

ALEVTINA SOLOVYEVA

Reawakening Spirits  
in Post-Socialist Mongolia:  
Vernacular Theories and Practices





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Vernacular Theories and Practices



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Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, Institute of Cultural Research, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Tartu, Estonia

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Supervisors: Prof. Ülo Valk, University of Tartu  
Prof. Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz, University of Bern  
Prof. Jonathan Roper, University of Tartu

Reviewer: Ergo-Hart Väsrik, University of Tartu

Opponents: Grégory Delaplace, Université Paris Nanterre  
Ergo-Hart Väsrik, University of Tartu

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## LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

### **Article I**

Solovyeva, Alevtina 2021. An Immured Soul: Contested Ritual Traditions and Demonological Narratives in Contemporary Mongolia. Ülo Valk and Marion Bowman (Eds.) *Contesting Authority: Vernacular Knowledge and Alternative Beliefs*. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing (forthcoming).

### **Article II**

Solovyeva, Alevtina 2017. Chötgöriin Yaria in the Twentyfirst Century: Mongolian Demonological Beliefs and Mass Culture in the Age of Globalisation. Ines Stolpe, Judith Nordby, Ulrike Gonzales (Eds.) *Mongolian Responses to Globalization Processes. Bonner Asienstudien V.13*. Berlin: EBV. 129–148.

### **Article III**

Solovyeva, Alevtina 2019. Mythological World of Mongolian Charms. Eva Pócs (Eds.) *Charms and Charming: Studies on Magic in Everyday Life. Studia Mythologica Slavica*, 15. Ljubljana. 169–194.

### **Article IV**

Solovyeva, Alevtina. Kollmar-Paulenz, Karénina 2021. From the Tibetan Burial Ground to the Mongolian Steppe: a New Life of the Buddhist Ritual Practice in post-socialist Mongolia. *Aspects of Mongolian Buddhism* (forthcoming).

# INTRODUCTION

## 1. Rediscovering Mongolia: origins and grounds of the research

Mongolia, the “Land of the Eternal Blue Sky and Golden Earth”,<sup>1</sup> is a special area of Inner Asia. It is also the name of a nation-state officially representing the distinctive culture of Mongols, descendants of those who in medieval times were famous as invincible nomadic conquerors, holders of the great Mongolian Empire founded by Genghis Khan and regarded as the largest contiguous state formation between Asia and Europe. Mongolian culture has ties to multiple cultural traditions including the ancient Iranian, Uyghur, Turkic, Tibetan and Central Asian cultures. Mongolia has not been as visible on the world stage over the last few centuries, and most people (at least, most western non-scholars) only began to rediscover it recently and in a new perspective: this time as a hidden land of freedom, wild nature, living traditions and flourishing spirituality. Indeed, nowadays Mongolia represents a peculiar culture, combining very different features and facing contemporary challenges. It is a culture that is sandwiched between Russia and China and must move in a complex web of geopolitical interests, maintaining a position between the eastern and western worlds, undergoing the processes of globalization and a rapid urbanization, while still attempting to preserve traditional values and lifestyle and remaining close to its pastoralist heritage. Between now and then, there has been a long road of great and dramatic events influencing Mongolian culture both gradually and harshly. The most significant and cruel of the recent ones was the experience of socialism which lasted for more than seventy years (1924–1991).<sup>2</sup> Hence, nowadays Mongolia presents an example of handling, conceptualizing and overcoming this arduous experience, which has more general importance for understanding ‘Soviet-type societies’ in a number of such countries with a similar past.

Significant roles in the ‘national revival’ and post-socialist Mongolian society were played by various categories of the supernatural and religious – the atheistic regime’s enemies and victims, suppressed and condemned for dozens of years to

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<sup>1</sup> The well-known phrase, *Khökh mönkh tenger altan delkhii oron* (‘the land of the eternal blue sky and golden earth’) is common in Mongolian epic poetry, and mentions the supreme deities, Sky and Earth. It is now popularly cited in nationalistic and spiritual discourse.

<sup>2</sup> After the collapse of the Qing dynasty, from 1911 Mongolia became involved in a range of political crises and revolutions in China and Russia, until the establishment of the Mongolian Peoples’ Republic in 1924. The socialist regime lasted until the 1990s, with the democratic revolution commenced and the new position of the president established in 1990, new political course and restrictions on the Communist party taken in 1991, the new constitution came in force in 1992 and the first direct election of the president conducted in 1993. In 1996 the democratic party won the majority of seats in the Parliament.



a hidden, ‘whispering’ form of existence.<sup>3</sup> In the early 1990’s, the supernatural burst back into Mongolian culture, clearly demonstrating its superior vitality and taking its revenge on the ruined atheistic ideology. Traditional images and motifs of the supernatural occupied various realms and contexts, revealing their important social character: the spirit (*ongon*) of Genghis Khan, the main patron of the nation (*ulsyn ezen*), supernatural lords of the state worshiped mountains and *oboo* (*ulsyn takhildag uulyн ovoony ezen*), local nature spirits (*lus savdag, gazaryн uulyн usny ezen*), the lord of the fire, hearth (*galyn khan, golomtyn ezen*), various demons, ghosts and restless souls (*chötgör, бүг, гүүдeл, сүнс*), etc.<sup>4</sup> They became symbols of the national revival and the new state ideology, expressions of collective memories and social relations, as well as of the sorrows of private life, the hopes and fears of post-socialist reconstruction and the present time, demanding (and receiving) the attention of an increasing number of specialists in ritual concerns.

The Mongolian example of national and religious revivals has a number of peculiar features. One of these is that while the supernatural figures are the most active mouthpieces of independence and nationalism, the creators of post-socialist spiritual and public environment, they are not from ‘high’ pantheons or epic traditions as often would be the case when constructing national identities (Hosking, Schöpflin 1997).<sup>5</sup> On the contrary, Mongolian representatives of the supernatural belong to realm of vernacular beliefs very close to everyday life. This work tries to follow the clues and to reveal the grounds for vitality of some supernatural and religious concepts in contemporary Mongolia.

## 2. Research settings

### 2.1. Research questions and aims

This work deals with post-socialist experience in Mongolian society, a choice granted by one of my professional specialisations and the valuable opportunity to research these very particular traditions in a time of high dynamics, transformations and rebuilding. The work follows two general lines of research: (1) it

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<sup>3</sup> In socialist ideology, expressions of beliefs in their various forms, together with official religions and a number of genres of the traditional folklore (these sometimes included even such traditions as epic storytelling *tuul*’ and ‘long songs’ *urtyn duu*), were labelled as ‘superstitions’ and as the outcomes of ‘old primitive culture’, and were forbidden and persecuted (Sandbag, Kendall 2000, Kaplonski 2002, 2004, 2008, Kuzmin, Oyunchimeg 2014).

<sup>4</sup> To avoid difficulties for readers, here and later on in this work I use the names of supernatural entities and other emic terms in Mongolian only in the singular form (so I use *ezen* rather than *ezed*, *ongon* rather than *ongod*, *chötgör* rather than *chötgörüüd*, etc.). For this and other Mongolian terms, see Appendix 2.

<sup>5</sup> This situation is especially remarkable because Mongolian cultures have old and rich epic traditions (still alive in oral performance in some communities). These traditions are highly respected and regarded as an important part of national heritage, but do not play any role in vernacular beliefs and theories.

investigates emic perspectives on the supernatural, which took a significant place in the national revival and in the life of contemporary Mongolian communities, and (2) it analyses these perspectives in the contexts of the relations between diverse participants and authorities involved in the shared creation of lived Mongolian religion.

The main object of this research is represented by contemporary Mongolian belief narratives associated with various discursive and ritual practices. The thesis is focused on the following research questions:

- what are the main features of vernacular beliefs about the supernatural in post-socialist Mongolia?
- what are the main concepts of the supernatural in the post-socialist Mongolian society?
- what are the institutional and non-institutional authorities that represent and shape the supernatural and religious traditions in post-socialist Mongolia?

Investigating these questions leads the research in the following directions:

- analysis of forms of the manifestation of the supernatural and religious in post-socialist Mongolia;
- analysis of the textual and contextual aspects of narratives;
- the definition of the main categories of the supernatural, reflected in vernacular theories and ritual practices;
- making a distinction between vernacular images and social ‘duties’ of the supernatural and religious;
- analysis of strategies of dealing with the supernatural, introduced by various agents of the religious life;
- the definition of the main features of contemporary religious life and emic perceptions of it;
- analysis of the conditions, balances and authorities of the religious and the supernatural in post-socialist Mongolian society.

## **2.2. Research data**

The research is based on fieldwork materials and complemented by written sources.

The fieldwork data consists of the materials collected during the years 2006–2020 in the rural and urban environment, in various parts of Mongolia (the main settlements listed in the Appendix 1). It includes several interconnected collections under the title “Mythological and ritual traditions of Mongolia” (2006–2018), a collective project of the Centre for Typological and Semiotic Folklore Studies, Russian State University for the Humanities (headed by S. Yu. Neklyudov and curated by A. Solovyeva), “Folklores and religious traditions of post-socialist Mongolia” (individual fieldwork research undertaken by A. Solovyeva, 2009–2020), including several topics such as “Mongolian Urban Folk Traditions”

(2009–2018), and the “Vernacular Religions of Contemporary Mongolia” (2016–2020). Separate attention was also paid to urban folk and religious traditions (these were investigated from 2009 onwards). The author undertook fieldwork annually in periods that varied from a minimum of one month to a maximum of ten months. Research was conducted in cities, the administrative centres of provinces (*aimag*) and districts (*sum*), settlements, pastoralist household camps, monasteries, and religious centres. During this period around one thousand interviews were conducted, over 300 of which are featured in this thesis.

The people, who kindly agreed to participate in the research and share their experiences, memories, knowledge, thoughts and ideas, represent the diversity of the contemporary Mongolian society. Among them are representatives of various Mongolian, Turkic and Tungus groups living in Mongolia: Khalkha (the major group), Barga, Bayad, Buryat, Chahar, Dariganga, Darkhad, Dörbet, Dukha (Tsaatan), Hamnigan (Evenks), Kazakh, Myangad, Olot, Tuvans, Uriankhai, Üzemchin, Zakhchin, etc. The social characteristics of the interviewees include a wide age range (with the youngest aged 10 and the oldest aged 101), in typically gender-balanced groups from a variety of professional groups (pastoralists, teachers, medical workers, midwives, veterinarians, psychiatrists, representatives of local administration, cultural workers, retired party workers, lamas, shamans, fortune-tellers, writers, technicians, geologists, wrestlers, drivers, and others). The fieldwork produced a unique corpus of diverse materials, representing Mongolian folk traditions, vernacular beliefs, everyday religiosity, discursive and ritual practices, oral history and narrative traditions.

The main written sources form several groups. One is the personal written materials of interviewees – unpublished manuscripts and published collections of stories about the supernatural, which people started to collect as remarkable and valuable facts (Tsermaa 2006, Davaa-Ochir 2008) in the late socialist period and to share during the 1990s and early 2000s. Another group includes special anonymous editions of stories about encounters with the supernatural (Chötgör 2014). The third group is represented by Mongolian mass media (journals, newspapers, etc.) and social media sources (Facebook, Twitter, special thematic blogs, websites and internet-communities, Youtube).<sup>6</sup>

Some of these sources (approximately a third) were previously cited in my candidate dissertation “Novye formy demonologicheskogo povestvovaniya v sovremennoj Mongolii” (Solovyeva 2019), submitted in 2016 and defended in 2019 at the Gorky Institute of World Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences. This research was focused on the repertoire of narratives and speech genres containing Mongolian demonological nomenclature, textological features

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<sup>6</sup> Recently this genre manifested itself also in the form of ‘audio stories’ on YouTube, commonly named *aimshgiin yaria* (horror stories). They are based on topics popular in oral folk traditions and urban legends and involves new examples of translated literature and movies (the most popular is from Korea, Japan, USA, France, Russia). I should like to thank Solongoo Oyundalai for sharing with me some of examples. See: *Aimshgiin yaria*, Youtube videos and podcasts (accessed 20.10.2020). URL: [youtube.com/results?search\\_query=аймшгийн+яриа](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=аймшгийн+яриа)

of traditional and new genres of storytelling, the relations between oral and written forms. The main result of the work was a model of a textual analysis and its application to oral and written texts, considering especially the semantics and pragmatics of demonological motifs. In the current work, however, I focus on Mongolian concepts of the supernatural and religious traditions, and view them in the contexts of historical transformations, post-socialist public issues and nationalist discourse. While the thesis includes previously collected materials, these materials are viewed from different angles, and much additional new data is considered (collected between 2016 and 2020 especially for this PhD project). Hence, the keynote of my previous research is textual and this thesis is contextual, they partly complement, but not repeat each other.

### 2.3. Historiography

This research covers several fields, such as vernacular beliefs, folk narrative cultures, religious traditions, social life of communities of post-socialist Mongolia, and subjects which have not been addressed before. However, the comparatively small international community of Mongolian Studies' scholars has made significant contributions to each of these fields (despite a noticeable lack of materials from some periods of the twentieth century). The works of predecessor scholars, as well as my present colleagues, provide comparative data and a solid base for the fruitful development of my research topic. Some of these works, which had special relevance to the thesis, are listed below in the brief bibliographical survey.

Since the research pays much attention to dynamics of beliefs and their representations after the experience of socialism, a number of collections of materials made earlier in the twentieth century and at the end of the nineteenth centuries supply the most valuable data for the necessary comparative analysis. Among such materials are published works by G. Potatin (1883), A. Pozdneeov (1887), A. Benningsen (1912), Maiskij (1921), B. Vladimirtsov (1927), G. Sanzheev (1930), I. N. Poppe (1932), M. Hangalov (1958–1960), A. Burdukov (1969) and unpublished collections by S. Boldaev, V. Kazakevich, and others.<sup>7</sup> These materials include examples of folk traditions, narratives of various genres, ritual texts, ethnographic descriptions, notes and travel diaries, analytical observations of different realms of the life of Mongolian communities from before and soon after the revolution.

A collection of stories about encounters with the supernatural of the mid- and late-twentieth century compiled by the Mongolian scholar, folklorists and writer Ts. Damdinsüren has great importance (Damdinsüren 1991).<sup>8</sup> He was the first, who paid special attention to vernacular beliefs about the supernatural and focused

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<sup>7</sup> Archival collections of the Centre for Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg), the Centre for Oriental manuscripts and woodcuts of the Institute for Mongolian, Buddhist and Tibetan Studies, the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Ulan-Ude).

<sup>8</sup> Archival collections of the House–Museum of Tsendiin Damdinsüren (Ulaanbaatar).

on collecting narratives about local deities, souls, spirits and demons, extraordinary incidents, talking to people about their thoughts and experiences during the socialist period. Examples of ritual genres, archived and collected in oral form during the mid-twentieth century, might be found in works of another Mongolian folklorist, Kh. Sampildendev (1984, 1987). Mongolian folk narratives, ritual genres, vernacular beliefs and religious traditions of the same period and earlier, as reflected in preserved collections of written sources, are represented in the works of such scholars as L. Lörincz (1970), W. Heissig (1966), and C. Bawden (1960–1961, 1970).<sup>9</sup>

Much substantial research has been devoted to the folklore, ethnography, traditional culture and customs, religious life and social relations of contemporary Mongolian communities. Included here are works concerning semantic ties and symbolics in traditional Mongolian cultures, both material and verbal, by S. Dulam (1999–2012) and T. Skrynnikova (1997). Mongolian speech and ritual genres (spells, charms, etc.) as regarded in research of S. Dulam and G. Nandinbilig (2007), supplemented by their work with the unique collections of fieldwork samples from the late-twentieth and early-twenty first century, in the works of I. Kul'ganek (2010), R. Otgonbaatar and A. Tsendina (2016), whose research involves rare archival material.

Mongolian demonology and traditional narratives about the supernatural received a comprehensive and systematic treatment in the works of S. Neklyudov (2007, 2008, 2010, 2019), A. Birtalan (1998), and other scholars (Billé, Delaplace, Humphrey 2012). A set of popular beliefs about the supernatural in connection to the pastoralist environment were examined by A. Oberfalzerova (2012) and M. M. High (2017). Topics concerning beliefs, ritual and social practices connected to the traditional environment are covered in works of G. Davaa-Ochir (2008) and D. Sneath (2014). Valuable data and new approaches toward the supernatural and demonic are introduced in works of anthropologist G. Delaplace, who investigated west Mongolian funeral traditions and relations with the deceased (2008), and various aspects of rural and urban ghostlore (2010, 2012).

The field of Mongolian religious studies is represented by numerous works that consider various religious traditions in different periods, historical and cultural contexts. The most relevant of these works for the current thesis include research touching on Buddhist and shamanic traditions, in particular on ritual practices and concepts. Among them are the works of K. Kollmar-Paulenz on the Tibetan Buddhist practice, *gCod* (Kollmar-Paulenz 1993, 1998, 2005, 2020), the development of the concept 'shamanism' and relations between Buddhist and shamanic traditions in Mongolia (Kollmar-Paulenz 2012), as well as contemporary traditions of pilgrimage and tourism (Kollmar-Paulenz 2017). Important aspects of the Mongolian religious revival, contemporary Buddhism and vernacular practices are considered in the research of A. Bareja-Starzyńska, H. Havnevik and B. Ragchaa (Havnevik, Bareja-Starzynska 2006; Havnevik,

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<sup>9</sup> Archival collections of the Abteilung für Mongolistik und Tibetstudien, Institut für Orient- und Asienwissenschaften (IOA), Universität Bonn.

Bareja-Starzynska, Ragchaa 2007), B. Mungunchimeg (2020), G. Nandinbilig and M. Sodnomsüren (2014), M. King (2012), and I. Shimamura (2020). Various aspects of 'traditional' and 'new' forms of shamanic practices and their social contexts are investigated in articles and monographs by S. Dulam (1992), J. Hangartner (2011), M.A. Pedersen (2011), B. Manduhai (2013), A. Birtalan (2016), and I. Shimamura (2011, 2017). Christian and Islamic traditions, which represent a part of contemporary religious life in Mongolia, are also considered in the academic work of J. Neeser (2014), N. Brede (2010) and other researchers.

The requisite contexts for this research is provided by works in political and social history of the socialist regime in Mongolia, contemporary social studies and cultural anthropology. In respect of historical contexts, the works of S. Sandag and H. Kendall (2000), Chr. Kaplonski (2002, 2004, 2008), S. Kuzmin and G. Oyunchimeg (2014), and I. Morozova (2009) should be mentioned. Various processes and features of Mongolian socialist and post-socialist societies are examined in the works of I. Stolpe (2017, 2019a, 2019b, 2020). Social aspects and public issues of contemporary mining, which has significant meanings in respect to actual beliefs, religious practices and national ideology, are investigated in the recent monograph of Bumochir (2020). The urban ethnography and social problematics of the transitional period are viewed against the background of Mongolia's capital city in the recent study of L. Hojer and M.A. Pedersen (2020).

Folk and religious traditions, and some aspects of social studies of contemporary Mongolian communities living in different conditions within state borders of Russia (Buryatia and Kalmykia) and China (Inner Mongolia) are tackled by a number of important researchers. Among these are works looking at Buryat narrative and ritual traditions by L. Dampilova (2005, 2016), Purbaeva (2010), Kalmyk folklore and oral history by T. Basangova (2007, 2011) and E. Habunova (2020). The folklore, religious practice and social life of Mongolian groups in China have been investigated by E. Chiodo (2000, 2009), C. Humphrey, D. Sneath and C. Evans (Humphrey 1996, Humphrey, Sneath 1999, Evans, Humphrey 2003).

## **2.4. Methodology and terms**

On the one hand, this thesis is based on folkloristic methodologies and approaches, which supported and enabled the analysis of the socialist and post-socialist experiences of Mongolian societies from epistemological and analytical perspectives that have not been addressed before in Mongolian studies. On the other hand, the study of Mongolian traditions may conceivably help in the development of analytic toolkits within folklore studies itself, especially as far as the functioning, updating and creating of narrative culture and vernacular religion are concerned. The theories and methods applied in this work can be divided in two groups, those concerning the collection of data and those concerning its analysis.

My fieldwork methods included interviewing based on pre-elaborated questionnaires and 'free' interviewing based on following and recording the 'speech flow'

of the interviewee in repeated interviews and surveys. The combination of various interview techniques permitted to document more diverse and complete data, involving such sensitive themes as family biographies and memories, supernatural experiences, fears and stereotypes, everyday ritual practices, discursive practices, communicative habits and norms, and many others. An essential part of methods of this research was participant-observation involving various situations including everyday activities, communal events, and ritual practices. The research had various locations: a neutral, or an improvised, 'office' area of the researcher (a room in a local school, dormitory or camping), the interviewee's own household setting, the interviewee's workplaces, public places (universities, museums, hospitals), ritual spaces including sacred places, monasteries, 'energy spots', locations of particular rituals in open air, journeys and pilgrimage tours, etc. These conditions of the research work gave fruitful opportunities to investigate discursive and ritual practices in their daily use and environments. The new data and research experience involving digital fieldwork once again demonstrate the efficacy of vernacular beliefs and respective practices in adapting rapidly to changing living conditions and modes of communication. The main methods of collecting data from written sources involved the regular monitoring and analysis of social media and internet sources.

In collecting and using the data, I follow the contemporary regulations governing ethics in the social sciences and humanities, as elaborated by international organisations: the guideline paper "Ethics in Social Science and Humanities" 2018;<sup>10</sup> the American Folklore Society's "Position Statement on Research with Human Subjects" 2011;<sup>11</sup> American Anthropological Association's "Statement on Race" 1998.<sup>12</sup> All fieldwork materials quoted in the thesis represent translations of transcripts of the original audio records of interviews conducted in Mongolian. My interlocutors were all aware of collecting the data and aims of the research. In those rare cases when my interviewees were ready to talk but did not agree for their speech to be published, I avoid quotations and refer only to a general topic or a particular motif. In respect of privacy, the safety and social comfort of my interviewees, all other quoted materials are accompanied by the initials (or by 'N', when the person did not want to reveal his or her initials).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> European Commission, Ethics in Social Science and Humanities, October 2018 (accessed 15.10.2020). URL: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/6\\_h2020\\_ethics-soc-science-humanities\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/6_h2020_ethics-soc-science-humanities_en.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> American Folklore Society, Position Statement on Research With Human Subjects, October 25, 2011 (accessed 15.10.2020). URL: <https://www.afsnet.org/page/HumanSubjects>

<sup>12</sup> American Anthropological Association, Statement on race, May 17, 1998 (accessed 15.10.2020).

URL: <https://www.americananthro.org/ConnectWithAAA/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=2583>

<sup>13</sup> For example, in the reference [R., 1958, Darkhad, 2007, Khövsgöl], here and further "R." denotes the initial letter of the interviewee's name; "1958" represents the year of birth of the interviewee; "Darkhad" is the Mongolian tribe that the interviewee belongs to; "2007" is the year when the interview was conducted and "Khövsgöl" is the name of the location (province, district, settlement).

In this thesis, I apply a combination of folkloristic theories and ethnographic approaches to analyse the collected data and to research the forms, meanings and roles of manifestations of beliefs about the supernatural in the discursive and ritual practices of post-socialist Mongolian communities.

One of the main elements of my research is its focus on the social contexts of supernatural beliefs. For this purpose, I use an approach that views ‘belief’ as a process and a form of delivery of ‘mental and social realities’ (Valk 2014, 2018), where supernatural entities, local deities, spirits and demons, are influential agents, marking various relations, interests and concerns. I consider textual and ritual (actional) representations of beliefs as forms of manifestation, recognition, conceptualization and construction of individual and collective experiences, connected to various situations of the past and the present (Valk 2001, 2006, 2014, 2018, Honko 1986).

In order to analyse textual representations of belief, their forms, meanings, interconnections and dynamics, I apply a number of concepts, concerning the specifics of folk narrative culture. Among these are ‘genre’, which I use in terms discussed in works of E. Meletinskij, S. Neklyudov, E. Novik (1994), Frog (2016) and K. Koski (2016). In my research, I develop some other related categories, such as, for example, ‘matrix of narration’ (Neklyudov 2007, 85), which is useful in the detection and analysis of narrative transformations, or ‘narrative registers’ (Koski 2008; 2016, 127–131), which in elaborated form refers to M. Bakhtin’s concept of ‘chronotope’, and provides tools for analysing modes of truth in narratives about the supernatural. One of the central analytical terms I apply in this work is ‘belief narrative’, indicating the closely interrelated nature of beliefs, experience and narration (Valk 2014, Korom 2000, Honko 1964). It is a category which allows me to bring together and analyse multiple narrative forms of ‘truestories’ from the intertextual angle (Valk 2016, 27). In some cases, I use the terms ‘memorate’ (Honko 1964) and ‘fabulate’ (Koski 2016) in order to investigate a ‘degree’ of personal experience, ‘urban’ or ‘contemporary’ legend (Dégh 2001) and other to consider the specific of relations within and between various forms of belief narratives (Frog, Koski, Savolainen 2016). I also use notions of ‘taleroles’, suggested by V. Propp (1968), and ‘character’, conceptualised as a combination of ‘taleroles’ and ‘actions’ in several works, for example, by E. Levkieskaya (2007) in modified senses. I use the term ‘motif’ for both textual and intertextual analysis of narrative and non-narrative folk genres. I use this term for semantic and morphological analysis, considering crosscultural ties and the typology of narrative traditions (Neklyudov 2004). I also include this term in a wider context, including the analysis of verbal and also actional expressions of beliefs and develop A. Dundes (1980) definition of motifs as notions that concurrently express underlying cultural ideas across genres.

For semantic analysis of non-narrative texts, I utilize general conceptualisations and tools developed in works looking at ritual genres, e.g. the principles of the symbolic language of charms and spells (Toporkov 2005, Agapkina 2010) as well as forms of speech genre (Bakhtin 1996). Such ideas allow useful framing of various statements. To analyse complex verbal and actional practices, I apply



concepts such as discursive genres (Van Dijk 1977, 1987), vernacular theories (Valk 2014) and conspiracy theories (Harambam, Aupers 2015), closely connected with such topics as social relations, communicative and behavioural models.

I consulted research on international demonology and ghostlore in order to place contemporary Mongolian beliefs and narratives about the supernatural in a wider cultural perspective. Among these are studies examining connected and regionally close traditions, as in the works of D. Doronin (2016) and K. Yadanova (2013) on some related motifs and characters of Altaic beliefs. In order to consider the typology of Mongolian beliefs and supernatural narratives and to examine the interactions with international folklore and mass culture it was useful to consult the article of J. Bosco (2007), devoted to the students' ghostlore of Hong Kong, J. H. Brunvand's book (1983) on American legends, which includes stories about demonic hitchhikers, a motif which is very popular in contemporary Mongolian urban folklore. Further examples and further theoretical grounds for the investigation of modern ghostlore were provided by the works of Ü. Valk (2006, 2014, 2018), D. E. Goldstein, S.A. Grider and J.B. Thomas (2007). These works examine ghost storytelling from multiple angles and in various contexts of social experiences, statements and practices, and bring to the discussion ways of updating traditional beliefs and motifs enrolled in new cultural circumstances.

In my research, I examine a diversity of ritual traditions and practices, seeing them as multiple aspects of the social life of post-socialist Mongolia. For research purposes, I apply and develop a number of contemporary concepts and approaches shared by folkloristics, anthropology and religious studies. Another main analytical category applied in the thesis is that of 'vernacular religion' or 'lived religion', as introduced in works of L. Primiano (1995, 2014), Ü. Valk (2014) and other scholars. Accordingly, in my work I regard 'religion' as an un-unified phenomenon (Valk 2017), determined by practice in the life of Mongolian communities and as a joint creative process. For the aims of analysis, I also distinguish between multiple participants of religious life, and identify their cooperative and contradictory interests, strategies and relations (see Chapter 3.3 and Article IV). In order to analyse various situations and cases, I also use a number of other terms, such as 'religious traditions' and 'religious identities' as discussed in the work of R. King (1999). In particular, he observed and developed a number of points relevant for my research, including the strong social nature and public character of religious practices. He showed the close connections between religion and nationalism, analysed using examples of such complex constructs as 'world religions' and 'hinduism'.

In order to develop a perspective on nationalism and its specific connections to traditional beliefs about the supernatural and religious practices, I found some other works helpful. Including those on other cases of post-socialist new age spirituality and national movements (Västriik 2015) and on the involvement of mythology in constructing national identities, public discourse and political behaviour (Viires 1991; Hosking, Schöpflin 1997; Šmidchens 2007).

In my thesis, I apply and discuss emic terms, which helps to present insider perspectives, one of the basic aims of this research. This helps to maintain in our

awareness the conventional and conditional nature of technical terms of art and their complicated cognitive life. Thus, for example, I find that basic Mongolian emic terms for narrative genres include a number of notions, apparently partly influenced in the past by the Soviet Russian academic language, but then taken up into popular use by local culture-bearers and performers:

*Tuul* – ‘epic stories’;  
*Ülger domog* – ‘myths’, ‘fairy tales’;  
*Khuuch aria* [*khuuch* – old, *aria* – talk(s)] – ‘legends’;  
*Bolson yavdal* [*bolson* – happened, *yavdal* – incident] – ‘belief narratives’;  
*Chötgöriin yaria* [*chötgöriin* – demonic, *yaria* – talk(s)] – ‘belief narratives’, more commonly used in urban contexts;  
*Aimshgüin yaria* [horror stories] – ‘belief narratives’, more commonly used in the Internet contexts.

In general, for textual representations of supernatural beliefs, I use the terms ‘(folk) narrative’ and ‘belief narrative’, while in some cases when genre differences are relevant, I use the term ‘legend’ to denote a belief narrative referring to the past, and ‘memorate’ and ‘fabulate’ to distinguish between storytelling in the first and second person. In such cases, I discuss the correlations between analytical and emic definitions. In some cases, which involve a special research query (as with Article II), I typically use the emic genre category.

Another case of research awareness is provided by the categories of the supernatural, their emic nomenclature and translation requirements. The names of Mongolian supernatural categories are multi-layered, characterized by a remarkable semantic capacity and variety, conditioned by their origin, history of usage and transformations (e.g. in Mongolian written culture and translated literature, discursive practices of various periods). For example, we can take some of the chief categories found in this research (see Appendix 2):

*Lus savdag* [from Tibetan *klu sa bdag*] – divine and demonic entities of water and earth (Sükhbaatar 1997, 12; Davaa-Ochir 2008, 30–31);

*Gazaryn ezen* [*gazar-yn* – of the earth, land, *ezen* – lord, using the root common in the Mongolian and Turkic languages: *ez-i*] – divine and demonic entities found in vernacular beliefs, which at different times might be translated as ‘lords of the locality’, conditionally divine and demonic ‘water and earth masters’, ‘nature spirits’, ‘patron spirits’ of mountain and other sacred places, ‘ancestral local spirits’, or ‘shamanic spirits’, etc.;

*Chötgör* [the etymological meaning is unclear, as, though the word has a Mongolian etymology, connected roots have not yet been found] – demonic entities featuring in vernacular beliefs. According to the context, the word might be translated as ‘demon’, ‘spirit’, ‘ghost’, ‘lost soul’, ‘bad soul’, or ‘bodily soul’,<sup>14</sup> etc.

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<sup>14</sup> According to the popular in narratives and ritual practices beliefs about the multiplicity of souls, one soul stays with the corpse, hiding in particular bone(s): the ‘bodily’ or ‘bone’ soul.

Due to the categories of the supernatural being even more contextually dependent and less conventional than genre categories (see Chapter 3.1, Chapter 3.2, Article I and Article II), when analysing particular cases, I use emic terms and their translational equivalents together, choosing the most semantically close and suitable for the situation.

Another type of specific complexity is introduced by categories concerning the ‘religious’, emic terms, as influenced by various cultural, academic and political traditions:

*Shashin* – ‘religion, teaching, doctrine’;  
*Böögiin shashin, khar shashin, böögiin mörgöl* – ‘shamanic religion’, ‘black religion’,<sup>15</sup> ‘shamanic practice(s)’, ‘shamanism’;<sup>16</sup>  
*Buddyn shashin, burhny shashin, shar / ulaan shashin* – ‘Buddhist religion’, ‘divine religion’ (or ‘religion of Buddha’), ‘yellow / red religion’;<sup>17</sup>  
*Yos zanshil* [*yos* – rule, order, custom, *zanshil* – tradition, custom, habit] – ‘tradition’.

In this research, I make use of emic terms, discussing their contextual meanings and roles and correlations with academic concepts. However, in general I rely on the concept ‘tradition’ (Glassie 1995, 398; Noyes 2009, 239), which denotes here an unity of beliefs shared by a certain community or local group, manifested in various forms, including verbal and performative forms, and applied to narrative, ritual and religious cases. The use of this term allows to consider a variety of such ‘belief-units’, both separately and in relation to one another. In my research, I use the term ‘specialist’ to refer to all kinds of professional and non-professional performers of ritual practices, and I also supply additional specifications (such as lama, shaman, ‘wise man’, etc).

The present research also involves some other emic terms concerning the supernatural and the religious, including recent loans from other languages and cultural realms such as *energ*’ [energy] and *radiats* [radiation], which are applied in a spiritual sense, especially to positively or negatively evaluated places. I also use the terms *shouman* [showman] and *oligarkh* [oligarch], which are used to express the negative characteristics of ritual specialists. Thus, these and many other linguistic examples provide evidence on the adventurous life of contemporary vernacular beliefs.

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<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that ‘black’ (*khar*) in Mongolian has multiple meanings, including ‘simple’ (as in ‘simple [not noble] man’ (*khar hün*)) and ‘clean’ (as in ‘clean water’ (*khar us*)).

<sup>16</sup> ‘Shamanism’ is a famous example of a compromised term and concept being taken advantage of by academic, religious and political interests. Nowadays it is partly tolerated by the academic community and taken up into use by a number of local traditions. About Mongolian history of this term see the work of Kollmar-Paulenz (2012).

<sup>17</sup> In this way in Mongolian tradition various schools of Tibetan-Mongolian Buddhism are marked, ‘yellow cap’ *gelug-pa* (*dGe lugs pa*), ‘red cap’ *ningma-pa* (*rNying ma pa*), and other schools (see Article IV). By analogy, other religious traditions also have their colourful epithets: Christianity as the ‘white religion’ (*tsagaan shashin*), Islam as the ‘green religion’ (*nogoon shashin*), etc.

### 3. Beliefs in narratives and practices in post-socialist Mongolia

#### 3.1. Textual and contextual features of vernacular beliefs

The story which starts this chapter is, at one and the same time, both unusual and characteristic of story telling in post-socialist Mongolia. It vividly illustrates numerous features, both textual and contextual, of the vernacular beliefs, narrative culture and the life of Mongolian society, which are discussed further below (see the original text in Mongolian in Appendix 3).

There was a *böö* [shaman],<sup>18</sup> *Zönög-khairkhan*. The title *khairkhan*<sup>19</sup> he was given later. At first, *Zönög* was not so good a shaman, he was an ordinary one. There was a monastery called *Evdiin Khuree* in the land of Darkhads. Then it was called *Dzulungiin Khuree*. When it was still [called] ‘*Evdiin Khuree*’, a large-scale epidemic broke out. In fact, it happened because the local *savdag* [nature spirits] became furious and turned the monastery upside down. Then all the best shamans and lamas from the Darkhad valley gathered together and started to discuss how to save the Darkhad valley and not let the [spirits] to destroy it. Then they united the strength of the Buddhist teaching and the power of the shamanic faith, and they suppressed those terrifying *savdag* [nature spirits] and captured those nine huge *tiiren* [demons]. The lamas and shamans captured those nine huge *tiiren*. All of them were poisoning *savdag* [nature spirits, harming people]. Besides these nine huge *tiiren savdag* [demonic nature spirits], there was their chief, the tenth *tiiren*. They caught him as well, put him between two huge cast-iron pots and buried him in the earth.<sup>20</sup> He is still there, buried under the earth in *Renchinlkhumbe* district, covered over by a stone. Those nine *tiiren* were separated from their chief, buried under nine black stones by the river *Tengesiin-gol*, which is to the north of the lake *Tsagaan-nuur*. They were such huge stones: each was the size of a yurt. At the time, *Zönög*-shaman was on the river *Tengesiin-gol*. He was curious and he dug the soil out from under each of those nine stones. When he dug a little under one black stone, a man with no neck or head came out, from another stone, a part of a human body emerged, as did something that did not look like a human, animals with some parts missing, birds with missing parts. At first, he took one [of them] and started to raise it as an animal, to teach it his language, to tame it, to train it as [people] train a dog. He made it his *ongon* [helper-spirit], taught it to

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<sup>18</sup> In contemporary traditions, *böö* is often used as a general term for male and female shamans. A separate term for a female shaman is *udagan*.

<sup>19</sup> *Khairkhan* is a popular term in Mongolia used as a euphemism for named worshipped mountains (Gruntov, Mazo, Solovyeva 2018). It literally means ‘beloved’. In this context, being the title of a skilful shaman, it emphasizes the ties which a specialist shaman has with the nature and a particular area *nutag* – the place of birth and a unity of local landscape, human and supernatural community. The beliefs about these relations are represented in narrations, testifying that after death shamans become local *lus savdag* nature spirits, and that in traditional ritual practices shamans were believed to be buried on the side of the local worshiped mountain (or on a tree in Buryat traditions) (see Article I).

<sup>20</sup> About this motif, see Article I.

follow his orders: do this!, come here! Then he started to dig up the other stones. By the end, he had dug out eight [entities] from the eight stones [and had made them his] *ongon*. But he did not touch the ninth stone. He taught those eight *ongon* his language, and taught them to do good and bad things. When he was sending his *ongon* [spirits] to do good and bad deeds, they did not understand [the language of] other *zairan*<sup>21</sup> [shamans]. That is why other *zairan* were not able to respond to the curses sent by the shaman Zönög. Nobody else could communicate with those *ongon*. That is why Zönög became famous as a strong *zairan*. The ninth stone he decided to leave over the winter and dig it up in the spring. In the spring, he started to dig it up and a live child came out from there. *Zairan* Zönög did not have a wife, he lived at the place of one woman from the river Tengesiin-gol. So, he gave the child to that woman to look after.

“Do not give him any milk, do not give him the food people eat. Feed him only with the blood of wild animals.”

He was a hunter, so he brought lots of antelope blood. This child grew as much in one day as other children do in three, and as much in three days as other do in ten days. Shaman Zönög was bringing blood for the child and going out in the morning at sunrise, and only coming back at twilight. The *zairan* had one [unusual] horse. The *zairan* wanted to marry the woman, but she was very jealous. Because he would leave for the entire day, she suspected that somewhere he must have another woman, and he had brought that woman’s child for her to raise. One day, she thought: “Why should I only give blood to this child? Why don’t I try to give him some milk!” And before the shaman Zönög came back, she gave to the child some milk. It had suddenly grown foggy on the *khoimor* [north side of the yurt],<sup>22</sup> and the boy disappeared. The woman waited for the shaman Zönög outside, watching out for which direction he would come from. He appeared at the place for tying horses, [coming] from the north-west at the evening darkness. When *zairan* Zönög dismounted from the horse, the woman passed around the yurt from the north side, maybe because she was scared [of him] and went up to his horse. She wanted to look at the horse, to see how tired it was, and whether he had come from a distant place or from nearby. [Suddenly, she heard] sounds coming from under the horse’s caparison. She lifted it up and saw two feathers stuck in its armpits. The woman pulled out and threw away those feathers, so Zönög could not go to another woman, and went back to the yurt. Shaman Zönög came out to meet her and asked “Where is my son?” She could do nothing but tell him the truth. “I am leaving you”, the shaman said and went to his horse, but before reaching the place it was tied up, he saw that his horse was dead.

The Khorolmoin war was raging in the Darkhadyn valley at that time, Xinjiang robbers came from Tenger Uul [Tian Shan] in order to raid Tengis. When the shaman Zönög lost his son, and lost his horse, those Khorolmoin soldiers came here from the south. They came [and asked]: “How many bulls do you have, how many stallions do you have? We came to rob your place.”

The *zairan* Zönög answered: “We do not have any bulls or stallions. There are some far away from here. What do I own is my body, and what I herd are my lice.”

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<sup>21</sup> *Zairan* is the title of a skilful male shaman.

<sup>22</sup> This is the most socially and ritually respected part of the traditional household yurt, where there should be an altar of the family, and, nearby, be a seat for the most honoured or oldest guest.

“O, how smart words you have. We will kill you!”

Zönög counted the Khorolmoin soldiers. There were sixty of them: “Sixty soldiers came to deliver me to my happiness. Kill me!”

“Get on your knees and bow down!”

So, he bowed down, and sixty soldiers started to slash away at his neck with sabres. All of the sabres they chopped him with hissed and bent, but his skin did not even get a scratch.

“What a solid [man you are], an immortal one! We will shoot you in order to kill you. Stand up!”

Sixty soldiers shot at him with sixty flintlock pistols and they thought that they had killed him. Sixty soldiers shot all their bullets at him, but he did not fall down.

“What an immortal one [you are]! We will bring you upon that mountain and burn!”

“I’m an old man, kids, if you need these, then take them. They are too heavy for me to carry up the mountain.”

As Zönög said this, he untied the belt of his *deel* robe, and lead bullets thundered down from it. They took the old man and brought him up the mountain called Shiveenii khar. There, sixty soldiers brought huge trees,<sup>23</sup> they put Zönög on the ground, surrounded him with 120 trees and lit them on all four sides of him. The dry wood was burning so fiercely that it was impossible to sit by it or stand near it. The sixty soldiers thought that the shaman must have died and went to sleep. Suddenly in their sleep, they heard a man screaming. Then they woke up and saw that it was *zairan* Zönög screaming: “Kids! Make the fire warmer! It’s cold!”

The *böö* was sitting on the burning red coals with his legs crossed, his arms hidden up his sleeves and his moustache covered in frost. They took him from there and asked: “How it is possible to kill you?! Teach us how to kill you or join us as a robber!”

So, they went off together to rob. They walked and walked and came to the river. It was the river Shishgediin-gol. [The shaman said]:

“There are some bulls and stallions over there! But we cannot reach it by land, we should go by water!”

“But how to go by water?” They asked the *böö* Zönög.

Zönög *böö* said:

“Let each man take a thick dry tree, sit on it and paddle. If [you] see a man or an animal, wave your hands to signal them to ‘come here’. But you must swim very fast!”

Among those sixty soldiers was a pregnant woman who cooked their food. The shaman told her to stay [on the riverside], then said to the soldiers:

“Swim on ahead! Someone might recognize me, so I will follow on behind.”

That stream was going to a very high waterfall. They tried to swim faster and faster, when suddenly came to the waterfall, all those soldiers tumbled down it and died. [The shaman] had saved that pregnant woman to have a witness. There is

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<sup>23</sup> ‘Huge trees’, literally *sharyn mod*. This refers to trees so huge they can only be transported by bulls six years or older (*shar ükher*). I should like to thank Dr. Alimaa Ayushjav (Institute of Language and Literature, Mongolian Academy of Sciences) for help with clarifying the meaning of this passage.

still a family called Khorolmoin-tekhen that lives today in Darkhad valley. They are her descendants.

Then Zönög böö said: “I do not have a son any more, I do not have a horse, and I defeated the enemy. Now I shall become a flying shaman!”

For three days and three nights he performed rituals. Then he tried to fly, reaching the *toono* [window at the top] of the yurt, but he could not get any higher. “Why can’t I fly?! Instead of living like this, it would be better for me to die!”

By that time people from his area [*nutag*] had started to value him very highly as a strong, powerful *zairan*. Then the *zairan* asked his people: “Kill me!”

But no-one agreed to kill him. At that time there were no yellow dogs in the Darkhat valley. “Without a yellow dog I cannot die”, said Zönög. He swam over the River Tengis and went to Russian Buryatia and there bought a yellow bitch. He brought that dog and ordered one man to kill the dog: “Roll the dog fat around my head. Choose a good day and bring the trousers of a woman who has not given a birth”. People around did not bring such trousers, saying that it would be used for the death of an honoured *zairan* to die. Then he chose a man and made him to sew some [women’s] trousers, bring them to him and ordered: “Roll my head in dog fat, then beat me about the head three times with these trousers! When I die bring me to the River Tengis and leave me at the mountain.<sup>24</sup> Then return after three years, and a part of my body will be found. Take it and offer to the *ongon* [spirit]<sup>25</sup> Üzüriin Ozoor, who lives in the area Khormoin Gurban Saikhan.”

Following his orders, [the people] left his body there and returned to that place three years later when they found something green with a hole in it, but nothing else. They took and looked at it closely. It was the pelvic bone<sup>26</sup> of an iron man. Finally, [they] found out that the *zairan* Zönög had not died when he was cut or shot or burnt because he had transformed his human nature into something bronze-iron. But when he started to turn back in his human body, a piece of his skeleton stayed bronze. He could not lift his bronze bones, that is why he was not able to fly. [He] could not lift it because *ongon* [helper-spirits] cannot lift precious stones [materials].

Then they brought that bronze bone to the Üzüür Oozoor area at the River Khormoin-gol in the Tsagaan Nuur district. That bronze bone is still there in Tsagaan Nuur district. Until 1953, that [construction of] *ongon* was kept, and now if you dig under it, that bone will be there.

– What is the shape of *ongon*?

– An *ongon* [statue] is kept in a small hut. It has an animal shape and is kept rolled up in textiles in a special hut. *Ongon* might also be made in human shape, in a shape which will be seen during shamanic ritual, in any shape that *Khangai*<sup>27</sup> nature has. That hut is a house of *ongon* spirits. They gather there.

There is another legend about the boy who disappeared. The ‘yellow religion’ was destroyed in Mongolia for being reactionary... This was in the 1930s. It was

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<sup>24</sup> A reflection of the ritual practice, concerning funerals of shamans.

<sup>25</sup> In Mongolian traditions, and here in the text, *ongon* has multiple meanings: a spirit, a ritual statue of the spirit, a construction (a hut and altar of venerated *ongon* spirits).

<sup>26</sup> A pelvic bone is a semantically important object in Mongolian demonology and everyday beliefs (see Article 1).

<sup>27</sup> *Khangai* and the same *Altai* in Mongolian folk traditions have double referents to both mountains as real geographical objects and to the venerated chief-patrons of nature.

the same with the shamans, who were also persecuted at that time.<sup>28</sup> But if that boy had only been fed with blood, he would now be a high religious hierarch. Then the religion here would not have been destroyed. Do you understand?

– He would have become a lama?

– Maybe a lama, maybe a shaman. *Shashin* [religion] is lamas and shamans together. Then none of them would have been destroyed. If he had grown up to be a man, he would definitely have become one of the heads of Mongolian religion. He was destroyed, that is why Mongol religion was destroyed at that time. That boy was a *sakhius* [protector] and a reincarnation of the Ochirvani *burkhan* [deity].<sup>29</sup> Ochirvani *burkhan* left as his testament: “I wished to come back and to strengthen this religion. But I was killed by one Kholmogor woman. Now I am going to sleep for sixty years and then I shall get up and be born again”. In 1990, exactly sixty years had passed, and Mongolian religion became free starting from that time. Lamas and shamans – [the entire] Mongolian religion. To put it in other words, that boy had slept for sixty years and now was born again somewhere. There is so much to tell about Zönög Khairkhan that it is possible to tell it for several days! But now it is already late, let’s go to sleep. [R., 1958, Darkhad, 2007, Khövsgöl].

This text represents an example of a complicated narration by a non-professional (but apparently talented and experienced) storyteller. It contains a few different storylines of legends, framed together, and directed by the narrator to the conclusive idea – motif of Mongolian religious and national revival, which turns the text into an actual message about the ‘here and now’. The narration draws the intertwined life paths of supernatural, non-human and human, blending together personal, communal and national fates. It also depicts the main figures in the narration, the shaman and the ‘spirit’, as flowing from one category of the natural and supernatural to another. The shaman, being a human, ‘domesticates’ remarkable nature spirits and turns them into his *ongon* helpers and adopts one of them as his son. In this way, he becomes a very strong ‘specialist’ with supernatural abilities and some traits of non-human (a bronze skeleton), and finally turns into a helper-spirit himself (located in the hut of spirits in the Tsagaan Nuur district). In his turn, the rising lord of the locality of Darkhad valley is a *savdag* nature spirit, who, being evil to the local community, is also a *tiiren* demon, turned into an *ongon* spirit-helper of the shaman and into his almost-human son. He is a reincarnation of the Buddhist deity *Ochirvani burkhan* and is a protector and leader of the Mongolian national religion (joint Buddhist and shamanic).

In contemporary folk traditions, discursive and ritual practices, the motifs of falling asleep and waking up applied to the main categories of the supernatural are the most popular forms of vernacular reflections and conceptualizations. The

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<sup>28</sup> The most intense periods of struggling against religion and ‘superstition’ were the 1930s, including the suppression of the ‘revolt of lamas’ and the subsequent tightening of anti-religious campaigns and repressions against religious specialists (Kuzmin, Oyunchimeg 2014), and the 1960s ‘cultural revolution’ in the Mongolian People’s Republic, followed by a campaign of ‘fighting against superstitions and prejudices’ (Kaplonski 2008; Sandag, Kendall 2000).

<sup>29</sup> Buddhist deity Vajrapani.



narratives concern various experiences of the past and the present, and touch upon important public issues involved in national, communal and individual contexts. Some of the most frequent and popular themes, expressed by these motifs include evaluations of previous and present political regimes, reflections on its collapse and reformation, the official banishment and reappearance of religious life, radical changes in ideological attitudes towards national traditions, customs, norms and recognitions of the supernatural, etc.

Among countless examples, there are sophisticated versions of the causes and consequences of socialism and other ‘misfortunes’ that happened to the Mongolian nation. This was either due to the supernatural patrons of Mongolian land falling asleep, meaning religion and national traditions were doomed to be suppressed for dozens of years. Or it was due to people getting the wrong ideas and interests, and turning away from their traditions, letting their religion be destroyed. The supernatural with no partner nor any proper attention fell asleep for a long time, leaving people without its protection and support. The motif of supernatural entities waking up is strongly associated with the change of the political regime and the gaining of religious freedom. At the same time, this theme also provides reflections upon the problematic topics of the revival: the changing cultural paradigms, overcoming the atheistic gap and the difficulties involved in the ‘return to national roots’. These issues are featured in various cases of misunderstandings between the ‘activated’ supernatural entities, awakened spirits and neglected restless demons, who wait for proper treatment from people who have forgotten what to do with them. Numerous stories tell how people suffered in everyday life because of their sloppy and unaware behaviour towards the supernatural, how practicing shamans infuriated the spirits with incorrect ritual performances, causing serious natural cataclysms, and how lamas died, because they were unable to send away the demons that they were navigating to another world (see Article I and IV), etc.

Thus, from the vernacular perspective, the awakening of supernatural entities is regarded as a promising fresh start for the Mongolian state and people, the revival of the nation, its spiritual liberation and independence. At the same time, this raises numerous concerns related to the need to restore and maintain the proper ritual relations with the supernatural and how to choose the right ritual delegates for this, so here the traditional conforms with the interests and conditions of contemporary life. Both of these motifs of falling asleep and of awaking, form a part of traditional narrative culture and are represented in a number of genres.<sup>30</sup> In contemporary contexts, the motif about awakening of the supernatural attaches itself to and develops the old motif about the rage of lords of the locality.<sup>31</sup> This

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<sup>30</sup> In Mongolian epic and mythological narratives this motif of awakening after a long sleep often appears in narratives about heroes or supreme deities, as for example, Khormusta or Ochirvani burkhan in the text above.

<sup>31</sup> In these contexts and contemporary language usage, both actions of nature spirits might be denoted by the verb *sereh*, *sergeh*, which carries a combination of meanings, including ‘to wake up’, ‘to revive’, ‘to rouse’, ‘to rebel’.

motif is characteristic of the Asian region, and of Mongolian folk traditions (both narrative and ritual) particularly. One of the most popular representations of this motif in past and contemporary narrative and ritual traditions is that of ‘nature spirits’ who express their rage towards people by causing various misfortunes and cataclysms. Many narratives focus on the consequences of the anger of spirits: bad weather, natural disasters, epidemics that torment people and cattle, and other forms of malevolent influence. The tracking of this motif helps to show the many ways in which traditional beliefs and narrative culture can update themselves, maintain their relevance in the ever-changing life of society. An analysis of belief narratives and their functions allows us to reveal examples of the flexibility and resistance of folk traditions and their role as in-demand resources, ready for the delivery of new meanings and for reflection upon significant processes and events in the community.

In Mongolian folklore, beliefs connected to nature spirits, the lords of particular areas small or large, and their capacity to be harmful can be found in historical written sources. Raging nature spirits can even be found in the first Mongolian chronicle ‘The Secret History of the Mongols’ (the 13th century CE). It relates how Ogodai Khan suffered from diseases caused by the supernatural lords of a conquered territory. His shamans used divination to communicate with these spirits and found out that:

The *gazaryn* and *usny ezen* [earth and water spirits] of Khitan land are violently raging in consequence of the seizure of their people and dwellings. We [ritual specialists] offered them everything they could possibly want as a ransom [gold, silver, cattle and food are mentioned]. But they agree to stop only for the ransom of a relative [of the khan], or they threaten to raise an even more ferocious frenzy (*Mongolyn nuuts tovchoo*, 272).

In this text, the lords of the conquered area are the supernatural representatives of the local community, taking revenge on the chief official figure responsible for the violations inflicted their patronized territory. This motif of the chief person responsible for misdeeds is still found in some beliefs and practices. In many early sources the responsibility more often takes on a collective form, whereby the rage of nature spirits reaches everyone related to this particular area without exclusions.

Detailed descriptions of the spirits, their outrages and their demands for veneration and offerings, appear in the ‘Sutra about the black shaman guardian spirits’ (the 17th century CE manuscript) (*Ongon qara sakius un teüke sudur bicig orosiba*). In this manuscript, spirits (*ezen, ongon, sakius, suns, chötgör* are mentioned) united together and became strong, learned to fly, to cause rain, thunder, lightning and hail. In addition to these horrible actions, they harmed people and livestock. The spirits did not leave any households untouched, whether they were near or far. Terrified people started to move away, trying to save their cattle and property, but the spirits immediately reached places where their victims were (Heissig 1966, 163–168).

The contemporary narrative, cited at the beginning of this chapter (the story about Zönög *zairan*) bears noticeable similarity to this older example. It gives the reason to think that some models of relations between human and supernatural representatives of the local communities are also well preserved in the genre of legends about ritual specialists. However, this is only one of the many forms in which these vivid vernacular beliefs are reflected. Many curious cases based on the motif of the nature spirits' rage are found in the notes, diaries and reports of Russian officials and researchers of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. They also document the different and even conflicting perspectives of beliefs and ritual behaviour between local people and outsiders. Frequently, such cases had a model, whereby individual misbehaviour by a stranger leads to collective disaster, caused by offended nature spirits (see Article I). In some cases, though, the revenge of lords of a locality might have already a more limited character, aiming the harm towards a limited group of people. One such incident was documented by a scholar V. Kazakavich in the report on his expedition to Mongolia:<sup>32</sup>

When I was caught in a storm at [the area of] Zerde–Azarga, my companions were sure that I was the one to be blamed for this, since several times I pronounced the name of Boro–Khuts–Khairkhan [venerated mountain], pointing at it. I learned its name earlier in the journey.<sup>33</sup>

The growing textual traces of a more individual perspective of responsibility can already be found in collections of the 1950s–1970s, where humans and nature spirits often communicate on a one–on–one basis. Below is a fragment of a legend that represents an example of local landscape mythology (placelore) connected with the venerated mountain *Erdene Tolgoi*.<sup>34</sup> The narrative relates an unusual accident that happened at the beginning of the twentieth century involving a local lama–healer, Seemij Luvsan, who lived in a settlement in the modern Central Province of Mongolia. Once he was visited by the messengers of an unknown noble, and on the following day the noble summoned the healer to cure his son. The place of residence of this mysterious noble, two large white yurts, was situated on the slopes of the mountain *Erdene Tolgoi*, and the noble revealed himself to be the lord (*ezen*) patron spirit of this mountain.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Kazakevich 1924, Report, page 7. Fond 7222, inventory 5, storage unit 19, Central State Archive of St. Petersburg. I should like to thank Dr. Dmitrij Nosov (Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences) for the sharing with me this archival material.

<sup>33</sup> Here, naming and pointing to the mountain is the misbehaviour. According to traditional norms, it is just as unacceptable to call parents (and some other relatives) by name or to point at them in their presence (Gruntov, Mazo, Solovyeva 2018). In this case, the incidental misfortunes are interpreted as a consequence of breaking restrictions. And such interpretations are still common nowadays as the author of this thesis has herself witnessed.

<sup>34</sup> Literally, 'precious head/peak'.

<sup>35</sup> In Mongolian traditions, worshipping mountains has some specific features and connotations, in spite of it representing a part of nature spirit worship. Some contemporary contexts of the mountain worship are discussed in the article of David Sneath (2014).

Luvsan came into the eastern yurt, where an ill man lay on the bed. Luvsan lifted the blanket to inspect him: it was a creature whose upper body looked like a human but whose lower part looked like a snake. There was a post sticking out from his snake tail. When Luvsan took the post out of the animal and threw it away, the creature said: “Oh that’s good! Now my sufferings are over!” Then the noble came in. “Thank you! You have cured my son’s illness. Ochirbat Taizhi’s rich family lives not far from here. They have many colts. Their servant girl, when changing the band for colts, took out the old post and hammered a new one in a different place. That was the post she hammered into the tail of my son, and it was that that caused his illness. The girl is also sick. Now that my son is cured, she will be cured too. I would like to make you a gift, but I don’t have anything you might need. I shall make an order to protect your herd of horses on the northern slope of the mountain Dohomiin.” And with these words the noble sent Luvsan home. (Damdinsüren 1991, 14–16).

This legend can be considered as a textual illustration of a well-known Mongolian ritual practice, requesting permission from nature spirits before starting on work connected to the earth and natural objects. In spite of having some details similar to a fairy-tale, the narrative contains many references to actual beliefs. This narrative demonstrates various forms of ‘individual’ relations between nature patrons and humans, belonging to the territory guarding by the chief spirit, the lord of the mountain, namely, misdeeds, revenge, help, and reward. In that period, the 1950s–1970s, individual perspectives on human relations with nature spirits were also represented in other genres such as memorates and fabulates, which (typically) supply examples of miscommunication between humans and earth spirits. Many variants of these plots survive in contemporary tradition.

My friend, Norvoo, once was travelling in the *hödöö* [countryside], and saw a strange white stone, in the shape of a female breast. He urinated on it, stupid man, and got very sick after that. The lama said it was an act of revenge, *lusyn horlol* [harm], coming from the white *lus savdag* [nature spirit] that he had insulted. [G.H., 1972, Khalkha, 2016, Ömnögovi].

In contemporary traditions, *lusyn horlol* is a special term, mostly used to describe ‘individual’ harm coming to a person from an enraged nature spirit. The motif of the nature spirit’s rage in this context provides a model for the interpretation of individual conditions and situations (illnesses and misfortunes), and is also connected with diagnosis and treatment, as performed by different agents of vernacular religion. Often in such narratives the territorial link is already very loose and uncertain: the encounter concerns a random nature spirit in a generalized countryside. This feature reflects a change of everyday lifestyle, including the role of urbanization and the conflict arising when a person drops out of *nutag*, the traditional local unity, as recognized through the relations of the human–natural–supernatural triad. This contemporary concern is also reflected in the ritual practice and advice of many specialists who aim to maintain these relations by regular visits to their place of birth or their parents’ living area in order to make

offerings to the local nature spirits and to *Galyn Burkhan*, the spirit/deity of the family fireplace.

I'm having a really hard time now, everything is going wrong. I've lost my wallet, broken with my boyfriend, I have some problems with my health. My *böö* [shaman]<sup>36</sup> said it might be *lusyn horlol*. Indeed, it might. I was in the countryside a couple of months ago. I just went to rest there with friends for a day. Maybe I did something wrong, touched or moved some stone. Maybe it was a place with a *dogshin*<sup>36</sup> *lus-savdak* [formidable nature spirits], and I awoke the spirit. Now I must perform special self-cleaning rituals, as my shaman prescribed me. I hope all this will pass soon. [V.E., 1983, Khalkha, 2019, Ulaanbaatar].

In contemporary folklore, the motif of nature spirits often accrues additional historical connotations, marking the past or the present according to political changes. In this context, the connection between the 'waking' and 'raging' meanings becomes extremely overlapping:

One man was passing a sacred mountain and he did not make any offerings. He spat, then crashed his car. When religion was forbidden, [people] did not do anything [any rituals]. The times were such. In the socialist period, all *lus-savdag* and *gazryn ezen* [nature spirits and lords of the locality] were sleeping, but then they woke up and started to demand [offerings]. [D.N., 1923, Buryat, 2009, Ömnögov].

In spite of the popularity of the individual perspective and transformations of the concept of the land's fraternity *nutag*, collective and territorial principles did not disappear altogether but were modified. Representations of 'collective' and 'territorial' in contemporary traditions have taken on two basic forms in narratives and discursive practices. The first represents local folk traditions, where nature spirits are a part of landscape mythology, as well as discursive practices focusing on the day-to-day concerns of local communities (weather conditions, the well-being of cattle, ritual life).

To worship nature spirits means to worship the entire Mongolian land, everything it has, the whole of nature. To worship means to respect, to care. [People] forget about this. When religion came back, then [they] remembered that spirits should be worshipped, but now nobody knows, and they started to do whatever they can: sprinkling<sup>37</sup> to these [deities], sprinkling to those [deities], bringing things to *oboo*<sup>38</sup> and leaving random trash. In our place, people say the *savdag* [nature spirit] was waiting until the people realized [their misdeeds], but he grew tired and left. For a

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<sup>36</sup> The term is coming from Tibetan-Mongolian Buddhist traditions and is originally connected to the descriptions of formidable deities-protectors of Dharma.

<sup>37</sup> Sprinkling with milk ('white sprinkling') or vodka ('black sprinkling') are very popular types of offerings.

<sup>38</sup> Ritual constructions of stones and wood, devoted to nature spirits. The many sometimes contradictory practices of worshipping *oboo* are discussed by S. Neklyudov (2013).

few years, no good rains fell here, no good grass grew, many cattle died, people became poor. Various [specialists], shamans, lamas had been invited, then one skilful lama came, performed some rituals, convinced the nature spirit to come back, explained [to the people] how to worship correctly and everything became better. [D.O., 1947, Khalkha, 2016, Övörkhangai].

The second form presents the extension of ‘collective’ and ‘territorial’ concepts in relation to nature spirits, to national and state perspectives. Old nature spirits found in new contexts now feature actively in discursive practices. They function there at one and the same time as strong figures of speech, metaphors, powerful figures of folklore, belief and ideology, and also as symbols of the national idea of a ‘return to traditional roots’. The motif of the raging nature spirits is nowadays very popular in different discussions, including traditional religious discourse, the new international ecological discourse, and in the always-relevant economic and political discourses. In new contexts, the meaning of the spirits as ‘true representatives’ of the Mongolian land and their rage also varies from piecemeal revenge to full rebellion. The targets are wrong religion, pollution, mining industry, ownership of the land by foreign companies, etc., and the spirits do not only hold the direct ‘actors’ responsible, but have an influence on the fortune of the whole nation and the whole land (Delaplace 2010, 2012, High 2017). Another significant feature is the change in meanings and attitudes related to different representations of the nature spirits: from the negative (destructive rebelling and harm) to the still frightening but positive (constructive rebellion and justified perturbation).

We, Mongols, our Mongol land, our *sahius* [patron spirits],<sup>39</sup> have been sleeping for a long time, that is why different misfortunes almost destroyed Mongols, first Chinese [rule], then socialism. But now the Mongolian land is waking up, and the Mongols will start to rise. [T.U., 1974, Khalkha, 2018, Selenge].

Accordingly, one of the main functions of nature spirits, namely, being angry, has been a productive form for the delivery of diverse meanings in different narrative genres and discursive practices. During the period under examination, beliefs about the supernatural, together with images of its representatives, spirits and demons, adapted to the new conditions of life, social needs and cultural habits. This motif reveals itself in a very stable and widespread scheme of narration, applicable to different issues, framing genres (biographies, legends about shamans and lamas, belief narratives, etc.), and contexts. These narratives contain details reflecting important features of earlier folk perception, including the popularity of the collective representation of the human and non-human, and the strong link found between territories and communities (whether they be those of people or of spirits). These features are linked to social and historical factors and have changed over the course of the 20th century, but left some influential traces behind. In

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<sup>39</sup> The term comes from Tibetan-Mongolian Buddhist traditions, referring to guardian deities and spirits. In narratives and discursive practices the term is often applied to nature spirits, patrons of the locality.

contemporary traditions, not only collective perspective, but also personal views of nature patrons continue to develop. And these frequently feature in narration and practices today, reflecting conflicting perspectives on traditional beliefs and social relations.

Contemporary Mongolian folk traditions give a huge number of examples of various textual transformations and contextual updates, connected to a diversity of supernatural entities and motifs. Below is another vivid pattern, representing the internationally–widespread motif of moving lights,<sup>40</sup> which in Mongolian traditions ties in with another very popular supernatural character – *chötgör*. *Chötgöriin gal*<sup>41</sup> has the habit of moving around the steppe, chasing night travellers (as well as eluding them), talking, being noisy, and even (in some rare cases) physically affecting the person who might accidentally touch them. In contemporary folk traditions, these motifs appear in two basic forms. The first of these has much in common with examples found in earlier folklore collections (Potanin 1883, Hangalov 1958–60):

Demonic lights, *chötgöriin gal*, exist: they show up at night on the steppe. Once I met such a light. I was returning from my brother’s family. It was already dark, suddenly the light appeared. I wondered what it could be and tried to approach it, but the light did not let me come closer and kept escaping. I felt uncomfortable and continued on my way. Then this light started to follow me, keeping at a distance: when I moved, it moved too, when I stopped, it stopped. The light was following me to my village, before it suddenly fell over a bush and disappeared. People often see such lights, and sometimes hear something calling them by name. (Tsermaa 2006, 18).

Another variant, more popular nowadays, contains a number of substantial modifications:

Once we went with my wife to visit her relatives and were returning late in the evening. Suddenly in the middle of the way back we saw that bad light. My wife first saw it. I did not believe her, but then I too saw the strange light. It was coming to us from the right side of the road. It looks like a car’s headlamp (people say sometimes even the sound of a car can be heard), but no car was visible. I tried to drive faster, but it kept chasing us. Once it came very close, my wife was scared, and she jumped onto the seat of the motorbike behind me and she accidentally touched that light. The light finally went away, but both of us were scared for a long time after this. My wife fell sick and her leg hurt so much she could not put any weight on it for a whole month. I think it was the souls of Russian soldiers, who had been based there. [A.L., 1980, Buryat, 2016, Töv].

Such narratives can have a wide range of details: one or two lights of an invisible motorbike or car, or a whole trainload of lights, chasing after night travellers,

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<sup>40</sup> For example, the motif A 2817 Origin of the will-o’-the-wisp, F 369.7 Fairies lead travelers astray (Thompson 1955–58).

<sup>41</sup> *Chötgöriin gal* – demonic/ghost fire/light(s), *chötgör* – soul, ghost, demon; *gal* – fire, light.

making human (or mechanical) noises, and the various ways the witnesses respond (fleeing the lights, chasing them, and even shooting at them – nobody was hurt however). Most of the demonic ghost lights were associated with Russian soldiers, whether they were identified individually (“probably it is a soul of Russian army cartographer, who used to drive here in his car, a *Vasik*<sup>42</sup> that was missing one headlight. He crashed and died one day not far from here” [M.D., 1968, Khalkha, 2016, Khentii]) or whether they were non-personalized soldiers and military units.<sup>43</sup>

As we can see, the differences between the traditional and the modified versions of the narratives are quite obvious – moving lights have developed into the headlights of invisible ghostly cars, often driven by souls of Russian soldiers. If we look a little more closely at the network and contexts of these narratives and the beliefs they relate to, then further significant changes are revealed. Here verbalized beliefs<sup>44</sup> along with ritual and historical contexts provide us with plenty of valuable clues. The first important connection is the link between moving lights and souls, a connection which is often made explicit in the assessments of the storytellers themselves in both old and contemporary narratives (“I think that light was a soul of...”). This connection is based on traditional Mongolian beliefs about the post-mortem existence of souls and their abilities to stay on the earth before going onto their next birth or reincarnation.

In earlier narrative traditions, this link could involve a more intimate personal context, related to family members:

My husband passed away when he was 39, and we were mourning so much. Several months later, when our cows were sent to another pasture, they did not settle there but tried to return to their previous area. So, I went look at them in the evening and saw that light. It came from the west side of the *hairhan*–mountain, moving slowly in my direction, stopping for a while, then moving again. I tried to approach it, and to see what it was, but I could not reach the light. While I was gathering my cows, the light soared in the air at a distance, and when I started to move, it followed me. Several times I heard something like someone calling me by name, but nobody was there, except that light. I hurried home. I then thought it was the soul of my husband. I have seen it and heard it calling me sometimes later on too and was no longer afraid of it. Some other people also saw that light nearby. Then it disappeared<sup>45</sup>.

In contemporary narrative tradition, this variation is already extinct, and the connection with a deceased family member has been supplanted by an anonymous

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<sup>42</sup> A make of car popular in the Soviet period.

<sup>43</sup> Mongolian folk memories about various foreign presence reflected in belief narratives, their motifs and meanings as collective statements are discussed in a number of works (Delaplace 2010, 2012, Billé, Delaplace, Humphrey 2012, see Article I).

<sup>44</sup> Here I use the term ‘verbalized belief’ to refer to a specific genre distinct from narrative, which does not contain a plot, does not refer to any particular experience, but which contains the basic scheme or textual “extract” of belief.

<sup>45</sup> Davaasüren 2016, Collection, page 9.



or (more frequently) ethnically other image (in this case, Russian soldiers) of lights–souls. This transformation reveals not only how this belief has been updated based on changes in everyday life, as it might seem at first glance, but also reveals more significant changes caused by switching between two different sets of traditional beliefs concerning notions of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ deaths, of one’s own dead, and of deceased foreigners (see Articles I, II and IV).

The first set of beliefs features variations as to why the soul might remain on earth, including ‘natural’ reasons, such as the defined period which every soul should stay as a ghost before undergoing another birth:

People say that after death every soul stays on the earth for three years, before the next birth, turning into *chōtgōr* [ghost, demon]. They stay close to the place they used to live, but their families are scared and don’t want them there. [T.B., 1967, Khalkha, 2014, Khovd aimag];

After death the soul stays near the corpse; as soon the body disappears, the soul is freed and leaves to be reborn. [A.L., 1957, Khalkha, 2018, Ulaanbaatar].

Another ‘natural’ reason is present in beliefs about multiple souls and relates to the special ‘bone soul’ [D. Z., 1918, Buryat, 2008, Khentii]. Usually this ‘bone soul’ (the soul of the body, or the demon who occupies a diseased bone) is believed to be found either in the skull or in the pelvic bone, both of which are highly demonized objects in Mongolian folklore, as reflected both in narrative and ritual (see Article I). The link between moving lights and the “bone soul”/ bones is also made explicit in verbalized beliefs, whether they be positive or negative statements:

Large *chōtgōriin gal* [demonic lights] come from skulls, small lights from pelvic bones [Ch.D., 1928, Khalkha, 2008, Sūkhbaatar];

People believed that there are demonic lights moving in the steppe that can follow travellers. Many people admit that they saw it. But I think there is no such thing: it is just phosphor, coming from bones. [S.V. 1936, Khalkha, 2009, Dundgovi].

This link between moving lights and soul–bones in Mongolian folklore and vernacular belief is not surprising in the ritual context. Especially if we consider the common forms of traditional funerals, namely the practice of ‘leaving on the steppe’, whereby a corpse is left at a place specified by divination, usually on a plain, and ritually prepared by a lama, so that “wild animals and birds could take care of it” [G.M. 1936, Khalkha, 2011, Bayankhongor aimag]. This ritual practice has been suppressed by the State at various points in history, and especially during the socialist regime when it was largely abandoned. It seems that changes in ritual life are reflected in folklore and narrative traditions in different ways (see Article I). In this case, the changes led to the obsolescence of this first set of beliefs about moving lights.

The modified version of narratives about moving lights, ghost cars and Russian soldiers establishes a link to another set of traditional beliefs, those touching upon ‘wrong death’. In this category fall especially those deaths and funerals occurring on foreign territories,<sup>46</sup> tragic and early deaths, and deceased foreigners. Importantly, these beliefs are associated with memories of the presence of a foreign military contingent, that of Russian soldiers, who were based in Mongolia until the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the associated collapse of the socialist regime in Mongolia. And just as changes have occurred in the content of the belief and in the situational context, the message of the narrative has changed. In other words, it switches from the ritual frame (that supplies the patterns for individual experiences) to the historical frame (that provides patterns for collective experiences and folk memories). Thus, we have here an example of substantial and profound changes in narrative tradition reflecting historical, social, ritual situations, and which involve the adoption of new forms and convey new meanings and functions.

The updating of narrative traditions might occur in various forms, and accordingly, transformation can affect different components of narration: the structure of narratives, the images of supernatural entities (their features, appearance, and names), and the plot itself. In some cases, motifs might be not the dominant component of storytelling. Instead, *talerole* (Levkievskaya 2007) might be key in defining character and attracting new motifs, as well as in replacing older motifs or existing alongside them (Dundes 1980). In the course of being updated, transformations affect not only the general components of narrative, but also its generic characteristics. For example, a fabulate may transform into a memorate. Modification can even shift images from a narrative frame into public discourse.

There are more significant transformations that are usually hidden behind textual modification, such as the deactualization of certain beliefs and practices and the switching of a narrative tradition over to a different group of beliefs, changes in everyday life conditions and cultural habits, and in controversial public deliberations. These show the capability of narrative tradition to reflect changes in society and, accordingly, how it can change its context and re-actualize itself in a new realm. Such moves may be from the ritual and religious realm to the realm of folk memory (moving lights carrying the souls of Russian soldiers), or from religious to national ideology (rousing nature spirits, marking the end of the previous political regime and the start of new page of Mongolian state history). They could also be movements from the mythological to new age religious and mass culture (transformation of the traditional figure of the ‘wild woman’ to the hitchhiking demonic woman; see Article II).

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<sup>46</sup> This motif is popular in different traditions, and very important in the Asian region (China, Korea, Japan), both in narrative and practice. For example, families of Chinese officials and traders, who worked and passed away in Mongolia, spent a fortune on transporting the body of deceased relatives back to their homeland to save the soul from turning into a ‘hungry spirit’ or demon (Maisij 1959, 80–81).

Traditional characters, along with their guiding roles and representative motifs, find a new life in different contexts of contemporary Mongolian culture, while retaining their same old folkloric duties: giving form to collective and personal memories, opinions, worries, and hopes. The categories of supernatural entity discussed here represent beliefs closely tied to ritual practice, which offer guidance through the routine of contemporary everyday life, its various situations (interpretations, and based on that the treatment of disease, misfortune and disaster) (see Articles I, II and IV), activities (short- and long-distance travel, work and outdoor recreation) and concerns (cultural, social, ecological) (High 2017).

### 3.2. Intertextual categories and concepts of the supernatural

The Mongolian nomenclature of the supernatural references many entities (*mangus, tiiren, sakhius, mam, shulmas, almas, büg*, etc.), some original and some coming from various ethnic and religious traditions. They have various characteristics: generic (*mungus*), areal (*tiiren*), and typological (Solovyeva 2019, 52–66). The figures of *lus savdag* and *chötgör* occupy very special positions in that they represent important emic categories of vernacular beliefs about the supernatural and the religious. They are characterized by a high level of general distribution and universality, being known in every local tradition, and being involved in various folk genres, discursive and ritual practices. Their images are complex and inclusive, and they reveal multiple closely-connected concepts. Some of these features are often represented implicitly in practice, while they receive more semantic extension and ‘visibility’ in narrative.

Below, some results of comparison of features and taleroles are presented, involving image-clusters in contemporary folk narratives, their generic forms and motifs.<sup>47</sup>

Names	Characters	Genres	Actions
<i>Lus savdag, gazaryn ezen</i>	Chief <i>lus savdag</i> ( <i>lusyn khan</i> ), the chief lord of a locality, a lord over other ‘regular’ nature spirits.	Fairy tale, legend, belief narrative (fabulate, memorate), ritual genres	Grows angry, punishes others for violation of taboos, prohibitions and regulations, sends a curse to the guilty person or family, avenges misdeeds.

<sup>47</sup> This table is based on 211 contemporary texts and include rural and urban narratives. (It is developed on the basis of the previous analytical scheme, see Solovyeva 2019, 73–97).

Names	Characters	Genres	Actions
	<i>Lus savdag</i> patrons of a locality, the personified lord of a particular natural object, sacred place, venerated mountain and <i>oboo</i> .	Legend, belief narrative (fabulate), ritual genres.	Grows angry, punishes others for violation of taboos, prohibitions and regulations at a place of patronage, sends a curse to the guilty person/family, avenges misdeeds, aids hunts in the capture of prey, rewards for a compliance of taboo, prohibitions and regulations at the place of patronage, helps, protects, shows up to the local people ( <i>nutgiin humuus</i> ) <sup>48</sup> in anthropomorphic and zoomorphic forms.
	Regular <i>lus savdag</i> , representatives of a local landscape, lords of the earth, natural (animate and inanimate) objects.	Legend, belief narrative (fabulate, memorate), ritual genres.	Grows angry, sends diseases and death to people and livestock, sends precipitation and storm and drought, punishes reckless behaviour, appears to people in anthropomorphic and zoomorphic forms, when angry appears in the form of lights on the steppe, appears in dreams, becomes an <i>ongon</i> (shamanic helper-spirit)
<i>Ongon</i>	<i>Ongon</i> helper-spirits of shamans ( <i>böö, udagan</i> ).	Legend, belief narrative (fabulate, memorate), ritual genres.	Emerges from a <i>lus savdag</i> nature spirit, emerges from a <i>süins</i> soul of a shaman, <sup>49</sup> appears to a shaman, occupies the body of a shaman, demonstrates its own character and habits, takes offerings, communicates with a shaman's visitors, helps, protects, performs tasks given by a shaman, demonstrates supernatural abilities, grows angry (at a shaman and visitors), punishes, harms, leaves (stops appearing to) a shaman, becomes patrons of locality <i>lus savdag</i> , appears in anthropomorphic and zoomorphic forms, appears in the form of lights and indirectly (sounds, lights, effects on mechanisms, weather, etc).

<sup>48</sup> More for the concept *nutag* in contemporary Mongolian traditions see (Solovyeva 2021).

<sup>49</sup> Various genres present different models of the relations between specialist shamans and their *ongon* spirit-helpers. Discursive practices and narratives about shamanic initiation, close to the ritual tradition, involve the belief that spirits (nature spirits and souls of previous, often ancestral, shamans) choose the person to be the shaman. Legends usually feature an alternative motif whereby a specialist who is to become a shaman chooses and domesticates spirits as it is presented above in the text about shaman Zönög (see Chapter 3.1.).

Names	Characters	Genres	Actions
	<i>Ongon</i> house spirit – family house spirit (distinctly patrilineal, ties with ancestors and relatives). <sup>50</sup>	Legend, belief narrative (fabulate).	Cares about a family and household, does not let goods be taken away from the house, receives offerings, helps and protects a household, grows angry, punishes.
<i>Süns</i>	<i>Süns</i> a soul or one of souls of a living person.	Belief narrative (fabulate, memorate), ritual genres.	Gets lost, gets scared, is stolen by a <i>chötgör</i> demon, returns to the body of a person after the special acts of a ritual specialist (shaman, lama, wise man) or acts prescribed by a specialist.
	<i>Süns</i> a soul, <i>muu süns</i> bad soul, <i>jasny süns</i> bone soul: the souls of the deceased, ghosts, restless spirits, demons associated with particular bones (skull, pelvis).	Legend, belief narrative (fabulate, memorate), ritual genres.	Remains in an area, grows scared, hides, continues everyday activities, is reborn, helps, disturbs, scares, harms, calls by name, walks/runs (in certain places), communicate with a person, makes demands, grows angry, attacks, fights (with a person, a dog), appears in the form of lights, appears in anthropomorphic and zoomorphic forms, manifests indirectly (via sounds, effects on mechanisms, etc.).
	<i>Süns</i> special souls of ritual specialists	Legend, belief narrative (fabulate, memorate)	<i>Süns</i> , a soul of a shaman(ess) turns into <i>lus savdag</i> , a lord of a locality, (or into into <i>ongon</i> , a helper-spirit, or into a <i>chötgör</i> , <i>büg</i> , <i>tiiren</i> demon), continues everyday life, helps, harms, scares, grows angry, attacks, appears in anthropomorphic and zoomorphic forms, manifests indirectly (as sounds, lights, effects on mechanisms, weather, etc.).

<sup>50</sup> In contemporary Mongolia, some traces of patrilineal and ancestral old traditions are retained implicitly in narratives and ritual practices. They also touch on the nature spirits of the locality and their worship, and are revealed in rules and taboos regarding mountains and *oboo* ritual constructions. Thus, for example, there is still a widespread restriction on females going up certain sacred mountains in the district, as these mountains were thought to be under the patronage of the ancestral spirits *ongon*, *ezen*, and the women of the area were regarded as ‘strangers’, coming from outside and from other ancestors. Nowadays these rules and taboos can also receive updated interpretations:

“For females it is forbidden to climb to the top of this mountain, Altan Oboo, because, I think, it is physically hard to climb it, that is why from old time there was such a rule, to take care of women” [A.P., 1952, Khalkha, 2008, Dariganga].

Names	Characters	Genres	Actions
	<i>Süns</i> place, demonically-possessed places, <i>sünstei baishin</i> haunted house, <i>guideltei gazar</i> , bad, ‘restless places’.	Belief narrative (fabulate, memorate), ritual genres.	Harms, scares, grows angry, attacks, appears in anthropomorphic or zoomorphic form as well as uncertain forms (e.g. something black, like a shadow, invisible <i>khii üzegdel</i> , etc.), manifests indirectly (sounds, lights, effects on mechanisms, moves objects around etc.).
	<i>Süns</i> object, a soul hiding in objects.	Belief narrative (fabulate, memorate), ritual genres.	Occupies objects (such as clocks, furniture, clothes, etc.), hides, disturbs, frightens, shows up in reflections on a glass, mirror, polished surfaces, manifests indirectly (sounds, effects on mechanisms, etc.).
<i>Chötgör</i>	<i>Chötgör</i> a malevolent demonic entity – demon-trickster, antagonist.	Mythological narratives, fairy-tales <sup>51</sup> , legend, belief narrative (fabulate).	Creates or takes part in creation of particular (animate and inanimate) objects, sends somebody (e.g. moth) to harm, to steal human goods (fire), fights, aims to kill.
	<i>Chötgör</i> an ambassador of <i>Erlük Khan</i> , death.	Fairy-tales, belief narrative (fabulate, memorate), ritual genres.	Comes to take the soul of a person to another world, anticipates death, tries to identify the right person to take, grants a postponement of death.
	<i>Chötgör</i> a bad soul <i>muu süns</i> (bone soul or demon who lives in the bone) – a bad form of post-death existence, a ghost, a restless spirit, a demon.	Fairy-tales, belief narrative (fabulate, memorate), ritual genres	Stays in an area, grows scared, hides, continues everyday activities, is reborn, helps, disturbs, scares, harms, calls by name, walks or runs [in certain places], communicates with a person, makes demands, grows angry, attacks, fights (with a person, a dog), appears in the form of lights, in anthropomorphic and zoomorphic forms, indirectly (sounds, effects on mechanisms, etc.)

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<sup>51</sup> Also *chötgör* is a notion and character which has been actively used in translated literature, old and new.

Names	Characters	Genres	Actions
	<i>Chötgör</i> light, <i>chötgöriin gal</i> – moving lights.	Belief narra- tive (fabulate, memorate).	Appear as a form of light(s), follows, escapes, calls by name.
	<i>Chötgör süüjnii</i> <i>yas</i> pelvic bone: demonic bone, demon living in a bone, bone soul.	Belief narra- tive (fabulate, memorate), ritual genres.	Turns into lights, turns into an anthropomorphic being, commu- nicates with a person, calls by name, follows, attacks, watches after people through a hole in the bone.
	<i>Chötgör бүг</i> , <i>chötgör</i> object – a ghost, a demon hiding in objects.	Belief narra- tive (fabulate, memorate), ritual genres.	Occupies objects (such as clocks, furniture, clothes, etc.), hides, disturbs, frightens, manifests indirectly (sounds, effects on mechanisms, etc.).
	<i>Chötgöriin gazar</i> , <i>chötgör</i> place – demonically possessed places, haunted places.	Belief narra- tive (fabulate, memorate), ritual genres.	Harms, scares, grows angry, attacks, manifests in anthropomorphic form, zoomorphic form, in uncertain forms (something black, like a shadow, etc), appears as lights, manifests indirectly (as sounds, lights, effects on mecha- nisms, manipulates with objects around etc).

Each genre endows a representative of the supernatural with particular features, motifs and actions, forming specific versions of its images (which might be quite different and unconnected between various genres). However, a consideration of multiple genres allows us to define general borders of the meanings and ‘capacity’ of particular supernatural figures, as well as their ties and relations, which in discursive and ritual practices are often projected only in reduced or implicit forms. Contemporary folk narrative culture reveals transformations, flexibility and contextual dependence. Many motifs and plots easily cross the generic borders or exist synchronically in various versions and forms. Generic forms and traits of folk narration often turn out to be quite fuzzy and fragile, and the same story when performed in different situations may significantly alter its ‘truth’-oriented modes and meanings. For example, a ‘fairy-tale’ might change into a ‘true story’ of a personal experience, a vivid explanation or a demonstration of the power of a ritual (see Article III). The investigation of such intergeneric ties is especially relevant in the context of the late socialist era and the period of the revival, when narrative culture had significant influence on ritual life (see Articles I, III and IV).

Thus, there is a cluster of supernatural figures, ranging from *lus savdag* nature spirits to *chötgör* demons, which display partially unique and partially overlapping fields of meanings and taleroles. Upon closer examination, we see that this is not simply the typical way folk traditions may possess a synonymy of characters (Solovyeva 2019, 67–81), but is a sign of the deeper relations between the notions of the *lus savdag*, *ongon*, *chötgör*, *büg*, *sünstei baishin*, *chötgör gazar*, *chötgöriin ga*’, and *guidel*. It shows the ties between their emanations, and how

they turn and flow into each other, and even are different forms of the same thing, the conceptual meeting point being that they are all different forms of the soul. “Everything is *chötgör*. Whatever is not a *burhkan* is a *chötgör*” [E.G., 1972, Khalka, 2009, Ömnögovi; G.Kh., 1951, Khalka, 2016, Harhorin]. Both these terms can represent an independent figure (in, for example, a figure in the narration or ritual communication) or they can rather represent entire classes of the supernatural. It is noticeable that, along other notions of Mongolian supernatural nomenclature, when they appear in narratives, they may introduce independent supernatural figures and characters to the story. However, when they appear alongside the categories of *lus savdag* and *chötgör*, they typically are not supernatural figures, but they revert ‘as words’ to their basic linguistic meaning. So they function somewhat like ‘adjectives’ modifying the sense of the terms *lus savdag* and *chötgör*.<sup>52</sup>

As supernatural entities, *lus savdag* and *chötgör* are the main figures of folk belief narratives, everyday religious life and ritual relations. They are ambivalent and have multiple roles; they have their own fields of specialisation as well as both particular and shared forms of manifesting. Among these manifestations, ‘negative’ forms have unfortunate and dangerous consequences for people<sup>53</sup>, and seem to be dominant in those personal belief narratives and ritual practices that deal with the actual concerns of the present time. Such texts are involved in the discursive practices of ‘clients’ and ‘specialists’, being a part of ritual communication, whether descriptions of personal symptoms, identifications of causes, prescriptions for ritual procedures as treatments, or the following of ritual procedures. It is worth noticing that the symptoms in both cases (illnesses, various failures in business and personal life, misfortunes and accidents, etc.) are often defined by the same term *buzar / buzarsan*, which can roughly be translated as ‘defilement’ or ‘defiled’. Typically, the source of such defilement is specified: earth, a deceased person, a ghost, etc. A typical treatment includes *ariulakh* (a period of cleansing)<sup>54</sup> and then a part dedicated to finding the chief cause of the disorder. This latter part differs greatly depending upon the supernatural entity involved. In the case of *lus savdag*, various specialists typically use ritual methods for ‘calming down’ (*taitgaruulakh*) and ‘propitiating’ (*taivshruulakh*)

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<sup>52</sup> For example, *shulmas* is a demoness, who often appears in epic stories, fairy-tales and legends, where she is often characterized by cannibalism and shapeshifting. When the term *shulmas* (or any other such term) co-occurs with the word *chötgör*, then they function gender markers, so *chötgör shulmas* denotes a spirit who is female. The *büg* might appear in narratives denoting a separate demonic figure, but when combined with the word *chötgör*, it usually indicates the type of demons or ghosts who occupy and possess objects (furniture, books, watches, clothes, etc). Or as in the text about shaman *Zönög, tiiren* which is a particular demonic entity, is in Mongolian folklore often represented as a demon-helper bringing wealth, but when the term co-occurs with the word *savdag*, then it indicates evil mood of the raging lord of the locality (Slovyeva 2019, 101–103).

<sup>53</sup> The malevolent influence of both categories is also expressed by the same verbs *khorlokh/ khor khürgekh*.

<sup>54</sup> Common methods of ritual self-cleaning include, for example, fumigation with juniper and the consumption of ‘white food’ (a dairy produce).



the nature spirits, and in correcting and re-establishing relations between a 'client' and the supernatural entity by means of offerings and prayers (invocations, the reading of ritual texts *sudar* and *tarni*, etc.). In the case of *chötgör*, ritual methods are used to destroy the source of a malevolent influence and a communicative connection spontaneously arises between the 'client' and the supernatural agent in order to suppress (*darakh*), send away (*zailuulakh*), and eliminate (*khöökh*) the latter (see Articles III and IV).

This difference in approaches found in various ritual traditions (those of lamas, shamans, lay performers–healers), namely, propitiation versus elimination, shows the different relations between people (in communal and individual modes) and categories of the supernatural. In the first case, it is seen as normative relations of humans and non-humans forming together a *nutag* (local unit) framed by daily communication, mutual obligations and responsibilities, which maintains the order of living. A negative outcome is regarded as a legible sign of the disorder (or, more commonly nowadays, as a misunderstanding) arising from the human party violating the rules of the 'partnership', which thus requires peaceful resolution and re-establishment of the status quo. In the second case, communication with the supernatural is regarded itself as something out-of-order, improper and dangerous which demands termination and the disposal of the supernatural agent (see Articles III and IV).

Both cases are common in post-socialist Mongolia, and involve different levels of folk reflection. Both can be found in the countryside, where they are core figures of the everyday religious life of local communities, of the landscape and of travelling mythology. In cities, the category of *chötgör* and its ghostly images are unambiguously dominant. They often represent an alternative kind of supernatural lordship in a locality (in this context replacing the traditional figures of nature spirits), denoting memories tied to decrepit objects in urban spaces. Comparing different examples of urban demonology reveals significant traits of Mongolian urban culture, which is relatively young and in the process of being adopted by various members of Mongolian society, including an increasing number of prestigious 'urban' religious specialists (especially in the capital) and representatives of the supernatural (see Articles III and IV). In this way, the highly variable but almost 'undivided authority' of the *chötgör* in the city space also can be seen as demonstrating a different set of norms, interests and contradictions among the social agents involved in urban life.

Despite regular attempts to 'create' a ritual environment for *lus savdag* in the cities,<sup>55</sup> they still stay away, remaining in the open space of the steppe and

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<sup>55</sup> One such example that shows the complex nature of this adaptation is the practice of morning offerings for nature spirits. In such a practice, milk is sprinkled in living areas and from windows and balconies, etc. This practice has launched intensive discussions, including over the problems of urban neighbourhoods, behavioural culture and sanitary conditions. Issues in urban ritual life are frequently narrated and are involved in various discursive practices. These reflect the multiple cultural, economic (financial interests of various participants of urban life) and social (for example, competitive relations between various ritual specialists) aspects.

mountains, and all cases which require a proper communication with nature and helper spirits require a trip out of the city.<sup>56</sup> The same concerns another supernatural entity, a central figure of the traditional house mythology, the lord of the fire / hearth (*galyn khan*), who also keeps out of urban life. During the last few years, the idea about harmful effect on city people of the separation from entities that stayed behind in their places of birth *nutag*, is growing more popular in the discourse of religious specialists and clients. It is another way the concerns and misfortunes of everyday life can be interpreted. It also underlies the practice of visiting (regularly or occasionally) one's small motherland (the area of birth) in order to renew and maintain supportive ties with its supernatural community.<sup>57</sup> These new practices reflect and manage the discomfort arising from contradictions between rapid changes in life and social relations and traditional concepts and norms.

Both urban and rural cultures, which are tied together by dynamic relations and mobility, feature a variety of contemporary supernatural and religious traditions, their own authorities, new balances and fresh perspectives.

### 3.3. Religious environment and authorities of the supernatural

The Mongolian 'religious revival' consisted of many different processes, which served as triggers for the contemporary period and its 'explosion' of religious diversity and pluralism. This has led to a high demand for spiritual support, which has been met with a broad number of ritual responses, the challenges of choice and evaluation, and keen competition for authority and 'clients'. This has led to the formation of new balances, conditioned by not only spiritual, but also by contradictory social, economic, political interests.

In contemporary Mongolia the multiplicity of religious traditions includes the various teachings of Buddhism (the Mahayana and Vajrayana schools of Tibetan-Mongolian Buddhism, with *gelug pa* in the dominant position), Christianity (various missionaries of the Orthodox, Catholic, Mormon, and other churches),

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A similar case of traditional pastoralist in an urban environment (this time in Tuva) is focused on in the work of V. Soyán (2020).

<sup>56</sup> Such small ritual tours might take from between one to a few days in length, and usually includes groups of clients with various private requests.

<sup>57</sup> Usually such visits include rituals of offering to the local nature spirits and the lord of the hearth of the parents' home (or the homes of other older relatives, if the parents are no longer living). It is to male customers, ritual specialists is specially recommend visits to the lord of the fire. According to traditional norms and former social practices, the youngest son was the one who stayed behind and inherited the fire place of his parents. In contemporary practice, this now applies to all the younger members of a family, including females. Thus, the understanding of *nutag* as a territorial unity is renewed by the strong additional sense of it is also being a parents' place. These ritual revisits seem to compensate for the decay in the network of social relations between family members in contemporary life. In addition, these new vernacular approaches find support from the contemporary international culture, that promotes family contacts, such as the 'call your parents' motivator.

Islam (Sunni), international marginal religious organizations and groups,<sup>58</sup> shamanism, diverse local religious communities based on vernacular practices,<sup>59</sup> individual specialists representing a combination of various religious traditions, etc. In contemporary Mongolian society, these all serve needs beyond the spiritual, such as that for national and communal identities (Schlieter 2014), ideology, social networking, and the introduction of integrative and divisive matters.<sup>60</sup>

These situations have received multiple reflections in vernacular theories represented in contemporary folk narratives, private and public discussions, and everyday practices. The most frequent themes include a recognition of spiritual profusion, an evaluation of religious offers, the conceptualization of an individual or collective choice, framed by relevant folk motifs, old and new stereotypes, and conspiracy theories. Nowadays, popular principles in the collective evaluation of such practices include the concepts of affinity in religion (Mongolian–not Mongolian–anti-Mongolian), authenticity in religion (true–fake), benefaction (wealth–poverty), exclusivity (the people–the elite). These and other principles work in contemporary Mongolian society as diverse and contradictory criteria of spiritual and social trust and distrust, and a context within which each practice has to exist.

It should be noted that the most popular and productive topics of folklorisation and the social imaginary concern the closest and most pressing religious traditions in contemporary Mongolian society, namely those involved in the problematic issues of nationalism, political relations, and social tensions. For example, as reflected in the concept of ‘affinity’, such religious traditions as Islam and Christianity, which have long and complex historical background locally, but nowadays are not tied up with any conflicts within Mongolia at least, are typically

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<sup>58</sup> For example, while he is forbidden in many countries, the Rev. Moon’s Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity has a large network of district communes in Ulaanbaatar.

<sup>59</sup> Local vernacular religious communities take various forms, as for example, the specific gender practices of vernacular Buddhism, which include the worship of particular *sakhius* protectors and the uniting of some female communities in western Mongolia (Nandinbilig 2007). Units of specialists and the lay communities linked to them worship particular Buddhist, shamanic, local patrons and spirits (Dayan Derkhi, Bökh Mod, Eej Khad, Dorj Shugden, Red Protector, etc.). Almost every local community has a specific form of ritual life, based on local landscape mythology and the dominance of certain figures of the Buddhist and shamanic pantheons: Manjushri, Khan Garudi, who is incidentally a protector of the capital, Nagoon Dari Ekhe, Ata tengri, local *ongon* spirits and *ezen* lords of the locality. This is reflected in the everyday practices and traditions of families and areal communities (images and symbols of the venerated figures occupy their place on the family *khoimor* and home altar, where they serve as addressees of *seter*), the common ritual of devoting animals, and so on.

<sup>60</sup> Remarkably in this situation of religious diversity, tensions concern not large groups (‘ethnic’ groups, for example), but small social groups, such as families where questions of religious belonging often take on the character of existing, including generational, conflicts. One of the fieldwork cases revealed the situation of a ‘shamanic’ family with practitioners and even specialists, where the youngest son (21 year-old man) opted to become a Mormon.

regarded as ethnic markers for the Kazakh and Russian communities, ‘others’ who have been incorporated into larger Mongolian society. In its turn, Buddhism, the former official religion of Mongolia,<sup>61</sup> which at the present period is involved in multiple heated contests, including that of national ideology, the Tibetan problem, the question of economic and political relations with China, the question of connection with the Dalai Lama, the head of Tibetan-Mongolian Buddhism, international Buddhist organisations and western societies, is a productive arena for confronting opinions and diverse understandings. It is seen as the right and true national religion, tied with the important historical and legendary figures of Mongolian rulers, the grandson of Genghis Khan, Khubilai Khan (1260–1294), the ‘Golden’ Altan Khan (1548–1582), and others. Another opinion, becoming popular recently, sees, by contrast, Buddhism as a wrong and ‘anti-Mongolian’ religion:

– Buddhism among the Mongols was spread by the Chinese in order to make the Mongolian people weak and submissive, and to extinguish them as a nation<sup>62</sup>. Lamas: how they are supposed to live? Eating meat is forbidden, going to war is forbidden, having children is forbidden. They made a rule that Mongolian people should send their kids to monasteries, so that everybody would become a lama and the Mongolian people would disappear.

– Yes, yes, but our lamas have been doing all these [forbidden things] much more than we all together have done, so, we Mongolians are safe [*laughing*]. [N.G., 1957, Khalkha and T.Kh. 1960, Khalkha, 2019, Ulaanbaatar].

Shamanic traditions in the post-socialist period are regarded as another Mongolian national religion, the religion of Genghis Khan.<sup>63</sup> The specialists and their

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<sup>61</sup> Buddhism among Mongolians was spread during two main waves, once during Yuan dynasty in the 13th–14th centuries when the *sa skya pa* school was dominant, and once during the 16th–17th centuries, when the *gelug pa* school was dominant. This latter wave led to the establishment of the institute of Bogd Khan. At the period of instability, for a decade (1911–1921) the Bogd Khan government represented a theocratic political structure in Mongolia (Atwood 2004, 533–535).

<sup>62</sup> The idea of Buddhism ‘making people weak’ reveals itself to be old and found in various contexts. In European discourse, it is already present in the early 14th century in a statement of Marco Polo, and in the 18th century it became popular in ethnographic accounts (I should like to thank Prof. Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz, of the Institute for the Science of Religion and Central Asian Studies, for this observation). This idea is also found in the early written sources of the regarding region and referred to the 7th–8th century, being ascribed to the advisor of Bilgä Khagan, Tonyukuk, who discouraged the building of Buddhist and daoist temples, due to these religions make people too peaceful and weak (I should like to thank Dr. Rustam Sabirov, Moscow State University for this observation).

<sup>63</sup> The symbolic figure of Genghis Khan has been shared by multiple traditions involved in Mongolian environment (Charleux 2009), and this point about shamanic belonging has been contested by Buddhist representatives in the centuries ongoing debates. Starting from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Buddhist hierarchs have been active in the discussion and have constructed connections between early history of Mongols and Buddhism. Nowadays these ideas are reactualised in contemporary competitive religious discourses, and also in nationalistic discourses.

practices (*böö*, *zairan* and *udagan*) are often evaluated according to the principle of authenticity, and accrue numerous motifs of ‘true’ and ‘fake’. The popularity of these principles reflects some inherent features of shamanic traditions and their contemporary state. It includes strong individual perspectives on ritual practice (Dulam 1992, Pedersen 2011), the intensive spread and development of shamanic traditions, including urban ones (Hangartner 2011), their new forms of the organisation and performance (Manduhai 2013, Birtalan 2016), as well as noticeable attempts at the institutionalisation and the commercialisation of practices. There is an enormous, and growing, number of practicing specialists, a process which is already aptly called a ‘shamanic pandemic’ (Shimamura 2011, 2017). Diverse evaluations also reflect the competitive relations existing between various shamanic traditions (or between particular specialists) and controversial attitudes held towards rural and urban cultures (see Article IV). For example, one common opinion views urban shamans with scepticism:<sup>64</sup>

Now there are so many shamans. Never were there so many before. But most of them are not true ones, they are fake shamans, just ordinary people who say ‘I am a shaman’, and want to be shamans. Anyone can go to the market, buy the materials for a shamanic costume and a drum, and suppose that they became shamans just like that. Then they sit inside the stone walls of their city apartments, beating their drums and talking nonsense. They are not *böö* [shamans], they are ‘showmen’, making a show, entertain people for their money, and that’s all. But it also might be harmful, if *lus-savdag* [nature spirits] notice such a shaman, they might get angry, then the shaman and the visitors will be harmed. [G.M., 1961, Khalkha, 2016, Töv]

The principles of benefaction take on a significant place in the context of the popular evaluation of various religious traditions and specialists, and is realized by vernacular concepts of the wealth (Ljakhova 2019) and poverty (Stolpe 2020). This estimation often has controversial modes. If a particular ritual practice brings wealth to clients, they will be in demand and regarded as

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They are represented in updated forms with references to the former authorities (including such famous Mongolian Buddhist authors as Gombojab of the 18th century and Zawa Damdin of the 19th century). The most recent example (2020) is provided by the ‘discovery’ of the ancient Mongolian manuscripts of *Ganjuur* that was supposedly ordered by Genghis Khan (Chingis khaany zarligaar büteesen Ganjuuryн tergüin bod’, Youtube video (accessed 30.10.2020). URL: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fw410pjuf\\_k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fw410pjuf_k)). One of the frequent features of such sensations is the contradictory relations with historical data, i.e. the *Ganjuur* collection was established in Tibet after 1310, almost a hundred years after Genghis Khan’s death (though in Mongolian, the *ganjuur* is also can denote any Buddhist sutra). I should like to thank Prof. Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz (Institute for the Science of Religion and Central Asian Studies) for her deep insight into the historical context of this discussion.

<sup>64</sup> Perhaps as a reaction to such criticism, the practice of ritual shamanic tours to countryside is now developing. In general, it should be noticed that images of the city and countryside shamans are one of many examples of the specific ongoing competition involving rural and urban religious prestige and authority.

positive.<sup>65</sup> The wealth of religious specialists is regarded as a sign of their professional incompetence, having a fake or wrong religious affiliation. Often in discursive practices such specialists are given uncomplimentary labels such as like *oligarch*, or *tiiren*<sup>66</sup> etc. Even the usual practice of taking money for ritual services is thought not to be greatly appreciated by spirits and deities (*lus savdag*, *ongon*, *sakhius*), who, it is believed, may leave such specialists.<sup>67</sup>

Ah, I see. Why did you go to that N shaman?! Everybody knows that his *ongon* spirits have left him! He declared himself to be the ‘Honoured State Shaman’ [*Khündet Töriin zairan*], and even printed a diploma which he put on the wall. But no-one respects him, except himself. He is arrogant and greedy, he takes lots of money from his visitors and disciples. He only pretends to do something, but he cannot actually do anything. His *ongon* spirits escaped from him long ago. [G.G., 1980, Khalkha, 2018, Ulaanbaatar].

The concept of ‘evil’ wealth often features in such cases. This is connected with another principle of popular evaluation: the notion of the exclusivity of religious practice.<sup>68</sup> In discursive practices, this principle is applied to various subjects:

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<sup>65</sup> Practices calling up wealth are nowadays the most popular ones after exorcistic rituals. They take various forms and are included in professional religious services in both old and new lay traditions. One example of such practices is the resending and reposting of pictures of stacks of tugriks and dollars. Another one is the now-popular Buddhist practice of *bumba(ny) takhilga*, which is believed to be very effective for invoking well-being, especially wealth and it gathers huge amount of people during the ritual (sometimes it has a form of festival and lasts for a few days, as for example at the area of a famous monastery Amarbayasgalant). At the same time, there is also a spread opinion about this practice regarding it as negative and even ‘poisoned’. According to one of such interpretations, the ritual vessel used in this practice (*bumba* filled with symbolic goods—cereals, etc) also carries the harm or, literally, poison of malevolent entities, disgraced deities and spirits. In a broader context, such interpretations are linked to the currently popular concept of conspiracy theories about poisoned Chinese goods: “Beware of the *bumba*, which contains poison *khorel* of *Sug don*, *Shügden*, *büg chötgör*! Be alert people, who took the *bumba*, that is to say *büg*, from Amarbayasgalant, Bulgany Chin vangiin khüree, Dundgoviin Delgiin Choiryn khiid, Nalaikhyn Sain nomuug khiid, Ulaanbaataryn Tögsbayasgalant khiid and other monasteries and temples which let in the Chinese *Shügden büg*” (Hunnu Mongol, Facebook group, the post on January 8, 2021 (accessed 08.01.2021). URL:

<https://www.facebook.com/hunnu.mongol.739/posts/205287954670886>).

<sup>66</sup> The term ‘*tiiren*’ in speech genres is associated with characteristics such as ‘supernatural’ greed, insatiability, and consumerism. These meanings are the understanding of *tiiren* as an evil helper-spirit which is very difficult to get rid of, and which brings the wealth to his owners, tortures them with constant requests for new tasks, insomnia, and so on.

<sup>67</sup> There are many practices that are followed to avoid directly paying for religious services, such as offering money to an altar/statue of the deity of the religious specialist, not speaking the price of the ritual aloud, etc.

<sup>68</sup> It is important to distinguish between ‘real’ practices and discursive products of the social imagination. The former might encompass the existence of marginal religious groups and organisations, while the latter involves beliefs about special sects and units who feature in contemporary conspiracy theories, the otherwise inaccessible ‘sects for the elite’, and personal spiritual specialists-advisers who are often evaluated as anti-popular and anti-national.

small or closed religious units (in the literal sense sects),<sup>69</sup> particular practices and worships (these can sometimes fall into disgrace),<sup>70</sup> public figures, personalities and even entire social groups. There are many examples of social groups being the focus of discussion which in turn reveal social stereotypes around, conspiracy theories about, and distrust of, contemporary ‘elites’, whether they be political, financial or intellectual. Members of such groups often are believed to have particular kinds of religious services, practices and even supernatural patrons, characterized by exceptional power, and can endow their followers with unlimited goods and influence. They are believed to be secretive and extraordinarily wicked. For example, government officials, businessmen and even academics are believed to have their own personal shamans with black spirits (*khar ongon*) [Kh.M., 1956, Khalkha, 2019, Ulaanbaatar], who are capable of sending curses (*kharaal*) to their opponents and do other dark tasks, or *tiiren* demons stealing and bringing wealth to the owners [M., 1978, Khalkha, 2019, Ulaanbaatar]. They worship particular deities and *sakhius* patrons, who bring wealth in this life, but prevent the souls of the followers from being reborn in their future lives [T.E., 1973, Khalkha, 2018, Ulaanbaatar]. It should be noticed that the discourses of ritual ‘clients’ and specialists intensively interact, exchange details and mutually enrich one another.

While vernacular thinking about religion is usually somewhat polarised (‘right–wrong’, ‘fake–true’, statements about strictly adhering to the only possible tradition), in practice we find more sophisticated perspectives. Analysis of field data allows to detect a few common attitudes towards various religious traditions, which might be termed ‘functional inclusiveness’. It is generally found amongst religious ‘clients’, but can also be found among members of religious communities and organisations, and even sometimes specialists. One such attitude is an understanding of religion as a form of ‘employment’ (*ajil, alba*).<sup>71</sup>

- So yes, I am a Christian, baptised four years ago, have been working in this temple for three years already. I like to work here.
- Which saints [*burkhan*] do you address when there is a need? Do you keep some of them [icons] at home?

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<sup>69</sup> One example of the folklorisation of particular practicing sects is that of the Moon organisation, now active in Mongolia. According to one of the popular interpretations of what takes place there is: “marriage with the *süns* (soul, ghost) of the dead old Korean man. Everybody who becomes a member of this Moon organisation is supposed to marry that *chötgör süns* (demonic soul)” [A.N., 1990, Khalkha, 2016, Ulaanbaatar]. The motif is connected to the practice of arranged marriages within units and the founder of this organisation, Sun Myung Moon.

<sup>70</sup> As, for example, the worship of the Buddhist *sakhius* Dorje Shugden, which is now involved in controversial political affairs (Ljakhova 2019a).

<sup>71</sup> Often it concerns ‘foreign’ religions organisations, especially Christian ones, which have a package of social goods, such as employment, medical support, educational programmes, for their followers.

– At home, I have Nogoön Dare Ekhe [Tara] and Jamsrai. There were high lamas in my family. If something bad happens, I ask them for support, and go to Gandan<sup>72</sup> or to the [Buddhist] temple close to my home... Your Russian deities are very good surely, but they are not familiar with our *chötgör* demons [*laughing*]. [O., 1962, Khalkha, 2018, Ulaanbaatar].

In this context, religious identity has a changeable, situational and temporary character, in other words, it serves as a utilitarian and easily alienable marker. As we can see from the quotation, religious tradition also preserves a link with ethnicity (“your Russian deities” – “our Mongolian demons”). But such presentations of ethnic identity can also be quite flexible and conditional. For example, there is a popular practice in contemporary shamanic traditions to take on ethnicity from the mentor shaman together with shamanic skills. In these cases, ethnic identity becomes a part of professional characteristics, and is not considered to lead to any inner contradictions within the complex of markers of self-identity:

- You are a Uriankhai, correct?
- No–no, I am Khalkha, a pure Mongol Khalkha. I am an Uriankhai shaman because my teacher was Uriankhai, and I do rituals as Uriankhai shamans do, they are regarded as very strong among shamans. I learned from my teacher, I took the initiation from him.
- What kind of *ongon* [helper-spirits] do you have? Uriankhai or Mongol?
- All kinds. Some of them I cannot understand, they come and speak in another language, there are Uriankhai and Buryat *ongon* spirits, Mongol *lus savdag* spirits, *sakhius* patrons of my area *nutag*. [G.B., 1980, Khalkha, 2019, Ulaanbaatar].

Another now-popular understanding, which arose as vernacular concept shared by various participants in religious life, is of religion as a tradition (*yos zanshil*). In particular contexts, this term covers a heterogeneous multitude of religious forms – personal, communal, local practices and religious choices, including those referring to Buddhist and shamanic practices. This term brings into vernacular discussions the ideas of tradition as a marker of national, ethnic and religious identities, which merge in practice, as well as the question of authenticity, as a popular principle of evaluation of religious claims.

I worship the *Burkhan Bagsh* [Buddha], I am a Buddhist. But I also have relatives who are shamans. When I have a concern, I visit them and consult on what to do. There were both lamas and shamans in our family. Shamanism [*böögiin mörgöl*] is about nature, how we should treat it, and it is about people, how we should live all together. It is our Mongolian tradition and custom. [A., 1963, Khalkha, 2018, Ulaanbaatar].

I am a *böö* shaman, I have different *ongon* [spirit–helpers]. I also have *sakhius* patrons of the ‘yellow religion’ [*sharyn shashin*]. My forefathers were lamas, and Buddhism is a tradition of my family. That is why I am a ‘yellow shaman’. [B.D., 1978, Khalkha, 2019, Ulaanbaatar].

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<sup>72</sup> Gandantegchinlen Monastery, located in the capital Ulaanbaatar, is one of the central monasteries in Mongolia.



Such a perspective introduces motifs of continuity and authenticity to the discussion of some contemporary practices, holding intimate links with ‘true’ ritual traditions as valuable knowledge and spiritual heritage, both personal and national. The idea of family continuity in ritual traditions is now a core feature for some groups of specialists, as it is important for their professional identification and self–presentation, and also in their resistance against the unification enforced by corporate religious authorities (see Article IV). In comparison with the first case, the ‘religion–tradition’ represents a more fundamental (and presumably life-long) affinity and is often recognized as a specific order of life and relations with the natural and supernatural, which, when followed, will grant individual and collective well–being. Clear examples of this are provided by shamanic practices. Involvement in shamanic rituals (visits, consultations, following the prescriptions given by shamans) are not thought of by ‘clients’ as being related to religious belonging. However, in some cases there are rebellions against this form of everyday life:

My aunt, mother’s sister, is an *udagan* [shamaness]. We have some other *böö* [shamans] in our family. People come all the time, and sit, talk, and drink. They and their *ongon* spirits drink vodka, smoke, and eat meat.<sup>73</sup> I want to live another life. I go running in the morning, go to the tidy white church, study and work here, meet young people like me, both Mongolians and foreigners. I am a vegetarian. The people at home do not like it, and think that I belong to a sect... But nothing can change that. [M., 1998, Khalkha, 2019, Ulaanbaatar].

There is also some vernacular reflection on the concept of religion *qua* religion – a doctrine and kind of spiritual belonging (*shashin*), an idea actively supported in official culture and by religious representatives. It can be found in state ideology, national branding, international relations, and so on. This conception sees Buddhism and shamanism (*buddyn shashin*, *böögin shashin*), the old Mongolian pair with long and complex relations (Heissig 1953, Kollmar-Paulenz 2012), as the traditional and true national religion(s) of all Mongolian people.<sup>74</sup> It emphasises the idea of shamanism as the religion of Genghis Khan and develops an image of a national Mongolian Buddhism. Both traditions received recognition as state religions at the start of the national revival. Lamas and shamans together appear as specialists–mediators of the nation during the most important state rituals, thereby representing ‘traditional heritage’ and offering spiritual support to the Mongolian people, land and state. These include annual ceremonies (*töriin takhilga*) of the *ongon* of Genghis Khan and the *khar suld* (flag) of Genghis Khan, revered mountains and their patron–spirits (Burkhan Khaldun, Altan Oboo and others), the deity/spirit of fire (*galyn burkhan*), as well as other national events.

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<sup>73</sup> The interviewee refers here to a popular part of ritual shamanic performance when the shaman spirit, on coming to the body of the shaman, demands vodka and a smoke as a gesture of respect and greetings.

<sup>74</sup> This includes Mongolian communities in Russia, China and elsewhere.

In the everyday life of local people, lamas and shamans are the principal negotiators with, and exorcists of, the supernatural. In this context, they have overlapping professional functions and ritual duties based on common ritual demands: healing, searching for lost souls, pacifying nature spirits, dealing with the weather, neutralising haunted places, and so on. Contemporary vernacular theories reflect the fundamental difference between two religious traditions, locating this difference in the sources of their supernatural power: “Shamans are strong by their spirits, lamas are strong by their *nom* books”.<sup>75</sup> [M.D., 1948, Khalkha, 2010, Ömnögovi]. Both the ‘traditional’ and the ‘educational’ principles have been the most respected ones in Mongolian culture, and they currently determine important ‘competitive’ trends in the contemporary society and its religious life.

Relations between lamas and shamans are conceptualised in folk narrative culture by motifs of competition (this is the older traditional understanding) and of co-operation (this is the more recent understanding). The motif of competition is often represented by an intense ritual struggle,<sup>76</sup> during which both participants demonstrate their supernatural abilities: damnations, spells and miracles, granted by the power of their *ongon* spirits, *sakhius* and teachings. This can even be taken on the character of something like a sports event, as in the example below:

There was an *udagan* [shamanness], Amajii *udagan*, the mother of the Darkhat woman Suda, the daughter of Agaryn *khairkhan*. Once she struggled with a lama. That lama took out his tongue and put its tip on his palm. “Well, now it’s your turn to show what you can do”. Amajii *udagan* instantly cut open her stomach, pulled out her interior fat and unwound her intestines. She showed the unwound intestines to the lama and was going to push them back in, but the lama was so angry at losing that he threw earth into her open stomach. Amajii *udagan* sewed up the wound with her cut-off hair, but nothing helped. She got an infection from the earth in her stomach, the wound began to fester and the *udagan* died. [R., 1958, Darkhad, 2007, Mörön].

Stories such as these mostly take the form of legends, linked with narrative cycles about outstanding religious specialists of former times and set in the past.

Both ‘Buddhism’ and ‘shamanism’ are extremely heterogeneous and are represented by multiple forms, corporate and individual, institutionalised and independent. These forms make reference to various schools and ritual traditions, or indeed can publicly claim to constitute their own unit of teachings.<sup>77</sup> Representatives of such traditions are the main conductors of the vernacular diversity of contemporary religious life. Relations between various specialists, despite mutual tolerance and in some cases practical cooperation (such as sending ‘clients’ to

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<sup>75</sup> *Nom* = sacred, ritual texts; teaching.

<sup>76</sup> The motif of the struggle-competition is typical for shamanic narratives in Mongolian and Siberian traditions.

<sup>77</sup> This position of religious identification, which has a historical basis and was very popular during the revival (Havnevik, Bareja-Starzynska, Ragchaa 2007), is still quite widespread amongst individual religious specialists and even amongst some monastic communities.

one another) are typically characterised by competition. This has various associated strategies and the supernatural is not the least amongst them. Thus, spirits and demons not only deliver concerns of ‘clients’, but they also can represent the interests of specialists, and become significant when, for example, the religious head of a local countryside community is chosen, or when territory and funding for building a new monastery in the capital is acquired.

Previously, this mountain *oboo* was worshipped by lamas, according to the ‘yellow faith’ [Buddhism]. But from this year [2009], [we] began to worship it according to the ‘black faith’ [shamanism]. People worship, make offerings to the mountain *oboo* in order that rain should fall. But, every time after worshipping the Sujin mountain *oboo*, dust and sand storms came. This continued for several years. Then the local people decided to invite shamans from Ulaanbaatar. The shamans came and said that the lord–spirit of this mountain *oboo* is a man after his forties, who plays the lip harp [*aman khuur*].<sup>78</sup> Having grown offended with the people of this area, he went away, and began to wander around the other *oboo* [and altars]. The shamans invoked him [to come back], rebuilt the stone pile of his *oboo* [on the mountain], and left boiled meat from two sheep on either side of it. They did not eat the meat as people usually do on *oboo* [after the offering], but left it there. The shamans said that everything now will be fine, and that it is no longer necessary to make offerings to this lord each year, and that from now on, the worship of this *oboo* will not be Buddhist, but shamanic. [Kh. S., 1969, khalkh, 2009, Ömnögovi].

– That is true. Many people from the district can confirm it and tell you that they saw strange things there [in the old building of the monastery]. That place is *chötgörtei* [haunted], that is why it caught fire several times for no apparent reason. There is not even any electricity there now.

– What is the *chötgör* of that place? How did it appear there?

– You know, it is because of karma. Just as a person’s past bad deeds influence their present life, it is the same with places. That place has a bad karma, dark energy, and that is why it is *chötgörtei* [haunted]. It is bad, dangerous place, that is why we applied for funding to build a new monastery. We got a nice place from the city government for that, very clean spiritually. Hopefully in a couple of years we will build it. [Interview with N, a head of a Buddhist organization in Ulaanbaatar, 2019].

Motifs of cooperation in narratives usually concern extraordinary situations which demand joint efforts. In contrast to such narratives, the discursive practices popular today emphasise the unity of two religions. Such an understanding is held by the ‘clients’ and, in general, also by the specialists.

Well, there is no hostility between us [lamas] and the shamans, ‘yellow’ and ‘black’ religions [*shar khar shashin*], as people say. Shamanism [*böögiin shashin*] is a part of the traditions of the Mongolian people, of our customs and culture, our

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<sup>78</sup> This detail hints about the religious affiliation of the lord-spirit, and probably his former biography, as a lip harp is regarded as one of traditional shamanic attribute.

view of the world. It does not contradict Buddhist teachings [*buddyn shashin*], so no, we do not prevent people coming to our temple from going to see a shaman sometimes, if they need it. [B.T., 1978, Khalkha, 2019, Ulaanbaatar].

Thus, from a vernacular perspective, being a Mongol nowadays means being both Buddhist and shamanist. In practice, people (clients) usually have their regular specialists, whether a relative or someone well-known, who they keep in touch with, as well as favoured temples and worshiped places they regularly visit in their everyday life. When in need of extra spiritual support, distant visits to particular famous specialists and sacred places or even modern pilgrimage tours take place (Kollmar-Paulenz 2017).

Inclusivity and diversity are still common in contemporary religious life. However nowadays, new forces which started to develop from the mid 2000s onwards, are already becoming more noticeable. We see the increasing role of the state<sup>79</sup> and of institutionalised religion (Buddhism), which started to reclaim authority, albeit with new features, conditions and forms.

Among significant processes worth considering are the professionalisation and unification of ritual life. The returning and ‘multiplying’ of religious specialists has had an influence on the number of non-professional vernacular practices, which had bloomed among lay people during the spiritual deficit, but have since decreased. In this situation, common tendencies to delegate the handling of spiritual concerns, together with the intensive activity of ‘professionals’, led to the situation that now many popular rituals co-opted by corporate specialists, are ‘corrected’ or replaced. Nevertheless, many significant meanings and understandings of rituals and their forms, found in previous periods amid folk traditions, are adapted by professionals due to demand for them from ‘clients’ (see Article IV).

Various factors in this process (including an orientation to the standards of global society and of international Buddhism) have also influenced some common criteria of what ‘professionalism’ is, and how religious specialists can be evaluated. In particular, recent standards have reinforced the dominance and prestige of the educated over the traditional, and furthermore, the urban over the rural, the corporate and monastic over the individual and independent.

This is reflected in various forms, for example, in a broad and incendiary public debate about the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ rituals and customs. This discussion might be regarded from various angles. On the one hand, it can be seen as a collective discursive reflection on the worrisome elements of social changes, the past and the future of Mongolian traditions and the process of religious revival itself. On

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<sup>79</sup> Among multiple examples of the increasing influence of the state is the regulatory rules for the registration of and permitted activities for religious units, which started to be noticeably consistent from the beginning of 2010s. The roles of state religious politics and of corporate Buddhist religious organisations in general might be regarded as factors in the ‘corporate’ tendencies in contemporary religious life, influenced by such vernacular traditions, as shamanic practices and their new forms.

the other hand, at a certain point, this discussion was partially taken over by religious specialists, and it became one of the tools they used to assert their positions in everyday ritual life. Even during the last ten years, the voice of religious professionals, especially presenting corporate Buddhism of the ‘yellow tradition’, has become noticeably dominant in a slowly fading polyphony of different voices and opinions. This situation is also projected into everyday religious life, with a range of actual ‘experts’ to whom lay people consult and delegate their ritual concerns to. If we could before find in discursive practice mentions of various independent authorities including non-professional figures, such as ‘old people’, ‘our elders’ (*khuugchuudaa*), ‘a wise man’ (*mergen khün*), ‘people with abilities’ (*chadaltai khümüüs*), ‘people with knowledge’ (*meddeg khümüüs*), nowadays people most commonly refer to professionals (lamas, shamans, and others). In its turn, the notion of ‘professionalism’ is increasingly recognised by the initiations and confirmations given by organisations, by mentors representing particular organisation, by monasteries and by shamanic units (see Article IV). Nowadays such official recognition strongly influences the character and number of independent ritual specialists, who before often had been self-initiated or had had semi-official initiations. Nevertheless, some vernacular practices continue their development in the new conditions and resist unification. An example of this is a special lay tradition of the Buddhist ritual *luijin* (Tibetan *gChod*), whose representatives are regarded as the strongest specialists—exorcists and thus maintain important functions in contemporary Mongolian communities (see Article IV).

However, the roles of vernacular tradition in the current situation are not limited to resisting and preserving, its authority also manifests in the production of new forms, which meet the current conditions and needs of Mongolian communities. Many examples can be found among vernacular practices represented by shamanic traditions and groups of independent specialists, such as the rapidly-growing alternative industry of ‘professional’ certification (titles, diplomas, certificates, forms of professional confirmations), and the new features and images of the supernatural. Vernacular traditions also actively adapt concepts from international religious practice, including new age religious discourse, and transfer to the internal and external images of Mongolia as a special spiritual centre with strong ‘energy’ centres and spots (Kollmar-Paulenz 2017), ‘vital radiation’,<sup>80</sup> ‘living in unity with nature’ and ‘ancient nomadic wisdom’, etc.<sup>81</sup> Thus, various participants and authorities of religious life with their diverse interests and strategies, jointly influence the permanent and turbulent recreation.

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<sup>80</sup> The topic, which has often been narrated during recent years, introduces a belief about the special sacred radiation of Mongolia and its soil, how it heals, gives power and fertility [Ts. Hk., 1958, Khalkha, 2019, Ulaanbaatar].

<sup>81</sup> These are concepts popular both in some contemporary Mongolian vernacular practices and also in the tourist business. They have apparently been influenced by international New Age traditions and also by foreign visitors, who have been searching for the spiritual in Mongolia, getting involved in shamanic learning, pilgrimage and so on.

## 4. Summary of articles

The articles making up this thesis introduce four different, but interconnected, cases of post-socialist Mongolian beliefs about the supernatural, as represented in narratives and practices. These cases form a united body of research which cross-examines a number of linked core-themes, regarded from different angles. These include such topics as 1) the roles of the supernatural and religious in Mongolian national revival, construction of new ideology, united and communal identities; 2) the forms and specifics of vernacular recognition, conceptualisation and discussion of matters involving social relations and authority; 3) the features of flexibility and resistance in narrative and ritual cultures, including interactions, conflicts, and the joint creativity of various traditions in Mongolia.

Articles I and II focus on rural and urban supernatural figures popular in narratives and practices, and investigate the ritual and social contexts connected to them. Articles III and IV focus on lay and professional practices, dealing with supernatural concerns in both ritual and social contexts, and examine the relations between ritual traditions and the narrative culture.

**Article I** examines a topic popular in rural areas, namely, particular demonic places which receive much attention in contemporary narratives and rituals. Investigating them reveals a number of issues critical for Mongolian communities, such as the conflict between ritual practices and the understandings they are based on, as represented by traditional and official cultures. It also presents a vernacular recognition of the problem of the interruption of open religious life that occurred during the socialist period, and its subsequent post-socialist revival, together with forms of overcoming the past and dealing with the present concerns supplied by narrative and ritual traditions. From the research point of view, the contemporary situation in Mongolian society could be described as one of very intensive transformation throughout various realms of life, and also of conflicts between different elements of culture: the traditional, the socialist past and the modern mainstream. Demonology, as one of the most sensitive and adaptive parts of folklore, reflects these complicated and conflicting social situations within its own rules, images and forms. This article is dedicated to one such contemporary Mongolian case where authority contested between different ritual traditions has been reflected in social life, vernacular beliefs and demonological narratives. Among the most popular topics in contemporary rural tradition is *güideltai gazar* (or *gazryn güits*), which might be loosely described as ‘restless places’, places with permanent supernatural activity.<sup>82</sup> These are usually small areas located in the steppe or on mountain slopes, marked in local traditions as having bad reputations. According to interviews they are regarded as the places of demonic possession, or they may

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<sup>82</sup> From Mongolian: *güidel*, to run, running, circulation (the verb *güih*, means to run, running, *güildeh*, to run, running around, back and forth). *-tei* is the indicator of joint case; *gazar*, earth, ground (Pyrbeev 2001, 9).

act as independent supernatural entities.<sup>83</sup> Narratives about them are a part of local landscape mythology and might be taken as examples of place lore.

**Article II** deals with the supernatural in urban space and examines the case of the capital city Ulaanbaatar. It provides insights into the characteristics of Mongolian social and religious life in the urban space, its current concerns, individual and collective, caused by the contradictions between the still thriving traditional order of living, family and communal relations and the new urban conditions. Mongolian urban ghostlore also reflects current economic instability and social tensions, and reveals popular social and ethnic stereotypes. In addition, this article introduces the characteristics of Mongolian capital culture and its rapidly developing folk memories, which shape the specific image of the city, its intensive interactions with the international mass culture, which together form a culture concept of the urban identity quite recent for Mongolian society. The article touches upon such matters as the relationship between traditional and mass culture, the transformation of folk narratives in modern urban culture, and the preservation (and adaptation) of the supernatural within new social and cultural conditions. The focus of this research is on ghost stories and ghost storytelling in contemporary Mongolia: *chötgöriin yaria*. These tales are widespread in modern culture and form a special genre which straddles the boundary between the oral and written traditions. While they are based on traditional beliefs, they also include new elements from mass culture and foreign demonology. In this article, I analyse some aspects of the formation and manifestation of texts of this genre in modern Mongolia, the image of demonological characters, the structure of ghost narratives, their semantics and pragmatics, and the way they adopt plots and images from other traditions.

**Article III** promotes specific perspectives on perception and negotiation with the supernatural as represented by ritual genres, which are strongly determined by practice and play a role in enabling communication between human and non-human representatives. The investigation is focused on examples of lay ritual genres and reveals a number of features which characterise the relations between various religious traditions and the roles of individual ritual specialists. It also reveals the strong ties existing between ritual genres and practices and folk narrative culture. These supplement and interpret one other, and thus create together the joint environment of Mongolian vernacular religion. The article presents the special and diverse world of Mongolian ritual poetry. Despite the effects of the socialist era and the intensive changes brought about by contact with global culture more recently, contemporary Mongolian society has managed to preserve a significant space for traditional lifestyle and worldview. The characteristics of this region were built up by the weaving together of different ethnic and religious traditions, as well as other historical and cultural features. All of these have contributed to the unique skein of images and meanings dwelling found in the world of Mongolian ritual poetry, invocations, prayers, verbal charms, a world which is manifested in everyday life and practice. In this article, I discuss some basic types

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<sup>83</sup> Compare the way the spirit of a mountain is equated with that mountain.

of Mongolian ritual poetry, focusing on genres performed by non-professional experts, *dom shivshleg*. This genre has very close relations with other religious traditions and their ritual genres, on the one hand, and close ties with vernacular beliefs and narrative culture, on the other hand. This genre was significantly popular because it was an accessible form for the manifestation of beliefs during the socialist period and it also allowed for the transmission of particular ritual demands and examples during the subsequent religious revival. Nowadays, this genre faces new challenges in the coming transformations resulting from the new standards of religious life, the processes of professionalization and the unification of ritual expressions.

Finally, **Article IV** deals with one very popular ritual practice in contemporary Mongolia, regarded as being the most effective exorcistic ritual for negotiating various supernatural concerns. This practice is characterised by high textual, ritual and social diversity, as represented by various groups of institutionalised and independent performers, including a very special group of women performers. The investigation presents the various opinions, roles and strategies of participants in contemporary religious life, as well as the spiritual and social demands of urban and rural communities. It also represents a vivid example of the close relationship between ritual and narrative traditions and its productivity in forming new meanings and functions while adapting to the current needs of the society. In this article, a Buddhist ritual is presented which first appeared nearly a thousand years ago. This ritual underwent many changes during its long life, disappeared from (or at least, became invisible in) the Mongolian religious landscape during the socialist times, only to re-emerge in the 1990s and to thrive in the early twenty-first century. The article discusses the Tibetan history of the ritual, its philosophical background and along with its practice in Tibet, as well as the contemporary forms this ritual takes in Mongolia. Its textual, ritual and social features are also examined from the point of view of their meanings and functions, now they have been enriched by multiple traditions. The article also looks at the strategies introduced by different authorities in the 'struggle' over this ritual, and examines the roles of narrative culture, ritual and discursive practices in this process. In order to examine these themes in their full complexity, this article features the various perspectives of participants, both specialists and adherents. In this article, the origins, historical contexts and Tibetan traditions of the practice are investigated by K. Kollmar-Paulenz and based on the original written sources (Introduction chapter of the article, comparative comments to Mongolian data, Conclusions). Mongolian traditions, the meanings and roles of this ritual in the socialist and post-socialist life of communities are elaborated by A. Solovyeva using fieldwork data in the frame of folkloristic approaches towards vernacular theories and practices (other Chapters of the article, Conclusions).

These investigations show the specific forms of vernacular perception of dramatic historical events and contemporary concerns, objectifying the 'haunting past' and the disturbing present as productive categories of the supernatural, thus making them verbalizable and discussable in the form of narratives and also 'tamable' by



rituals. The research examines the unity of the supernatural and religious perspectives, and the interconnected narrative and ritual cultures, which maintain their spiritual and social power during the socialist period and post-socialist revival, which have created the new balances and standards of the current period.

## 5. Conclusions and perspectives

Vernacular images of the supernatural in contemporary Mongolian traditions are inclusive and shaped by multiple traditions, blended together in everyday discursive and ritual practices of religious folk life (Buddhist and shamanic traditions, new age religious concepts, the foreign spirituality and mass culture, etc). In Mongolian folk traditions, beliefs about the supernatural are embodied in an immense number of images, generally representing two large groups. The first includes non-human supernatural entities: nature spirits, lords of particular localities, the spirits-helpers of religious specialists, various demonic creatures, ghosts, and a large number of deities, both close and distant. It is noticeable that emic perceptions do not divide into opposed camps, stressing either the ‘demonic’ or the ‘divine’ aspects, but rather stresses their ambivalent unity. This is because ‘the divine’ may take on extremely frightening and demonic forms, whereas the ‘demonic’ regularly turns out to be emanations of the unfortunate ‘divine’ (see Articles I and IV). Their images and qualities are determined conditionally and manifested by communication with people and their representatives (the mandatory mediators in relations with the supernatural).

These mediators represent the second large group, which includes human bearers of supernatural abilities: shamans, lamas, traditional wrestlers, smiths, ‘wise people’, and many others. In folk traditions, while these sub-groups possess various competences (healing, curse, foretelling, searching for the lost, influencing the weather, etc.), they are all characterised by the common folk ‘specialisation’ of dealing with the supernatural. In practice, the quality, status and prestige of specialists are usually assessed by their ability to successfully negotiate with supernatural entities. An emic perspective does not bring with it an impenetrable border between non-human supernatural entities and human bearers of the supernatural abilities in general. Rather, it regards them as belonging to the same ‘other world’, possessing a similar nature, and working in close partnership: “To deal with demons, it is necessary to be the most demon” [L.B., 1987, Khalka, 2019, Ulaanbaatar].<sup>84</sup> This traditional perception is expressed in various motifs and ritual situations. Among these are common beliefs about supernatural entities needing the help of specialists in order to get offerings and to communicate with visitors; specialists who travel between worlds, change their form, and perform miracles with the help of supernatural entities; supernatural entities who are reborn into outstanding specialists, and specialists who after death become supernatural

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<sup>84</sup> This idea seems to be stable and shared by various Mongolian communities, e.g. a similar definition is documented amongst Dagur community of China (Humphrey 1996, 28).

entities, such as lords of the locality, spirit-helpers of other specialists, or restless demons (see Articles I and IV).

These features of beliefs about the supernatural reveal the strong connections existing between some of its categories, based on important emic concepts. For example, take the most widespread supernatural figures of post-socialist Mongolia, the *lus savdag / gazaryn ezen* (nature spirits, lords of the locality) and the *chötgör* (ghosts, demons, restless spirits). Their popularity and frequent involvement in various realms of everyday life arises from the concepts they are grounded on: the ‘soul’ (*süns*), its emanations and characteristics, various forms of the ‘bad’ and ‘good’ deceased, ancestors, property relations, the concept of the ‘small’ and ‘big’ motherland *nutag* (the area of birth) as a unity of local landscape, human and non-human communities, and so on (see Articles I, II, III and IV).

The Mongolian epistemology of social, natural and supernatural relations shapes the vernacular idea of ‘religion’ (*shashin*) as a form of professionalism (professional ‘specialists’) with an emphasis upon communicative functions (see Articles III and IV). It emphasizes the interdependent coexistence of ‘the religious’ and ‘the supernatural’, as reflected in discursive and ritual practices. “Where there is a religion (*shashin*), there are demons (*chötgör*), because demons (*chötgör*) always compete with religion (*shashin*), and with lamas” [G.D., 1949, Khalkha, 2011, Kharkhorin]. However, in (ritual) practice, it is rather the case that lamas and other specialists have to compete for the spirits and demons, in order to demonstrate their own abilities to negotiate with the supernatural and to assert their own spiritual, social and economic position in the community. Either way, since the collapse of the socialism, abundant forms of the supernatural and manifestations of religion have prospered.

In Mongolia, as in other post-socialist countries, ‘religious revival’ has become a part of national revival (Västrik 2015). It revealed itself as a complex of processes and situations, characterised by spiritual diversity and pluralism, a high degree of inclusiveness, (conditionally forced) tolerance, and intensive competition for the ‘souls’ of followers and ritual clients. “Due to socialism, Mongols lost their immunity towards religion” [S.D., 1950, Khalkha, 2019, Ulaanbaatar]. This is a concise expression of one of the most common insider reflections upon the ebullient religious life of post-socialist Mongolia. Topics such as principles of evaluation of religious propositions, the grounds of religious choice and trust, the functions of religions are still very popular topics in contemporary vernacular theories, and are reflected in narratives and discursive practices. The ‘religious revival’ granted even more positions for the traditional Mongolian pairing of Buddhism and shamanism, which were both equally suppressed during socialism and both gained the status of national religions afterwards. It also allowed free access for various religious movements and organizations, Eastern and Western, old and new. Despite equivocal opinions about the status and popularity of particular religious practices, all of them have had their impact upon the collective ‘spiritual’ environment, and this has led to the introduction of a significant amount of cultural patterns, ethnic stereotypes, temporary political predilection and so on.

If a person has lived a normal life, being good, but not too good and not too bad, they will be reborn in Mongolia. If they lived a bit worse, doing more bad than good, they will be reborn in Russian Federation. If they lived badly and was a very sinful person, in the next life they will be born in China. But if the person lived very righteous life and amassed good deeds, s/he will be born in *divaajin*,<sup>85</sup> I think, it is in America. [M.S., 1949, Khalkha, 2009, Khentii].

Some other important processes that began at the same time as ‘the revival’ have had delayed effects, which have become more evident in the second decade of 2000s onwards, in new standards, balances and authorities of religious life. One of them is the ‘professionalisation’ (or re-professionalisation) of religious life, which had spontaneous and regulated forms. The influx of ritual services stimulated the transfer of spiritual concerns, which during the socialist period had been the concern of lay individual performers and local vernacular traditions, back to professional specialists. In its turn, the ‘professionalism’ of religious specialists is nowadays more noticeably determined by principles of education and corporate affiliation, due to the influence of international norms, large religious organisations and the growing regulatory policies of the Mongolian state. These factors involved the multi-layered developments characteristic of the present ‘post-revival’ period. They include the increasing role played in religious life by the ‘authorities of stability’, as represented by the state and institutionalised religion, and the new balances existing between various religious traditions and participants of religious life. They also include the new conditions and forms of religion and the supernatural. In practice, new trends are reflected in numerous features: experiences of the spontaneous institutionalisation of ritual practices (such as shamanic organisations), the development of new attributes of religious legitimacy and trustworthiness, together with the respective industry of proofs (diplomas, confirmation letters, certificates and other documents), that verify professional religious aptitude and affiliation. Such proofs are given both by ‘real’ religious organisations and by firms helping with alternative proof. They can even be self-made.

The new cultural contexts enriched supernatural beliefs with new features and new fields of relations and ‘activities’, including situations of individual and collective religious choice, competition and cooperation between different traditions and specialists, and images of spiritual and social reliability. Hence nowadays spirits-helpers and patrons may neglect a religious specialist due to the fact that the specialist works in a city and takes money from visitors. Or this might be because the specialist practices rituals with a fake (or no) certificate. Or the specialist him/her-self might turn out to be at the same time an independent ‘wise (wo)man’ and a member of both Buddhist and shamanic organisations.

Mongolian folk traditions and narrative culture have significant roles in all these processes, which apparently embrace three different periods – the period of

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<sup>85</sup> In popular Buddhist mythology, an analogue of ‘paradise’, the better place for reincarnation, the land of deities and dakinis. It refers to Sukhāvātī, or the Western Paradise, the pure land of Amitābha in Mahayana Buddhism.

socialism and suppressions, the subsequent revival and 'rebuilding', and the current period of 'stabilisation' and finding new balances. All three periods contribute toward the actual contexts of the 'post-socialist Mongolia' and the life of its society. During these periods, folk narrative culture had some specific and some common features and roles. The first period was the time of 'underground' (but successful) folk forms and narrative culture, that had a terrific influence on the entirety of ritual life. The second period was the time when vernacular beliefs and folk narratives, trickling in all realms of Mongolian culture, also became a part of the new official ideology, and figures and motifs of the supernatural became symbols of the national revival and guarantees of the new state. The third period is characterised by the involvement of a multiplicity of supernatural and religious participants and authorities, each with various interests and strategies behind them. In that situation, one of the specific roles of folk narrative culture is the delivery and framing of a polyphony of voices and opinions in the swirling processes of contemporary religious life. Folklore and narrative culture keep changing and updating themselves, producing new forms for the expression of various concerns, and reflections upon individual and collective experiences, as well as mechanisms for the handling of crises and instability. They also conceptualise events and situations, resisting, adapting and creating new forms and meanings of beliefs in both narratives and practices.

The development of the currently-vectored balances and features of Mongolian vernacular beliefs and religious life represent inspiring possibilities for future research. Productive and more fundamental future investigations would come via comparative research into Mongolian communities, which have lived in other state borders, political and cultural contexts. In the first instance, the subjects of study could be the Buryat and Kalmyk communities of Russia, who experienced a similar but different socialist past with strong state politics of unification and episodes of genocide, and also the communities of Inner Mongolia of China, who still live under a communist regime and are experiencing hard times in standing up for their rights, identities, and cultures.

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## **APPENDIXES**





## Appendix 1. Fieldwork locations

<b>2006</b>	<b>Settlements:</b>	Kharkhorin
<b>Province:</b>	Dalanzadgad	Kharkhorin
Övörkhangai	Erdenet	Khatgal
	Gurvansaikhan	Mörön
<b>Settlements:</b>	Khanbogd	Ölziit
Khujirt	Khuld	Rashand
Ölziit	Luus	Ulaanbaatar
Zuil	Mandalgovi	
Züünbayan-Ulaan	Manlai	
	Ölziit	<b>2012</b>
	Saishand	<b>Provinces:</b>
	Ulaanbaatar	Arkhangai
<b>2007</b>		Khentii
<b>Province:</b>		Töv
Bulgan	<b>2010</b>	Zavkhan
Khövsgöl	<b>Provinces:</b>	
	Dornod	<b>Settlements:</b>
<b>Settlements:</b>	Khentii	Erdenet
Bulgan	Ömnögovi	Ölziit
Khatgal	Töv	Öndörulaan
Mörön		Tosontsengel
	<b>Settlements:</b>	Tsagaannuur
<b>2008</b>	Biledkhoshud	Tsakhir
<b>Province:</b>	Choibalsan	Ulaanbaatar
Khentii	Erkhetyzburg	Uliastai
Sükhbaatar	Hulunbuir	
Töv	Kharkhorin	
	Saishand	<b>2013</b>
<b>Settlements:</b>	Tsagaanovoo	<b>Region:</b>
Baruunurt	Ulaanbaatar	Inner Mongolia (China)
Binder		Hulunbuir
Dadal		
Dariganga	<b>2011</b>	<b>Settlements:</b>
Erdenetsagaan	<b>Provinces:</b>	Hailar
Ganganuur	Arkhangai	Hothot
Mönkhkhaan	Arkhangai	
Öndörkhaan	Bayankhongor	
Suugiin tasal	Khentii	<b>2014</b>
	Khövsgöl	<b>Provinces:</b>
	Övörkhanghai	Khentii
	Töv	Khovd
<b>2009</b>		Töv
<b>Provinces:</b>	<b>Settlements:</b>	Uvs
Dundgovi	Gurbansaikhan	
Khentii	Jankhai	<b>Settlements:</b>
Ömnögovi	Khairkhan	Bayanbulgan
Töv		

Durgun  
Erdenebüren  
Myangat  
Ulaanbaatar

**2015**

**Provinces:**  
Arkhangai  
Bayankhongor  
Övörkhongai

**Settlements:**  
Bayanbulag  
Bayanovoo  
Bömbögör  
Buutsagaan  
Elsentasarkhai  
Galuut  
Gurvanbulag  
Jargalant  
Khüreemaraal  
Ulaanbaatar  
Zag

**2016**

**Provinces:**  
Arkhangai  
Khentii

Övörkhongai  
Töv

**Settlements:**  
Bayanovoo  
Elsentasarkhai  
Erdenet  
Kharkhorin  
Ölziit

**2017**

**Provinces:**  
Govi-Altai  
Khentii  
Sükhbaatar  
Töv

**Settlements:**  
Altai  
Asgat  
Baruunurt  
Erdenet  
Erdenetsagaan  
Jargalant  
Kharkhorin  
Sharga  
Taishir  
Ulaanbaatar

**2018**

**Provinces:**  
Selenge  
Töv

**Settlements:**

Amarbayasgalant khiid  
Manjir khiid  
Ölzi badruulagch khiid  
Ulaanbaatar

**2019**

**Provinces:**  
Khentii  
Töv

**Settlements:**

Erdenet  
Ulaanbaatar

## Appendix 2. Mongolian terms

[Literal meaning appears in squared brackets]

- Ad zetger** (*ad* and *zetger* can also be used separately). Obstacle, barrier, harm; demonic entities who cause obstacles on the way, failures and illnesses.
- Almas**. A popular demonic entity, a character in epics and narratives; a wild (wo)man, yeti (in this role it has other names, *khün göröö*s wild (wo)man, *khar khün* black man, *tsasny khün* snow man).
- Altai Khangai** (*Altai* and *Khangai* can also be used separately). Altai and Khangai are both, mountain chains; together they represent the name of important supernatural figure in folklore and everyday life beliefs, regarded as the chief patron of nature and all other nature spirits.
- Aman khur**. A lip harp, one of traditional attributes of shamanic performers.
- Arshan**. A natural spring, usually a sacred worshipped place in Mongolian traditions.
- Badarchin**. A wandering lama, monk-pilgrim. From Sanskrit *pātra*, a bowl for collecting alms.
- Bolson yavdal** [happened incident]. An emic term for belief narrative genres. A term with the similar meaning is *chötgöriin yaria*.
- Böö**. In contemporary traditions, a common term for male and female shamans.
- Böögün mörgöl**. A shamanic cult, shamanic rituals.
- Böögün shashin/mörgöl** [shamanic religion/worship]. Shamanism. A synonym is *khar shashin* (black religion).
- Böölöh**. To perform shamanic rituals (in particular, rituals of invoking *ongon* helper-spirits).
- Buddyn shashin** [Buddhist religion/worship]. It includes both *ulaan* (red) and *shar* (yellow) schools.
- Büg**. A name of a demonic entity often recognized in folk beliefs as a soul of a deceased person that hides in random objects.
- Burkhan** [a deity, god].
- Burkhan bagsh** [god teacher]. Buddha.
- Buzar** [dirt]. Ritual dirt.
- Chavgants** [nun]. In Mongolian traditions, it is most often old women who take monastic vows in their old age.
- Chötgör**. An emic term for the category of demonic entities, ghosts, demons, restless spirits, souls of the deceased; a name of a demonic entity.
- Chötgöriin gal** [demonic light(s)]. Moving light(s), believed to be visible in the steppe at night, a popular figure in vernacular beliefs and narratives.
- Chötgöriin yaria** [demonic stories]. An emic term for belief narrative genres, focused on encounters with demonic entities, especially in urban space.
- Chötgörtei gazar** [demonic place]. A bad, haunted area, a demonically possessed place.
- Dara Ekhe** [Dara Mother]. An important divine figure in Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism, vernacular beliefs, narratives and practices. She appears as a female bodhisattva in Mahayana doctrine and as a female Buddha in Vajrayana doctrine (Sanskrit *Tārā*; Tibetan *Dölma*).
- Deel**. Traditional female and male clothes, a robe.
- Divaajin**. In popular Buddhist mythology, an analogue of ‘paradise’, a better place to be reincarnated, the land of deities and *dakinis*. It refers to Sukhāvātī, or the Western Paradise, the pure land of Amitābha in Mahayana Buddhism.

- Dogshin/dokshit** [terrifying, wrathful]. The Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhist concept of terrifying wrathful deities, protectors of dharma (Sanskrit *dharmapāla*, Tibetan *chos-skyong* or *drag-gshed*, a terrifying, wrathful executioner). In Mongolian this term often is used as an adjective and is included in characteristics of natural worshiped places and their patrons, *gazaryn ezen*, *lus savdag*.
- Doloon burkhan** [seven gods]. The Big Dipper/Plough constellation, a popular figure in the mythology, folklore, ritual practices.
- Dom shivshleg** [healing whispering]. An emic term for non-professional ritual genres, charms, spells.
- Duudlaga** [calling]. An emic term for ritual genres of invocation, popular in shamanic and also Buddhist rites (e.g. *süns duudlaga*, invocation of the lost soul of a living person, a form of healing ritual).
- Erlük(/-g) Khan**. The lord of the death and the head of Mongolian Buddhist hell (*Tamag*), active figure in vernacular beliefs, narratives and practices.
- Ezen** [lord]. A term of Turkic and Mongolian traditions, denoting various forms of sacral and common possession, used as part of titles of former state rulers and supreme deities (*ulsyn delkhiin ertontsiin ezen*), local patron spirits (*gazaryn uulyн usny ezen*), house patron spirits and family members (*golomтын ezen*, *geriin ezen*).
- Galyn burkhan** [fire god]. The deity of fire and hearth, a central figure in household mythology and ritual practices. Synonyms include *galyn khan*, *golomтын ezen*. The term also might be applied as a euphemism, denoting the youngest son of the family or the mistress of the house (also *geriin ezen*).
- Gazaryn ezen** [earth lords]. Patrons of the locality, nature spirits. A synonym is *lus savdag*.
- Gazryn buzар** [earth dirt]. The harm coming from the earth (from lords of the locality, nature spirits *gazaryn ezen/lus savdag*).
- Güideltei gazар** [running place]. A ‘restless’ place, a bad, haunted area, a demonically possessed place.
- Haraal** [curse]. Traditional genre of cursing.
- Id shid**. The supernatural, miracle.
- Jamsaran/Ulaan sakhius** [red protector]. A deity of Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism, *sakhius* protector of dharma (Sanskrit *dharmapāla*), a deity of war. A popular figure in vernacular practices. (In Tibetan he is known by the name as *beg tse chen lcam sring* ‘the great coat of mail’).
- Khadak**. A ritual scarf, popular attribute in Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism. In vernacular practices it serves as a universal object of ritual offering and as a sign of respect.
- Khadma**. In popular Mongolian Buddhism, one kind of nun, a holy woman, a reincarnation of *Dara Ekhe*. (Sanskrit *dakini*, Tibetan *mkha`gro ma* ‘a sky goer’).
- Khairhan** [lovely, beloved]. A popular emic term, used as a euphemism for naming venerated mountains and *oboo* instead of their ‘real’ names; a title of male shamans.
- Khan Garudi**. The king of birds, enemy of *nāga* and all serpentes in hinduist and Buddhist mythologies, a popular figure in Mongolian vernacular beliefs and practices. (Sanskrit *Garuḍa*, Tibetan *Khyung*, *Mkha`lding*).
- Khar shashin** [black religion]. Shamanism. A synonym is *böögийн shashin/mörgöl* (shamanic religion/worship).
- Khii üzegdel** [ethereal manifestation]. An emic term often used to characterize demonic entities, their shape and essence.

- Khiiimor'** [the wind–horse]. It encompasses the mythological and Buddhist religious symbol of 'the horse-wind'. In Mongolian vernacular beliefs, it means 'vital energy', 'strengths', 'happiness' (*az hiimor'*), 'good luck', etc.
- Khödöö.** The countryside, a rural area.
- Khoimor.** The most socially and ritually respected part of the traditional household dwelling yurt, the place where the family home altar and the seat for the most honoured/oldest guest should be situated.
- Khormusta / Khurmast (tenger).** The supreme celestial deity, a popular figure in Mongolian and Turkic mythologies, epic traditions, vernacular beliefs. In Buddhist contexts, *Khurmast* is often identified with Shakra (Indra), who heads the host of thirty three heavenly gods. (Sogdian *Khurmazta, Mazda*).
- Khubilgan** [reborn]. A reincarnate custodian of a specific lineage of teachings in Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism. Examples of khubilgan include the Dalai Lamas, the Panchen Lamas and other high hierarchs of Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism. (Tibetan *tülku*, Sanskrit *nirmāṇakāya* – “a phenomenal body”, the third body of Buddha, which is meant for physical manifestation in time and space).
- Khuuchin yaria** [old talks]. Emic term for a folk genre close to legends.
- Lüüjin/ lüüjin.** A ritual practice of Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism. In contemporary vernacular traditions of Mongolia, *lüüjin* is regarded as the main exorcistic ritual. From Tibetan *lus sbyin* (offering of the body). Another name in Tibetan *gCod* (cutting / cutting through).
- Lus savdag** (*lus* and *savdag* can also be used separately). Lords of a locality, nature spirits (*lus* is usually associated with water sphere and *savdag* with earth). From Tibetan *klu* and *sa bdag / shivdag / gzhi bdag*. A synonym is *gazaryn ezen*.
- Lusyn horlol** [venom of *lus*]. A harm, curse coming from *lus savdag / gazaryn ezen*, lords of a locality.
- Magtaal.** A traditional genre of praise and ode.
- Mam.** A female demon, demones, wild woman (in this role synonymous with *almas*). (Tibetan *mamo*).
- Mangas /mangus.** A multi-headed monster in Mongolian epic and fairy tale narratives.
- Mergen khün** [wise man]. A popular emic term for lay ritual specialists (also the related verb *mergekh* denotes telling fortunes).
- Morinkhur** [horse harp]. A Mongolian traditional stringed instrument with an image of a horse head at the top of its neck. It is also a popular object in folk narration and vernacular beliefs.
- Naadam.** A type of traditional Mongolian festival, which usually includes competitions at the “three manly skills” (wrestling, horse racing and archery) and offerings to various kinds of deities (depending on the level of the holiday, offerings may be addressed to local or state figures).
- Namtar.** The genre of written biographies of Buddhist figures. (Tibetan *rnam thar*).
- Nom** [book]. In the religious contexts this means 'sacred text(s)', 'teaching', 'doctrine'.
- Nutag.** A local area, varying in size from small districts to the whole of Mongolia, the place of one's birth. An important emic concept in vernacular beliefs and ritual practices.
- Oboo/Ovoo.** A ritual construction made of stone and timber, devoted to the worship of nature spirits, the lords of the locality, the patrons of sacred places.
- Ochirvani burkhan.** Buddhist deity Vajrapani, a popular figure in Mongolian folk narratives and practices.
- Ongon.** A helper-spirit of shamans; a patron (ancestral) spirit; a handmade ritual figurine.

- Oroolon.** A demonic entity. In Mongolian folklore, it is often endowed by the ability to transform its appearance. (Tibetan *ro lang*s).
- Önchin mod** [orphan tree]. A solitary tree, usually a sacred place in Mongolian traditions.
- Örgöh mjalaalga.** Ritual offerings.
- Sakhius** [protector]. In Mongolian vernacular traditions, this term applies to various kinds of deities and spirits, both Buddhist and local, including the patrons of natural sacred places, mountains, lords of a locality *lus savdag* / *gazaryn ezen*. It derives from the Mongolian word *sakhikh* (to protect) and connected to the Buddhist concept of the terrifying wrathful deities, protectors of dharma (Sanskrit *dharmapāla*, Tibetan *chos-skyong*).
- Seter.** A type of bloodless offering, dedication of the cattle to deities and spirits, both Buddhist and local. It removes them from household usage and sets them free.
- Shar shashin** [yellow religion]. The ‘yellow hatted’ tradition of Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism, represented by *gelug pa* school. (Tibetan *dGe lugs pa*).
- Shulmas.** A demon, who often has female gender, a popular figure in epic traditions, legends, belief narratives, who has the ability to transform her shape and turn into a dark-blue wolf.
- Sum(b)er (uul(a))** [Meru Mountain]. The sacred five-peaked mountain in Buddhist cosmology, an important toponym in Mongolian narrative and ritual folk genres. (Sanskrit Sumeru).
- Suu(n) dalai** [milk sea]. A sacred mythological toponym in Mongolian cosmology, epic traditions and vernacular practices.
- Süld(e).** A complex emic concept, which relates to soul, faith, strength, divine/supernatural strength, luck.
- Süins.** The soul of the living and the dead.
- Sünstei baishin** [building with a soul]. Haunted house.
- Süins duudlaga** [soul calling]. The ritual of invoking the soul of the living person. According to vernacular beliefs, a soul of a person can get scared and lost or to be stolen by a malevolent supernatural entity, which causes sickness and misfortunes, until a shaman or a lama finds the lost soul and calls it back using special rituals.
- Takhilga.** Rituals of worship devoted to sacred places.
- Tenger** [sky]. The supreme deity(s) of Mongolian and Turkic mythologies, epic traditions and vernacular beliefs, personified in multiple figures of *tenger* sky-deities or supreme deities *Khormusta Tentger*, *Ata Tenger*, and others.
- Türen.** A demonic entity. In Mongolian traditions, it often has the ability to change its appearance. It is also a name for an evil helper-spirit which is very difficult to get rid of, and which brings wealth to his owners, tortures them with constant requests for new tasks, insomnia, and so on. (Tibetan *the’u rang*).
- Toono.** A window at the top of the yurt, which has important semantics in the mythology of the house and vernacular ritual practices.
- Tsagaan sar** [white month]. The traditional New Year holiday of the lunar calendar. The important part of it, when many vernacular rituals take place, is the *bitüünii ödör* (New Year’s Eve).
- Tuul’.** Traditional epic stories, storytelling.
- Tuulai** [hare]. A vernacular apotropaic ritual, performed when leaving the house and putting a mark with ashes from the house fire place between the eyebrows of a child under three years old. In this case it is believed, that malevolent entities would see the child as a hare or a pot and would not be able to harm it.
- Udagan.** A female shaman, a shamaness.

**Ulaan shashin** [red religion]. The ‘red hatted’ tradition of Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism, represented mainly by three schools *ningma pa*, *sakya pa*, *kagyü pa*. (Tibetan *rNying ma pa*, *Sa skya pa*, *bKa’ brgyud pa*).

**Ülger domog** (*Ülger* and *domog* can also be used separately). A term for myths and fairy-tales.

**Üzmerch**. Fortune-teller. In contemporary practices, the *üzmerch* might belong to any tradition (Buddhist, shamanic or lay).

**Yeröööl**. A traditional genre of praise, performed in various occasions, including ritual (‘wedding praise’, ‘praise for the new yurt’, ‘praise for the guests’, etc.).

**Zairan**. A title of male shamans.

**Zurkhaich**. An astrologer. Traditionally Buddhist, but in contemporary practices s/he might be shamanic or lay.

## Appendix 3 An example of original text

### 1. [Legend about Zönög zairan]

Зөнөг хайрхан гэдэг бөө байжээ. Хайрхан гэдэг алдарыг сүүлд өгсөн юм гэнэлээ. Зөнөг бөө бол тэр үедээ тийм ч сайн зайран биш. Ер нь тааруухан, дунд зэргийн зайран байсан гэнэ.

Дархадад Эвдийн хүрээ гэж байсан. Дараа нь Зөөлөнгийн хүрээ болсон. Эвдийн хүрээ гэж байхад нь тэнд их тахал өвчин гарсан гэнэ. Энэ нь ямар учиртай юм гэхлээр савдаг асар их хорлолтой болж, тэр хүрээг тэр чигт нь хөмөрчихсөн гэнэ.

Тэгээд Дархадын хонхорын бүх сайн бөө нар, бүх сайн лам нар нийлээд Дархадын хонхорыг аврах уу, алах уу” гэж ярилцаад бурханы номын хүч, бөөгийн хүчийг хавсруулан, хүчээ нэгтгэсэн гэнэ.

Нөгөө айхтар савдагийг дарсан чинь есөн том тийрэн бөө, лам нарын хүчинд баригдсан гэнэ. Тэд нар дандаа хорлолын савдагууд байсан ажээ.

Есөн том тийрэн савдагаас гадна ахлагч нь гэж 10 дах тийрэн бас байсан гэнэ. Тэрнийг нь бас барьж аваад хоёр том ширмэн тогоон дунд хийж бэхлээд газар дор булж устгажээ. Тэр нь одоо Рэнчинлхүмбэ сумын нэгдүгээр багийн нутагт одоо хүртэл газар дор булаастай хэвээрээ байгаа. Чулуугаар дарсан байдаг.

Үлдсэн есийг нь ахлагчаас нь салгаад Цагаан-Нуураас хойшоо Тэнгисийн голд есөн том хар бул чулуугаар есөн газар аваачиж, булж дарсан гэнэ. Гэр шиг гэр шиг том чулуугаар даржээ.

Тэр үед өнөөх Зөнөг бөө Тэнгисийн голд байжээ. Тэгээд Зөнөг бөө сонирхон, дарсан чулууг нэг нэгээр нь ухсан гэнэ. Нэг бул хар чулууг ухаж гаргахаар л хүзүү толгойгүй хүн. Аль эсвэл хүн танихааргүй хүний өрөөсөн тал гарч ирээд байсан гэнэ. Бас эрхтэн дутуу араатан, жигүүртэн амьтан гарч иржээ. Тийм юм гарч ирээд байхаар нь нэгийг нь гаргаж аваад амьтан гэжээдэг шиг өөрийнхөө хэлээр сургаж, удирджээ. Яг л нохой шиг сургаж, онгод болгон авсан гэнэ. Тэг, ир гэдэг хэлээ мэдүүлээд дараа дараачийн чулууг ухдаг байсан гэнэ.

Тэгсээр байгаад найман чулуу ухаж, найман онгод болгож чаджээ. Ес дэхь чулууг ухаагүй байгаа юм. Найман онгодоо өөрийн хэлийг мэддэг болгож сургаж авчихаад, сайн мууг хийлгэж сургажээ. Сайн муу юманд онгодоо явуулахад нь өөрөөс нь өөр зайран хэл нэвтрэхгүй болсон гэнэ.

Тэгээд Зөнөг бөөгийн хараалд бусад бөө нар нь хариу хийж чадахгүй болжээ. Онгодтой нь өөр хүн харьцаж чадахгүй. Хэлийг нь мэдэхгүй байж гэнэ. Тэгээд Зөнөг зайран сайн зайран гээд тодроод иржээ.

Ес дэхь нүхийг нь хавар ухах ёстой гээд өвөлжүүлээд хавар ухжээ. Хавар ухаад үзсэн чинь амьд хүүхэд гараад ирсэн гэнэ.

Зөнөг зайран авгайгүй хүн байжээ. Тэр Тэнгисийн голд нэг эмгэнийд орогнож байсан юм. Нөгөө айлын авгайдаа нөгөө хүүхдийг тэжээлгэжээ. Тэгэхдээ:

– “Энэнд сүү өгч болохгүй. Хүний иддэг хоолоор тэжээхгүй. Зөвхөн гөрөөсийн цусаар хооллоно” гэжээ. Өөрөө анчин хүн байсан болохоор гөрөөсний цусыг хангалттай бэлтгэж өгдөг байсан гэнэ. Тэгэхэд тэр хүүхэд нэг хонохдоо гурав хоносон шиг. Гурав хонохдоо 10 хоносон шиг өсөж байсан гэнэ.

Зөнөг бөө хүүхдийнхээ идэх цусыг бэлдэж тавьчихаад өглөө үүрээр мордоод үдшийн бүрийд ирдэг байжээ. Тэр бөө ганц морьтой гэнэ. Тэр ганц бие авгайг эхнэрээ болгох санаатай байжээ. Харин тэр авгай нь их хартай хүн байсан байгаа



юм. Өдөр бүр ингэж яваад эзгүй байгаа болохоор өөр газар бас авгайтай юм байна. Тэгээд тэр авгайнхаа хүүхдийг надад авчирч тэжээлгэж байна гэж боджээ. Тэгээд энэ хүүхдэд яагаад заавал цус өгөөд байхдаа яадаг юм. Сүү өгөөд үзье нэг өдөр боджээ.

Тэгээд Зөнөг бөөг ирэхээс нь өмнө хүүд сүү өгчихсөн гэнэ. Гэтэл тэр хүү гэрийн хойморт цагаан будан татуулаад алга болчихжээ. Тэгээд тэр авгай Зөнөг бөөг аль зүгээс ирэх бол гэж гэрийн гадаа тандаж байжээ. Тэгсэн гэрийнхээ баруун хойд талаас үдшийн бүрийд уян дээрээ бууж гэнэ.

Зөнөг бөөг мориноосоо буухаар нь эхнэр айсандаа ч юмуу, гэрийн хойд талаар тойрч, морин дээр очжээ. Морь нь холоос ирж үү. Ойроос ирж үү. Хэр зэрэг зовж вэ гэдгийг үзэхээр очжээ. Тэгсэн чинь моринийх гөлмөн дор нь юм дуугараад байна гэнэ. Гөлмийг нь сөхөөд харсан чинь хоёр гуурс мориных нь суга руу нь орсон байна гэнэ. Тэгэхээр нь тэр авгай Зөнөг бөөг нөгөө авгай руу нь явуулахгүй шийдэн морины хоёр гуурсыг тасдаад хаясан. гэнэ. Тэгээд гэр лүүгээ орох гээд явж байтал Зөнөг бөө урдаас нь гараад иржээ. Тэгээд тэр:

– “Хүүхэд минь хаачив” гэжээ. Тэгсэн яалтгүй ч бүх үнэнээ хэлжээ. Тэгэхлээр нөгөө бөө:

– “Би чамаас явлаа” гээд морь руугаа явжээ. Тэгсэн мориныхоо уяа руу хүрээгүй байхад морь нь үхчихсэн байсан гэнэ.

Тэр үед Дархадын хотгорт Хоролмойн дайн гэж болж байжээ. Тэнгэр уулнаас ирсэн Шинжааны дээрэмчид байжээ. Тэд нар яг тэр үед Тэнгисийг дээрэмдэхээр очиж байсан нь таарч гэнэ. Тэр Зөнөг бөөг хүүхэдгүй болсон. Морьгүй болсон байхад нь Хоролмойн цэргүүд наад талаас нь яваад очиж гэнэ. Тэгтэл тэд хүрч ирээд:

– “Амбан шар, агт морь хэд байна? Танай энэ нутгийг дээрэмдэхээр ирлээ” гэжээ. Тэгэхлээр нь Зөнөг бөө:

– “Манай энд амбан шар, агт морь байхгүй. Хол байгаа. Надад бол бийгээс бие. Бэлчихээс бөөс байна” гэжээ. Тэгэхээр нь:

– “Чи яасан цэцэн цэлмэг үгтэй хүн бэ? Чамайг ална” гэжээ.

Тэгэхлээр Хоролмойн цэргүүдийг тоолсон чинь 60 цэрэг байна гэнэ. Тэгэхлээр нь Зөнөг бөө:

“Жаргалд минь аваачих 60 цэрэг иржээ. Намайг ал” гэсэн байгаа юм. Тэгэхлээр нь тэд:

– “Хоёр өвдгөө тулаад тонгойгоод зогс” гэжээ. Тэгээд тонгойгоод зогсохоор нь нөгөө 60 цэрэг хүзүүгээр нь толгойг нь цавчсан гэнэ. Бүгдээрээ цавчаад байсан сэлэм нь майтан майтан оргиод майтийгаад байсан гэнэ. Тэгээд бүр арьс нь ч шалбаргахгүй байсан ажээ. Тэхээр нь:

– “Яасан сүрхий үхдэггүй юм. Чамайг буудаж ална” гэжээ. Тэгээд:

– “Босоод зогс” гэжээ. Босоод зогсохоор нь нөгөө 60 цэрэг чинь дайрч очоод цахиур буугаар буудаад алсан гэж боджээ. Зөнөг бөөг тэр 60 цэрэг 60-уулаа сумаа дуустал буудаад байхад унаагүй гэнэ. Тэгсэн чинь:

– “Яасан үхдэггүй юм. Чамайг тэр уулан дээр аваачиж шатааж ална” гэжээ. Тэхээр нь:

– “Би настай хүн. Хүүхдүүд минь хэрэгтэй бол үүнийгээ ав. Тэр уулан дээр гарахад миний биед хүнд байна” гээд дээлийнхээ бүсийг авахад тугалган бууны сум нирхийтэл асгарч байсан гэдэг. Тэгээд тэр өвгөнийг аваад Шивээний хар гэдэг уулан дээр аваачжээ. Тэгээд тэнд очоод тэр 60 цэргээр нэг нэг шарын мод бэлтгүүлжээ. Тэгээд Зөнөг бөөг газар дээр суулгаж байгаад тал талаас нь урц шиг 120 модоор битүү хүрээлүүлжээ. Тэгээд дөрвөн талаас нь галджээ. Тэгэхэд хуурай мод чинь шатаад хүн ойртохын

аргагүй, байж суухын аргагүй их гал дөл асчээ. Тэгсэн чинь 60 цэрэг бөөг одоо л үхлээ гэж бодоод унтаад өгчээ. Тэгсэн нойрон дунд нь хүн хашгираад байна гэнэ. Сэрээд харсан чинь нөгөө Зөнөг бөө:

- “Хүүхдүүд минь ээ! Галаа нэмээрэй. Хүйтэн байна шүү” гэжээ. Тэр бөө улаан цогон дээр нь завилаад, ханцуйндаа гараа хийгээд, сахал нь цангчихсан сууж байсан гэсэн. Тэгэхээр нь нөгөө хүнийг чинь гаргаад:
- “Таныг яаж алах вэ?” гэж түүнээс асуужээ. Эсвэл та үхэх аргаа зааж өг. Эсвэл бидэнтэй дээрэм хийхээр хамт яв” гэжээ. Тэгээд тэд нартай хамт дээрэм хийхээр цаашаа явжээ. Тэгээд явж явж байгаад устай газар тааралджээ. Тэр нь Шишгэдийн гол гэнэ. Одоо амбан шар, агт морь тэнд л байгаа. Газраар харин явж болохгүй. Усаар явна” гэхэд:
- “Тэгээд усаар яаж явах вэ?” гэж Зөнөг бөөгөөс тэд асуужээ. Зөнөг бөө:
- “Хүн бүхэн нэг нэг бүдүүн, хуурай мод бэлдээд аваад ир. Тэгээд тэр бүдүүн модон дээрээ суугаад хүн, мал харагдвал хурдан ир гэж даллаад яваад байгаарай. Хурдан явна шүү” гэжээ. Тэгээд тэр 60 цэргийн тогооч нь нэг жирэмсэн эмэгтэй хүн явсан тул түүнийг үзэгээд:
- “Та нар эхлээд очиж бай. Аягүй бол намайг зааж өгсөн гэнэ. Би араас чинь очь” гэжээ. Нөгөө ус нь урсаж очоод нэг их өндөр хүрхэрээ давдаг байхгүй юу. Тэхээр нь нөгөөдүүл нь сандраад хурдан гэж байна хурдан гэж байна гээд явсаар тэр бүх цэргийг хүрхэрээ давуулж алсан гэнэ. Тэгээд гэрч болгон, жирэмсэн ганц эмэгтэйг авч үлдсэн нь тэр ажээ.

Тэр эмэгтэйн удам нь Дархадын хотгорт Хоролмойн тээхэн гэж нэг бүлэг овог одоо ч бий.

Тэгээд Зөнөг бөө:

- “Би одоо хүүхэдгүй боллоо. Морьгүй боллоо. Дайснаа дарлаа. Одоо нисдэг бөө больё” гээд гурван өдөр, гурван шөнө бөөлжээ. Тэгээд л бөөлөөд л нисэх гэхээр гэрийнхээ тоонд тулаад ерөөсөө болж өгөхгүй байсан гэнэ. Тэгээд би яагаад нисч чадахгүй байна. Ингэж амьд байгаад үхье гэж боджээ. Нутгийн хүмүүс нь ч шидтэй, сайн зайран болчихлоо гээд их шүтдэг болжээ. Тэхээр нь нөгөө зайран чинь нутгийн хүмүүстээ:
- “Намайг алж өг” гэж гуйжээ. Тэгсэн нөгөөдөхийг чинь алж өгөх хүн олдохгүй байв.

Тэр үед монголд, Дархадын хотгорт шар нохой ерөөсөө олддоггүй байсан ажээ.

- “Шар нохойгүй бол би үхэхгүй ёстой хүн” гээд Зөнөг бөө Тэнгисээр давж, оросын буриад руу явж, шар жингэр худалдаж авчээ. Тэгээд тэр нохойг авчраад нэг хүнээр алуулж, нохойн сэмжээр миний толгойг ороогоод өдрийн сайныг сонгож, хүүхэд гаргаагүй эмэгтэй хүний өмдийг олж ир гэж хэлжээ. Нутгийн хүмүүс нь том зайран хүн үхэх гэж байна гэхээр өмдөө өгөхгүй байжээ. Тэгэхээр нь зайран нэг хүнийг нэр зааж, шинэ өмд хийлгээд тушаан авчруулжээ. Тэгээд тушааж байгаад:
- “Миний толгойг энэ нохойны сэмжээр ороогоод энэ өмдөөр миний толгой руу гурав цохiorой” гэжээ. Намайг үхэхээр Тэнгисийн жаргийн бэлд аваачиж, уулын энгэрт тавиарай. Гурван жилийн дараа ирэхэд чинь миний аль нэг эрхтэн тэнд байж байх болно. Миний тэр эрхтэнг Хормойн Гурван сайханы наана Үзүүрийн озоор гэдэг асартай онгодод өргөөрэй” гэж хэлжээ. Тэгээд тэр хэлсэн ёсоор нь тэр газарт нь оршуулжээ. Гурван жилийн дараа хэлсэн газар дээр нь очиход нүхтэй ногоон хатуу юм хэвтэж байсан гэнэ. Өөр мэдэгдэх юм байхгүй байжээ. Нөгөө юмыг аваад үзтэл хүрэл төмөр хүний сүүжний яс байсан гэнэ. Түрүү нь Зөнөг бөөг цавчаад, шатаагаад, буудаад

үхэхгүй байсан шалтгаан нь хүн төрлөөсөө хувилахдаа шууд хүрэл төмөр болчихдог байсан байжээ. Эргүүлээд хүн төрөлд шилжихэд нь хүрэл төмөр байсан учраас дэндүү удаад бүрэн хүн төрөлдөө шилжиж чадалгүй, өрөөсөн сүүж нь хүрэл хэвээрээ үлдсэн байжээ. Хүрэл сүүжээ даахгүй байсан тул тэр бөө нисэж чадахгүй байжээ. Эрдэнийн чулууг бөөгийн онгод даадаггүй юм гэнэ.

Тэгээд тэр хүрэл сүүжийг нь Цагаан-Нуур сумын Хормойн голд Үзүүр Оозоор гэдэг газар аваачиж тавьжээ. Одоо Цагаан-Нуур сумын нутагт тэр хүрэл сүүж байгаа. Тэр онгодыг 1953 он хүртэл хадгалж байсан гэсэн. Одоо ч гэсэн ухаж үзвэл дор нь байгаа. Онгодын доорх хөвдөд тэр сүүж байгаа.

- Онгод ямар хэлбэртэй байдаг вэ?
- Жижиг байшин дотор онгодын асарт амьтны дүрсээр онгодыг даавуунд бэхлээд хадгалсан байгаа. Онгодыг төлөөлж хүн дүрстэй хийдэг. Бөөлж байхад нь нүдэнд нь үзэгдсэн юмаа төсөөлөн, хангайд байдаг юмаар онгодоо хийдэг. Тэр асарт онгод чуулдаг, гэр нь болдог байгаа юм.
- Тэр алга болсон хүүхэд чинь бас өөрөө домогтой. Өөрөөр хэлбэл монголд шарын шашныг эсэргүү гээд устгалаа шүү дээ. 1930 аад онд. Бөө ч мөн ялгаа байхгүй тэр үед хавчигдаад устсан шүү дээ. Хэрвээ тэр хүүг дан цусаар тэжээсэн бол одоо том шашны ноён болох ёстой байсан. Тэгээд энд шашин устгахгүй ёстой байсан байхгүй юу.
- Тэр лам байх байсан уу?
- Лам ч байж болно. Бөө ч байж мэднэ. Шашин гэдэг чинь лам, бөө бүгд л шашин шүү дээ. Аль аль нь устгахгүй байсан. Хүн болгосон л бол монголын шашныг авч явах хүн тэр л байсан байхгүй юу. Тэрийг устгасан учраас монголын шашин тэр үед мөхчихсөн юм. Тэр хүүхэд Очирваань бурханы сахиустай дүр байсан байгаа юм. Очирваань бурхан захихдаа: “Би ингээд эргээд энэ шашныг бөхлөх гэсэн юм. Намайг нэг хоролмой хүн аллаа. Одоо би 60 жил унтаад босч ирнэ. Дахиад төрнө” гэсэн. Тэгээд 1990 он гэдэг чинь 60 жил болчихож байгаа биз дээ 1990 оноос чинь монголын шашин чөлөөтэй болчихоо биз дээ. Лам ч, бөө ч монголын шашин. Өөрөөр хэлбэл тэр хүүхэд 60 жил унтаад одоо ямар нэгэн газар төрсөн байх аа гэсэн үг. Зөнөг хайрхан тийм түүхтэй. Энэ талаар хэдэн өдөр ч ярьж болно. Одоо орой болжээ. Унтацгаая. [R., 1958, Darkhad, 2007, Khövsgöl].

## SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

### Postsotsialistliku Mongoolia taasärkavad vaimolendid: rahvapärased teooriad ja praktikad

Mongoolia, „Igavese sinitaeva ja kuldse maa riik“,<sup>1</sup> on Sise-Aasias eriline piirkond. Nii nimetatakse ka rahvusriiki, mis ametlikult esindab mongolitele iseloomulikku kultuuri – nende järeltulijaid, keda keskajal tunti võitmatute rändvallutajatena ja Tšingis-khaani rajatud suure Mongoolia impeeriumi valdajatena. Mongoolia impeeriumi peetakse suurimaks ühtseks riigiks Aasia ja Euroopa aladel. Mongoolia kultuur on olnud seotud paljude teiste, nende hulgas iidsete iraani, uiguuri, turgi, tiibeti ja Kesk-Aasia kultuuridega. Mongoolia ei ole paaril viimasel sajandil olnud maailmas riigina eriti nähtav ning enamik (vähemalt teadusekaugemaid lääne) inimesi on hakanud seda alles hiljuti taasavastama ja nüüd huvitatakse hoopis muust: seekord kui maast, mida iseloomustavad varjatud vabadusepüüded, metsik loodus, elavad traditsioonid ja kirglik vaimsus. Tööpoolest, tänapäeval esindab Mongoolia omapärast kultuuri, mis ühendab endas väga erinevaid väljendusvahendeid ja seisab silmitsi tänapäevaste probleemidega. See on kultuur, mis on surutud Venemaa ja Hiina vahele ning sunnitud toime tulema keerulises geopoliitiliste huvide võrgustikus, säilitades positsiooni ida- ja läänemaailma vahel, kohanedes üleilmastumise ja kiire linnastumisega, püüdes seejuures siiski säilitada oma traditsioonilisi väärtusi ja elustiili ning jäädes truuks oma rändkarjaste pärandile. Mongoolia pikk ajalugu kätkeb paljusid suuri ja dramaatilisi sündmusi, mis on Mongoolia kultuuri mõjutanud tasapisi, aga teinekord ka väga jõuliselt. Neist ajaloolistest protsessidest kõige märgatavam ja julmem oli sotsialism, mis kestis üle seitsmekümne aasta (1924–1991).<sup>2</sup> Nii on tänapäevane Mongoolia näide sellest, kuidas selle keerulise ajaloolise katsumusega toime tulla, kuidas seda on kontseptualiseeritud ja ületatud, ja millel on nii üldisem tähtsus „nõukogulike ühiskondade“ mõistmiseks paljude sarnase minevikuga riikide seas.

Rahvusluse esilekerkimises ja postsotsialistlikus Mongoolias on olnud suur roll üleloomulikul ja religioossusel – need olid ateistliku režiimi vaenlased ja ohvrid, mis olid olnud aastakümneid alla surutud ja mõistetud elama varjatud, hillitsetud elu.<sup>3</sup> 1990. aastate alguses naasis üleloomulik element uuesti Mongoolia

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<sup>1</sup> Tuntud fraas *Khökh mönkh tenger altan delkhii oron* [igavese sinitaeva ja kuldse maa riik] on levinud Mongoolia eepilises luules ning mainib kõrgeimaid jumalusi Taevast ja Maad. Praegu tsiteeritakse seda sageli rahvuslikus ja spirituaalses diskursuses.

<sup>2</sup> Pärast Qing-dünastia kokkuvarisemist kaasati Mongoolia 1911.–1912. aastatel mitmesse Hiina ja Venemaa poliitilisse kriisi ja revolutsiooni, mis lõppesid Mongoolia Rahvavabariigi loomisega 1924. aastal. Sotsialistlik režiim kestis kuni 1990. aastate kriisini ja režiimi kokkuvarisemiseni ning lõppes Mongoolia Demokraatliku Partei võidu ja esimese presidendi valimisega 1996. aastal.

<sup>3</sup> Sotsialistlikus ideoloogias nimetati kõiki rahvausu ja ametliku religiooni vorme ebausuks, mille hulka arvati ka traditsioonilise folkloori „reaktsioonilised“ žanrid. Neid peeti „vana primitiivse kultuuri“ jäänusteks, mida püüti keelustada ning välja juurida (Sandag, Kendall 2000, Kaplonski 2002, 2004, 2008, Kuzmin, Oyunchimeg 2014, Morozova 2009).

kultuuri, näidates selgelt oma suurt elujõudu ja makstes kätte hävinud ateistlikule ideoloogiale. Traditsioonilised üleloomulikud kujutuspildid ja motiivid hõlmasid erinevaid valdkondi ja kontekste, muutudes nii oluliseks osaks ühiskonnast (Valk 2006, 35): need olid Tšingis-khaani vaim (*ongon*), „rahva kaitsja ja isa“, riiklikult pühaks kuulutatud mägede jumalused (*ezen*), kohalikud loodusvaimud (*lus savdag*), erinevad deemonid, vaimud ja rahutud hinged (*chötgör, büg, güidel*) jne. Neist said rahvusliku ärkamisaja ja uue riigi ideoloogilised sümbolid, milles väljendusid nii kollektiivne mälu ja sotsiaalsed suhted kui ka argielu mured, postsotsialistliku riigi lootused ja tänapäevased hirmud, pälvides üha suurema hulga rituaaliekspertide tähelepanu.

Käesolev töö käsitleb postsotsialistlikke muutusi Mongoolia ühiskonnas. Teema on ühelt poolt lähtunud autori erialast, teisalt väärtuslikust võimalusest uurida neid väga erilisi traditsioone ajal, mil ühiskond on dünaamiliselt muutunud ja end uuesti üles ehitanud. Töö järgib kahte üldist uurimissuunda: (1) uuritakse üleloomuliku eemilisi vaatenurki, mis muutusid oluliseks rahvuslikul ärkamisajal ja on seda ka tänapäevaste Mongoolia kogukondade elus, ning (2) analüüsitakse neid vaatenurki selle kaudu, millised on erinevate religioossete liikumiste esindajate ja võimude omavahelised suhted.

Tänapäevases Mongoolias on üleloomuliku rahvapärane kujutamine laialt levinud ja seda mõjutavad paljud erinevad traditsioonid. See on segunenud argipäeva diskursusega ja religioosse rahvakultuuri rituaalsete tavadega (budistlikud ja šamanistlikud traditsioonid, *new age*'i religioossed arusaamad, välismaist päritolu vaimsus, massikultuur jne). Mongoolia rahvakultuuris on üleloomulikel uskumustel arvukalt väljendusviise, mis tavaliselt esindavad kahte suurt rühma. Neist esimene hõlmab mitte-inimlikke üleloomulikke olendeid: loodusvaime, pühapaikade valitsejaid, religiooniekspertide abivaime, erinevaid deemonlikke olendeid, vaime ning suurt hulka nii kohalikke kui ka kaugemaid jumalusi. Tähelepanuväärne on see, et eemilised arusaamad ei jagune vastandlikeks leerideks, rõhutades kas „deemonlikke“ või „jumalikke“ aspekte, vaid pigem rõhutavad nende ambivalentset ühtsust. Seda seetõttu, et „jumalik“ võib võtta äärmiselt hirmutavaid ja deemonlikke vorme, samas kui „deemonlik“ osutub sageli jumaliku emanatsiooniks (vt artiklid 1 ja 4). Nende omadused ja väärtused on pidevas muutumises ja avalduvad suhtluses inimeste ja nende esindajatega, kes on kohustuslikud vahendajad suhtluses üleloomulikuga.

Need vahendajad esindavad teist suurt rühma, kuhu kuuluvad üleloomulike võimetega inimesed: šamaanid, laamad, traditsioonilised maadlejad, sepad, targad ja paljud teised. Kui rahvakultuuris on neil alaliikidel mitmesuguseid erinevaid oskusi (tervendamine, needmine, ennustamine, kadunute otsimine, ilmasitiku mõjutamine jne), ühendab neid kõiki tegelemine üleloomulikuga. Praktikas hinnatakse vahendajate kvaliteeti, staatust ja prestiiži tavaliselt nende võime järgi üleloomulike olenditega edukalt läbi rääkida. Eemilisest vaatenurgast nähtuna ei ole üleloomulike olendite ja üleloomulike võimetega inimeste vahel selget piiri, mida oleks võimatu ületada. Pigem kuuluvad nad samasse, teise maailma, nad on olemuselt sarnased ja teevad aktiivselt koostööd: „Deemonitega tegelemiseks peab ise olema kõige suurem deemon“ [LB, 1987, Khalkha, Ulaanbaatar 2019]. See

traditsiooniline arusaam väljendub mitmesugustes motiivides ja rituaalsetes situatsioonides. Nende seas on levinud uskumused selle kohta, et üleloomulikud olendid vajavad ohvrite saamiseks ja külastajatega suhtlemiseks teadjate abi; teadjad, kes liiguvad eri maailmade vahel, muudavad kuju ja teevad üleloomulike olendite abil imesid; üleloomulikud olendid, kes taassünnivad silmapaistvateks teadjateks, ja teadjad, kellest saavad pärast surma üleloomulikud olendid, näiteks paigajumalused, teiste teadjate abivaimud või rahutud deemonid (vt artiklid 1 ja 4).

Neis üleloomulikes uskumustes avalduvad mitmete eemiliste kategooriate tihedad seosed. Näiteks võib tuua mõned postsotsialistliku Mongoolia kõige levinumad üleloomulikud tegelased, nagu *lus savdag / gazaryn ezen* (loodusvaim, mägede jumalus) ja *chötgör* (kummitus, deemon, rahutu vaim). Nende populaarsus ja tugev side erinevate igapäevaelu valdkondadega, tuleneb nendega seotud kujutelmadest, nagu näiteks hing (*süns*), selle emanatsioonid ja omadused, „kurjade“ ja „heade“ lahkunute erinevad kehastused, esivanemad, omandisuhted, idee „väikesest“ ja „suurest“ emamaast (*nutag*) kui kohaliku maastiku, inim- ja muude kogukondade ühtsusest jne (vt artiklid 1, 2, 3 ja 4).

Mongoolia sotsiaalsete, looduslike ja üleloomulike suhete epistemoloogia kujundab rahvapärast ideed religioonist (*shashin*) kui ühest erialavaldkonnast (kutselised eksperdid), rõhutades selle omavahelise suhtluse olulisust (vt artiklid 3 ja 4). Selles rõhutatakse „religioosse“ ja „üleloomuliku“ sõltuvust üksteisest, mis kajastub diskursiivsetes ja rituaalsetes tavades. „Seal, kus on usk (*shashin*), on ka deemoneid (*chötgör*), sest deemonid (*chötgör*) võitlevad alati usu (*shashin*) ja laamadega“ [GD, 1949, Khalkha, 2011, Kharkhorin]. (Rituaalses) praktikas on aga pigem nii, et laamad ja teised spetsialistid peavad vaimude ja deemonitega võitlema, et näidata oma võimeid läbirääkimistel üleloomulikuga ning kindlustada oma vaimset, sotsiaalset ja majanduslikku positsiooni. Mõlemal juhul on pärast sotsialismi kokkuvarisemist üleloomulik ja selle avaldumisvormid õitsele puhkenud.

Mongoolias, nagu teisteski postsotsialistlikes riikides, on usu taaselustumine saanud osaks rahvuslikust ärkamisest (Västrik 2015). See väljendus protsesside ja olukordade kogumina, mida iseloomustavad vaimne mitmekesisus ja pluralism, suur kaasatus, (pealesunnitud) sallivus ja intensiivne võitlus järgijate ja rituaalides osalejate „hingede“ nimel. „Sotsialismi tõttu kaotasid mongolid oma immuniteedi religiooni osas“ [S.D., 1950, Khalkha, 2019, Ulaanbaatar]. See on lühidalt väljendatuna üks levinumaid siseringi mõtisklusi postsotsialistlikus Mongoolias pulbitseva usu kohta. Sellised teemad, nagu usuliste seisukohtade hindamise põhimõtted, usulise valiku ja usalduse alused ja religiooni funktsioonid on tänapäevastes rahvapärastes teooriates endiselt populaarsed ning kajastuvad narratiivides ja diskursiivsetes praktikates. Religioosne taaselustumine tugevdas mongoli budismi ja šamanismi traditsioonilise koosluse positsiooni veelgi rohkem. Sotsialismi perioodil olid need mõlemad ühtemoodi maha surutud, pärast seda said aga ka rahvusreligiooni staatuse. Ühtlasi tekkis võimalus erinevate ida- ja läänepoolsete, vanade ja uute religioossete liikumiste ja organisatsioonide kujunemiseks. Kuigi arusaamad konkreetsete usuliste tavade staatuse ja populaarsuse kohta võivad olla hajusad, on kõigil neil liikumistel olnud

mõju kollektiivsele vaimsele keskkonnale ning see on endaga kaasa toonud märkimisväärsel hulgal kultuurilisi käitumisnorme, etnilisi stereotüüpe, ajutisi poliitilisi eelistusi jne.

Kui inimene on elanud tavalist elu, olnud tubli, kuid mitte liiga hea ega liiga halb, sünnib ta uuesti Mongoolias. Kui ta elas natuke halvemini, tehes rohkem halba kui head, sünnib ta uuesti Vene Föderatsioonis. Kui ta elas halvasti ja oli väga patune, sünnib ta järgmises elus Hiinas. Aga kui inimene elas väga õiglast elu ja tegi häid tegusid, siis ta sünnib *divaajinis*,<sup>4</sup> ma arvan, et see on Ameerikas.

[M.S., 1949, Khalkha, 2009, Khentii]

Mõnel teisel rahvuslikul ärkamisajal alguse saanud olulisel protsessil on olnud hilisemad mõjud, mis on ilmsiks tulnud 2000. aastate teisest kümnendist saadik usuelu uutes standardites, tasakaalus ja autoriteetides. Neist üks on usuelu „professionaliseerumine“ (või taasprofessionaliseerumine), millel oli nii spontaanseid kui ka reguleeritud vorme. Üha suurem rituaalsete teenuste juurdevool tähendas, et kõik usueluga seonduv, millega sotsialismi perioodil tegelesid üksikud ilmalikud eksperdid või mis oli seotud kohaliku rahvausuga, läks tagasi professionaalsete ekspertide kätte. Religioonispetsialistide professionaalsus on tänapäeval omakorda märgatavalt rohkem seotud haridusvaldkonna ja suurettevõtete põhimõtetega, seda peamiselt rahvusvaheliste normide, suurte usuorganisatsioonide ja Mongoolia riigi suureneva poliitilise regulatsiooni mõjul. Need tegurid on seotud praegusele taassünnijärgsele ajastule iseloomulike mitmekihiliste arengutega. Nii on üha suurem stabiilsust pakkuvate autoriteetide roll, kes esindavad riiki ja institutsionaalset religiooni, ja ka tasakaal erinevate religioossete praktikate ja nendes osalejate vahel. Nad hõlmavad ka usu ja üleloomuliku uusi olemisviise ja -vorme. Neid uusi suundumusi saab kirjeldada järgmiste tunnuste kaudu: rituaalsete tavade spontaanse institutsionaliseerimise kogemused (näiteks šamaaniorganisatsioonid), religioosse legitiimsuse ja usaldusväärse uute omaduste väljatöötamine koos sellekohase tõenditõestusega (diplomid, kinnituskirjad, tunnistused ja muud dokumendid), mis kinnitavad ametialaseid usulisi sobivusi ja kuuluvusi. Niisuguseid tõendeid annavad nii ametlikud usuorganisatsioonid kui ka alternatiivset abi pakkuvad ettevõtted. Need võivad isegi olla isetehtud.

Uus kultuurikontekst on üleloomulikke tõekspidamisi rikastanud uute funktsioonide ning uute suhete ja tegevusvaldkondadega, sealhulgas sellega, millised on individuaalsed ja kollektiivsed usulised valikud, erinevate traditsioonide ja spetsialistide omavahelise konkurentsi ja koostööga ning sellega, mida peetakse vaimselt või sotsiaalselt usaldusväärseks. Seetõttu võivad abivaimud ja patroonid religioonieksperti hüljata, kuna too töötab linnas ja võtab külastajatelt raha. Või ka selle tõttu, et ekspert sooritab rituaale võltsitud sertifikaadiga (või hoopis ilma selleta). Või ekspert võib osutada ühtaegu sõltumatuks asjatundjaks, aga ka kas budistlike või šamanistlike organisatsioonide liikmeks.

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<sup>4</sup> Populaarses budistlikus mütoloogias paradiisi analoog, parem koht reinkarnatsiooniks, jumaluste ja *daakinite* maa. See viitab *Sukhāvati*<sup>7</sup> le ehk lääne paradiisile, mahajaana budismis tuntud Amitābha puhtale maale.

Kõigis neis protsessides on märkimisväärne roll Mongoolia rahvatraditsioonidel ja suulisel kultuuril. See hõlmab ilmselt kolme erinevat perioodi: esiteks sotsialismi ja repressioonide periood, teiseks sellele järgnenud ärkamisaeg ja taasloomine ning kolmandaks praegune stabiliseerumise ja uue tasakaalu leidmise periood. Kõik need kolm perioodi on mõjutanud postsotsialistliku Mongoolia tegelikkust ja ühiskonnaelu. Nende perioodide vältel on suulisel rahvakultuuril olnud nii mõningaid spetsiifilisi kui ka ühiseid tunnuseid ja funktsioone. Esimesel perioodil oli oluline n-õ põrandaalne (kuid edukas) rahvapärane suuline kultuur, millel oli tohutu mõju rituaalsele elule tervikuna. Teine periood oli aeg, mil rahvapärased töekspidamised ja rahvajutud, mis imbusid kõikidesse Mongoolia kultuurivaldkondadesse, muutusid uue ametliku ideoloogia osaks ning üleloomulikest olenditest ja motiividest said rahvusliku taaselustumise sümbolid ja uue riigi kaitsjad. Kolmandat perioodi iseloomustab paljude üleloomulike tegelaste ja usuelus osalejate ning autoriteetide kaasamine, kellest igapäev on erinevad huvid ja strateegiad. Selles olukorras on suulise rahvakultuuri üks peamisi rolle hääle ja arvamuste mitmekesisuse edastamine ja raamistamine tänapäeva usuelu virvarris. Folkloor ja suuline kultuur muutuvad ja ajakohastuvad pidevalt, võttes aina uusi vorme, väljendades erinevaid muresid, kajastades individuaalseid ja kollektiivseid kogemusi ning mõtestades kriise ja ebastabiilsust. Samuti kujundavad nad sündmusi ja olukordi, tõrjudes, kohandades ja luues uskumuste uusi vorme ja tähendusi nii juttude kui ka tavade vahendusel.

Mongoolia rahvapäraste uskumuste ja usulise elu ning sellele iseloomulike omaduste praegune taasloomine pakub inspireerivaid võimalusi, kuidas uurimistööd jätkata. Tulevikus saab produktiivsemaid ja põhjalikumaid võrdlevaid uurimusi teha nende Mongoolia kogukondade kohta, kes on elanud teistes riikides või kes on seotud teise poliitilise ja kultuurilise kontekstiga. Esmalt võiksid uurimisobjektideks olla Venemaa burjaatide ja kalmõkkide kogukonnad, kes on kogenud sarnast, kuid siiski teistsugust sotsialistlikku minevikku ühes range riikliku ühtsuspoliitikaga ja genotsiidiepisoodidega, samuti Hiina Sise-Mongoolia kogukonnad, kes siiani elavad kommunistliku režiimi all ja kel on praegu oma õiguste, identiteedi ja kultuuri eest seismisel rasked ajad.



## **PUBLICATIONS**

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: Alevtina Solovyeva  
Date of birth: 22.12.1981  
Citizenship: Russian  
E-mail: alevtinasolovyeva@ut.ee

### Education:

2016–2020 Doctoral studies, Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, Institute of Cultural Research, University of Tartu  
2019 (equivalent to PhD) Candidate of Sciences in Philology (Asian Literatures and Folklores), Gorky Institute of World Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences.  
2010–2016 Doctoral studies, Centre of Typological and Semiotic Folklore Studies, Russian State University for the Humanities  
2007–2010 (equivalent to MA) studies in History and Philology of Central and Inner Asia, Institute of Oriental and Classical Studies, Russian State University for the Humanities  
2003–2008 (equivalent to BA) studies in Historical Anthropology, Russian-French Center of Historical Anthropology named after Marc Bloch, Russian State University for the Humanities  
2015 Visiting researcher, Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, Institute of Cultural Research, University of Tartu  
2013–2014 Visiting researcher, Department of Mongolian and Tibetan Studies, University of Bonn  
2012 Visiting researcher, Institute of Language and Literature, Mongolian Academy of Science  
2009–2011 Visiting researcher, Centre of Nomadic Cultures, Mongolian State University

### Professional employment:

2019–2020 Junior research fellow, Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, Institute of Cultural Research, University of Tartu  
2017–2021 Leading research fellow, Institute of Oriental and Classical Studies, National Research University Higher School of Economics  
2009–2017 Lecturer, Institute of Oriental and Classical Studies, Russian State University for the Humanities  
2008–2021 Research fellow, Centre of Typological and Semiotic Folklore Studies, Russian State University for the Humanities

### List of selected publications

2021 New Life of the Old Mongolian Demons: Cases of Updated Folk Characters and their Functions. *Narrative culture* [forthcoming].

- 2021 'A miracle walking tree': the Supernatural in the Landscape Mythology and Social Space of Contemporary Mongolia. *Acta Mongolica* [forthcoming].
- 2021 An Immured Soul: Contested Ritual Traditions and Demonological Narratives in Contemporary Mongolia. Ülo Valk and Marion Bowman (eds.) *Contesting Authority: Vernacular Knowledge and Alternative Beliefs*. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing [forthcoming].
- 2020 Faces of Mongolian fear. *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics*, 14 (1), 49–64.
- 2019 The Mythological World of Mongolian Ritual Poetry. Éva Pócs (ed.) *Charms and Charming. Studies on Magic in Everyday Life*. Ljubljana: Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 169–192.
- 2019 Ghostlore of Contemporary Beijing. Karl Bell (ed.) *Supernatural Cities*. London: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 269–289.
- 2018 [together with Ílya Gruntov and Olga Mazo]. Mongolian Euphemisms and Taboos. Animals and Hunting. *Mongolica Pragensia* '16. *Linguistics, Ethnolinguistics, Religion and Culture*, 9 (1). Praha (Prague): Stanislav Juhaňák–TRITON, 39–58.
- 2017 Chötgöriin Yaria in the Twentyfirst Century: Mongolian Demonological Beliefs and Mass Culture in the Age of Globalisation. Ines Stolpe, Judith Nordby, Ulrike Gonzales (eds.) *Mongolian Responses to Globalization Processes. Bonner Asienstudien*, 13. Berlin: EBV, 129–148.

## ELULOOKIRJELDUS

Nimi: Alevtina Solovyeva  
Sünniaeg: 22.12.1981  
Kodakondsus: Venemaa  
E-post: alevtinasolovyeva@ut.ee

### Haridus:

- 2016–2020 doktorant, Eesti ja võrdleva rahvaluule osakond, Humanitaarteaduste ja kunstide valdkond, Kultuuriteaduste Instituut, Tartu Ülikool
- 2019 (samaväärne doktorikraadiga) filoloogikandidaat (Aasia kirjandus ja folkloor), Gorki Maailmakirjanduse Instituut, Vene Teaduste Akadeemia.
- 2010–2016 doktorant, Tüpoloogiliste ja semiootiliste rahvaluule uuringute keskus, Vene Riiklik Humanitaarteaduste Ülikool
- 2007–2010 (samaväärne MA-ga) Kesk- ja Sise-Aasia ajaloo ja filoloogia uuringud, Idamaiste ja Klassikaliste Uuringute Instituut, Vene riiklik Humanitaarteaduste Ülikool
- 2003–2008 (samaväärne BA-ga) Ajaloolise antropoloogia uuringud, Marc Blochi nimeline Vene-Prantsuse Ajaloolise Antropoloogia Keskus, Vene Riiklik Humanitaarteaduste Ülikool
- 2015 külalisteadur, Eesti ja võrdleva rahvaluule osakond, Kultuuriuuringute Instituut, Tartu Ülikool
- 2013–2014 külalisteadlane, Mongoolia ja Tiibeti uuringute osakond, Bonni Ülikool
- 2012 külalisteadlane, Keele ja Kirjanduse Instituut, Mongoolia Teaduste Akadeemia
- 2009–2011 külalisteadlane, Mongoolia Riikliku Ülikooli Nomaadiliste Kultuuride Keskus

### Teenistuskäik:

- 2019–2020 nooremteadur, Eesti ja võrdleva rahvaluule osakond, Kultuuriuuringute Instituut, Tartu Ülikool
- 2017–2021 juhtivteadur, Ida ja Klassikaliste Uuringute Instituut, Riikliku Teadusülikooli Kõrgem Majanduskool
- 2009–2017 lektor, Idamaade ja Klassikaliste Uuringute Instituut, Vene Riiklik Humanitaarteaduste Ülikool
- 2008–2021 teadur, Tüpoloogiliste ja semiootiliste rahvaluule uuringute keskus, Vene Riiklik Humanitaarteaduste Ülikool

### Valik publikatsioone:

- 2021 New Life of the Old Mongolian Demons: Cases of Updated Folk Characters and their Functions. *Narrative culture* [ilmumas].

- 2021 'A miracle walking tree': the Supernatural in the Landscape Mythology and Social Space of Contemporary Mongolia. *Acta Mongolica* [ilmumas].
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- 2020 Faces of Mongolian Fear: Demonological Beliefs, Narratives and Protective Measures in Contemporary Folk Religion. *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics*, 14 (1), 49–64.
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