasi-popular narrative *Sámánok nyomában Szibéria földjén* [In the Steps of the Siberian Shamans] and his recently published diaries and letters, the article examines the key forces shaping his scholarly practice, specifically Hungarian nationalist origin-mythology and Soviet nationalities policy, during the course of his travels collecting information on the last shamans in Siberia and Tuva.

Much discussion in the social sciences in recent decades has focused on calling into question the foundations of the disciplines themselves – in particular, the role of the social scientist him- or herself. On the one hand, there is the double-edged phenomenon of the “observer's paradox”.¹ The presence of the anthropologist within the group being studied cannot but have an effect upon them, both in terms of influencing their behaviour while under observation, and equally by the entire cultural apparatus that the individual investigator brings into the observing process. From the other side, there is the sceptical approach that casts doubt on the scientific verifiability of anthropological evidence, as expressed in the words of leading American anthropologist Clifford Geertz regarding “the oddity of constructing texts ostensibly scientific out of experiences broadly biographical” (Geertz 1988, p. 10). Moreover, in recent years the central question among many post-structuralist American social scientists has been whether the “understanding” of a different mentality cannot be more than the imposition of unconscious prejudices – or if the true

1) First proposed by William Labov in his *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (Labov 1972). Though Labov's original insight concerned the difference between ‘unobserved’ speech and the more formal speech patterns that occur when talking to a researcher, it can be – and has been – extended to other social sciences.

subject of anthropology should be the self-analysis of the anthropologist in confrontation with the subject.

One need not completely follow the radical scepticism that, as Ernest Gellner noted, demonstrates its “commitment to the equality of men and cultures by our preoccupation with our own selves and our own cultural blinkers, a preoccupation so intense that it prevents us on occasion even from trying to reach out to that external object which we are supposed to be investigating” (Gellner 1995, p. 212) to realise that the question of meta-anthropology – in other words, of examining the culture and personality of the scientific investigator alongside his or her material – poses questions that require answering. The difference between human beings and the world of physical or biological phenomena means that, in the words of another view in this debate, “we, like our subjects, are humans ‘suspended in webs of significance’ rather than unthinking minerals” (Carrithers 1990, p. 263). The process of studying and presentation of results, in other words the study of the anthropological narratives constructed first in field notes and later in structured books or articles, is not irrelevant to the data, even if disputes may continue as to the degree of relevance.

Secondly, the question of the political and ethical ramifications of practicing anthropology also requires us to pay attention to the power relations between the investigator and the investigated. American post-structuralist schemata regularly posit the anthropological enterprise as positioned within the political struggles and actual imbalances of economic and intellectual capital between an “ex-imperial” West and a “post-colonial” Third World. Yet, just as much as this political question is valid with respect to the cultures of Africa or the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere, there are other areas in which the forms of colonization and post-colonization still in evidence did not originate from the maritime empires of the Atlantic or white settlement in the New World. Anthropology in central and northern Asia is confronted with a very different, and in many more respects far more destructive, imperial legacy: that of Czarist Russification, Stalinist genocide² and acculturation into the uniform model of *Homo sovieticus* lasting up until the end of the USSR in 1991. The meta-anthropological critique that takes political power relations as its point of departure focuses predominantly on the activities (both scientific and imperialist) of the ‘West’, and has only rarely been applied to

2) Though the evidence is sparse, it appears that exceptionally high numbers of Central Asian pastoralists perished in the first decades of Communist rule through forced settlement, collectivization schemes, etc. See Merridale 2000.

the equally paradoxical position of the (former) Second World.³ During the 1990s, an extensive literature on the 'anthropology of Communism' rapidly emerged in the non-Communist world to capture the social and interpersonal relations of this specific type of closed society, yet the social-science institutions and practices of Communism were, usually, of less significance than the positioning of social scientists within the anthropological category of 'Communist-formed intelligentsia' and observing them as members of this particular social grouping. On the other hand, data collected by researchers working within Soviet-based scientific frameworks still continues to be regarded as separate, even though one might well suspect that the lives and careers of the anthropologists themselves would enter into their work in ways unexpected in the practice of science in truly open societies.

And for a third meta-anthropological dilemma, there is the vexed question of the theoretical relation between anthropology and ethnography. Perhaps the best-known statement of this quandary is the rather sarcastic remark by Gellner that (Gellner 1995, p. 143):

...a British anthropologist was a man who, under the impact of Darwinism, was eager to use surviving 'savages' as evidence concerning the past of all of humanity. By contrast, a Central European ethnographer was a man who, under the impact of nationalism and populism, was eagerly exploring and codifying a peasant culture in the hope of preserving and protecting it, above all from encroachments by rival nationalisms. (A Russian ethnographer was a man filling in time because the Tsar had sent him to Siberia).

For Gellner, in fact, the positivist anthropology that views other cultures as comprehensible (rather than focusing on questioning the process of comprehension) is the strongest critique of the post-modern suspicion of communication, which he finds rooted in the irrationalist nationalistic passions of twentieth-century central Europe. Drawing a connection between a meta-anthropology that focuses on the observer and an ethnographic imagination of nationalist self-regard, complete with all the dubious political implications, makes it still more difficult to consider the anthropological work created in countries with a strong tradition of national ethnography. Anthropologists from the lands of central Europe have, in this respect, a further level of meta-anthropological suspicion to confront. In contrast to the anthropological hierarchies in the former USSR (i.e. Russians and other European nationalities

3) One exception to this statement is the American ethnomusicologist Theodore Levin, who extensively discussed Soviet ethnomusicology and ethnography in his descriptions of the traditional musical cultures of Uzbekistan (Levin 1996) and Tuva (Levin and Süzükei 2006).

able to observe any of the peoples at will, non-European nationalities more or less confined to self-reflexive ethnography), the generation of twentieth-century anthropologists who lived through both post-1918 nationalism and post-1945 'socialist internationalism' were in an even more complicated position.

One particular paradigmatic case that unquestionably touches upon all of these questions is the impressive life and work of the Hungarian anthropologist Vilmos Diószegi (1923–1971). Diószegi's contributions to the study of shamanism among the peoples of inner Asia, particularly from his field research in Siberia and Mongolia, are an invaluable source of material, and continue to serve as a basis for further scholarship. Even during his tragically short life, he managed to achieve for himself an indisputable position on the world stage. His career, for all its adversities and set-backs, is not the narrative of intellectual oppression at the hands of the Party-State, nor is it an example of an intriguing yet obscure personage long hidden from view for his identification with one of Europe's smaller languages. Neither a direct opponent of the Communist regime nor an apologist for it, restricting the obligatory Marxist phraseology to the absolute minimum, Diószegi might appear, at first glance, a rather disappointing subject for meta-anthropological analysis. Instead of presenting, say, a heavily encoded critique of totalitarian rule in seemingly anodyne descriptions of healing rituals in the Siberian taiga, or using linguistic data from Uralic tribes to argue for Hungarian national superiority – to take two possible extremes that could have been followed – his published work is strictly empirical.

Nonetheless, the overall trajectory of Diószegi's life is not only compelling in itself, but exists in narrative form. In fact, there are two narratives that overlap; the narrative in the form of a finished book, and the raw data of his field notes, diaries, and letters to his second wife, Judit Morvay. At the centre of the present study is the account of Diószegi's career as presented by himself in his *Sámánok nyomában Szibéria földjén*, a title perhaps best translated as *In Search of the Shamans of Siberia*. Not one of his key scholarly contributions, in fact much more of a survey for the general public, this book nonetheless throws a considerable amount of light on the motivations behind the scholarship itself. Along with the diaries that Diószegi maintained during his Siberian travels, published in Hungary under the title *Halkuló sámánok* (The Fading Shaman Drums), the book represents how its author conceived the mission of scholarly investigation of the particular religio-cultural phenomenon that, indeed quite literally, proved fateful for him.

At the same time, *Sámánok nyomában...* is equally as intriguing when viewed as a sociological or historical artifact emerging from the experiences

of central Europe in the mid-twentieth century. By his own admission, the key incident behind Diószegi's entire life-work was a childhood encounter with an icon of Hungarian nationalist sentiment (Diószegi 1998, p. 5):

My father, a good thirty years ago, took me on my name-day to the English Garden. We looked at the panorama painted by Árpád Feszty, depicting the great migration of the Hungarian people into the Carpathian basin. Being a naïvely enthusiastic little boy, I was enraptured by this theatrical painting, flattering national vanity and swarming with factual errors. Upon arriving home, my mother listened with astonishment: what I liked best was not the dragon-shaped rollercoaster, not the swinging boats, but the panorama showing the *táltos*, the Hungarian shaman, sacrificing a white horse.

That the enthusiasm persisted is demonstrated by the following anecdotes (Diószegi 1998, p. 5):

My second memory is from primary school. I received a rap across the knuckles from the teacher... because he found in my square-ruled notebook, instead of arithmetic sums, my heavy-handed versifications on the subject of pagan Hungarian shamans.

In my first years at Gymnasium, I would rise at six in the morning, ostensibly to cram Latin words into my head. Once, my father, struck by my diligence, took the vocabulary list out of my hands. Words faltering, I ruefully confessed: I was studying Turkish words. And it was useless to try to explain that otherwise, I would never be able to translate the shaman-songs of the Yakuts – my father mercilessly confiscated my dictionary.

Nonetheless, perhaps even more interesting than the tales of parental or pedagogic misunderstanding are the moments in Diószegi's youth when he did come across people sympathetic to his quest – or even indications that his personal concerns were not as removed from society as a whole as might have been the case in other European countries (Diószegi 1998, p. 5):

For my school-leaving exam from history, I pulled the “Tatar invasion” as my theme from the slips of paper: my task was to describe the military incursions of the Mongolians into Hungary. However, I had so much to say about the language, culture and religion of the Mongolians themselves that I never even got around to describing the invasion. After the exam, the examiner, a university instructor from the Department of Eastern European History, advised me to seek out the Inner Asian Department in the university's Building C, as well as the institutes of Turkish philology and the ancient history of the Hungarians.

My parents' attempt to frighten me away from this path was unsuccessful, despite their dire prediction that if I did not enroll in some kind of pedagogical program, I would certainly never be able to get a job after graduation. However, I insisted upon my choice of Turkish, Mongolian and Finno-Ugric languages, as well as early Hungarian history.

As matters turned out, I was not forced into starvation: I found work in the Asian Collections of the Ethnographic Museum. Now I could rummage at my leisure through the Hungarian and Siberian collections of “shaman beliefs”. At last, on June 18, 1957, my childhood dream became a reality. I set off in search of the shamans. The path of a more profound understanding of the belief systems of the “pagan” Hungarians had led me to the study of shamanism.

Though these autobiographical notes make their appearance in a work clearly intended for the popular reader – and hence have more of the function of an amusing introduction to the subject than any serious meta-anthropological self-analysis – they are nonetheless well worth considering seriously. The Hungary of Diószegi's childhood – the paradoxical “kingdom without a king, ruled by an admiral without a navy” of the regime of Miklós Horthy – was undoubtedly a country where nationalism, often in quite aggressive forms, dominated the public sphere. In many respects, it can be argued that the conservative patriotism of Admiral Horthy, grounded in the Hapsburg-era attitudes that produced the Feszty panorama, had its share in preparing for Hungary's collaboration with Nazi Germany and the eventual installation of the openly fascistic Arrow Cross regime.⁴ And it is indisputable that the political Right in Hungary, whether quasi-officially in the interwar years or in the form of the extensive subcultures that began to coalesce in the last decade of Communist rule and flourish openly today, has regularly turned precisely to ethnography in Gellner's sense for intellectual legitimacy. However, to draw the assumption that Diószegi's formative experiences as detailed above were predominantly the result of Hungarian nationalism would be inaccurate; to fit his career neatly into Gellner's schema of “nationalist east vs. empiricist west” would not only be inaccurate but wrong.

For one, neither Hungarian ethnography nor even Hungarian national sentiment (as distinct from the official nationalism of both the pre-1918 kingdom and the interwar state)⁵ can be reduced to the formula of “the narcissism of minor differences”. As a European nation of obvious and demonstrable non-European origin and radical linguistic difference from all of its immediate neighbours, Hungary's impulse towards national self-examination has never needed to emphasise the uniqueness of the Magyar ethnicity. And, taking matters further, even such a topic as the recording of Hungarian folk legends can never be as self-contained a field of study as performing the exact same fieldwork among, say, a Germanic or Slavic populace: Hungarian Romanticism may well stress blood to the same degree as its counterparts elsewhere, but the soil in its most original form – not the Carpathian Basin but the nebulous *Ősháza* of the steppes – remains open in the public imagination, even if scholarly consensus has largely been achieved. In correspondence, the dividing line between self-absorbed ethnography and scientifically cosmopolitan anthropology within the Hungarian social sciences has never

4) Note Ignotus 1972.

5) See Anderson 1991, as well as Jászi 1929.

been clear. Investigation of peasant superstitions on the Alföld necessarily suggests parallels with beliefs found thousands of kilometers further east; by the same token, the impressive legacy of serious scholarship on Asia running from the medieval journeys of Julian the Monk through Alexander Csoma de Kőrös through the twentieth-century work of Lajos Ligeti or Diószegi himself nonetheless bears a undertone of a yearning for contact with the long-lost relatives of the original tribes of Árpád.

Secondly, as Diószegi admitted (and many other scholars have as well), quite little concrete information survives concerning the Hungarian tribes before they left the Eurasian steppes to adopt a settled life, Christianity, and the other attributes of a conventional European nation. No pagan legends, no names of gods or originary myths remain: not even the odd marginal Latin note survives to detail the world of the still-nomadic Magyars. An entire syncretic belief-system exists within Hungary today, dating back to the confusion of the interwar years and combining selected fragments of archaeology, anthropology, Turkic runes and Christian iconography, the idea of an ancient homeland of “Turanía” and many fanciful national genealogies linking the Hungarians to every ethnicity from the Etruscans to the Japanese. Yet the outright fantasies of the adherents of Turanism are, if inexcusable on scholarly grounds, at least comprehensible in psychological terms. The highest degree of certainty about even such a basic matter as the route followed by the Magyars on their great migration westward has been established as much on the basis of linguistic paleontology as the analysis of pollen samples.⁶ And, in yet another paradox, nationalist Hungary remained thoroughly cut off from any possibilities of empirical investigation on territory controlled by the “enemy” USSR. It was only after 1945, with Hungary firmly within the Soviet bloc and committed to socialist internationalism, that Hungarian archaeologists – or ethnographers – could actually attempt to answer the question left open by the nationalists through fieldwork in Soviet territory.

Despite his youthful fascination with the realm of Turanist legend, Diószegi in his adult years nonetheless remained consistently empiricist. His true environment, when not in the field, was the museum, whether the Ethnographic Museum in Budapest or the local museum of each autonomous region of the Russian SSR he happened to visit. In his own travel narratives, both personal and public, his descriptions of museum archives are prominent, and his great unrealized project (plotted, during the final year of his life, in stages up to 1984) was to have been the creation of an Archive of Shamanistic

6) For more on this topic, see Klima 2000.

Faiths that would contain reproductions or facsimiles of the documents and records scattered across the regional capitols of central Asia. And above all, it was his focus on shamanism as an explicitly non-ethnic cultural phenomenon – in other words, a literal “interculture” – of the variegated people of the northern portion of the continent, and not as the exclusive possession of a single favoured group, that most clearly demarcates Diószegi’s scholarship from the sentiments of the Feszty panorama, as much as his respect for verifiable fact (Diószegi 1998, p. 6):

The Hungarian people are of Finno-Ugric origin, as our linguists and researchers of early Hungarian history have long since confirmed. Our closest relatives are the Voguls and the Ostyaks of Siberia. However, in the course of our history, our fate was frequently bound together with that of certain Turkic peoples. The original religion of both the Finno-Ugric and the Turkic peoples was shamanistic in nature; from this, we may clearly conclude that before Hungarians adopted Christianity, they too were shamanists. Our shamans were called *táltosok* or *tátosok* (the peoples of Siberia, depending on whether they are of Turkic or Mongolian origin, call their shamans *böö* or *kaam*; the word “shaman”, which was taken up by academic literature and applied to the entire phenomenon is used only by the Far Eastern Manchu and Tunguz peoples).

The term “shamanistic belief” should be understood as a form of religion, a definite focal point of the cult of the soul.

At the same time, the institution of the museum – that point where knowledge and state power coincide – is hardly an innocent repository of objective fact, and this Foucauldian suspicion is more than doubly necessary when considering the role that museums and museology played in the imperial framework of Soviet nationalities policy. By his own account,⁷ Diószegi found the writings of Soviet anthropologists highly inspiring in the early 1950s, in no small part for their refusal (couched in Marxist terminology) to transform human cultures into the incommunicable mysteries of romantic nationalism as deplored by Gellner. Soviet (if overwhelmingly ethnically Russian) authors may have offered the young researcher the promise of intellectual liberation from sentiments gravely tarnished by Hungary’s collaboration with Fascism, yet at the same time they were part of a definite system of social control. For the non-European peoples of the USSR, the ethnographic museum collections served a double function: to recall the primitive state from which Communist “iron laws of history” rescued them, yet simultaneously forming the central point for the “national intelligentsias”, consigned to the task of cataloguing and reifying the culture officially allocated as their own.⁸

7) Note the documentation provided by Lágler 1984.

8) For several practical descriptions of this method in practice, see Levin 1996, 2006.

A flavour of this now rapidly vanishing imperial world of the Soviet ethnographer can be inferred from a description that Diószegi gave of his first Siberian expedition in September 1957 (Diószegi 1998, p. 18):

From the very moment that I arrived in Irkutsk, only one thing occupied my thoughts: how to get myself as quickly as possible amongst the Buryats. How many times had I fantasized in Hungary about how, one day, I would go to Siberia; I had even created an entire small narrative depicting the great moment:

I arrive at a Siberian city, and I go into the museum. There, I meet with a researcher, a pack on his back and a bag over his shoulder. I ask him why he's packed up. Answer: I'm headed off to a Buryat village to collect the knowledge of the very last shaman. I ask him: Please give me an hour to get my things together, because I'd love to go with you. And he says: Fine, I'll wait. One hour later, we set off.

I played out this scenario to myself with many different variations.

The individual in question is of course of the same nationality of the group we're about to go and visit. Thus the collecting is much more fruitful.

That I already considered quite a daring dream...

However, here we are now in Irkutsk.

In Leningrad, Diószegi had been given the name of a Buryat researcher, Nadezhda Osipovna Sharakshinova, who conducted research into Buryat-Mongol folk poetry. Only a few hours after arrival in Irkutsk, he looked for her but was told that she had left on an expedition. With the director of the Irkutsk museum, he went to her apartment, where her husband informed them that she had left only five minutes previously. A neighbour's son was dispatched on a bicycle to catch up with her. Diószegi (1998, p. 20) continues:

At last, twenty minutes later, the boy with the bicycle turned up at the door, a short, pretty Buryat lady at his side. As if she were a moon-faced maiden from an epic ballad – clad in a raincoat.

I told her why I was there, rounding up my explanation with a request for her to wait until tomorrow morning so I could put my affairs in order.

The most beautiful variation of my Budapest dream was realized as she consented to my request.

It was during this expedition with Sharakshinova that Diószegi made his acquaintance with his first shaman, Xadi Xanxaevich Xanchaev (b. 1884) (Diószegi 1998, p. 47):

Thrilling moments followed. I don't even know what was more exciting – to meet and shake hands for the very first time in my life with a shaman, or to find out if my tape recorder would still work after the journey across the taiga. Because what good is a shaman without a tape recorder?

On September 23, 1957, Diószegi also visited an even older shaman (Diószegi 2002, p. 96):

In Kizlan, we went immediately to the shaman. He was very weak and lay in bed. I asked him to speak about shamanism into my tape recorder. After many requests, he consented.

We left immediately, to look for a source of electricity. We found one in a sovkhöz.

Back to the shaman, we got the old man, the 77-year-old Yegor, into a car and set off for the sovkhöz....

Yes, for the first time in my life I heard a shaman song from a true shaman, or more accurately I saw a shaman call forth the spirits. But I believe that even if I were to see and hear it a hundred times, I would still have chills run down my spine. Yegor was in a state of ecstasy within moments. He had no drum in his hand, but with his right hand he beat the invisible drum. Sometimes he whistled, sometimes he whinnied, in the meantime reciting words in the Sagai language. It will be impossible to transcribe.

Transcription – as well as examining and copying the previously recorded materials in the museum archives in Leningrad – was to occupy Diószegi for the difficult nine months that followed. Just before setting off on his second journey to Siberia, Diószegi wrote in his diary in the early spring of 1958 while negotiating the details of joining another expedition, this time to the Tuva region (Diószegi 2002, p. 128):

You know,... it is just amazing what's happening with me here. I almost feel as if I were living in a perpetual dream. All of those Siberian peoples that I more or less came to know at home still seemed as if they were living on the moon or Mars, and now they are within reachable distance from me. And it's all the same whether I'm thinking of Voguls, Samoyeds, Altai, Sayans or the Tuvan Turks, or for that matter Buryats, Mongolians, or the Tunguz, Nanai, Gilyaks, or Chugchra, they're all my personal acquaintances. One sewed on a button for me, with another I sat hunched over the tape recorder for hours, just to get the shamanistic song on tape; I listened to a third for an entire evening sitting beneath a coarse blanket, etc. etc. Maybe this is more meaningful than all of those thousands of photographs, etc. that I'll be bringing home. And Siberia itself... I spit into the Yenisey River, I peed into Lake Baikal, I swallowed the dust of the Sayan Mountains, I drank the water of the Abakan; the streets and the houses of Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk or Abakan are as familiar to me as those of Zsére or Galgácsa. And the planning: the next expedition.

Diószegi's original government fellowship had allotted him funds for three months; at the cost of relentless economizing interspersed with occasional small windfalls, he made it last for over a year. At one point, to stretch his money even further, he moved into a Leningrad University dormitory (Diószegi 2002, p. 147):

Leningrad, March 23, 1958

I will write you a long letter, and the last one from Leningrad. It is Sunday, with its endless tranquility. Five forty-five in the evening. Everyone has gone off on his own. The Chinese is obviously searching for plants; he could find them even underneath the snow (he is a botanist), the Hungarian doctoral candidate has gone to lunch, one of the Armenians clearly started Sunday yesterday because he hasn't come back, the second Armenian already finished his ironing, his shoe-shining, his half-hour of hair-combing (he is the pedantic sort in our little "cupboard").

Thus I am perched here in the room, all by myself. Yes, because five of us live here. In this very room. And it's not the first – not even in this student dormitory. ... I slept for two evenings on the sofa in the office, after that withdrawing into the room where I'm now living. I was able to stay here three nights. Then, the "absent" Armenian, who is still absent, returned and a different bed was found for me.

I had arrived at the House of the Insane. (Only I call it that.) The still life could be "painted" like this: the radio blasting at full strength, which, however, does not in the least bother the three Uzbeks, who play folk songs on their wind-up gramophone from one evening to the next. I believe that in these "multiple harmonies" Volodya was not yet a dividing or a multiplying factor. Yes, Volodya, with his own radio. The only way he could study was to lie in bed, with his radio tuned to the shortwave frequency and continually turning the knob, like a sufferer from severe rheumatism constantly turning two conkers over and over again in his hand. He was in search of dance music. And what's more: he always found it. I adjusted to all of this very quickly. Indeed, within a mere three or four days, I was contributing my own part to the orchestra, with, however, my own unique melodies. In this period, I was working with a Chukchi student. We listened to my tape recordings and transcribed the shaman songs. However, as you know from your experience, all good things must come to an end.

After settling all the necessary matters in Moscow, Diószegi left for Siberia for the second time in June of 1958. Passing through the foothills of the Urals, he found himself near Omsk, along the river Irtysh, in the territory of the closest demonstrable linguistic relatives of the Hungarians: the Voguls and the Ostyaks (Diószegi 1998, pp. 68–70):

I arose early the next morning. The train was about to leave for Novosibirsk, the future capital city of Siberia. However, this city is of interest to the Hungarian traveler for other reasons: here, our train would pass across the Ob, the great river of our closest linguistic relatives.

I knew full well that this section of the Ob could provide as profound a picture of the Voguls and Ostyaks living there as an aquarium does of the ocean depths; still... Already the bridge was rumbling beneath us. We had entered Novosibirsk. The train was still moving as I jumped off the step. I was wearing running shoes and trousers, but only a pyjama-top above them. "I'll just have a look at the famous river, stick my hand into it and run straight back," I thought cheerfully.

There I stood on the banks, the water of the Ob flowing like pearls through my hands. I comfortably began strolling back to the train station, like someone returning from a job well done. On the way, I had to pass some ladies selling fish. Suddenly, a fragment of a sentence very distant from Russian and very close to Hungarian struck my ear:

– *Hárum hol... ut hol...*

Somebody here is trying to decide in Vogul or Ostyak if they will buy three fish or five fish [Hungarian: *három hal, öt hal*]. There are so few immediately recognizable Finno-Ugric words in our vocabulary, particularly without linguistic analysis, and lo and behold, I had instantly stumbled upon three of them. So I began chatting with the Vogul ladies.

After a few polite words, I immediately began interrogating them as to the shaman head-dress, without much result.

– They never had anything particular on their heads, just normal hats. Why do you ask?

– I'm working in the museum, and I saw such a thing. Have you been to the museum? Do you know what it is?

– Of course we've been there, here in Novosibirsk.

The conversation warmed up considerably: I gathered much important information about idols and sacrificial sites from my two accidentally sent “informants”.

– The museum still collects quite a few of these figures from where we live, the younger one said.

I looked at her in disbelief.

– I can see you don't believe me, but it's true.

– But surely all the idols were destroyed a long time ago already.

– Yes, yes in the villages, the ones that were in the houses. But in the thick woods, the hidden islands, it's not like that! Nobody goes there to pray, but they also don't go there to destroy. They're falling apart slowly, by themselves: disintegrating from the snow, the rain, the frost and the sun.

– You just *think*, or do you know from experience that such 'totem idols' really exist?

– I certainly don't just *think*, I've seen it with my own two eyes! Once I was fishing on a smaller boat. Suddenly a storm came up. I rowed to the first island I saw, and tied the boat up. I had never been there. When the storm passed, I carefully went in a little from the shore. And what did I find on the inner part of the island! Idols! And so many! Everything had remained as it had been twenty, thirty years ago.

In the middle of this conversation, the characteristically harsh whistle of the Soviet locomotive sliced through the air.

I then remembered: I had only meant to get off the train for a few minutes, and I had presumably been chewing the fat for quite a while now with the ladies of the Ob.

I ran to the train station. As I did so, I reassured myself: how lucky I was that back at school, I had run track and field.

I reached the station and dashed to the second platform. Only the empty space where the train had been. I perhaps have never lived through such a painful moment in my life.

My bags were on their way to Krasnoyarsk with the train, and here I stood in the station of a foreign city – in a pyjama top, with no money and no passport. Even my ticket had remained on board.

As we might expect, after considerable negotiations, Diószegi was eventually able to continue on his journey, reaching Krasnoyarsk and from there proceeding still eastwards. His goal: to verify if any remnants of shamanistic tradition persisted among the small Turkic and Samoyed peoples of the distant taiga. The following excerpts from his personal notes (including letters back to his wife in Budapest) give the flavor of the journey – on one hand the excitement at reaching social groups previously little known to scholarship, on the other, the ever-present fear that modernity (or, reading between the lines, the imperialisms of Czarist orthodoxy and Soviet Communism) had left nothing remaining (Diószegi 2002, pp. 186–198):

1958, July 2, Wednesday, Nizhnyi Udinsk

The Leningrad warning came into my mind: the colleagues who said there is no point in going to “Tofalaria” [the region of the Tofa people beside the Ude River], I could sit waiting for an entire week at the airport. – But if only the Moscow warning won't come true! M. G. Levin said there is no point in travelling to the Tofas, because they have already completely lost their national character and are totally Russified. ...

... Now here I am, sitting at the airport, waiting to find out when I can fly to the Saya – the land of reindeer tracks, among the Karagas.

These are the different melodies that have lulled me to sleep: in Krasnoyarsk it was foghorns, in Irkutsk dance music (the museum where they put me up stood at the foot of the “Culture Park”), in Nizhnyi Udinsk aircraft motors. And in the land of the Karagas – the lowing of reindeer. Jealous, aren't you? No [Hungarian] ethnographer has ever gone where I'm going – to the Turkicised Samoyeds, to the Karagas. I'm coming a little late. The shaman of Alygdzher died in March. There are Karagas still living in two villages. Maybe I'll find something among them.

...

Sunday July 6, Alygdzher

Now I dare to write it: The Moscow prophecy did not in the least come true, because the Tofas have truly preserved their traditional culture. I could easily prepare an entire ethnographic study about them. In any event, I've collected beautiful leather, bone and bark objects, and I shall try to make some additional recordings unrelated to shamanism. – If I can stay here for another three or four days. Then there'll be a monograph.

Monday, July 7, Alygdzher

In the morning we went to the cemetery. The cemetery is already marked by Orthodox crosses and red stars standing on wooden pylons. But I also found two or three grave-markers in the shape of human forms. This is certainly a find. For in old times, they would place the body in something resembling a grain-box, right on the surface of the ground, and even then there were hardly grave-markers in the shape of a person. Otherwise, one of these graves in question was that of a shaman. The second, that of a small child. And the third was for the relative of a shaman.

...

July 10, Nyerkha

Now I can confess to you: I was afraid that I would not be able to transcribe and translate the songs recorded on my reels of tape. In most ethnic areas, there is a regional research centre, where experts on the given ethnicity can complete this work. But of course, for a group consisting of only 430 people, there is no such institution. Here, I am referred to the schoolchildren. And it goes well. The method I had figured out while still at home has been successful: I transcribe all the taped material onto paper, and translate it into Russian while still here.

...

Saturday, July 12, Nyerkha

In the morning I went to [Innokentii] Kokuev, and we began the work of taping the shaman songs. The songs poured out of him in an unbroken flood. Later on, he took a thick paper block into his hand, and beat it with a jam-jar as if it were a drum. “The singing goes much better this way,” he said. I recorded one and one-quarter reels.

After leaving the Tofas, on July 26 Diószegi joined the expedition of Alexey Pavlovich Okladnikov, along the Oka River. Still haunted by financial worries yet not yet willing to leave Siberia, he was glad to have the chance to remain. However – despite such exciting archaeological finds as a Bronze Age image of a shaman drum – the real goal remained the Tuvans (whom he largely calls Soyots – though the term now refers to a Tuvan sub-ethnicity in Buryatia). With only 500 rubles in his pocket, Diószegi found himself in the airport at

Irkutsk, wondering whether to continue to the Tuvan capitol of Kizil or simply to return to Moscow. As one might by now expect, the prospect of further exploration won out, though once again with the doubt that enough evidence of shamanistic belief and practice could be found. Diószegi recalled that another Hungarian explorer, János Jankó (regarded as the founder of the comparative approach within Hungarian ethnography and folkloric studies) had spent the years from 1899 to 1901 in Tuva, reassuring himself that perhaps not all knowledge was irretrievably vanished, yet his flight to Kizil provoked considerable reflection (Diószegi 1998, p. 141):

The whirling clouds at time break up, the Yenisei River sparkles below us. The Yenisei, and the rumbling of the motor. The ethnographer in me enviously recalls the words of one description of a journey:

“The Soyots are even today zealous in their shamanistic beliefs. When in 1907 we rowed up the Yenisei, the shaman drums resounded all evening in the territory of the Soyots. The local residents informed me what the boat carries, the boat that is never seen, and that moves against the current.”

With the passing of fifty years, the drone of the aircraft motor had replaced the sound of the shaman drum.

The feeling that I had come too late weighed heavily upon me. The great people's movement of the Soyots, which in 1921 created the Tuvan Republic, began the struggle against superstition and shamanism. Houses of Culture, hospitals, radio, newspapers began the work of enlightenment, of opposing the benightedness, the old beliefs and customs. And in truth, that is a good thing. It was important for shamanism to disappear. But it is equally as important that it not disappear without trace, for it represents a significant stage in the development of religious consciousness. For the sake of scientific research, everything about it that can be immortalized must be.

“Immortalize” (Hungarian: *örökít*: to make or render immortal) is, for an investigator as scrupulously factual as Diószegi, something of a strange word to encounter. Museums, these institutions of post-Enlightenment secular time-consciousness⁹ are concerned with preservation for the immediate, foreseeable future, not with a transcendental, metaphysical survival beyond the physical world. In one respect, the idea of “immortalising” the knowledge of traditional peoples could be linked to Diószegi's concerns for thorough scholarship, both in his proposed shamanism archive and his repeated criticism of the habit of Soviet regional museums of labelling unknown artefacts merely as “object used by shamans”: rather than the mere preservation of culturally “dead” objects or legends, to understand their position within their social orders. Yet in another sense, the evocation of what is, after all, quasi-religious language might also – particularly when juxtaposed against one of the rare

9) Note the penultimate chapter of Anderson 1991, “Census, Map, Museum”.

instances of compulsory praise for socialist progress – serve to recall the spiritual dimensions of shamanistic faith.

Similar alternations between despair and hope continued throughout Diószegi's stay in Tuva: disappointments were interspersed with chance encounters that opened up unforeseen possibilities, such as the following incident (Diószegi 1998, p. 154):

Unfortunately, at the counter they were only selling tickets for westward-bound flights, none for the east. "There is no scheduled flight time." So I could wait again. Wait until the fog finally lifted, or the cloud drifted higher.

At noon, we were still waiting for a "favourable" breeze.

– There is a mountain pass, I don't know the name, but there's always fog above it, said a black-haired lady. – The plane can only fly through there, that's why we have to wait.

– Why don't you know the name of the mountain pass? You're not from here? – I asked her.

– I'm Khakas, not Soyot.

– Khakas? Last year I was among the Khakas: I was with the Belyts, the Sagais, the Kachins, and the Khoibals.

– Well then you really went everywhere, everywhere but where I'm from. I'm from Kizil.

Suddenly the fog over the mountain pass did not seem as important. After a few words, I took out my notebook, so I could write down whatever the charming lady had to say about the Kizil shamans.

However, she knew very little.

– You see, I'm only thirty-five, and in my time nobody shamanized very much. But I heard a lot from my grandfather. My grandfather's a storyteller. He knows a lot of tales.

– Where does he live?

– In Abakan. His name is Taacheev. Anyone in the city can tell you where he lives.

As much as this incident reveals the ease and absence of self-conscious inhibitions of Diószegi in making contact with informants, he never met with the Khakas woman's grandfather. And even the ethnographic establishment in Kizil expressed its doubts about what could still be found, as evident in this conversation with the director of the Kizil museum (Diószegi 1998, p. 145):

Try to research it, if you go among the shamans. I'm also curious.

Among the shamans? Will I find any?

Kalzan answered: Hardly any functioning ones. But you will certainly find those who shamanized once.

In the village of Iy, Diószegi certainly found enough informants to give a picture of Tuvan shamanism before the advent of the Communist version of modernity. Nonetheless, as he remained in the region throughout August 1958, his budget was stretched to the absolute minimum, even with the additions of a few small sums for writing articles for the Russian-language regional

newspaper *Tuvinskaya Pravda* or accompanying a documentary film crew (Diószegi 1998, p. 150):

I could even entertain the thought of accommodations and food, if I was really careful with money. (Although I had been more than a little uneasy in the last week: every time I swallowed a bite, my stomach hurt so much, as if I had been scouring a wound. Alas: erratic nutrition never goes unpunished.)

Once again, Diószegi was truly pushing himself to his physical limitations in his quest for material. Yet to interpret his ascetic regimen as a conscious or unconscious attempt to join the world of his subjects – as later anthropologists have indeed done – would be inaccurate. In distant Tuva, the Hungarian scholar willing to miss his train to speak with Vogul fishmongers retained a firm grasp of his own Christian-Aristotelian “mythologies” to a degree increasingly rare today. Chief among them was, up until the very end of his career, the search for original forms of shamanism, for shamanism as one of the earliest forms of spiritual experience. In part, this quest for the most primal shamanistic elements explains his relative lack of success in Mongolia, where centuries of Tibetan Buddhist practice and long familiarity with a religious rather than magical world-view (Nestorian Christianity, Islam) have left so many cultural layers intermixed with shamanic practice. And the same can be said for Diószegi’s clear distaste for syncretic expressions of tradition and modernity, as evidenced in this description of a contemporary Tuvan prayer-mound (Diószegi 1998, p. 202):

Two poles stood out from the pile of rocks. The longer one was blunt, the shorter one pointed. However, as far as their adornments were concerned, they were equally decked out. Scraps of fabric of various colours, sizes and materials, horsehairs and lace were fastened onto them. But also dangling from the poles were torn sections of inner tube, and other automotive parts.

All of this had been brought as an offering by those travelling upon this road, brought as a sacrifice.

Alas: civilization had broken into the land of the shamans, and already not only the dog-eared garlands hang on the ovoo, but machine parts as well.

As I photograph the mound from close up, from far away, from right and left, our cameraman uncertainly asks me:

– Is this something you need for your work?

Current anthropological theory would certainly not lament the incursion of “civilisation” into “tradition” but rather find such an artifact greatly to the liking of a postmodern sensibility that has largely abandoned the ontological quests of a previous age. By contrast, Diószegi represents a scholarly practice with a far different aim, one shared by the two formative European mentalities

of romanticism and modernism: to find original, primal sources for human cultures. The regret at what had been lost is, in so many of the passages quoted, clearly genuine, and it would have been impossible at the time to have pointed an accusing finger at the real causes of what was in fact cultural genocide: the murder of thousands of practicing shamans followed by Soviet policies of assimilation through Russian-language boarding-school education. Not only would doing so have ended Diószegi's scholarly career (or at the very least any hopes of conducting fieldwork in the USSR until two decades after his death), but that for many of the peoples of the northern taiga the work of destruction only started in earnest at around the same time as Diószegi's visit.¹⁰ Above all, Diószegi's impulse to avoid the romantic extremes of Hungarian nationalist "Turanism" at many times diverted him to the opposite: to expressions of a deterministic materialism that seems most dated today. For one instance, it is worth quoting a conversation that he records with Dr. Leonid Potapov, director of the Ethnographic Institute in Leningrad and the leading Russian expert on shamanism of the time, in the museum in Kizil (Diószegi 1998, pp. 210–211):

– So, how was the second expedition? As good as the first, I hope? – He shook my hand delightfully. – Come with me, I'd like to hear your results.

And arm in arm, we started off towards one of the empty offices.

– I can reveal to you – he said as we walked – that I was able to find a shaman grave.

I, in turn, proudly boasted that in the territory of the northeastern Soyots, I myself had photographed another such rare monument.

Lighting up and leaning back comfortably in the armchairs, I began my "report".

[...] Those one-time shamans whom I knew personally were for the most part, clearly high-strung, mentally unstable people. These abnormalities were obviously inherited within a family or a clan. This can explain the belief that perceives the process of becoming a shaman as hereditary. However, this explanation is in and of itself insufficient for the actual state of being a shaman: a certain inclination or sense of vocation for this activity is absolutely necessary. Therefore, only those individuals become shamans who are born with the necessary disposition among the members of a shaman family, who bear the burden of this genetic inheritance. Only these persons will "feel" the summoning of the spirits, only these will "see" the "spirits" coming to them. This could be the reason why the designated person, in contrast to the process of succession, can become a shaman through "selection".

As concerns the shamans who originate from families that are not shaman families: just as in any family with genetic abnormalities not everyone is afflicted. Thus, just as a mentally ill or neurotic person can be born into a healthy family, such people – even though they have no shaman ancestors – "feel" a sense of calling, "see" the spirits, that is to say they become shamans.

– As I see it – said Potapov – you're really on the right track.

10) For a more detailed picture of official policy on taiga-dwellers, see the chapters on the Tofa, Todzhu and Os peoples in Harrison 2007.

Yearning for immortalization of vanishing beliefs and dismissal of shamanism as a psychiatric or dietary imbalance: this contradiction is jarring indeed. And yet, in the final analysis, it may have been these very same intellectual contradictions (not much different from the images of the Feszty panorama, with its iconography derived from medieval Christian art, and the fishwives along the Ob) that made Diószegi such a unique recorder, at such a unique time. For he was, coming at the very end, one of the last modern researchers who had the possibility of meeting people with vivid memories of a tradition forcibly destroyed. Indeed, he admits such in the final paragraphs, recalling his last conversation on the way out to the Moscow-bound airplane with a Tuvan friend, a leading actor from the Kizil State Theater whose mother had been a shaman (Diószegi 1998, p. 217):

The Soyot actor, paying no attention to the prohibition, slips out with me all the way to the aircraft. I would already be stepping up the staircase rolled towards the narrow door, but he keeps squeezing my hand.

– A few decades from now, when the people of Siberia will want to know what life was like in the time of their grandfathers, what it was like before the spread of civilization, they will have to take out your descriptions. And they will take them out. For we can only measure how far we've gone if we know where we started.

The airplane motor rumbles loudly; I cannot say anything in response.

Perhaps our only response today is to conclude by examining what we, half a century later, can see of the world that Diószegi could glimpse through the actual living memories of his informants. A Hungarian expedition in the 1990s to re-trace Diószegi's routes through Siberia did succeed in finding several elderly villagers who could remember him, but few with direct personal recollections of original shamanistic belief. Among the Buryats, where some knowledge of shamanism remained among the population (and has even revived after the fall of Communism), they noted that (Sántha 2002, p. 424):

... what has changed the most in the significance of western Buryat shamanism since the time of V. D. [is that] at the time of his researches, shamans who had come of age before the war, indeed before the October Revolution, were still alive, shamans who could perform their functions freely and who in terms of their cultic implements as well as in their activities were complete representatives of classical Buryat shamanism dating from the beginning of the eighteenth century, precisely as described by the literature.

And even for the Tofa, the tiny Turkic people of the taiga who had provided enough material for a monograph in 1958, here is what an American linguist, seeking to record their now severely endangered language, found in 2001 (Harrison 2007, p. 101):

The Tofa we met there subsisted on small vegetable plots, hunting, and gathering berries and other forest edibles, and a few supplies (flour, sugar, vodka) flown in occasionally on decrepit Russian helicopters. Their domestic reindeer herds, they told us, had long since turned wild and run off... Despite the bleak circumstances, our party was warmly welcomed, and we found people eager to share their stories. Perhaps this was because no one else ever asked to hear stories in the Tofa language. Indeed, no one under age 55 spoke Tofa any more.

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