

みんなのポジトリ

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CHAPTER 5. THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

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CHAPTER 5. THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

By the end of XIX – the early XX century, among the *Altai Uriankhains* were distributed two religious systems: Buddhism in the Central Asian (Tibeto-Mongolian) form and shamanism. In addition, there were found the remnants of pagan cults, inspiration forces, and phenomena of nature.

Shamanism and Shamanic Paraphernalia

Shamanism among the *Altai Uriankhains* was the result of a complex and long-term historical process being attended by various Turkic-Mongol and other ethnic groups of the Central Asia and the Southern Siberia. As a certain ideology and a cult system – shamanism has been closely linked with social and family life, which have been interwoven with moral, aesthetic and the other views of the *Altai Uriankhains*.

The heart of the shamanic worldview is the idea that the world is divided into three areas-terrestrial (*Dund tiv*), underground (*Dood tiv*) and celestial (*Deed tiv*); in this case they are inspired by, i.e., populated by good (*ongon*) and evil (*savdag*) spirits. Life and human health, wellbeing, family and genus lineage depend on the will of the spirits and their relationship with humans. The good spirits have helped people, once in their life do occur the cases of accident, a failure in pursuing matters, a sudden death or serious illness of a loved one, loss of property, and childlessness, etc. For all these cases, people appealed to the good spirits-protectors. According to shamanic views, they came to rescue the people, but it is necessary to establish contact with them. Communication between people and the spirits has to go through shamans – intermediaries who were able to call them and talk to them directly. Man-Shaman is named as *buu* or *zairan*, but a woman– shaman – *udgan buu*. According to our informants, some of the most famous shamans lived among the *Altai Uriankhains* having the equal popularity among the population.

Like other Mongols, the shamans of the *Altai Uriankhains* divided into black and white as well as into the powerful and weak ones. Black shamans were regarded as evil, they were afraid because they could do a spell, and the white shamans, quiet and peaceful and they are helpful to people.

The main form of communication with the spirits the shamans believed to perform a rite of *buu* calling (*buu buulukh*). The rite necessarily occurs in the special vestments and with a tambourine. One of the main reasons of the

Uriankhain shaman ritual was the magic of healing. According to shamanic beliefs, the cause of the disease is either a temporary withdrawal from the body of one of his souls (*ongon*) or indwelling in the body an evil spirit (*savdagiyn horlol*). The task of the shaman was either to locate and return the bygone soul (*ongon*) to a person, or to expel the evil spirit off the body. In addition, the rite was conducted to elicit the child's soul to a childless family, or correcting someone else's fate, etc.



PHOTO 11 Tambourine and associated items *khengereg* and *tsokhiur* of the *Altai Uriankhains* shamans

Rite took place in the yurt of some one whom the trouble has happened with. Time of the rite was determined by the shaman, this usually occurs after sunset, or before the nightfall. G.N. Potanin, wrote that "... *Uriankhains* living in the *Altai* (near *Khovd*) speak Mongolian, there is also a shaman, and myself had the opportunity to see in *Khovd* the rite (i.e., dancing under the blows of tambourine) of the *Uriankhain* shaman. The rite of *Uriankhain* shamans would take place during the night, first he sat on the felt on the right, i.e., in the western half of the tent, therefore, facing east, this time he slowly beat the tambourine and sang the invocation" (Potanin 1881: 81–83). S. Badamhatan wrote that Darkhat shaman rite began in the morning at sunrise (Badamkhatan 1964: 225).

Before the rite of *buu* calling, the smoke-hole of the yurt was left half-closed to let a little light in the ger. Before the start of a rite, the shaman makes offerings to the spirits with the patron of dairy products. According to the stories of informants, in the old days, except for dairy products shamans sacrificed sheep with red head or horse with black suit. However, according to the description of G.N. Potanin, by the late XIX – the early XX centuries, throughout Mongolia have already not done blood sacrifice (Potanin 1883: 139).

The rite of shaman began with a melodious chant in verse form (*ongodyn duudlaga*). N.L. Zhukovskaya wrote that “every text uttered by the shaman during the ceremony – improvisation of single destination. The next time you would hear a similar rite but not identical with the text” (Zhukovskaya 1998: 150). In these texts, the shaman turned to his spirits, patrons and asked for help. His voice was uneven, the loud, then low, at times he uttered loud cries. Our informants told us that the ancient shamans were strong by entering through the burning wood curtain, swallow a piece of burning coals, licking red-hot iron, “sit” on top of her tambourine and flew into the sky to the spirits of the patron and long time there did not return. After some time, the patron spirits would dwell in the body of the shaman. It was this point that the shaman fell into an ecstasy (*ongod oroh*). In this state, there is a direct communication between him and the spirits patrons. The audience did not notice the arrival of spirits, but knew about it only through the shaman. But there is sometimes able to hear the different sounds made by different animals, such as an owl, howling wolf, or a horse’s hoof kick, etc. State of mind of the shaman is directly dependent on the spirit of a patron who dwell in it: Utterance of the shaman becomes unclear and he stops responding to what was happening around them. From the side it might seem that he is unconscious. Sometimes the closest people might play the role of mediator between the shaman and the audience, explaining the mutter of the shaman in a language people understand. When the spirit-protector leaves the body of the shaman, the latter would completely loose the consciousness. At this time, presenting there people help him to remove the garment, and attributes. Upon completion of the ritual, the offerings are portrayed to the shaman. However, they were not meant as to shaman, but as to the spirit – patron (Lkhagvasuren 1988: 209).

According to the stories of the old men, white and black shamans at least three times a month would make the public rites, but the days for those, they would choose the different ones. Black shamans performed ritual on 9th, 19th, and 29th days of the month on the lunar calendar, and white shamans would each individually select for that day. A shaman ritual is hold in the yurt of the shaman, which was placed in some distance from the yurts of ordinary people. They could attend if anyone needed help of the shaman.

There are two ways to become as shamans: by inheritance or by the principle of selection. The vast majority became as a shaman by inheritance. Some elected themselves the spirits, they dwell in him and thus made it clear that henceforth he should devote himself to shamanic craft. According to informants, “elected representatives of the Spirits” at an early age differed from the other children. For such a child signs of the shaman would be appearant from the early ages, and those signs would be intensified with age.

They would manifest at both the physiological and psychological levels. In

physiological terms, this was manifested in the fact that people would hear voices in reality, see dreams, sometimes left in the woods or mountains, retreated, grew pensive, sometimes lapsed into delirium and showed keen interest to the rites of sacrifice, and making predictions, etc. In psychological terms, it has happened a split of personality due to its simultaneous presence in the human world and the world of spirits. Our informants argued that shamanic symptoms usually appear by the end of a 12-year cycle. For example, to the shaman Tsogtoo, first signs of shamanic gifts appeared to 13 years, while the shaman Tevegt – to 25 years, shamans Too and Chuluunbat discovered a penchant for doing voodoo in 37 years, i.e., after three 12 year of cycles. Usually this happens to people who made this gift to be inherited. N.L. Zhukovskaya wrote that “Not accepting the gift of the ancestors is virtually impossible. The refusal was accompanied by a disease, every time a person would rate the choice between life and death” (Zhukovskaya 1998: 147). Newly-born shaman must undergo training in a stronger, and more experienced shaman. S. Badamhatan wrote that among Darkhat the right to be a teacher for the novice had only the one shaman behind whom was more than 15 years of experience and unquestioned authority (Badamkhatan 1965: 225).

During the period of apprenticeship a future shaman was present at the ritual of his teacher, would remember the sacred shamanic texts, accompany him on trips, and help him in everyday life. Education could last from one to two years. Good memory, intuition, imagination, the gift of improvisation rather facilitates the future shaman’s learning process.

Altai Uriankhains called shamans as “bilingual”, because they can talk not only with people but also with the spirits as well as animals, birds, insects, plants, etc. When the future shaman reached willingness to serve, he was given these real shamanic attributes: special clothing (*boogiyn umsgul*) and drum (*dunger*).

Shaman drum among *Altai Uriankhains* are called as *dunger*. It was one of the key attributes of a shaman and has played the dominant role in all of his actions. The shamans of the *Altai Uriankhains* never do the rite of calling without a tambourine.

In view of shamans, drum was their horse, on which they performed their “journey” to the spirit world (Lkhagvasuren 1988: 301). S. Badamhatan wrote that drum among Darkhat shamans would symbolize not the horse, but a deer with big horns (Badamkhatan 1965: 211).

The tambourine had a round shape, its longitudinal diameter was 65 cm, cross – about 70 cm, its wooden rim – had a width of shell is from 10 to 15 cm. Tambourine covered with leather on one side only, forming as it were, the bottom, but covering the back and sides. The internal cavity remained open, it inserted two wooden slats: vertical and horizontal. The vertical slat served as a handle, for which the shaman holds a tambourine during the ritual. Handle of the drum made

of birch, a horizontal crossbar - from white willow. On it hung iron pendants and small bell (*khonkh*). For the drum clapper also chose birch and covered with kamus of male mountain goat.

The shaman would have to expose each new drum for revival. To symbolic revival, it was exposed the animal, whose skin was used to cover the tambourine, and that birch, from which is made a wooden frame of the drum. After that, the tambourine becomes unavailable for others and it served only to its owner. Life and health of the shaman was contacted via his tambourine.

The vestment of the shaman did not change. After the death of a shaman, it was important to properly dispose of his tambourine. Strictly forbidden to put it in a shaman's grave, but always carried it into the woods to a secluded place, and hung on a tree. Usually, the burial of a deceased shaman was situated nearby. In this case, the leather bag of the tambourine was cut into pieces (i.e., unanimating the tambourine) and placed above the grave. A clapper necessarily stored in a shaman's relatives as to the event that their family will have a new shaman.

The number of mandatory attributes for shamans of the *Altai Uriankhains* included the following items: clapper (*malia*), mirror (*felts*), the metal plate (*cang*), etc. A shaman's clothing consisted of a top coat (*khuyag*, *umsgul*), headgear (*duulga*) and footwear (*gos*). Shaman's robe was considered a protective agent during the ritual, it was a striped – colorful dress with silk patchwork of different colors. This gown had a number of features, first of all, it is distinguished by its open front and wide sleeves.

On this outfit, on parts of the shoulder blades, shoulders, chest, and at sides sewn bells, coral, pearls, and fringe, etc. Shamans usually wore a low hat. The height of the headdress was 20 cm, width – 40 cm to the top of the headdress necessarily attached owl feathers.

Spiritualization of the Nature

For the *Altai Uriankhains*, like the other nomadic tribes of Mongolia in the late XIX – the early XX century there were various forms of inspiration of surrounding nature. One of the most popular of its forms was associated with *ovoo* as cult, at which it was carried out the rite of sacrifice – *Ovoo tahlilga*.

According to researchers, the term of *ovoo* in various versions (*Ovoo*, *oba*, *ova*, *uva*) is found among many Turkic-Mongol peoples of the Southern Siberia, the Central and the Middle Asia. Actually in the Mongolian language the word of *Ovoo* has two basic meanings several meanings: 1) the mound, a heap; 2) a place to perform the religious rites. The term “*takhilga*”, which is based on Mongolian verb *takhikh* (reading, worship, sacrifice), also in different versions (*Taikh*, *tailgan*, *taiylgan*) occurs in the Buryat, Kalmyk, Tuva, and *Altai* people.

Some researchers speculate about the possibility of Mongolian origin of the

term *ovoo*, others on the contrary, consider it as of a Turkic origin. However, most researchers agree that *ovoo* cult and ritual sacrifice to the collective prayers is the phenomenon of the Central Asia due to the nomadic way of life.

An essential feature of sacrifice on *ovoo* was the requirement with respect to suit of sacrificial animal. If this is the ram, then it must have of a red head, if that is the horse, then it should not have broken hooves, and back injuries, etc. The carcass of the animal was separated by parts (bones are not broken), its meat is burned at *ovoo* and fired as a sacrifice to the “owners” of the area. Then the rest of the meat was boiled and treated with them to all presence. Women are not allowed to be present at the place where it takes place the bloody slaughter of animals. Later, when Mongolia began to spread Buddhism, this requirement is preserved.



PHOTO 12 *Ovoo* – the altar of the area “owner”

According to the stories of informants, earlier in seven *khoshuns* of *Altai Uriankhains* existed *ovoo* of the different shapes and sizes. The most common form was a pile of stacked pyramid of stones, which are stuck into the center of the pole on which to hang “khadag” or strip of white cloth –*zalam*.

Traditionally been understood appointment is that *ovoo* – is the altar of the “owner” of the area. It is believed that he lives exactly in the place where erected *ovoo*. Likely, the ritual sacrifice at *ovoo* originated with tribal system, where hunting was the main way of getting food for people. Then it was sacrificed the wild animals. With the subsequent era, when nomadic pastoralism gradually appeared instead of wild animals in sacrifice began to bring their livestock, mainly horses and sheep. Aims and objectives of the rite gradually began to

change.

Regarding when arose and what function performed the cult of *ovoo* wrote the Russian researchers. Thus, V.P. Dyakonova wrote that the cult *ovoo* in its genesis goes back to ancient pre-shamanistic representations relating to the worship of nature, including the cult of mountains, rocks, rivers, and so forth. According to her, in the past cult *ovoo* cult wore generic nature (Dyakonova 1977: 188–189). N.L. Zhukovskaya believes that “... *Ovoo* the cult persisted during the entire period of development and prosperity of shamanism, coexisting with him, without disturbing it and did not contradict the principles of the shamanic worldview. As the shaman as an intermediary between the spirit world and the people, it (the rite) (-I.L. rite) was not needed” (Zhukovskaya 1977: 37). She also believes that the stones are placed on *ovoo* with the views of the victim, and *ovoo* itself is the marker of ethnic territory (Zhukovskaya 2000: 26–27), T.M. Mikhailov believes that “*ovoo* – not only the seat of the god or spirit, but also a religious center, a temple, the shrine within a particular ethnic or territorial-administrative units” (Mikhailov 1980: 166).

Thus, we can say that most researchers agree in opinion that cult *ovoo*, which is available in various nomadic tribes of Mongolia, is associated with cult system of shamanism.

In view of the *Altai Uriankhains*, the Greater *Altai* has a “master” (“owner”), whose name is “*Alia Khongor (Altain Ezen Alia Khongor)*”. Its image was personified – a woman of 25 years old (age remains unchanged), and she always rides.

Each Ridge of the Great *Altai*, its every hill, every river and every stream have its “Owner” (*Ezen*). Each year at the exactly fixed time, the *Altai Uriankhains* commit a ritual sacrifice on *ovoo*, which aims to cajole “the masters”, both large and small.

The *Altai Uriankhains* have had also a tradition to inspire rocks, trees, and the other natural objects. However, those were not ordinary objects, but the special ones. For example, the sacred rock had of unusual twists, and the sacred tree – a fancy form. Next to such objects no man dwelt, where people come to make a ritual and ceremonies.

On the 15th of the first spring month, the *Altaic Uriankhains* staged ritual worship of “owner” for water. According to the Buryat scholar – ethnographers M.M. Sodnompilova and B.Z. Nanzatov noted that the Mongolian People “... masters of the water sources, as well as the mountains can be gods of heavenly origin, and many spirits of the land and water – *lus*, *sabdaki (shibdak)* in the Buddhist interpretation ...” (B.Z. Nanzatov and M.M. Sodnompilova et al., 2008: 62). During the rite, it is usually consecrated goat: in her neck tied white ribbons, fumigated her with juniper, and sprinkled over her milk. Cleric of the cult (usually

a lama) read the prayer. Then the animal is released. Since then, it was considered hallowed and its score was strictly prohibited.

In this connection it should be noted that the custom of devoting the animals (mainly horses, sheep and goat) to some deity – a common phenomenon among the Turkic-Mongol peoples. Devoted to the animals of the Mongols, including the *Altai Uriankhains*, called “*setertey mal*.” Researchers note that the rite of initiation and requirements with respect to the dedicated animals were almost identical else where. Probably the original origins of this custom were all the same. Its birthplace is the Central Asia and the Southern Siberia. Among the Turkic-Mongol peoples the rite of consecration of animals once performed with the help of shamans (Lkhagvasuren 2008: 315).

In addition, the *Altai Uriankhains* like the other Mongols – the nomads, there were various forms of inspiration of the sky and celestial bodies: sun, moon and constellations of stars. According to their legends, thunder and lightning comes from the fact that the dragon that dwells in the heavens, somewhat got angry. Dragon, according to the ideas of *Uriankhains*, was one of those powerful and sacred animals that are in the service of protection “owner” of the sky.

When the thunder was a long, the *Uriankhains* erected an altar on which burned the juniper. The purpose of the ceremony is to appease the angry dragon. The owner three times goes around and inside the yurt with the smoke of juniper. Bypassing it, he turned to the sky with the words:

Listen, the Eternal Blue Sky!

I am an *Uriankhain*!

Thunderstorm, lightning thy terrible!.

Do you want to hit me, the real *Uriankhain*!

Do you want to hit by thy lightning the raven of my colt!

Do you want to hit by thy lightning my brown horse!

Of the heavenly bodies at the special honor of *Uriankhains* was constellation Ursa Major (*Doloon Burkhan*), Polaris (*Altan gadas*), etc. According to their beliefs, these constellations bring happiness and they were especially favored by the large families. All *Uriankhain* families devoted a sheep with a star on his forehead to the constellation of Ursa Major.

The *Uriankhain* hunters enjoyed the great respect for wild animals and birds, such as wolf, deer, and eagle, etc. According to their beliefs, these animals were special – they were in close connection with the “Owner” of the *Altai*. For example, they avoided aloud utter the word of “wolf” (*Chono*). The wolf was figuratively called as “heavenly beast” (*tengeriin amitan*). If a wolf ate his favorite horse, then the event was seen as punishment for what he hurted the “owner” of the *Altai*. They believed that the wolf has been sent to him to punish him.

Buddhism

Buddhism is the major world religion born in the VI-V Centuries BC in the valley of Ganges, on its middle flow, and it has developed and spread throughout India in the consequent centuries. In the III century, it erected by Emperor Ashoka, who united under his rule almost all of India and proclaimed it as a State religion by the empire of Magadha. The religious tradition ascribes the basis of Buddhism Sakyamuni, prince of royal lineage Shakya, who attained supreme perfection, knowledge and wisdom in the course of endless rebirth under the sacred bodhi tree – the path to the cessation of rebirth, each of which carries beings just suffering.

Subsequently, the figure of Sakyamuni is canonized and changes into a supreme deity whose name allegedly associated with all basic tenets, rules of monastic discipline, and faith prescription.

Agreeing that life in any form of its manifestation – the suffering, and that the only way to salvation from suffering – cessation of rebirth, the achievement of nothingness (Nirvana), various groups and associations of early Buddhists were not unanimous in the opinion on specific ways to achieve “salvation”, views on the nature of nirvana, etc.

The largest crystallized schools of Indian Buddhism are called Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism.

- Hinayana, i.e., “small chariot” or “narrow way” of salvation, is usually considered a form of Buddhism and the closest to the original.

- Mahayana, i.e., the “big chariot” or “broad way” of salvation, is usually considered a later form of Buddhism, although many of its characteristics can be found in a number of provisions attributed to the Buddha. The Mahayana is rapidly evolving and complicated magic tricks impact on the supernatural, i.e., a religious cult. Indeed, the mahayana Buddhism became the most important ideological basis of Lamaism, which was widespread in Mongolia. Lamaism, is mainly composed in the XVI century, subsequently did not undergo any substantial changes in its dogma, temple organization and worship, except for attempts to “update”, relating mainly with the twentieth century.

“Lamaism”, a term coined in Europe, laid the foundation of his Tibetan word “lama”. It literally means “above is not”, or “highest.” It has been used in European languages only in relation to the Central Asian (Tibetan - Mongolian) form of Buddhism. In the Mongolian language is usually called Shariin-shadzhin– “Yellow Faith”, “yellow religion”. Lamaism is a real existing form of Buddhism. All of the major provisions of its teachings are based on Buddhist literature and always rely on the authority of the Buddha Sakyamuni, the cult of Lamaism penetrated with the general Buddhist views. At the end of XX century, Lamaism as a scientific term gradually fell into disuse.



PHOTO 13 Buddhist bronze statue *burkhan*

An important feature of the world's religions (this is most true for Buddhism and Christianity) are truly enormous size of their geographic and ethnic distribution. They have easily transcended national boundaries, adapting to the customs and views of people who received the new faith, and at the same time also having been evolving as a result of the inclusion in its doctrine and worship of many elements of those religions with which they met with “circulating” peoples.

Buddhism was first announced as Mongolia's state religion during the Kublai Khan in the XIII century. Although the turning of the Mongols to Buddhism did not take place during this period and its mass distribution in the form of teaching Gelug (Gelugpa) was in effect by the end of the XVI century. The founder of this school was a prominent Tibetan religious reformer Tsonkhapa (1357–1419).

Tsonkhapa was established as a complex system of the temple hierarchy, which has developed the Model Rules for the lamasery, established celibacy for the lamas and lamas were allowed to own property. At the head of the new hierarchy arose “living gods” – the earthly embodiment of various deities of higher Lamaist pantheon. The very hierarchical system gave everyone the opportunity Lama to find in it its place, is defined as the social position and connections, and to some extent personal business qualities and the degree of scholarship. This is ensured by the establishment of hierarchy and specialization in the various profiles.

Tsonkhapa attributed to the introduction of a complex ritual, the widespread use of the elements of theater and music during the colorful mysteries, devoted to various gods, or aimed at cleansing the area of evil spirits, holiday, established in honor of the most important events in the life of Sakyamuni, in honor of the future Buddha Maitreya, etc .

By the end of XIX – the beginning of XX century in seven *khoshuns* of the *Altai Uriankhains* operated more than 10 stationary Buddhist monasteries. The largest and most famous of them were the following monasteries:

1. *Darkhadyn khiid* – at the River Khovd
2. *Sogoogiin khiid* – at the River Sogoo gol.
3. *Khar soeny khiid* – at the River Khargantyn gol
4. *Tsagaan soeny Khuree* – at the River Tsagaan Gol
5. *Shar Dagiin Khuree* – at locality Kharganat.
6. *Sagsain Khuree* – at the River Sagsain Gol.
7. *Deluunii Khiid* – at the River Deluunii Gol.
8. *Baruun Beisiin Khuree* – at locality Ikh Jargalant.
9. *Saruul Gunii Khuree* – at locality Jiratyn Am.
10. *Meeringiin Khuree* – at locality Tsagaan Tung.

According to G.N. Potanin, the territory of each *khoshun* acted on one main monastery (*khuree*), they were all near *khoshun*'s Administration (Potanin, 1881: 77). To our knowledge, most of these monasteries continued to operate until mid-30thies of the twentieth century. Later, they were completely destroyed and lamas were repressed. Those Lama, who survived many years spent in prison.

From the above list shows that for the monastic constructions were characterized by only two types of the buildings – *khuree* and *khiid*.

Khiid – this lonely monastery or hermitage. Usually it was built in the mountains. Subsequently, based on it were created monasteries, which are often worn by the former name – *khiid*. *Khuree* – monastery, consisting of several temples located in a circle (*khuree*).

Although so far has survived the description of these temples, based on



PHOTO 14 Copper kettles *guts* for the holy water

interviews with persons who visited them in their youth, we have tried to recreate their overall appearance. Typically, the temples were united in the monastery complex, which consists of a variety of places of worship. There were temples, as different in type and purpose, and as in architectural design. On their territory erected dwellings for the lamas and disciples, outbuildings, and broke ground for the special administration, Lama ceremonies, and rituals. The entire complex of buildings twine with a wooden fence, which had an entrance gate.

Site selection and bookmarks of monasteries furnish with Lamaist rites and rituals. These were built mainly by local architects, but very often in their construction involved experienced craftsmen who are specially invited from the eastern Mongolia. Monasteries were built by the Buddhist canon, set out in building regulations, but local craftsmen also creatively used the skills of construction of similar facilities in the Mongolian *Altai*. The monastic complex was built in such a way that all places of worship together and individually had a strong impact on the psyche of the believers and called everyone gets into his reverence for the gods.

Prayer in the construction of monasteries was called as *dugan*. According to our surveys, in monasteries acted in seven *khoshuns* of the *Altai Uriankhains*, no monasteries, which had two or more *dugans*, while some monasteries in the eastern Mongolia had a number of large and small *dugans*. Inside the *dugan* exhibited gold gilded copper statue and iconographical images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas made by local craftsmen, applique and embroidery depicting the Buddhist saints, a set of wind instruments, such as *dun*, *buree*, *bishguur*, *gandan*, *hengereg* and *tsan*, collections of religious objects – *khonkh*, *damar*, *shoo*, *ochir* and library, etc.

Before entering the monastery must have installed a rotating cylinder – *khurd* made of wood or metal with which put many pieces of paper with prayers–*maani*. By turning the cylinder – *khurd*, believer thought that he pledged in the number of prayers. When construction of the monasteries had *suburgan* cult, the prototype of which was the Indian stupa. According to the Buddhist canon, or a stupa was erected as a repository for the remains of saints, or in honor of outstanding events. The researchers note that the Mongolian suburgans although consistent in its purpose with the Indian stupa, but they have differed somewhat from them in their architectural form.

Time of completion of construction of these monasteries we were not able to establish, but according to some sources, the construction of the monastery of *Meeringiin Khuree* completed in 1848. It was the first monastery complex, which was built by all canons of Buddhist architecture. Then in 1890 came the monastery of *Sagsain Khuree*, which is built at the beginning of XX century, considered the most significant on the number of lamas and their economic power.

Construction of the monastery *Baruun Beisiin Khuree* completed in 1933. It was the last monastery complex, which appeared in seven *khoshuns* of the *Altai Uriankhains*. Construction of monasteries *Shar Dagiin* and *Saruul Gunii Khuree* completed in 1900, and the construction of *Khar Soeny Khiid* and *Tsagaan Soeny Khuree* – in 1920.

Funds for the construction of monasteries were collected from residents of *khoshuns* territories of which the complex was being built. Sometimes, fundraising was forced. However, donations received quite a lot.

The highest hierarchical level for the lamas in the *Uriankhain* monasteries was determined by rank Hambo Lama. Hamba Lama were abbots of the monasteries, but they could be also lamas of the other of less high-ranks. For example, the most recent head of *Baruun Beisiin khuree* was not Hambo Lama, but Da-Lama. His name was Chultem Da-Lama. By the way, to our knowledge about the teachings of this lama still go around some legends.

According to our field research, these monasteries had Lamas of the following ranks: *Da-Lama*, *Tsorj Lama*, *Unzad Lama*, *Lovin Lama*, *Gesgui Lama*, *gelen*, *khuvrag*, and *Bandi*, etc. A certain range of duties associated with the monastic activities was assigned over the lamas of those ranks. Lama also specialize in different kinds of magic: *miracle workers* – *choijen*, charmers – *gurumch*, astrologers – *zurkhaich*, doctors – *domch*, etc. According to the stories of older people, particularly the *Altai Uriankhains* feared Lamas-charmers – *gurumch* and miracle workers – *choijinch*.

By the end of XIX – the early XX century in all *Uriankhain* monasteries boys aged from 7 to 8 years and older were trained in Lamaist teaching. Each family having at least two sons, a sacred duty believed to be to give one of them for training at the monastery. Those who studied in the monastery called *Bandi*, i.e., student. *Bandi* during the study lived with a teacher – *Lam Bagsh*, they helped to *Lam Bagsh* in the household work at their spare time. Upon completion of the study they were to serve in these monasteries.

Monasteries sometimes recruited young people for training at a minimal program. Having such a course, they then engaged in the cult activities among the population. They were called monk-*badarchin Lama*. Although they did not live permanently in the monasteries, but included in the category of the Lamas.

Number of the *Uriankhain* Lamas in one temple was not possible set, but presumably they ranged from 20 to 30 (Lkhagvasuren 1988: 280). Such a small amount can only be explained by the fact that the total population of seven *khoshuns* of the *Altai Uriankhains* by the end of XIX century – the beginning of XX century was insignificant as compared to the inhabitants of the other peoples of western Mongolia.

At every monastery operated the so-called *Jas* which were responsible for the

economic activity. Monasteries were also engaged in typography in the Tibetan language.

During the field work we had to meet with the elderly, who as teenagers were members of the rite of the Maitreya Buddha (*Maidar ergek*). Their stories suggest that it was the most colorful and memorable rite of all ceremonies, which were held in the *khoshun* monasteries. It held on the first day of the first summer month. On this day all Lamas dressed very elegantly, they were holding the necessary attributes of the Lama: *khonkh*, *damar*, *ochir*, *gandan*, and *tsan* etc. In front of the main *dugan* on a special altar burned a lot of juniper which are enveloped with smoke for all believers.

Ordinary people in this day too dressed festively, came to the monastery of *khoshun* with high spirits and brought with them dairy products in large quantities. All of them, followed by the lamas, did three laps around the monastery. After the ceremony in the courtyard of the monastery began the general public feast.

According to polls of informants, *khoshun* monasteries almost every month conduct the inside temple-holidays, accompanied by the complex rituals and ceremonies. N.L. Zhukovskaya on the example of the eastern Mongolian monasteries wrote that “occasions for those were the remarkable events of Buddhist history: birthday of Buddha, the beginning of his mentor, his death and dive into nirvana, praying *dokshitam* for the elimination of enemies of the faith, a commemoration of Tsonkhapa – reformer and founder of the school Gelugpa, and the day of Buddha-Ayush (Zhukovskaya 2000: 104).

In addition, the monasteries held everyday *khural*, which had the right to be attended by the ordinary public. Normally, when an ordinary layman came to the monastery, he first cleared himself with the smoke of juniper, which being burned on the altar in the front of the monastery, and then he went inside the *Dugan*. There, he thrice did traverse moves inside of estates temple by the clockwise way. Along the way he prayed before the images of Buddhist gods and bodhisattvas, who had been placed on the altar at the northern part of the *Dugan*. In doing so he turned the rotating cylinder – *hurd*, which was standing there. Then he sat down near the entrance at a special sitting. At the same time, he should take a prayer pose: hands clapping, and kept them under the chin. At times, he raised his hands up to the forehead and bowed his head forward with your eyes closed. In this position he was to sit up late reading of the morning prayers.

In addition, each *Uriankhain* thought was his duty to pray to Buddhist deities and Bodhisattva in his tent. Each yurt on the northern side, which was considered the most honorable part of it, placed the altar, as we already wrote about this. Each evening before bedtime owner of the yurt would be praying before the altar. Hostess lit a new icon lamp– *Zul* in front of Buddhist deities, and every morning

she put a little bit of dairy products on the “sacrificial dish.” *Hurd* could twist at any time without restriction. This was done as family members and guests. Turning the cylinder–*khurd*, all believed that they were uttered as pledged to him the number of prayers – *Maani*. Generally, *Altai Uriankhains*, like the other Mongols on various issues in life turned to a teacher-mentor–*Lama Bagsh*. For such cases, each family had his teacher. Usually, once in their lives had occurred any important event or any trouble, they turned to him for help and advice. Without such treatment to them, teachers–*Lama Bagsh* himself on its own initiative would not come into the tent. Lama made ritual ceremonies, rituals on all important matters in human life. Upon the submission of the *Altai Uriankhains*, Lama ceremonies and rituals can help them to successfully find a groom for the daughter and a bride for the son, well spend the summer and autumn of fattening cattle, birth went well, did prevent illness and all sorts of unexpected dangers in their lives. N.L. Zhukovskaya wrote that all Mongols “... Lama participated in all events in the life of the laity: weddings, funerals, the “protection of” infant from evil forces, treating, predicting, implored, consecrated cattle and hid evil spirits from a person in certain periods of his life” (Zhukovskaya 2000: 104).

Every adult *Uriankhain* necessarily must have counter-*erkh*. They differed in material, color, shape and number of beads. Method of wearing beads was strictly defined.

Women wore them on the left hand, wrapped around it twice, the men – on the right hand, not wrapping. To use other people’s rosary was not supposed to, but after the death of the parents it could be benefited by their children. Over a lifetime, people could have two – three counters. Praying for counting beads usually made in the morning without saying from the moment of awakening a single word, because otherwise one hundred prayers will be effective only about half. It was believed that praying the rosary for the elderly prepare him or herself an easy death, and the young overcome difficulties in path of their life. Prayers were of small and different content. Anyone could say the prayer with the words of “Om mani pad me hum!” under the circumstances of fright and fear.

With the spread of Buddhism began an intense process of displacement of shamanism from the life of *Altai Uriankhains*, although shamanism has provided stiff resistance. For purely shamanistic rites such as the *ovoo* cult and the cult of fire, presence of Lamas gradually became mandatory and necessary.