Cutting the black noose of a fiend
A healing-method of Mongolian Shamanism

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Mongols just like other peoples of Asia believed that death and disease were caused by harmful spirits and special ceremonies were necessary to counteract the prolongation of the evil influence.

Among others, it was supposed that there existed a bond between the patient and the foe causing harm. The demons were believed to throw lassoes onto men and binding people. A ritual should have been performed to cut this spiritual bondage. The dead and the living were also bind together and the help of an officiating lama was needed to cut the rope and separate the spheres of death and life that do not belong together. Nebesky-Wojkowitz refers to a Tibetan blockprint in the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden, a death ceremony: Che dpag med gnam lčags rdo rje'i čha lag 'čhi bslu'i gtor chen 'grigs chags su bkod pa 'čhi bdag g'yul zlog čes bya ba bzugs so, a part of which describing the setting up of the sacrificial objects bears the title 'čhi bdag zags gčod-pa "Cutting the noose of the Lord of Death". Some handbooks in Mongolian also suggest that it was commonly believed that there existed a bond between the living and the dead. A manuscript Amidu ükügsen-ü yar barilčayson-i qačačayulqu-yin ary-a "Method of tearing off the clasping hands of the living and the dead" prescribe that the black rope and the white rope symbolizing the attachment between the dead and the living must be cut off by the ceremony master. Pozdneev also refers to a ritual held on the second or third day after the funeral in order to ward off misfortunes from living persons. The ceremony is called Tačiyal-un qariyuly-a "Detaching the clinging". It allows the supposition that a symbolical rope-cutting took place during this ritual, as well. Prof. Bawden mentions a similar text: Amitu ükügsen qoyar-un yar barilduysan-u sijim-i tasul "Separate the cord of the clasping hands of the dead and the living" - instructing that the bond which unites

1Nebesky-Wojkowitz, op. cit. p. 511.


the living and the dead should be broken.

Texts indicating the bondage between the disease and the patient are few in the libraries.

A handbook preserved in Hungary *Calm-a tasulqu sudur* (Mong 67) "Cutting off the Lasso" presents such a ceremony. The ritual served to exorcise the evil spirits by cutting the lasso they had thrown onto the patient. The officiating lama played in reality the lasso throwing and cutting saying that he transforms himself into the deity Heruka and in this form he cuts the fastening between the harmful spirits and the patient.4

Here we should like to publish another, till now unpublished text of this curing method though different in wording similar in the idea of cutting the connection between the patient and the disease. The manuscript of altogether 3 folios is preserved in the St. Peterbourg collection of the Russian Academy of Sciences: MS. Q 165.5

This purely shamanistic ritual is dressed in Buddhist disguise using the usual beginning formula of Buddhist prayers: I bow to Buddha, I bow to the Teaching, I bow to the Assembly. Avalokitesvara is requested to save people. Then, the prayer goes on in a clearly shamanistic manner. The officiant addresses the evil spirits and states that he will cut off the bondage between them and the patient. We get some information who these foes are: they ride several kinds of mounts: a black goat, a yellow goat, a black horse, red sheep and their coach is drawn by a blue goat. We are informed about their figure, behavior and habits: they are raksasa-s, white chested multi-coloured fiends, they are quick in their actions and they drink blood. They are the spirits who wander around the dwelling place and make obstacles for the travellers. During the enumeration of the evil spirits the officiant cuts their ropes. Most probably he imitates this cutting movement.

Colours play an important role in the ritual - not only the evil spirits' mounts are of certain colours but the defilements, as well: black sins, yellow sins, red defilements.

The leader of the ceremony offers food to the harmful spirits and asks them to take away disease together with the offered food. Beyond food a ransom figure is also offered together with the patient's hat, robe, belt, trousers, boots, and incense.

After trying to gain the benevolence of the spirits the officiant threatens them: "If you do not leave I will hit you", then he calls his helping spirits - among them also a Buddhist saint, Vajrapani with his nine branched vajra.


Certain days are prescribed when the ritual should be carried out. Famous Buddhist sutras are recommended to be read.

Now technical instructions are given how to prepare the ransom figure of red mud. Then, red ropes are bound to the members of the ransom figure and to the arms and feet of the patient. Then the ritual rope cutting takes place.

At this point our text gives another version of the ceremony, when gold and silver are offered. The patient is bound together with the dough ransom figure with a hook that should be cut off. While separating the bondage the ceremony master emphasizes: it is not the striped rope that I cut, but the hindrances, it is not the offering meat that I cut, but the flesh and tongue of the thousand devils. The text makes it clear that later the ransom figure containing the evil doers is taken out to the steppe and destroyed by burning.

At the end of the text it is told that this method is used when a woman has difficulties in childbirth. Again two ransom figures must be prepared: one representing the mother. The identity with the suffering mother is expressed by placing a drawing onto the ransom figure with the name and birth date of hers. The other ransom figure is riding an animal.

Text

[1a] Eliy-e qar-a čalm-a-yi oytolan qariyulqu sudur :

[1b] Namś'budha-ya
Namś'dharma-ya
Namś'sangha-ya

Avalokitì kiged : ürgülji tasurasi ügei .
oroy-yin čimeg blam-a erdini-dür mörgümüi :

bi kiged qamuy amitan-a tusa boltuyai :

öglige-yin ejin-lüge buu qarsila :
bi ber ğinu čalm-a-yi oytolamui
qara kkir-i bariysan .
qara imayan-a unuysan buyu çi :
bi ğinu čalm-a-yi oytolamui :
šira kkiri bariysan :
šir-a imayan-a unuysan buyu çi :
bi ğinu čalm-a-yi oytolamui :
qara mori unuysan
qara kkiri bariysan :
qara raks-a buyu či:
bi činu čalm-a-yi oytol-lumui:
ulayan čisun-yi uyuγad
bey-e-degen türγen yabudal-tu buyu či:
bi činu čalm-a-yi oytolamui:
köke imay-an-a köliglegsən:
ködelesi ügei yeke jobalang-yi bey-e-degen egürürgsen:
čayən ebčigüťu alay eliy-e buyu či:
bi činu čalm-a-yi oytolumui:
ottuŋ bayuri kiged-tü ergiũ yabușan
qamuy eliy-e čidkür buyu či:
bi činu čalm-a-yi oytolumui:
bərayun ýar-daγan ildü bariyən
(üşgün ýar-taγan jida bariyən)
iγulcın-aça jedker buyu či:
bi činu čalm-a-yi oytolumui:
ulayan qoní unuyən:
ulayan kkıri bariyən:
ükegetin jedker buyu či:
bi činu čalm-a-yi oytolumui:
enę oglige-yin eγen-lüğe buu qarsila:
minu ogüşen idesi abuγad ödtür bọged nəgči [2a] nəgči
yər köliün kiged bey-e-yin ebečin terigüten ba:
bey-e-yin joliγ-yi či ab:
abuγad od od:
enę oglige-yin eγen-ü malay-a degel kiged:
bey-e-yin joliγ-yi či ab:
abuγad od od:
oglige-yin eγen-ü buse dotuγaγi yutul kiged:
bey-e-yin joliγ-yi či ab:
abuγad od od:
enę oguşči abuγusun mal kiged:
bey-e-yin joliγiyi či ab:
yuũir tosun kiged jula kũji
bey-e-yin joliγiyi či ab:
abuγad öber öberin yəγar-tur od od:
minu undišun blam-a-yin jarliγ-aça buu daba:
ödtör bọged yabu yabu:
esę yabubasu:
çoytu ǒkin tngri-yin torm-a-bar çokimui bi:
qamuy sakiγulşun-iyor uriŋu:
Vačar-bani-yin yısışun salyaŋatu vačar-iyor çokimui bi:
či minu yidam burqan vajar-tu baysi-yin jarliγ-aça buu daba:
od od:
sümbari ber üldə:
mörü jiy-a::
calm-a oytolaquy-dur qaburin 3 sarayin 8 sine :
Jun-u 3 sarayin 15 sine :
ebul-un 3 sara-yin 19 edür
namurun 3 sarayin luu noqai edür :
ebul 3 sarayin moyai yaqai edür oytol-i mayui iru-a qariyulqui-dur :
Bigarun nom :
Bajar cediq-a
Yeke nigulesigci ungsi :
aryaquy siabar-iyar ulayan kümün-ni kijü :
kelkigci kümün-ni möce-tü ulayan utasu uyaqu :
jes vajar-tu kituy-a-bar buruyu oytol :
jeguii qara qoni yamayan-a üker mori
qara degel qara [2b] eriyen utasun-i oytolju
siabar kümün-ni qoyar yar ba :
qoyar köl-dü-i uyaytun :: ::

basa nigen jüil :
calm-a oytolqu bui :
uriqu kereg anu . eyimu bui :
lang mônggun ba :
ese bógесü nigen čang altan ba :
čayariy altan yoq-a :
tabun öngge-yin-ber tomuysin altan delim utasun :
nige yulir kümün kijü :
tegüni egüden-ü tende talbiyad :
utasun-u nige üjügür-eče čayariy ki :
uyaqu calm-a-u kümün aman-dayan ol kijü bayituyai :
nige üjügür-eče to-y-a-yi uyaqu yulir kümün-ü oroy-du qadquju :
tegün-lüge temür sirem-e kijü talbi :
oytaluyçi kümün-ü yar-tu nemen dūgureng čayan toryun uy-a :
jes kituy-a-bar yurban uy-e tomulan
ildü-iyer yurban taşu tebcı :
čibčirtei eyin eyin ögülegdeküi :

∞ eriyen utasun-i oytolqu busu
erke doycid-un kücün-iyer :
ali todqari ebeden oytolanam bi :
eriyen utasun-i oytolqu busu :
mingyan çıdkid-un miqan kelen-i
mital ügei doycid-un kücün-iyer oytolanam bi :
kesig miqan-u oytalqu busu :
gem kigçı todqar kedün mayui sedkil-ten-i
kelen aman-i qarisju oytolnam bi :
tüuki miqan-yi oytolqu busu :
tüg tümen dörben Jüg-ün simnus kiged :
Cutting the Black Noose of a Fiend

Translation

[1a] Sutra of averting the black noose of a fiend by cutting it

[1b] Namō buddhay-a
Namō dharmay-a
Namō sanghay-a

I bow to Avalokiteśvara and to the Precious lama,

6 The figure and activity of eliy-e is described in great detail by Ch. Bawden, The Supernatural Element in Sickness I. (1961), pp. 243-245: It is a category of evil spirits causing disease. Some dictionaries define the term eliy only as a "kite", however some dictionaries give the secondary meaning: "hideous demon, hostile spirit in the form of la bird, goblin, devil".

7Avalokita or Avalokiteśvara "The keen seeing lord, the great pitier and lord of
the Supreme ornament [who is] always without interruption. 8

Let there be assistance to me and to all the living beings!

Do not be an obstacle to the almsgiver! 9

I cut off your noose!
You ride a black goat
and take the black sins.
I cut off your noose!
You ride a yellow goat
and take the yellow sins.
I cut off your noose!
You ride a black horse
and take the black sins.
You are the black râksasa. 10
I cut off your noose!
You drink red blood 11 and
You are quick in your actions. 12


8 Most probably it can be identified with the Bodhisattva Ratnakuta (Tib. Ggug na rin čhen) the Mongolian name of whom Kowalewski gives as Oroi-dayan erdenitü. (p. 446/a)

9 The Mongolian expression öglige-yin efen-lüge buu qarsila is not correct. It would be better: efen-dür buu qarsila.. The mistake indicates that the text is a translation of Tibetan where the verb 'gal-ba "to counteract" stands with the suffix of Instrumental is dan, that was translated by the Mongolian -lüge.

10 Râkṣasâs (Tib. Srin-po) are large group of malignant spirits, they cause several kinds of disease, they wander around the house and in cemeteries. Waddell, op.cit., p. 369, Kowalewski, p. 2660. Nebesky-Wojkowitz enumerates and describes in detail the râkṣasâs and the ceremonies required to counteract them. He mentions a certain srin-po nag-po - it can be supposed that it is the same spirit as the one here. It is the leader of the -s dressed in a cloak consisting of lightening and it holds corns of hail in his left hand.


12 Moving quickly is characteristic of certain evil spirits. E.g. Mongolian ada, whose role and sphere of activity is the best defined is said to move quickly in fear of skilful and sudden people who might hit him. His mouth and only tooth are also bloody
I cut off your noose!

You travel [on a coach drawn] by a blue goat and take on yourself the unmoving great sufferings.\textsuperscript{13}

You are the white chested multi-coloured fiend.

I cut off your noose!

Your are all the fiends and evils who wander around.

I cut off your noose!

Taking a sword in your right hand and a spear in your left hand\textsuperscript{14}

you are a hindrance to the travellers.

I cut off your noose!

You ride a red sheep and take the red defilement.

You are the hindrance of the dead!

I cut off your noose!

Do not be an obstacle to the almsgiver!

Take the food that I had given you and disappear, disappear at once. [2a]

Take the disease of the arms and feet, of the body and together with the ransom figure take it away!

Taking it go away, go away!

Take the hat and robe of this almsgiver and his ransom figure.

Taking them go away, go away!

Take the belt, the trousers, the boots indicating that it is a blood-drinking spirit just as Heruka. I.A. Manzigeev, \textit{Burjatskie šamanističeskie i došamanističeskie terminy}. Moskva 1978, p.3.


\textsuperscript{14} The use of weapons in exorcising ceremonies and as the belongings of \textit{jolii} figures is well known in Mongolia and Tibet. Cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz, \textit{op.cit.}, 129, 441, 443, 463, 515, W. Heissig and Ch.R. Bawden, Catalogue of Mongol Books, Manuscripts and Xylographs. The Royal Library Copenhagen, 1971. Mong 301., Ch. R. Bawden, \textit{The Supernatural Element}, II. p. 175, etc.
of the almsgiver and
together with the ransom figure of his body
take them and go away, go away!
Take the given\textsuperscript{15} cattle and
the ransom figure of his body,
take the pastry, the butter,
the lamp and the incense
together with the ransom figure.
Taking them go \textit{every of you} to your own places,
go away!
Do not transgress the command of my teacher lama.
Go, go away at once!
If you do not go,
I will hit you with the \textit{gtorma} of the mighty goddess.\textsuperscript{16}
I call all my guardian spirits and
I hit you with the nine-branched vajra of Vajrapani.\textsuperscript{17}
Do not transgress the command of my tutelary Buddha,
the Vajra master,
go away, go away!
Expel the Sumbani [?]\textsuperscript{18}
and show the way.
When cutting the noose, it should be cut
on the 8th of the new moon of the 3rd spring month
on the 15th of the new moon of the 3rd summer month
on the 19th day of the new moon of the 3rd winter month
on the dragon, dog day of the 3rd autumn month
on the snake, pig day of the 3rd winter month.
When averting the bad omen
read the books: the Vajravidarana, the Vajracchedika
and the Great Avalokitesvara.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{15} The form \textit{ögügči} is not correct here, \textit{ögügsen} would be better.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Okin tengri} is taken over from the Buddhist pantheon, she is identical with

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Vajrapāni}, Tib. \textit{Phyag-na-rdo-rje} "The wider of the thunderbolt" a meta-
morphosis of Jupiter (Indra), a spiritual son of the second celestial Buddha, Akshobhya.

\textsuperscript{18} I could not identify it.

\textsuperscript{19} The books recommended here are the holy scriptures of Buddhism and are
incorporated into the Canon: \textit{Vajravidarana} (Teyin ebdegči očir) Cf. L.Ligeti, \textit{Catalogue
du Kanjur mongol imprimé}. Budapest, 1942, Nr 412, Heissig, \textit{Mongolische Handschriften,
Blockdrucke, Landkarten}. Wiesbaden 1961, No 203. \textit{Vajracchedikā} is one of the most
popular books of Buddhism, several versions are known., Cf. Heissig, \textit{op.cit.} Nos 233-258.,
Prepare a human figure of red mud to be thrown out.
Tie a red rope on the members of the man who unites the things\textsuperscript{20} and cut it to reverse direction with a knife [decorated] with a vajra.
Hang [on it the following things].\textsuperscript{21} a black sheep, a goat, a cow, a horse, a black garment cut the black [2b] striped rope and tie it to the two arms and feet of the human figure.

And another version:

Cutting off the noose

The invoking is as follows:
Place a lang\textsuperscript{22} of silver to the door, if there is not any, then a chen\textsuperscript{23} of gold, a ring and a golden hook, and a delim\textsuperscript{24} long golden rope twisted of five colours. Make a hoop of the one end of the rope, tie it and put it into the mouth of the man of the noose and stand it there.

Tie a hook to the one end of (the rope) and stick it into the head of the dough figure.
Together with all these place there (a piece of) cast iron.

Tie, in addition, a complete (piece of) white silk to the arm of the man who will cut (the rope).
Twist the rope three times with the copper knife and Cut it three times with the sword.

Let the man with the hatchet say like this:

Ligeti, op. cit. 771. Arya-avalokites\textsuperscript{\textit{e}}vara-n\textit{ā}ma-dh\textit{ā}rani, Ligeti, op. cit. Nos 376, 551, etc.

\textsuperscript{20} I translate kelkig\c{c}i k\textit{ūm\d{u}n} "the man who unites things" - it is perhaps the leader of the ceremony, or the person on whose account the ritual is meant. The expression is not quite clear.

\textsuperscript{21} This sentence is not quite clear.

\textsuperscript{22} A Chinese unit of weight, 37.3 gram, a tael or ounce of silver. Lessing, p. 515.

\textsuperscript{23} Ch. ch'ien, Chinese weight equivalent to about four grams. Lessing p. 171.

\textsuperscript{24} The space necessary to stretch a bow, distance between the two ends of a stretched bow, a linear measure (from the tips of the fingers of an outstretched arm to the shoulder of the other arm), half an alda (fathom). Lessing, p. 250.
I do not cut the striped rope [but] with the power of mighty wrathful deities I cut off all the hindrances destroying them.

I do not cut the striped rope [but] with the power of fearless wrathful deities I cut off the flesh and tongue of thousand devils.  

I do not cut the offering meat [but] I cut off obstructing the hinderance causing harm, and all those with malevolent thoughts and the wrangle 

I do not cut off the raw meat [but] with the razor sword of the four mahārajā-s I cut off the ten thousand demons of the four directions and the wrangle of the devils.

I do not cut the multicoloured rope [but] with my sacred spells of knowledge I cut off the necks of the evils, and the ada-s, the foes and hindrance of the ten directions.

I do not cut off the black striped rope [but]

25 didkur-s are believed to be the souls of dead people that have become demons and bring evil to the living. Tucci - Heissig, *Die Religionen*, p. 314-315.

26 In the lowest compartment of the heavens are the four "great guardian kings of the quarters", the mahārajā-s: the white guardian of the east, the red guardian of the west, the green guardian of the south, the yellow guardian of the north. Waddell, *op.cit.*, p. 84.

27 Šimnus Tib. bdud is a group of a great number of evil spirits causing harm to people. In Buddhist texts they are mostly subdivided into four groups according to the cardinal directions. Cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *op.cit.*, p. 276.

28 arvis tarni Tib. rig-pa snags Skr. vidyā mantra sacred spell of magic knowledge. Lessing pp. 1161, 1185.

29 Ada usually is a one-eyed evil demon who makes people mad and raging, and is especially dangerous to young children. It is disease provoker sitting above the patient. Burial folklore considers that one of the three souls of man becomes an ada after death. It settles in various reptiles, snakes in particular. It can be a bearded wolf. Mostly, it is invisible, however shamans and children under the age of three can see it sometimes. Before people taste food, he spits into it and in this way causes them lung trouble and other diseases. Cf. Manzigeev, *op.cit.* p.3, D. Banzarov, *Cernaja vera ili šamanstvo u mongolov' i drugija stat' D. Banzarova*. Sanktpeterburg 1891, p. 30. J.A. Partanen, A description of Burial Shamanism. *Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne* 51 (1941), p. 9, Bawden, *op.cit.* (1961), p. 234.
I cut off the gossiping of all the evils
I tear off the black eyes
I break the wild backbone [3a]
with the power of all the Buddhas
I cut off returning all the cruelty of old times.
I have burned all the ada-s, hindrances, evils
with hot burning fire.
Think it over!
Take out the animals, the dresses and the coats 30 the.[?]...
Read the Prajnaparamita31, the Vajraviddhara.

When a woman's foot is heavy and can not give birth for three days
make a ransom figure with an animal
make a ransom figure with a tail
make a drawing: this and this is the clan of the mother
she was born in this and this year,
Place it on the heart of the ransom figure
Make an other ransom figure of the convenient year
Ride it on a black ransom animal
If you prepare medicine this day, it will return the danger.

30 The reading and translation of qubčad suba is uncertain.