



## **Returning to the Forest**

### **Shamanism, Landscape and History among the Duha of Northern Mongolia**

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## PhD thesis

Benedikte Møller Kristensen

# Returning to the Forest

Shamanism, Landscape and History among the Duha of Northern Mongolia



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## Introduction

### Masters among Masters

I lived most of my life in the city of Darhan and only returned to the taiga to visit my family. I am not a religious person, so when the shamans say they can see souls and spirits I think it is all 'lies' (*hudlaa*). People say that some places in the taiga are ferocious, while others are calm. It is not visible, but still 'it seems to exist' (*baih shig baigaa yum*). The other day when I went hunting with my brother, his dog went crazy; it started to bark and chase something, though nothing was there. It felt very strange. So we did not hunt at that place. I honour the land of Oron Hangai [the forested hilly land], even though I have no faith.

These were the words of the 73-year-old Duha, Baatar, whom I met while he was visiting his brother, Bayan Dalai, in the summer camp of the Duha reindeer nomads and hunters in northern Mongolia. Whereas Bayan Dalai had followed the traditional livelihood of the Duha and lived most of his life as a reindeer herder and hunter in the taiga, Baatar had moved to the city of Ulaanbaatar to study engineering as a young man; since this time, he had settled in the city, only to return sporadically to his ancestral homeland in the taiga to visit his family.

Baatar enjoyed telling me about his life; he came to my *urts*<sup>1</sup> (a conical tent made of canvas and wooden poles) almost every day to talk with me or invite me on his daily walks in the forest. Often he told of the hardship of his childhood in the taiga in the 1940s, where the Duha had been a stateless people within Mongolia and, according to Baatar, had lived as 'savage folk' (*zerleg omog*) in the forest. With a trembling voice he recounted how he had hidden in the forest with his parents and siblings and watched relatives being dragged away by Mongolian authorities, who in those years expelled the Duha from their homeland within Mongolia. He told how he had lived as a 'savage child', who dressed in fur had caught fish with

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<sup>1</sup> The *urts* is the traditionally dwelling of the Duha.

his bare hands from the rivers. He explained how his stomach often had ached from hunger, as his parents only had few reindeer and relied on hunting and gathering for survival. With pride in his voice, he proclaimed that his father had become a socialist and that it was him, who managed to convince the Mongolian authorities to grant the Duha Mongolian citizenship. According to Baatar, this marked a turning point in his life, as he, along with other Duha children, was allowed to enter Mongolian schools, which was the first step toward becoming a 'civilized' (*soyoltoi*) person. Later, Baatar succeeded in obtaining a university degree in engineering and settled in the city of Darhan.

Again and again Baatar stated that as he was a civilized person living in the city, he neither believed in nor needed the spirits. 'I do not even care about walking through the graveyards of the city' he once proclaimed to underpin that he really did not believe in spirits. However, when Baatar went hunting or searching for medicinal herbs in the taiga, he appeared to care quite a lot about the spiritual realm. One day, I followed Baatar on his daily walks to the mountains to search for a medicinal plant called *vanseberüü*, praised in Mongolia for its many medical qualities. Fortunately, Baatar found a *vanseberüü* plant, however, as he leaned down to pluck the plant, he suddenly removed his hand as if hit by an electric shock. He took his jacket off and placed it gently over the plant and picked it up mumbling a prayer. Afterwards, I asked him what had happened and he answered: 'In the taiga Oron Hangai is watching'.

On our way back to the camp, Baatar told me how his father had taught him to hunt as a boy. Though Baatar's father was a stern believer in the socialist revolution, he had taught Baatar that in the taiga one ought to adhere to the 'rules' (*yos*) of Oron Hangai. He told Baatar that even though the 'master spirits' (*ezed*) of the taiga are not visible to the eye; they are the ones, who uphold the balance of nature. Baatar remembered how his father had shown him the signs in nature indicating the presence of a master spirit, and how he had taught him that it was essential to avoid interfering with the master spirits to receive the gifts of prey from the land of Oron Hangai. When I asked Baatar whether he believed in master spirits, he looked puzzled and answered: 'I am not a religious man, but in the taiga the land of Oron Hangai is watching'. He then went on to tell me how Mongolians fear the Duha, because 'their livelihood in the taiga makes them the 'masters of the taiga' (*taigyn ezed*) guarded by Oron Hangai'.

Baatar's turn toward tradition in the taiga is reminiscent of the way the Duha, following the breakdown of socialism in the early 1990s and their recurrent return to their traditional livelihood as hunters and herders in the taiga, have turned towards their shamanic tradition. During the period of socialism, most of my Duha informants had been employed as workers in the 'collective farm' (*negdel*) in the village of Tsaagaannuur and Ulaan Uul, where shamanism only, at least according to my informants' accounts, had been practiced sporadically and in secret. However, with the breakdown of socialism, the collectives closed and many Duha felt they had no choice but to return to their traditional livelihood as hunters and herders in the taiga. Concurrently, many Duha turned towards their shamanic tradition of worshipping the multiple spirits thought to master the taiga; as a result, the Duha came to be perceived by Mongolians in general as the shamanic masters of the taiga.

The intention of recounting this encounter with Baatar is to draw attention to how the contemporary revitalization of Duha shamanism is not merely a question of an indigenous people struggling to uncover and reclaim meaning or belief in the aftermath of the post-socialist political transition. Instead, the example reveals how the resurgence of shamanism among the Duha must be understood in relation to their return to the practices of hunting and herding in a landscape felt to be mastered by spiritual powers. This opens up the question of how the return to the taiga at once subjected the Duha to the rules of the master spirits of the land and positioned them as yet another master of the land.

The overall focus of this thesis is on why the Duha turned toward their shamanic traditions when they returned to the taiga. The thesis will explore how the increased role of shamanism is tied to the return to the taiga in three ways: First, the thesis examines how the shamanic tradition of the Duha evolves from their practical interaction with the land and its beings (animals and spirits), taking place during hunting and herding. Secondly, it investigates why the socialist past, contemporary economic enterprises and spiritual tourism is thought to have increased the flow of dangerous spiritual powers among the Duha. Finally, the thesis will discuss why the Duha have come to be regarded as 'the masters of the taiga' within Mongolia and how this perception influences their legal position within the Mongolian state. These questions lead to a broader level of inquiry: How local shamanic traditions may be entangled in the specific practices of livelihood in certain landscapes, and how local spiritual worlds and

landscapes may be fashioned and enlivened with the historical imaginaries and policies of surrounding communities and states.

The thesis is based on a number of fieldworks, altogether 22 months, carried out among the Duha during 1998-2012. During these fieldworks, I lived with and followed the same Duha interlocutors through shared joys, struggles and hardships of living in the taiga. This gave me a unique insight into their lives. My Duha interlocutors and friends hoped the work would offer new generations knowledge about their history, which they felt was almost absent in official Mongolian historical accounts. Consequently, the thesis aims to accurately encapsulate the voices of those who contributed to the research and to ensure that the rich ethnographic material they granted to the research can contribute to the regional study of shamanism in Inner and Northern Asia. This means that although the thesis is a theoretical contribution to the regional and general study of shamanism and its revitalization, it equally aims to make a comprehensive empirical account of the Duha and their shamanic tradition.

### **The Duha**

Historically, the Duha livelihood as reindeer nomads and hunters in the forested mountain regions in the borderland between Russian Tuva and Mongolia has invoked the fascination, condemnation and fright of surrounding states, neighbouring people and foreign travellers. In 1914, English explorer, Douglas Carruthers, wrote of the Duha:

The Urianhai [Duha], in his simple and yet subtle belief, sees mystery and feels the supernatural on all sides. His attitude is scarcely to be wondered at. The mystery of the sudden, taiga-clothed hills, the dark, silent valleys, and the mountain-crags which toss their heights above the forest, fill him with awe and crowd his thought with dread (Carruthers 1914: 244).

The image of the Duha as a 'timeless other' (Fabian 1983) enmeshed in the savage and mysterious land of the taiga was not restricted to foreign travellers; rather, it appears to have fuelled the imagination of neighbouring people and surrounding states until the present time. In 1759, during the early Qing' reign in the region, a Manchu official described the Duha as 'wild beasts' impossible 'to rule by law', who ought to be governed according to 'the freedom

their nature demands' (Olsson 1915b: 218). A 1983 Mongolian documentary<sup>2</sup> depicts socialism as the means through which the Duha overcame the primitive ages of 'cultural backwardness' and 'shamanic oppression' and became part of the 'light path' and 'bright future' of socialism. Though the documentary depicts the Duha as having become historical subjects by means of socialism, it simultaneously describes the Duha as being the 'other', who have preserved the strength of their ancestors to survive in harsh conditions not even feeling cold when the temperatures drop down to below minus 50 degrees Celsius.

Today there only are around 500 Duha living in the remote Tsagaannuur district in the north western corner of Hövsgöl province in Mongolia. Being a Tuvan minority, their mother tongue is '*duhan*', an 'endangered' Tuvan dialect of Turkish origin (Ragagnin 2006). However, today, the majority of those who are able to speak *duhan* are over the age of 60; those below this age tend to speak Mongolian although they understand *duhan*. Historically, the Duha have been known by a number of names. Earlier sources refer to them as Tagna, Urianghai, Todja and Soyod. Today they call themselves Duha, referring to their language, or 'taiga people' (*taigyn хүмүүс*), pointing toward their homeland in the taiga. Mongolians commonly call them Tsaatan (reindeer herders).

The Duha are a sub-group of the reindeer herding Todja people of the republic of Tuva in Russia (Jernsletten & Klovov 2002), who both are historically related to the Tofa (or Tofalar) of Irkutsk and the Soyot of Buriyatia (Stepanoff 2012, Donehoe 2006). Historically, the pastures and hunting grounds of the Duha were situated in the Sayan Mountains<sup>3</sup> around the Jenisej River in Tuva and within the Hövsgöl province of Mongolia. This area marks the geographical edge between the taiga and the steppe, and is the southernmost area in the world where reindeer herding is practised at the outer limits of the reindeers' natural habitat (Jernsletten & Klovov 2002).

The traditional livelihood of the Duha is a distinctive combination of taiga reindeer nomadism and hunter-gathering (Vainhstein 1980 [1972]; Johnsen et. al 2012); historically, this livelihood has only been practised among a limited number of indigenous people<sup>4</sup> scattered around a huge area of central and southern Siberia, northern China and northern Mongolia

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8ADibUI5dg>

<sup>4</sup> Evenki, Even, Tofa, Soyot, Ul'ta, Todji-Tuva, Ket, Selkup, and Negidel.

(Johnsen et al 2012). Today, only around 200 Duha, approximately 40 households, live as reindeer herders and hunters in the areas of Baruun Taiga (the western taiga) and Zuun Taiga (the eastern taiga), north of Tsagaannuur village in Mongolia. The remaining 300 Duha have either adopted a more settled lifestyle in the district centre of Tsagaannuur or herd steppe-based livestock on the steppe areas bordering the taiga.

Traditionally, the migration of the Duha was coordinated with both their reindeer husbandry and hunter-gathering subsistence. Their choice of pastures depended on the seasonal availability of grasses, wild berries, wild lily bulbs (Latin: *lilium martagon*; Mongolian: *shar tömösh*) and wild game. During autumn and winter, groups of men went on monthly hunting trips in the wild forest and high mountains in search of various wild game; i.e., red deer, musk deer, wild reindeer, elk, roe deer and bear, squirrel, and sable for meat and pelts. Hunting and herding has historically been part and parcel of the shamanic tradition of the Duha, as wild game and healthy herds were thought to be the 'blessing' (*hishig*) of Oron Hangai (the taiga) and its spirits, only bestowed upon those, hunters and herders, who interacted in spiritually proper ways with the land and its spirits.

Up until the 1940s, the Duha appear to have moved rather freely between their traditional pastures in present day Mongolia and those in the Tuva republic in the Russian federation (Johnsen et al 2012; Wheeler 1999). However, the establishment of the Mongolian People's Republic in 1924 led to the formal declaration of the border in 1926/27, dividing the traditional pastures of the Duha into those belonging to Mongolia and those attached to Tuva in Russia. The Mongolian government decided that the Duha, as a people of Tuvan nationality, were supposed to live in Tuva, and began a series of campaigns – lasting from 1927 up until 1951 – to expel them from Mongolia (Farkas 1992: 7-8). In 1944, Tuva was annexed by the Soviet Union, prompting many Duha to flee from Tuva to Mongolia. Older informants recounted how the annexation of Tuva initiated an era of general anxiety. Duha men feared that they would be conscripted to serve in the Soviet army during World War II; further, most Duha were anxious about whether collectivization would deprive them of their livestock. Some elderly people also stated that their parents had fled, as a growing number of 'demonic beings' (*chötgörs*) had begun to haunt their children, who lived in the newly established border schools in Tuva. Concurrently (between the 1940s and early 1950s), the Mongolian government intensified the campaign of expelling the Duha from Mongolian land. This forced

many Duha to hide in the forest, where they struggled to survive on hunting, always on the run from patrolling state officials.

In 1954, the Mongolian People's Republic <sup>5</sup> finally agreed to grant the Duha, until now living as stateless forest dwellers, with citizenship. This coincided with the government's campaign, initiated in 1954, for 'full' collectivization of the country, which by the end of 1959 had ensured the collectivization of most of the country's livestock and integrated the whole herding population in *negdel* collectives (Bawden 1960: 261). Much in the same vein as the Mongolian documentary quoted above, many of the older informants recollected this era as a move from 'being savage people' to becoming 'civilized and cultured' people. Laughing, many of my informants substantiated this with accounts of how they had arrived to the newly established school on the steppe from the taiga dressed in fur and skin. They recounted how the teachers had granted them new and fancy clothes made of modern materials.

As other citizens in Mongolia, the Duha became subject to collectivization and relocated several times, first to the villages of Hanh and Renchinlhumbe and later to the villages of Ulaan Uul and Tsagaannuur where they worked in the local *negdels* (collectives) in the lumber or fishing industries or as state herders or hunters. The integration of the Duha as citizens in the Mongolian People's Republic in 1954 thus marked a transition from their traditional life as hunters in the taiga with limited knowledge of, and access to, the surrounding nation states, to employees and citizens in the *modern* socialist state with *free* access to various consumption and consumer goods, medical supplies and education. Their new citizenship also marked a change in the processes of breadwinning; being a worker automatically released a salary, whereas obtaining the blessings (wild game and healthy herds) of Oron Hangai was seen as a much more uncertain affair depending on the hunter's ability to interact properly with the labile spiritual powers of the land. However, it also meant that their traditional pastures and hunting territories were declared state properties, and their rights to land and game resources were co-opted by the state.

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<sup>5</sup> I have not been able to find any sources explaining why the Mongolian government decided to grant the Duha citizenship in 1954. Yet, according to Baatar, his family had already received Mongolian citizenship in the late 1940s due to his father being actively involved in the Communist Party. His father had also convinced the government that the Duha should have Mongolian citizenship; according to Baatar he 'ensured the citizenship of the fifty Duha in Baruun Taiga and the 45 Duha in Zuun Taiga'.



With the disintegration of the Soviet economy in the late 1980s, economic and political unrest spread to Mongolia, giving rise to the Democratic Revolution in 1990. This compelled the Mongolian government to introduce political democratization along with economic 'shock therapy' that resulted in the liberalization of state-enterprises and a reduction in state-subsidies (Humphrey 2002; Sneath 2002). A general economic instability arose within the country, which spread to the *negdels* in Tsagaannuur and Ulaan Uul; this resulted in their closure in the late 1990s (Wheeler 1999). Without work, many Duha, some of whom had lived for 30 years in the villages, decided to leave their settled life and move to the taiga joining other families who had lived as state herders during socialism. During the first couple of years, the reindeer remained state property and the Duha, who had moved back to the taiga, received a salary from the local government for herding the reindeer. However, in 1995, the government decided to privatize the reindeer and simply gave the Duha herders the reindeer they had been herding for the state.

Throughout the 1990s, the number of reindeer declined dramatically, as many Duha, in an effort to make a living, harvested the velvet antlers of the deer to sell to Chinese merchants; this had a detrimental effect on the health of the herd. Together with inbreeding, this led to a serious decline in the number of reindeer, making the Duha increasingly reliant on hunting for survival. Living in the taiga without salaries or other state support and needing to survive on the decreasing herds and the uncertain hunt, life became a daily struggle for subsistence. Concurrently, the national hunting law became stricter and many Duha felt that their livelihood had been deemed illegal. Yet, most Duha men continued to hunt, because they thought they had no other choice other than to rely on poaching for survival.

### **Aim and Argument**

During the last two decades, the Duha, as other indigenous people in Inner and Northern Asia, have increasingly turned toward their shamanic traditions. Scholarly studies on the 'revival of' or 'turn towards' shamanism in Inner Asia have tended to view shamanism after socialism through the lens of post-socialism, as an effort to reconstruct identity and meaning felt to have been lost following the decline of socialism (Buyandelgeriyn 2007: 142; Buyandelger 2013; Lindquist 2005; 2011; Shinamura 2004; Vitebsky 1995), or as 'an ontology of transition' actualising the labile and uncertain character of post-socialist society (Pedersen 2011: 35).

Some of these studies view the dissolution of socialism as effectuating a rupture in ideology and meaning, which caused people to turn towards their traditional religion in an effort to rebuild their entire meaningful worlds (Lindquist 2005; 2011; Buyandelgeriyin 2007; Shinamura 2004, Verdery 1999). Other studies view the socialist transition as ‘an ontological meltdown’ (Pedersen 2011: 8) effectuated by the dissolution of the institution of the socialist welfare state formerly perceived as permanent and immutable (Yurchak 2006). In this case, the re-emergence of shamanism is seen as materializing and instantiating the ‘cosmological turmoil’ of democracy, transition and the age of the market (Pedersen 2011: 39). Though these scholarly works contain many valuable insights, the Duha return to shamanism should not be viewed primarily as an indigenous reaction to the political transition, but more as a consequence of the Duha returning to the landscape and practices (hunting and herding) in which their spirits ‘subsists’ (Ingold 2000: 162; Willerslev 2004: 407).

This does not mean that I view Duha shamanism as an ahistorical local ontology or tradition. Rather, this thesis shows how Duha shamanism has changed historically in response to the policies and imaginaries of surrounding states and power-holders, and how Duha shamanism has given rise to certain ways of perceiving social or political changes and events (Buyandelgeriyin 2007; Buyandelger 2013; Hangartner 2011; Humphrey 1997 [1995]; 1996; 1996 [1994]; Taussig 1987; Pedersen 2011). As such, this thesis views the post-socialist transition as one of several components (the rise and fall of the Qing’ empire, socialism, the arrival of illegal gold-miners and spiritual tourists, the tightening of the hunting law), which historically has left, and continues to leave, its ambiguous marks on Duha shamanism. It thus contributes to the regional and general study on indigenous shamanism as a historical phenomenon tied to broader political dynamics and historical processes (Humphrey 1997 [1995]; 1996; Hangartner 2011; Taussig 1987; Thomas & Humphrey 1996; Atkinson 1987). Caroline Humphrey (1996) and Judith Hangartner (2011) have excellently shown how Mongolian shamanism as a ‘heterogeneous discourse’ (Hangartner 2011: 13; Humphrey 1996: 192) historically has responded to – and been fashioned by – the imaginaries and policies of surrounding power holders and states. Though this study expands on the work of the above mentioned scholars, it differs as it shows how Duha shamanism is enacted through a particular subsistence form and perception of the land, which historically has been perpetuated or restrained by the policies of surrounding states and fashioned as a shamanic

one by the imaginaries and the interventions of surrounding states and people. It argues that the Duha return to the taiga was a return to tradition, because it was a return to the land and practices in which Duha shamanism subsists as a local and historic tradition.

The thesis seeks to contribute to the wider anthropological debate on the invention, reinvention or inventiveness of tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983; Keesing & Tonkinson 1982; Sahlins 1999). In their classic study, 'The Invention of Tradition', historian, Eric Hobsbawm (1983) famously argued that many seemingly ancient traditions indeed are of a more recent date and have evolved as 'responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations' (1983: 2). In the 1980s and early 1990s, several anthropologists (Keesing & Tonkinson 1982; Linnekin 1992) argued that most indigenous traditions formerly viewed as ancient, were indeed 'reinvented traditions' constructed to make sense of, or deal with, colonization or modernization.

In line with this, the influential scholarly works of Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff (1999) titled 'Occult Economies' and the works of Peter Geschiere (1997) titled 'The Modernity of Witchcraft' show how the rise in indigenous occult phenomena may be viewed as inherently modern phenomena signifying 'politico-economic changes' (Geschiere 1997: 3) and the 'mysterious mechanism of the market' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1999: 284). In contrast to the Comaroffs and Geschiere, Marshal Sahlins (1999) has suggested that we examine the 'indigenization of modernity' (1999: 410) substituting 'invention of tradition' with the 'inventiveness of tradition' to uncover how new traditions are framed by prevailing 'cultural structures'. Sahlins' approach shares similarities with Pedersen's suggestion of Darhad shamanism being an 'ontology of transition', as both illustrate how the political undertakes the form of the local (cultural structure or ontology) and thus emphasizes the continuity of local forms. In a similar vein, Harri Englund and James Leach (2000) have argued that scholars working within the framework of the modernity of tradition are biased by a 'meta-narrative of modernity', making cultural diversity mere illustrations of particular modernities (2000: 228) and undermining ethnographic reflectivity crucial for understanding local contexts of beliefs and practices.

However, Joel Robbins (2005) has argued that continuity thinking has its limitations, as it tends not to fully recognise<sup>6</sup> the historical transformation which may ‘rupture the unfolding of processes of cultural continuity-in-change’ (2005: 3). According to Robbins, this is the case with Christian conversion which tends to instantiate a radical rupture with people’s past due to the ‘salvational necessity’ of ‘the creation of ruptures between the past, present and future’ inherent in the Christian ‘model’ (2007: 10-11). Turning to the Duha, their integration as citizens in the socialist state indeed did mark a rupture in time. This is evident in socialist ideology of those days, which depicted the Duha’s integration as workers in the socialist state as a leap from timeless primitivism to modern socialism, which was heading to stateless communism. This image was partly incorporated by the Duha themselves, who often described their integration as citizens and workers in the Mongolian People’s Republic as having instantiated a radical shift from *savagery* to *civilization*.

However, while it is possible to discern a shift away from shamanism during socialism, and shift toward shamanism after the dissolution of socialism, this shift is not merely tied to the rise and fall of political content (ideologies) or forms (infrastructures), or the pure tenacity of cultural structures. Rather, this thesis demonstrates that Duha shamanism only became less prevalent among the Duha who were settled as workers on the steppe, while it prevailed in the lives of those who were employed as state herders or hunters in the taiga during socialism. It argues that Duha shamanism as a local tradition and ontology is tied to the Duha livelihood of hunting and herding in a specific landscape conditioned and shaped by the policies and imaginaries of states and surrounding people. However, it also shows how the rupture in time felt to have arisen from socialism has left its impact on contemporary shamanism. This is evident in the way many Duha – especially those who were settled during socialism – feel they have become estranged from their ancestral spirits, as socialism separated them from their ancestral land, spirits and traditions.

This thesis first argues that Duha shamanism has waxed and waned throughout history as state policies have driven the Duha away from, and then back to, the livelihood of hunting and herding in the taiga. Secondly, it shows how historical imaginaries and policies have played a crucial role in constituting the taiga as a wilderness mastered by its savage, yet pristine non-

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<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, Robbins (2005) acknowledges and takes his point of departure in Sahlins thesis on how the experience of ‘humiliation’ could evoke a radical rupture in cultural structures leading to radical change.

humans (spirits and animals) and humans (Duha). This research thus seeks to contribute a new angle both to the regional study of the revitalization of shamanism in Inner and Northern Asia and to the general debate in anthropology on the invention/inventiveness of tradition. Whereas many scholars have analysed the revival of indigenous traditions within the framework of political and ideological transition or culturalism, this thesis argues that it is important to examine how the revival of tradition is tied to the more phenomenological aspects of people's actual livelihood in landscapes animated with spiritual forces and historical events and imaginaries.

### **Analytical Framework**

In order to explore this issue, an analytical framework is established which oscillates between examining how the Duha shamanic tradition is embedded in local practices, ontologies and landscapes and how it has been, and continues to be, shaped by wider historical, political and social imaginaries, interventions and processes.

Initially, this research viewed Duha shamanism as an ontology, a local theory on what exists, (Pedersen 2011: 35, n19), enacted through the shamanic artefacts and 'sacrificial places' (*tahij shütdeg gazar*) of the Duha (Kristensen 2007; 2013). The ontological perspective aided in depicting some central animistic and totemistic forms shaping Duha shamanic thoughts on the relationship between humans and non-humans. Yet, working through the empirical findings, it became evident that Duha shamanism is not primarily a theory on what exists, an ontology, but more a set of 'traditions' (*yos*) aimed at controlling labile spiritual forces felt to touch upon human life in certain landscapes. It is, however, through such traditions - enacted through the practical life in the taiga - that the taiga and the Duha comes to exist (ontologically) as ambiguous and erratic shamanic powers. Consequently, in order to understand Duha shamanism, it needs to be treated as a tradition embedded in the practices of a certain livelihood in a specific landscape.

This opens up the question of how we may conceptualize the shamanic tradition of the Duha analytically. Working on a different area of study, Talal Asad (1986) has criticised the essentialist definition of tradition, which frames much scholarly work on Islam, as it tends to portray Islam as a fixed and ahistorical substance. A similar critique can be applied to many anthropological studies, including some of my own, working within the essentialist

framework of ontology and perspectivism, which tend to depict shamanism as an ahistorical form (Kristensen 2004; 2007; Pedersen 2007; 2011; Viveiros de Castro 1998; 2004; 2007). Assad (1986: 14) has argued that Islam is a 'discursive tradition' founded on 'Muslim discourse' that addresses conceptions of the Islamic past and future, with reference to a particular Islamic practice in the present. Duha shamanism, being an oral tradition, is obviously not a 'discursive tradition' founded on texts. However, it can be argued that Duha shamanism, much like Islam, is a historic tradition; yet, in contrast to Islam, it is not founded on discourse, but enacted through certain kinds of livelihood in a specific landscape. Inspired by Keith Basso (1996), this thesis argues that the taiga and its places are animated by stories of the past, which continues to animate the thought and feelings of human hunters and herders. So, while this thesis drawing on Tim Ingold (2000) argues that the Duha practices of hunting and herding gives rise to particular shamanic ways of viewing the relation between humans and non-humans, it shows how the animistic and totemic forms (Pedersen 2001) of these relations are boosted, and moulded, by historical imaginaries and policies of surrounding states and people (Taussig 1987; Humphrey 1996 [1995]; 1997 [1995]). The thesis thus argues that a sharp distinction between the historical and the ontological should not be made with regards to Duha shamanism, as the Duha ontology is particular historical.

This thesis aims to demonstrate how the return to Duha shamanism, though a deeply local phenomena tied to the practices of hunting and herding, is conditioned and enlivened with the historical policies and imaginaries of states and the interventions of visitors (tourists, miners and state-officials). In the following section, the two overall theoretical frameworks (the shamanic landscape and the historical landscape), which structure this thesis, will be discussed.

### **The Shamanic Landscape**

Duha shamanism is a deeply local phenomenon closely intertwined with people's awareness of, and interaction with, their surrounding landscape (Vitebsky 1995; Halemba 2006; Humphrey 1996; Ingold 2000; Jordan 2001; 2003; 2010). Though reflections on local perceptions on landscape appear sporadically in classical anthropological works (Malinowski 2002 [1922], Keesing 1982; Munn 1973), it was not until the 1980s that landscape became an actual focus of anthropological studies. The publication of the multidisciplinary volume 'The

Iconography of Landscape' edited by geographers, Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove, in 1988 initiated a new debate on landscape in anthropology. In the introduction, Daniels and Cosgrove defined landscape, inspired by Clifford Geertz' (1976) conceptualization of culture, as 'a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing or symbolising surroundings' (Daniels & Cosgrove 1988:1). This definition has since been widely contested by anthropologists, who have criticized it for being 'essentially static' and ignoring the more everyday phenomenological aspects of the landscape (Hirsch 1997 [1995]: 5; Gow 1997 [1995]; Ingold 2000).

Erich Hirsch (1997 [1995]) has argued that the problem with the Daniels and Cosgrove's landscape definition is that it only accounts for the representational aspects of the landscape and ignores how landscape is embedded in everyday social life (Hirsch 1997 [1995]: 5). Instead, Hirsch famously suggested that we view landscape as a 'cultural process' constituted in the relationship between the more phenomenological 'foreground actuality' and the representational 'background potentiality' of social landscapes (Hirsch 1997 [1995]: 4-5). Turning to the Duha, the analytical merit of this definition is limited, as the Duha landscape is an animistic one, where the 'physical foreground reality' of the land collapses with its more 'spiritual background reality' (Pedersen 2011 [2009]: 137-38). To understand the Duha perception of the taiga we hence need to search into how the Duha sense the spirits through their practical involvement with the physical land and hence how the physical foreground and spiritual background is experienced as a totality. In order to do this, a departure from the more phenomenological studies on 'senses of place' (Basso 1992; 1996; Feld & Basso 1996) and local 'perceptions of the environment' (Ingold 2000; Willerslev 2010) is required.

As Tim Ingold (1999; 2000) has proposed, local landscapes come into being in the 'process of dwelling', referring to the fact that the 'forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their surroundings' (2000: 186). This means that in order to understand local landscapes, we need to reject the divisions between a foreground and background *landscape* (inner and outer world, nature and culture) and instead examine how the practical livelihood of the people of our studies gives rise to particular ways of perceiving the environment (Ingold 2000: 190). This thesis argues that it is indeed through

the practical livelihood in the taiga that the shamanic traditions and ontology of the Duha come into being.

The Duha repeatedly stated that within the taiga, Oron Hangai 'watches over' (*harj handaj*) the Duha, granting protection and food to those who adhere to the traditions of Oron Hangai regarding the proper interaction with places and beings (spirits and animals). Through living in the taiga and complying with its traditions, the Duha are said to become the 'souls [kin] of Oron Hangai' (*hangain süns*) and the 'masters of the taiga' worthy of the favours (wild game, healthy herds) and the protection of Oron Hangai. On the contrary if the human hunter or herder violates these traditions, Oron Hangai is said to see the human hunter as a 'stranger' (*tanihgüi hün*), who will be subject to the violent powers of Oron Hangai. Hence, we are dealing with a perception of the environment where the landscape is thought to gaze upon humans and their actions to settle their being, as kin or stranger, masters within its reign. For the Duha the gains of the hunter and health of herd is thus felt to depend on whether the hunter and herder interact with the land and its beings according to the traditions of Oron Hangai.

Oron Hangai refers to a certain 'cosmic economy' (Bird-David 1992: 28), where all beings (humans, animals and spirits) participate in a 'social field of interaction' (Willerslev 2010: 50) defined by local notions of kinship and mastery enacted through the practical livelihood in the taiga. This thesis argues that the return to the taiga relocated the Duha in the cosmic economy of the taiga, where they had to interact properly with its spirits to become the masters of the taiga and receive its gifts of prey and protection. Hence, it is proposed that the revival of Duha shamanism was set forth by the Duha returning to a subsistence lifestyle, where their shamanic tradition and ontology exists.

The Duha practice of hunting and herding comprises what Ingold has termed 'task-scape', which refers to various related activities people carry out as they move through the landscape (2000: 195). It is, as Ingold argues, these tasks that shape people's perception of the environment. Ingold has likened the task-scape of hunter-gatherers to that of 'orchestral music' and proposed that hunters resonate with the multiple 'rhythms' of the land and its beings as they journey through it (Ingold 2000: 325). Though this thesis is highly indebted to Tim Ingold's phenomenological studies of hunter-gathers, I find that Ingold's understanding of



hunter-gatherers' perception of the environment as being harmonic somehow romanticizes and simplifies the practices and perceptions of hunter-gatherers. When the Duha returned to the taiga, their challenge was not simply to integrate into its innate rhythms, which would presuppose an assured and confident sense of the land and its intangible spiritual dimension, i.e., the capability to recognize its rhythms. Rather, the Duha perceive their land and its beings as inherently erratic, as spirits are capable of changing characters and locations (Pedersen 2011). Thus, their challenge was to be aware of the dissonance within the land, hinting at the presence and character of spiritual entities. Among the Duha – as Rane Willerslev (2004) also has described among the Siberian Yukaghir - it is when a hunter encounters an odd looking animal, loses his hunting luck or is caught in a sudden snowstorm that he becomes aware of the presence of a spirit (Willerslev 2004). The task of the Duha hunter is thus to continually attune his own movement and actions in the land to such experiences of dissonance. The Duha livelihood in the taiga propels the Duha to continually experiment with tradition - how to interact properly with the land and its beings – which gives rise to a highly erratic ontology.

### **The Historical Landscape**

The Duha return to their shamanic tradition was thus triggered by their return to subsistence hunting and herding in the taiga. As such, their shamanic tradition subsists in subsistence forms. This does not mean, however, that we are only dealing with a return to an ahistorical local tradition or ontology. Instead, the landscape of the taiga, the Duha and their livelihood as hunters and herders has historically been – and continues to be – actualized and fashioned as wild and shamanic by the policies and imaginaries of surrounding states and people. Hence, this thesis argues that the Duha return to the taiga was a return to shamanism, as it was a return to the livelihood and land in which historical shamanic imaginaries – emerging from within and outside the Duha world – exists.

Drawing on the works of Caroline Humphrey (1996 [1994]; 1996), it is argued that Duha shamanism historically has been constituted in relation to other kinds of power, such as those of surrounding states. This thesis shows how the administrative policies of surrounding states has consolidated the Duha in patrilineal clans and appointed Duha hunters as masters of the taiga. This has granted the Duha hunters and the very livelihood of hunting and herding 'chiefly powers' (Humphrey 1997 [1995]) to master their land and 'shamanic powers' to

direct the spiritual powers of the land (Humphrey 1997 [1995]); i.e. to either serve or challenge the power of the state. At the same time, it has left its traces on the Duha and surrounding people's perception of the Duha land. For most Mongolians, the landscape of the taiga is experienced as an uncanny shamanic land *ruled* by the Duha and their spirits. We are here dealing with a fusion of what Humphrey has termed the 'shamanist landscape' and 'chiefly landscape' pointing toward two modes of being in the land, which are simultaneously possible for any Mongolian group (Humphrey 1997 [1995]: 135). In general terms, the 'shamanic landscape' is felt to be alive with a variety of personalized and unruly spirits, from whom shamans summon their powers in order to challenge the powers of other power holders (shamans, Buddhist clergy and states). In contrast, in the 'chiefly landscape', the land is experienced as enlivened with essentially similar spirit masters, which exemplify and confirm the powers of chiefs, patrilineages or military units (Humphrey 1997 [1995]).

Mongolians commonly perceive the taiga as a 'shamanic landscape', as it is felt to be enlivened with intangible and uncanny shamanic spirits of the Duha. Yet, they view it as a 'chiefly landscape', as it is perceived to be ruled by the Duha, who are all thought to embody similar shamanic powers, which can master the taiga. The thesis shows how these imaginaries have contributed to constitute the taiga as a kind of spiritual 'sovereignty' (Hansen & Stepputat 2009; Humphrey 2004) within Mongolia. It reveals how Mongolians upon entering the taiga commonly efforts to submit to the perceived shamanic rules of the taiga in an effort not to be punished by the violent powers of the taiga and its Duha masters.

This thesis demonstrates how Duha hunters have become the shamanic masters of the taiga by 'mimicking' (Taussig 1993) past and present imaginaries of the Duha as unruly shamanic masters of the taiga. However, this mimetic renewal of shamanism also backfire, as while it actualize the shamanic powers of the Duha, it also actualize their 'tragic spirits' (Buyandelger 2013), who people believe have become estranged from their kin due to socialist repression. This gives rise to a perceived 'absence of knowledge' (Højer 2009) on how to master these spirits and how to remain the masters of the taiga. This uncertainty with regards to the spiritual realm is boosted by the arrival of gold-mining and shamanic tourism in the 2010s, which is felt to contaminate the Duha relationship with their spirits and land. Therefore, it is proposed the Duha return to the taiga has embedded them in a kind of 'history of sorcery' (Taussig 1984), which render them masters of the taiga and strangers to the taiga, as

historical forces had left – and continued to leave - ambiguous marks on the Duha relationship with their land and spirits.

### **Outline of the Thesis**

The thesis begins with a methodological chapter (Chapter 1), which explains how the author came to discover that the Duha return to shamanism was fashioned by their return to the taiga. This chapter discusses my fieldwork experience, where I came to be perceived not merely as an anthropologist, but also a friend, daughter and diviner, and how that influenced the findings of the research. This chapter shows how I became aware that both the Duha and Mongolians turned more attentive to the spiritual dimension of the land, while traveling with them from the steppe into the taiga. The chapter describes how I came to understand how the Duha return to the taiga has instantiated specific spiritual challenges, such as how to deal with related yet estranged spirits, when I involuntarily became a diviner among the Duha. The chapter discusses how background data produced from participant observation and divination was used to elaborate on interviews in order to reach a more profound understanding of Duha shamanism.

Chapter 2 places the overall argument in a historical context, by showing how the Duha have turned towards shamanism during periods where hunting and herding played a focal role in their livelihood, while the opposite occurred when hunting and herding played a more minor role in their lives. It shows how the administrative policies of the Qing Empire and the socialist state have historically strengthened and weakened Duha shamanism, as these policies shifted between facilitating and limiting the Duha livelihood of hunting and herding. It argues that past state imaginaries and policies on the Duha have constituted the taiga as a pristine, yet unruly wilderness and the Duha hunters as its shamanic masters. Additionally, it examines how the policies of past states have boosted and shaped the powers of the ancestral spirits of the Duha, which continue to linger on the land influencing human trespassers.

Chapter 3 shows how the Duha return to the taiga instigated a return to kinship. It argues that as the Duha took up their traditional livelihood of hunting and herding, they engaged in practices in which their ancestral spirits were experienced and enacted, and hence drew forward the spiritual realm. However, as many Duha had given up their worship of spirits during socialism, the decrease in the number of reindeer and their bad luck with regards to

hunting was perceived as a sign of contemporary kin having turned estranged to their ancestral spirits. In an attempt ensure the hunt and the wellbeing of the herd, many Duha tried to renew their ancestral bonds to their spirits, e.g., by worshipping the sacrificial places of their ancestral clans and lineages.

Chapter 3 thus demonstrates how the Duha sensed, renewed and controlled their kinship ties to ancestral spirits of clans and lineage through practical and ritual engagement with the land and its sacrificial places. Chapter 4 elaborates on chapter 3 and shows how kinship ties also are sensed, renewed and controlled through acts of fastening and removing things from shamanic artefacts. It then demonstrates how their lifestyle in the taiga gave rise to a perceived loss of traditional knowledge on how to master the spiritual realm and how it has incited the Duha to *gamble* with tradition in an effort to regain control over their ancestral spirits.

Chapters 5 to 8 explore how contemporary interventions in the Duha land and livelihood, such as illegal mining, spiritual tourism and stricter hunting laws, have shaped their return to shamanism. Chapter 5 examines how illegal mining in the taiga has left its violent marks on Duha land and lives, as it is thought to arouse demonic forces, which has created new uncertainties. The Duha view the escalation of murder and violations, which followed illegal mining, as the materialization of demonic forces brought into being by both kin' and non-kin' members' improper intervention with the land and its spirits. Departing from rumours with regards to demons, this chapter shows how contemporary misfortunes conduct their own kind of sorcery, as they invoke concealed memories of past atrocities conducted within the kin, which has pervaded kin units with internal suspicion.

Chapters 6 and 7 examine how stricter hunting laws has furthered the Duha return to shamanism, as it has given new strength to the historic images of the Duha as the unruly shamanic masters of the taiga. Chapter 6 offers a historical analysis of how the policies and imaginaries of past states have positioned the Duha and their land in a state of exception within the state and its laws. It is argued that the historical images of the Duha and their land being beyond the law was strengthened by the Duha return to the taiga, resulting in the evolution of the taiga as a kind of sovereign power capable of determining the conduct of Mongolian officials without external legal constraints. Chapter 7 shows how the encounter

between Duha criminal offenders and various Mongolian officials represents an encounter between the powers of state legislation and those of shamanic spirits. It examines how the Duha encounter with state officials involves mimesis, where the Duha imitate the Mongolian image of themselves as shamanic masters of the taiga. It argues that while these mimetic acts empower the Duha and their land with shamanic powers to challenge state law, they also make the hunters vulnerable to the powers they imitate.

Chapter 8 concerns the tension between Duha shamanism and global tourism, in particular how visiting tourists' image of, and engagement with, Duha shamanism appears to have increased the flow of dangerous spiritual powers among the Duha. It shows how this has promoted the Duha return to shamanism.

## Chapter 1

### My Return to the Forest

Between 1999 and 2000, I lived for ten months among the Duha in the northern Mongolian taiga conducting fieldwork for my master's thesis on Duha shamanism. Most of the time, I lived and migrated with Solnoi and Aichurek, an elder Duha couple, and their group of reindeer nomads and hunters in Zuun Taiga. I participated in the everyday life of the taiga: I helped Aichurek to cook and herd the reindeer, and went hunting with Solnoi. Gradually, I became absorbed in the camp and came to be regarded as a kind of daughter of Solnoi and Aichurek. Traversing the land with the Duha, they guided me on how to sense and interact with its spiritual beings. Slowly I came to experience the land anew and found myself capable of sensing the presence of certain spiritual entities within the land through the minor changes in the behaviour of my horse, the odd appearance of a wild game or certain changes in the weather. During a winter night in 2000, I once saw a spiritual being, which made my informants convinced that I was some kind of shaman capable of summoning spirits. This incident came – as we will see – to change my position in the field from that of merely an anthropologist to also include that of the shaman.

Ten years later, in 2010, I returned to the Duha with my husband and two daughters (aged one and eight) to develop a pilot-study on Duha shamanism in the hope of receiving a grant to carry out my doctoral research on their shamanic traditions. We arrived at the village of Tsagaannuur in early June 2010, where we met with Solnoi and Aichurek. As they were both in their sixties, they lived every winter in the village and only moved to the taiga during the summer. Our reunion was touching. Both Solnoi and Aichurek cried when they saw my family and me. They greeted me as their returning daughter, my husband as their son in law and my children as their grandchildren. Learning that I would be conducting fieldwork in Zuun Taiga, they offered us to migrate with them the following week; they had plans to travel to their summer camp in the taiga. They invited us to live as their extended family in the taiga and borrowed us all the necessary materials (canvas, stove, cooking pot etc.) for a household in

the taiga. As they did not have enough riding horses for us, they suggested that we buy four horses.

Solnoi said that we certainly ought to buy horses from the taiga, which I presumed was because he wanted us to make the purchase through his relatives. I told Solnoi that it would be time consuming to buy horses from the taiga, knowing that it would take days for Solnoi's relatives to bring the horses to Tsagaannuur. Also, I wanted to ensure that the horses had a calm temper, as we had to ride with the children; this would be easier to check if we bought the horses from one of the Darhad families on the nearby steppe. Solnoi agreed and accompanied me to the steppe to search for horses. Luckily we managed to buy four horses, all of which seemed to have a calm temper, from one of the Darhad families.

A couple of days later, it was time to travel to the taiga. When we left Tsagaannuur with Solnoi and Aichurek the sun was shining over the Shishged River, which twisted and turned like a blue snake through the yellow colours of the almost barren steppe land. After eight hours of riding we arrived in Hogrog, a steppe area populated with Darhad cattle nomads, where we would camp for the night. In the evening, I told Solnoi how much I was looking forward to showing my husband and children the taiga. He nodded with a smile and said 'tomorrow we will ride into the taiga'.

The next morning, several of my Darhad friends helped us pack the horses. However, it turned out to be rather difficult. Each time they tried to pack one of the horses, it kicked and bit them; they decided to go to the neighbouring camps in order to ask for help. Eventually some men arrived in order to help us; with the assistance of seven local men, we succeeded, to our great relief, in packing the horse. Yet, our relief was brief, as the horse was heavily disturbed by its load and soon managed to break free from its ties. In the next moment, the horse reared aggressively to free itself of its load. Our sacks with flour and pieces of mutton flew off its back, and scatted across the ground. I stood paralyzed, wondering whether it was a good idea to ride into the taiga on these horses with my young daughters. Our packhorse galloped toward the steppes, returning to the area where we had bought it. Then one of the Darhad men said: 'Your packhorse is a steppe horse. That is why it is afraid to ride into the taiga. You should have bought taiga horses [horses bred in the taiga by the Duha] as they do not fear the taiga'.

The reason for bringing up this particular event is that it reveals how it was through traversing the land with my informants that I became aware of how they experience the taiga and the steppe, as places of different powers. It is thus an apt example of how much data for this thesis has been collected from classical participant observation. The event shows how animals are thought to embody the powers of their specific places of living. Through living in the taiga also I, like the taiga horses and the Duha, came to be perceived as embodying some of the shamanic powers of the taiga. A position which frustrated and puzzled me, yet, also gave me the opportunity to 'experience participation' (Turner 1992), which gave me insights into aspects of Duha shamanism, which I might otherwise have not obtained.

The aim of this chapter is to show how this thesis is the result of my recurrent returns to the taiga and the ways I became absorbed in the everyday practices and hardship of life in the taiga and involuntarily came to be regarded as a kind of shaman and diviner. It shows how I came to understand how Duha shamanism is embedded in the practical livelihood of the Duha through conducting classical participant observation with the same group of people over long periods of time. It then moves on to show how it was through more experiential methods of 'experienced participation' (Turner 1992; Ots 1994) that I came to understand how the Duha feel their return to the taiga has entangled them with particular and kindred, yet, ambiguous and estranged spiritual powers. The thesis argues that anthropologists may reach a more profound understanding of certain sensuous, epistemological and ontological aspects of local traditions by allowing ourselves to become our informant's apprentices, 'experience participation' and be involved in local processes of 'enskillment' (Grasseni 2008; Ingold 2000; Okeley 1994).

### **Fieldwork and Methodology**

This thesis is based on ten months of fieldwork in Mongolia during the early 2010s including: one month of pilot-fieldwork in 2010, six months of fieldwork in 2011 and three months of fieldwork in 2012. Approximately six of these months were spent among the Duha in the Zuun Taiga, one month among the Duha in Baruun Taiga, one month in the village of Tsagaannuur and one month in Ulaanbaatar.

Methodologically, the results of the study are based on participant observation (DeWalt & DeWalt 2010; Hammersley and Atkinson 1984) of life in the taiga. I participated in the



everyday life of the camp, herding and milking reindeer, cooking, and visiting other households, drinking tea and chatting with people - a major preoccupation of every adult in the camp. I took part in most of the shamanic rituals undertaken by two shamans in the camp. Moreover, I joined the camp during several migrations, travelled with Solnoi and his companions on a couple of hunting trips, and accompanied Solnoi and other Duha on several visits to sacrificial places. It was through participating in and observing life in the taiga that I understood that the Duha experience spirits as present in the land and in their life through the interface between concrete events in human life and that of the land. Moreover, I involuntarily came to use 'divination as a fieldwork method' (Swancut 2012: 41), which gave me access to people's everyday concerns. It also helped me to understand how the Duha perceive much contemporary misfortunes as tied to the historical estrangement of human kin from ancestral spirits and places. Most evenings I wrote down my observations, which helped to develop new questions for conversations and formal interviews with my interlocutors.

Each day I conducted several informal interviews with members of the camp, as we visited each other's households. I wrote these down from memory every evening. Most days I also conducted at least one recorded interview, where I would often delve into issues I had discovered during the divination or while participating in the everyday life in the camp. Altogether, I conducted 152 structured and semi-structured interviews (Wengraf 2001) with Duha informants and 48 interviews with tourists, officials, Mongolians and neighbouring Darhad people. As my Mongolian language skills are intermediate, I could quite easily communicate with my informants during everyday life and informal interviews. However, in order to ease the flow of communication, Chimeg (a young Mongolian woman, who lived in our camp with her Duha boyfriend) aided me as an interpreter (Mongolian - English) for approximately half of my formal interviews. A local Duha teacher, Otgonbayar, who lived in Ulaanbaatar, transcribed all the interviews. This was of great help, as she also aided me in understanding the content of local terms; she also gave her perspective on questions raised in interviews conducted with her close kin.

I used mapping (Powell 2010) to reach an overview of the sacrificial places of the Duha (appendix A). I asked those of my interlocutors whom I knew understood and enjoyed reading maps to name the locations of all the sacrificial places they knew of. This provided me with important data on the history and movement of Duha kin units, as many of my informants

recalled the historical movement of the Duha and stories of their kin while scrutinizing the map, without me asking any questions on this matter. Additionally, I used genealogical diagramming of kinship relations (appendix B) to reach an understanding of the history and composition of clans and lineages. Many of my interlocutors offered to help me create and elaborate on these diagrams; they would often sit together to scrutinize the diagrams, while discussing the stories of certain kin units. Mapping and genealogical diagramming thus gave me valuable insight into how Duha history and kinship is enacted and remembered through the land.

The thesis also draws on my earlier fieldwork in the region, i.e., fourteen months of fieldwork conducted between 1998 and 2005 among the Duha, and ten months of fieldwork conducted during 1999-2006 among the Tuvans in Russia. During my initial fieldwork among the Duha, I studied how shamanic knowledge is produced through the land. This became the focus of my master's thesis titled 'The Living Landscape of knowledge' (Kristensen: 2004). Furthermore, I used data from this fieldwork for my article published in the journal 'Inner Asia' titled 'The Human Perspective' (2007), which focused on perspectivist (Viveiros de Castro 1998; 2007) notions among the Duha. My former fieldwork and findings among the Duha proved to be very useful. It provided me with background knowledge on the Duha and their shamanic tradition and granted me a network in the field, which aided me to reach new understandings – and challenge some of my earlier assumptions - on Duha shamanism.

During my initial fieldwork among the Duha in 1999, I predominately lived with Solnoi and Aichurek and their two young daughters in a camp in Zuun Taiga and partly with a younger couple, Chuluujii and Bazar, and their three children in a camp in Baruun Taiga. During my fieldwork in 2010, 2011 and 2012, my family and I lived with Solnoi and Aichurek. Additionally, I stayed with Chuluujii and Bazar in Baruun Taiga, for one month in 2011.

In Solnoi and Aichurek's household in Zuun Taiga I and my husband participated in the daily chores of the family. The division of daily chores in our extended family was never subject to open discussion. Solnoi and Aichurek never directly requested us to assist with any of the chores. Instead they began to take over some of our daily chores, and hinted at what they expected of us. Solnoi would sit for hours watching our horses with his binoculars, and when two of our horses once went missing, we suddenly realized that he had rode out to search for

them. My hosts soon learnt that I could not bake bread (it would always turn out raw), and one morning, Aichurek appeared with a freshly baked loaf of bread. From that moment onwards, Aichurek and her daughter baked the bread. In contrast Solnoi and Aichurek expected that I or my husband cooked lunch or supper for them. When we started to cook lunch or supper Atarmaa, Solnoi's eldest daughter, frequently appeared to help cut the meat and vegetables or make noodles. When the meal was ready, Solnoi, Aichurek, their daughters and often other members of the camp congregated in our *urts*. As is common etiquette in Mongolia, all the guests were offered food. Frequently Aichurek came to us and said – while looking at my husband – ‘Solnoi's has a bad back and we have run out of firewood’. In response, my husband chopped wood – every day - for them, as was expected.

On the one hand, the obligations of living in an extended family implied a rather huge work burden, having to cook not just for the four of us, but for some ten people to be sure to have enough for everyone. On the other hand, it gave me significant data: the everyday conversations taking place in the camp, as our hosts and other people in the camp would congregate daily in our *urts*.

Our camp housed between eight and fifteen households, depending on the season. During summer, most Zuun Taiga households joined together in one camp, which was possible due to the summer pastures being abundant with grass for the reindeer and horses. It was desired by the members of the camp to ensure that all tourists travelling to Zuun Taiga went to the same camp to guarantee that all households could benefit from the tourist business. Yet, people also wanted to settle in one camp simply because they enjoyed staying together with their friends and relatives. In early autumn, around four families returned to Tsagaannuur, including young couples who had children attending school and elderly couples who found it too difficult to remain in the taiga during winter. The rest of the camp split into two or three camps migrating to different areas, due to the insufficient availability of grass for the reindeer in autumn and winter. All of my fieldwork in 2010 took place between spring and autumn, which gave me the privilege of participating in the preparations for the ritual worship of sacrificial trees; this ritual only takes place in spring and autumn. Staying among the Duha during spring and summer also offered an opportunity to have regular contact with most of the Duha living in Zuun Taiga, as they all were settled in the same camp. However, if I had stayed during

winter, I would have had more opportunities to participate in hunting trips, which mainly take place during winter.

Returning to the field enabled me to document some of the changes, which had occurred among the Duha since my earlier visits. My memories of people and life in the taiga in the early 2000s – including shamans and laypeople who had passed away, children who had grown up and started their own families and the general struggles of everyday life during that period – served as a natural starting point for valuable conversations with my Duha interlocutors and friends regarding the past and present. However, my personal ties to certain Duha also restricted my freedom in the field, as it would be regarded as an act of disrespect if I chose to live with families other than my former hosts. Nonetheless, I consider it primarily an advantage as my personal ties to these families gave me an insight into their lives, which otherwise might not have been obtained.

The fact that I was not merely regarded as an anthropologist, but also as a friend and family member, who remembered their hardships, their dear ones or the bright or funny words of a child made me a 'true companion', a 'compassionate witness', and at times a 'vulnerable observer' (Behar 1996); at times, this made it difficult to be an objective observer. For instance, when Otgonbayar, my good friend and dedicated field assistant, who had transcribed all my interviews during my fieldwork in 2000 by hand, first told me that her husband and the son of my host family had been murdered during a gold mining trip, I was so tormented by my own grief and my effort to comfort her that I was not able to remember most of the details she had told me; however, I retrospectively knew that her words could have served as important background knowledge for further studies.

I found that also the presence of my own family during the fieldwork both strengthened and at times weakened my research. First, it was easier to fit into the camp, as we, like everyone else in the camp, were a nuclear family and also part of an extended family, that of Solnoi and Aichurek. During the day, I hardly saw my eldest daughter, as she would disappear into the woods to play with a group of taiga children. In the evenings, she would return home exhausted from her adventures and often she would report how elders had warned her and her friends to keep away from certain places in the forest. Asking my informants on these places often provided me with valuable data, yet, if my daughter had not told me of these

places I might not have become aware of them. My youngest daughter was too young to play on her own, however, when I visited people in their homes, her presence often served as a natural opening for conversations on Duha concepts of family life and kinship. Despite the advantages there were some disadvantages, for example, many interesting conversations were interrupted by my children, who wanted my attention.

### **Experiencing Dissonance**

The following section will discuss the use of participant observation during fieldtrips among the Duha to gain an understanding of how Duha shamanism is enacted through the practices of hunting, herding, migrating and living in the taiga. I will show how my Duha interlocutors and friends throughout my years in the taiga guided me to sense the presence of spirits within the land and how I happened to embody their teachings to such a degree that I found myself assuming the spirits' presence through my sensation of the land. Moreover, I will show how I used these experiences to direct my observing gaze and to develop my informal and formal interviews with informants.

I was often confused to find that neither my husband nor my children intuitively knew how to behave within the camp or on the land. When camp members came to eat in our household, I instinctively presented the food first to elders and then to youngsters, including my own daughters. To my embarrassment, this often made my eldest daughter object loudly, as she was used to the Danish tradition of 'feed the children first'. One day, my husband went running to a river next to our camp and to my horror took off his dirty boots and cleaned them in the river. Among the Duha, as among Mongolians in general, it is strictly prohibited to wash directly in rivers and lakes, as it is perceived as an act of interfering with the water-spirits (*lus*). These and similar incidents made me aware of how I, though I could seldom pinpoint when it exactly had taken place, had embodied some conventional principles for appropriate interaction between humans and the land and its beings.

My field notes from my initial fieldwork among the Duha in 1999-2000 details how my Duha interlocutors guided me on how to interact properly with human, non-humans (animals and spirits) and land. As for many other anthropologists, it was often through my involuntarily transgression of conventional rules that I came to know about these rules. For instance, I became aware that it was taboo to throw garbage in a hearth, bathe in rivers and dig holes in

the ground, only after I attempted to do all of these things. Witnessing my misdeeds, my host family corrected me and explained that throwing garbage in the family hearth is akin to polluting the fate of the family, bathing in rivers disturbs the water spirits and digging holes in the ground infuriates the 'master spirits of the land' (*gazryn ezed*). As I traversed the land with my Duha hosts and friends I also gradually came to sense signs in the land indicating the necessity of certain conduct.

While in the forest, my Duha informants commonly appeared more alert than in the camp. As we travelled throughout the land, the behaviour of wild animals, odd features in the land or sudden changes in the weather often made people wonder whether we had entered the land of master spirit. During a winter hunt with Solnoi in 2000, after not coming across any wild game for several days, we suddenly saw three red deer in the distance while riding through a heavy hailstorm. However, Solnoi merely pointed at them and said that their appearance signified that his hunting luck was about to return. I asked him why he did not try to shoot them and he answered: 'Through this hailstorm, the master spirit of the land is showing us that it is *its* deer'. In 1999, while travelling with an elderly Duha man, Dagjii, to his 'sacrificial tree' (*tahij shütdeg mod*) situated at the border of Tuva in Baruun Taiga, we saw a flock of ravens flying over the tree. Dagjii pointed anxiously towards the ravens and said: 'Maybe they are here because I did not visit my sacrificial tree last year or maybe it is because you are not a kin of the tree'. He then asked me to wait with the horses, while he made offerings to the tree; he felt it was safer for me not to approach the tree. Also, during my fieldtrips in the 2010s, the Duha guided me on how to sense the spiritual powers of the places and natural entities within the land. On a trip to Solnoi's sacrificial tree in 2011, I started to feel the taiga as radiant with various uncanny powers making me aware of how I, to some extent, had come to sense the taiga in similar ways to that of the Duha.

During an autumn day in 2011, my husband and two daughters joined Solnoi on his annual visit to a sacrificial tree with one hundred branches worshipped by several Duha clans. In the early morning, we left our summer camp located in a valley surrounded by high and almost barren mountains to the south and lower mountains covered in dense forest to the north. We rode north following the tracks of the Duha hunters into what the Duha call 'the wilderness' (*heer*), referring to the wild forest, unpeopled (without contemporary camp sites) with humans, yet, punctuated with places felt to be animated with various spirits and spiritual

powers. Moving away from the camp into the dense forest along steep and muddy mountain trails, I asked Solnoi some questions about the land; however, his short and irritated answers made me realise that he did not want to talk. Instead of asking any further questions, I watched how Solnoi's alertness had intensified since entering the wild forest. Each time the sound of a bird broke the silence of the forest, Solnoi stopped for a moment, gazing into the direction of the sounds; when we arrived at a trail with the imprints of horses, he stopped to scrutinize the prints. While I did not dare ask Solnoi what was happening, I felt that we had indeed entered a land, which demanded his full attention.

After we had passed Tengis River, whose water was so high that it touched the belly of our horses, Solnoi said: 'Nobody is permitted to enter the land of the tree with one hundred branches after noon. So we should not travel any further today'. We then rode into the dense forest to find a place to camp for the night. We followed a narrow and unbeaten trail which brought us into an area called Bagtyn Hoshuun, known among the Duha for its numerous sacrificial places. As the sky darkened and a heavy hailstorm began, I started to feel anxious and wondered whether we had entered a land haunted by some of the 'ghosts' (*chötgör*) known to strangle young hunters. As the track showed the fresh imprints of horses, I worried whether patrolling rangers were nearby and might arrest us for poaching, as Solnoi was carrying a gun. Even more worrying was what would happen, if we would encounter some of the gold miners or eloped prisoners known to traverse or hide in the taiga, where they robbed and even killed innocent Duha people.

'All kinds of people follow this track, so we better camp at a distance from the riding track' Solnoi said, as he gave me a knowing look. I felt a sense of awe, as I knew Solnoi was referring to a gang of eloped Russian prisoners who had recently stolen several horses from our camp and were said to have captured, stripped naked and robbed a Darhad man in the steppe. As we veered away from the track and rode into the thick, dark larch forest where there was no trail, my horse became increasingly difficult to hold, as he was irritated by the plaster of horseflies covering its back and aggressively sucking its blood. While my horse trotted through the forest, the branches of the larch trees hit my two-year old daughter so violently that she started to scream making the horse even more nervous. Finally, we came to a clearing in the forest; I was greatly relieved as Solnoi said it was a good place to spend the night.

During the night, I woke up to the sound of branches being broken in the woods. Solnoi had seemingly also heard the sound and without a word, got up, took his rifle and went to assess the situation. Left in the tent with my husband and two children who were fast asleep, I lay petrified, wondering whether it was the Russian prisoners who had come to steal our horses or maybe do something worse. The forest now seemed to have turned totally silent. Suddenly, I heard a strange sound, which sounded like a drum beating in the darkness. Knowing that the closest camp was a two-day horse ride from our camp, it could not have been the sound of a shaman; I tried to convince myself that the sound emanated from a bird. Yet, recalling all the stories I had heard through my years in the taiga on how the restless souls of deceased shamans show themselves to those who enter their land uninvited through the sound of drumming, known as 'the drum of the wilderness' (*heriin hengreg*), I suddenly realized that, though it was a freezing night, I was bathed in sweat from fright. As Solnoi entered our tent, he said 'I guess it was just a deer'. I felt immense relief. Yet, I was awake the rest of the night listening to the sounds of the forest wondering which kinds of humans or non-humans might be wandering around in the woods.

The next morning, we continued our journey towards the tree with one hundred branches. Solnoi was in an excellent mood, enjoying the ride in the clear and sunny autumn weather. As we approached Tengis River, Solnoi said that we should camp in this location on our way back, as 'it is a good place for hunting and we may be lucky enough to kill a deer'. 'What if the rangers come by?' I asked Solnoi, worried about the new hunting law which designates Duha subsistence hunting as poaching. 'Do not worry. President Bagbandi actually gave me a gun-permit some years ago. I guess I am the only one in the taiga who has one', Solnoi laughingly replied. Turning more serious, he said:

Anybody who tries to prevent us [the Duha] from hunting is likely to have something bad happen to them. As long as we follow the rules of Oron Hangai we are protected. The rangers know we are the masters of the taiga, they know we have the most powerful shamans within Mongolia, so they fear us.

At that point, I realized that the Duha regard it as essential to follow the tradition of Oron Hangai while traversing the taiga to uphold their position as masters of the taiga, precisely because this position enables them to avoid spiritual and legal retribution, which can arise



from traversing or hunting within the taiga. However, it was when I came to be seen as a diviner that I came to understand how the Duha feel history has estranged them from their ancestral spirits and made them doubt the tenacity of their role as masters of the taiga.

### **Becoming a Diviner**

It was not so much a matter of conscious choice that I became a diviner and a kind of shaman among the Duha. During my initial fieldwork among the Duha in 1999, I happened to find myself enmeshed in a series of unanticipated circumstances, which coerced me to divine. I will describe these circumstances in order to show that the methods we use during fieldwork are not always a matter of our own conscious choices; rather, they are also affected by the choices our informants make on our behalf.

I became a diviner among the Duha much in the same manner as in the classical story of the Kwakiutl Indian Quesalid documented by Franz Boas (1930) and reinterpreted by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1963a). According to this story, Quesalid initially chose to become initiated as a shaman to reveal the trickery of the shamans. But, as he repeated the trickery of his shamanic teachers, his patients happened to be healed and thus, as Lévi-Strauss famously wrote, 'Quesalid did not become a great shaman because he cured his patients. He cured his patients because he had become a great shaman' (Lévi-Strauss 1963a: 180). In contrast to Quesalid, I was obviously not trying to uncover the Duha shamans' potential trickeries. Yet, I happened, like Quesalid, to conduct spiritual practices, though I did not really believe in them, yet, living in the taiga through the harsh winter of 1999 a rumour spread in the area, that I was a 'powerful shaman' (*hüchtei udgan*). A reputation I became unable to escape.

During the winter of 1999, I lived with Solnoi and Aichurek in Zuun Taiga. This was a rather difficult time, as I was struggling with my poor Mongolian language skills and the harsh weather conditions; temperatures were dropping to minus 56 degrees Celsius. Sometimes I found comfort in reading a deck of tarot cards I had brought with me. At that time, I used the cards partly for fun and partly as a kind of psychological tool to reflect upon issues in my own life, rather than as divination as such. One day, I grabbed the tarot cards and did a reading for myself. As I was sitting with the cards, our neighbour, Aichurek's younger brother, Bazar, came into our *urts*; he looked curiously at my cards and asked what I was doing. I tried to explain that I was merely using the cards for fun and that I could not really divine. However, I

soon realized that my attempts had failed, as Bazar said: 'Oh you are a diviner. Please do a reading for me'. I tried to explain that I simply used the card for leisure and did not at all know how to divine, eager to make it clear that I was no diviner. As he kept insisting, I did a half-hearted reading and told Bat that I really did not know how to read the cards, only I could say that the picture on the cards he had picked portrayed people in grief. Then Bat looked at me and said 'yes you are right' and to my surprise he started to elaborate on my reading. He told me that as one of the cards included an image of a tree it could be an indication that his current misfortunes evolved from him having improperly killed a deer close to a sacrificial tree at Tengis River. Confused by the authority I was being granted, I replied that I really did not know if this was the case.

However, a couple of days later I had an experience which, as described in detail in my master's thesis (Kristensen 2004), somehow forced me to become a diviner and enter into a deeper participation in the shamanic traditions of the Duha:

One night, I was fast asleep with my two sleeping bags protecting me from the indoor temperature of minus 50 Celsius. I suddenly woke and saw an elderly man dressed in a heavy fur coat enter our *urts*. At first I thought this visit was nothing unusual. Hunters would often spend the night in our household. As always, being Solnoi's *daughter*, I woke up and made him tea. The visitor was unusually quiet, and did not answer my questions. He just sat there, observing me intensely, which made me feel rather uncomfortable. Usually, the dogs would howl when visitors came to our *urts* and people would wake up, however, the dogs had been silent and my family was asleep, which I also found strange. Suddenly the visitor said farewell and left the *urts* (Kristensen 2004: 28).

The following morning, I told Solnoi and Aichurek about the visitor. When I asked them if it could be someone from the steppe or from the neighbouring camp, Solnoi shook his head and said: 'It might not have been a human, maybe you saw a 'ghost' (*chötgör*)'. I refused to believe this and tried to convince Solnoi that what I had seen was a human being and not some kind of spirit. However, my effort to convince Solnoi was fruitless. On the same day, a Duha from the neighbouring camp rode to our camp to announce that shaman Bayar had passed away the previous night. Solnoi and others took this as evidence that I was indeed capable of seeing spirits and thus was some kind of shaman. I felt deeply confused after this incident. I

wondered whether the man I had seen was a product of a dream or an actual spirit. As I was no longer seen as merely an anthropologist, but also some kind of shaman - a role I was not sure I wanted to fill - I began to feel that I was losing control over my position in the field.

Soon, more and more people in the camp started asking me for a tarot card reading. At first I refused, as I felt insecure about the kind of authority the readings might grant me. However, my refusals irritated some and compelled others to insist on a reading. One day, an elderly man from a neighbouring camp asked me for a reading. When I refused he said: 'I have been riding for several days just to meet you'. My host mother gave me a stern look making me feel that another refusal was simply not an option. Consequently, I complied, making it clear that while I would do a reading, I was not capable of seeing spirits. Similar to other anthropologists, I was suddenly in a situation where I was having experiences that were beyond my capacity to understand and to control (Toelken 1996 in Goulet and Miller 2007; Turner 1992).

Being a 'shaman' among the Duha troubled me, as I wondered whether I had trespassed the golden rule of classic anthropology: 'never to go native'; it made me question whether my observation skills had become blurred by my own engagement with the spirits and whether the fact that my divinations were often followed by *visions* of spirits was a sign that I was 'out of my mind' (Fabian 2000).

### **The Ethics and Methodological Concerns of Commitment**

In 2010, I returned to the taiga to conduct a pilot fieldwork study on Duha shamanism. I did not know whether to bring my tarot cards with me or not on this trip. I was tempted to leave them behind to rid myself of my former position as a diviner and to avoid the ethical and methodological implications of being both an anthropologist and a diviner. However, as I was worried about what would happen if my old friends did not accept my withdrawal from divining, I decided to bring the cards and only use them in case the situation somehow demanded it.

Arriving in Tsagaannuur, I was relieved that nobody asked me to do readings; I did not tell anyone that I had brought the cards. Instead I told people in detail about the content and intentions of my anthropological research in order to assert my position as an anthropologist

rather than a diviner. As nobody asked about the cards, I naively thought that the growth in the number of local shamans and diviners since my last visit maybe meant that nobody felt the need to engage me as a diviner. However, on the second day of my visit, I woke up to the sound of somebody knocking heavily on the door of my guesthouse. When I opened the door, I saw a crowd of people standing outside waiting to receive a reading. I told them that unfortunately I was no longer doing any readings, as I really did not have the skills. An old man approached me and angrily said: 'How can you say no. Years ago you really helped my family and I sincerely need your help'. The crowd looked at me angrily and I realized I had no choice but to comply. Addressing the crowd, I said: 'All right I will do a reading, though I really do not know anything'.

Following American anthropologists Ana Mariella Bacigalupo's (1999) initiation as a shamanic helper of a Mapuche shaman in Chile, it became clear that the shaman expected her to commit herself to her newly acquired role for life and not just during fieldwork. If Bacigalupo withdrew from this role, it would have been regarded as an act of disrespect towards the shaman; it would also have severed her opportunities to work academically with the shaman in the future. I found myself in a similar situation as I was somehow *trapped* in my role as a diviner. Yet, in contrast to Bacigalupo, I knew that if I refused the old man's requests of divining, I would not merely sever my ties to him, but potentially to the broader Duha community.

It was also hard to reject the old man as he appeared convinced that only I was capable of helping him. According to Bacigalupo, it is unethical for anthropologists to take on the role of shamans or healers for academic purposes. Rather, if we chose to take on such a role, we are ethically obliged to 'fulfil the obligations and commitments' of the position (Bacigalupo 1999: 39). Though I agree with these general ethics, I also believe that we need be aware of the ethical implications of submitting blindly to local obligations of being a diviner or a shaman helper. Instead, we need to evaluate whether such obligations contradict the general ethical principles of our discipline, and if they do, we need to withdraw from them. Sometimes inquirers told me that they suspected this or that person had caused a certain misfortune by an act of 'black magic' (*jatga*) and asked me whether it *really* was this person. Much to the inquirers irritation, in these situations, I refused to continue divining, as I found it ethically

improper to engage in divinations which possibly could lead to accusations of black magic, simply because such questions are part of local divination.

However, most of my inquirers' questions did not raise such ethical concerns, as they were often rather practical, e.g., 'should I buy a new horse in spring or summer? Nonetheless, I was often anxious of the authority people might grant my words. However, I was consoled by the fact that though people listened attentively to my words; also, they appeared even more interested in scrutinizing the images of the cards in order to form their own meanings. My experience of engaging in divinations among the Duha was in many ways similar to those of Kathrine Swancutt (2012), who used 'divination as a research method' in her fieldwork among the Buryat in Mongolia. Similar to Swancutt I became an 'apprentice' of my inquirers, who guided me to interpret my own cards making me realize how my Duha inquirers had 'a substantial influence on any given divinatory pronouncement' (Swancutt 2012: 46).

Retrospectively, I believe that I gained some of my most significant insights during the divinations. First, the divinations offered me a valuable insight into the contemporary concerns of the Duha, as the divinations served as an occasion for local inquirers to voice personal anxieties, which they often appeared uncomfortable talking about in ordinary interviews or everyday conversations. This is likely due to the local conception that careless voicing of one's fears is thought to attract trouble (Højer 2003), whereas voicing fears is regarded as 'safer' in the context of a ritual. Secondly, the inquirers guided me to realize how the Duha commonly perceive human misfortune as an outcome of improper engagement with various artefacts within the household or natural entities and wild animals within the land. It was through the divinations that I became aware how the Duha return to the taiga has placed them in a challenging position: being masters and kin of the taiga and its spirits, yet, alienated from their ancestral land and spirits and subject to their anger aroused from Duha absence from and return to the taiga.

The inquirers seldom expected me to answer their questions. Instead, they appeared to have quite specific, yet often numerous and highly diverse, ideas about the potential reasons behind their struggles. What they were not sure of, however, was which of these potential causes the actual cause was. The inquirers often used my readings to voice, test and discuss their own presumptions on the potential causes behind their misfortunes. Often they would

voice their doubt on the true nature of, and their relation to, various spirit vessels (*erens*) or sacrificial trees in their kin and discuss whether they had to continue, initiate or break their relation to these entities; i.e. make offerings or not make offerings to certain spiritual entities. At first, I was puzzled by these inquiries, which I simply did not understand. Yet, through the divinations I slowly came to realize how life in the taiga is felt to entangle people in a web of risky, labile and uncertain relations with various spiritual powers – embodied in spirit-vessels kept in people’s households or in sacrificial trees or places within the taiga - of their ancestral kin (clans and lineages).

Interestingly, my most frequent inquirers were Duha males and shamans of both genders. Duha men often told me their worries on whether they had happened to raise the anger of various spiritual powers of the land during hunting or mining expeditions. For instance, one hunter told me that after he had shot a deer, it ran into a river where it had died. Not being able to drag the deer out of the water, the hunter had to tear it apart in the river, though he knew that it was against the tradition to allow blood to run into a river. He was certain that his misfortunes had arisen from these events. The stories of my inquirers aided me to understand how the practices of hunting and mining confront the Duha, and in particular males, with specific spiritual challenges. Duha shamans often visited me to ask whether their shamanic paraphernalia (spirit-vessels, shamanic gowns or drums) were made according to the tradition or not. This made me realise how Duha shamans’ often extensive knowledge on – and involvement with – tradition increased rather than diminished their doubts and fears on it. It guided me to understand that shamans often are uncertain on tradition and fear their own shamanic artefacts, because they perceive such artefacts as enlivened with labile and hence uncertain spiritual powers.

In the taiga and in the village of Tsagaannuur also Mongolian rangers and border guards visited me regularly to ask whether their misfortune or that of their families had arisen as a result of their patrols in the taiga. This guided me to understand and search into how Mongolian state officials’ legal duties in the taiga are circumscribed and shaped by fears of the shamanic powers of the Duha and their land.

The question is whether my role as a diviner somehow led me towards more shamanic-minded people in the taiga. I do not believe this was the case, as every adult - at least in the Zuun Taiga where most of my fieldwork was conducted - asked me to do divinations.

### **Thinking through Extraordinary Experiences**

Since the publication of Laura Bohannan's book, 'Return to Laughter', in 1954, the tension between participation and observation has been a matter of discussion. In conventional anthropology, we are advised 'to be one with them yet not one of them' (Obeyesekere in Goulet 1993: 173). Clifford Geertz suggests that 'We cannot live people's lives and it is a piece of bad faith to try. We can but listen to what in words, in images, in actions they say about their lives' (Geertz 1986: 373). While it is impossible to live other people's lives, I do not share Geertz's view that we may only obtain knowledge from the expressions of our informants. Rather, I agree with experiential anthropologists who argue that to study certain religious phenomena, we need to go 'out of our mind' and engage with the 'ecstatic' to be 'touched by lived experience' (Fabian 2000: 8) through which we may gain access to significant epistemological and ontological issues (Goulet and Miller 2007: 1).

At the start of my work as a diviner among the Duha, I felt in control of the process. However, one day as I was doing a reading for an elderly man, I started to feel dizzy; I could barely see him as his face had become blurred with strange images of weird creatures and then overtaken by an image of a burning *ger* (Mongolian felt tent). I threw down the cards I was holding in my hand. Then the strange sight somehow vanished and I could again see the old man. Seeing his surprise, I apologized and said with a nervous laugh that I might be coming down with the flu; I told him, with a laugh, that I had seen a burning *ger* and some strange creatures. To my surprise, he nodded and said: 'You are right. My daughter's husband burned their *ger* some weeks ago, such things happened'. After the man had left, my young daughter took the cards and started to play with them. As I saw her with the cards, I suddenly heard myself screaming: 'You should not touch them'. My husband looked at me puzzled, as I never viewed the cards as having any kind of spiritual power. Yet, having experienced how my strange sights appeared to arrive and depart depending on whether I was holding the cards suddenly made me understand some of the ambiguous feelings the Duha in general and the shamans in particular have toward their sacred paraphernalia.

Scholars (Ots 1994; Lindquist 1995) have argued that in order to gain knowledge of certain fields, we need to use 'experiencing participation' (Ots 1994), which refers to 'socialization in their (our subjects) systems of meanings and participation in the dynamic process of the construction of these meanings in which they are engaged' (Lindquist 1995: 5). The question is of course to what extent we may use such personal experiences as 'primary data' (Jackson 1989). Can we argue that such experiences are somehow reminiscent of those of our informants or are they merely 'authorial artifice' (Poewe 1996: 191). I do not argue that my *spiritual* experiences were similar to those of my informants, however, similar to Renato Rosaldo (1984; 1989), I believe that using our own experiences in the field may open up new understanding of our informant's experiences. Studying headhunting among the Ilongot, it was Rosaldo's experience of grief and rage following the death of his wife, which made him understand the emotions connected to headhunting. Rosaldo did not equate his own anger to that of the Ilongot; instead he proposed that the two experiences overlapped, 'like two circles, partially overlaid and partially separate' (Rosaldo 1989: 10). It is hard to say whether my experiences overlapped with those of the Duha, yet I found that experiences like the one above offered me secondary data on the spiritual realm of the Duha, which I could, and did, engage to direct my own observing gaze on how the Duha dealt with various spiritual artefacts in daily life. Using my own experience to direct my gaze - to a wider degree than usual - I found that I became a better observer in the field and inquirer during interviews.

The question is how we may use such extraordinary experiences anthropologically. Edith Turner (1992; 1993; 2003; 2006) has repeatedly argued that anthropologists studying spiritual traditions should take the 'fatal step of going native' to 'achieve a breakthrough to an altogether different worldview to obtain certain material which can be gathered in no other way' (2003: 146-148). The work of Turner marked the emergence of a new 'experiential anthropology' acknowledging the significance of the extraordinary experiences and transformative moments of anthropologists in the field (Goulet & Miller 2007). Turner engaged her own experience of seeing a spirit during a ritual among the Ndembu to assert that 'there *is* spirit stuff. There *is* spirit affliction' (Turner 1993: 10). Though I did *see* spirits among the Duha I do not view it as my task or the task of anthropology to use such experiences to deny or ascertain the *actual* - whatever that may mean - existence of spirits. However, I view it as our task as anthropologists, drawing on Henare et al (2007) and many



others, to take different worlds seriously. Now for the Duha spirits - as illustrated in the case of Baatar in the beginning of this thesis – exists in the taiga regardless of one's belief or disbelief. I thus argue that I indeed did *see* spirits, because the experiences I had were regarded as spiritual ones within the taiga. I propose that such extraordinary experiences in the field may indeed give us privileged access to local worlds, though indirectly, as they compel us to experiment with our own experiences and thus forces us to gaze in ever new directions, which we might not have turned to otherwise.

Following the proponents of experiential anthropology, I believe we may gain a deeper understanding of our field by participating actively in the lives of the people we are studying, not only with our mind, but also with our body, emotions, senses and feelings (Turner 1993, Wikan 1992). Through discussing my own uncanny experiences with my Duha friends, they guided me on how to use my body and senses to experience the spiritual realm and hence I acquired knowledge on the more sensational aspects of Duha shamanism. However, my position as a diviner in the field also helped me to understand how the epistemological, ontological and historical is interwoven among the Duha.

During the divinations, I found that many of my inquirers from two specific clans would point toward a historical dispute between two of their shamans, which occurred approximately one hundred years ago. This incident made me aware of how historical events are thought to fashion the very being or nature of ancestral spirits and sacrificial places. This, in turn, inspired me to be more observant of these issues and delve deeper into these issues during formal interviews. I became aware of how historical disputes between clans appeared to live on in the way members of these clans appeared to address each other with caution; they even placed their *urts* far from each other.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have shown how the results of this thesis are the outcome of my long-term fieldwork among the Duha. The methodological choices which I made were not all my own; rather, they evolved through my encounters with my informants and through my recurrent visits to the taiga. During my last fieldtrip in 2012, I arrived in the field six months pregnant and rode to the surprise of my informants around the taiga with my three-year-old daughter sitting on my huge stomach. My friends in the taiga told me how people all over the area were

talking about how 'the taiga shaman Tuya' (me) indeed possesses extraordinary capabilities, as she survived a winter in the taiga and was riding around in the wilderness while pregnant. A group of border guards once visited our camp on a stormy autumn day; they were greeted by my youngest daughter, who was dirty and running around naked after playing in the forest. The general of the border guards later came to pay me a visit and requested a reading. Just before the reading he said: 'Even my kids would not be able to survive in the taiga and your daughter just runs around naked not feeling cold. I guess living in the taiga has made you all become Tsaatan people'. And after the reading he said: 'Just tell me if your husband wants to go hunting. He will not need a permit.' Could it be possible that people had come to see not only me, but also my family, as embodying some of the powers of the taiga, because of our recurrent stays in the taiga? This would explain why my daughter did not feel the cold and why my husband - as other Duha men - was excluded from the hunting legislation.

As this chapter has shown, my recurrent returns to the taiga gradually absorbed me into the taiga, making me capable of *sensing* its spirits, yet, also made people perceive me as part of the taiga, and specifically as one of its shamans. Whereas some scholars have proposed that data developed through our own experiences may be used as 'primary data' (Jackson 1989; Turner 1992; 2003), I have argued that such data ought to be used primarily as 'secondary data' aiming to direct our gaze and develop new questions to explore aspects of traditions, which we might have missed had we not been actively engaged in them. Nevertheless, it was my own experience of sensing the spirits presence through the land or through my cards, which enabled me to reach a more profound understanding of the processes through which the Duha and their shamans enact their shamanic tradition. Much of the data of this thesis is indeed founded on informal and formal interviews with my Duha friends and informants. The questions I presented to my informants were often inspired by my findings during participant observation and divining, which guided me to understand the contemporary worries of the Duha. For instance, it was divination which helped me to understand how the Duha often perceive contemporary misery as tied to certain historical events in specific kin units or lands. Such knowledge guided me to direct my observing gaze and develop new questions on these issues, which often proved fruitful as my informants conveyed intricate details on their lives and that of their kin, which they might otherwise not have told me about.

## Chapter 2

### Lived Legacies

One sunny autumn day, the dogs were barking angrily as two riders approached our camp. I was sitting outside my *urts* with Solnoi and Aichurek, enjoying the good weather and discussing the possible identities of the riders. Solnoi looked at them through his binoculars and said: 'It's not taiga people and certainly not tourists. I guess it's Mongolians'. The two riders, a middle-aged woman and her younger brother, turned out to be Darhad people of Duha descent from the Renchinlümbe district. The Darhad woman introduced herself as Erdemchimeg and informed us that she was searching for the sacrificial places of her mother's family, who were Duha. A shaman in the city of Mörön had told her that the spirits' of her maternal grandmother was calling her from three places within the taiga: Khoroo River, the land of Khogor Bish and Nariin Khoroo, begging her to become a 'shaman' (*böö*). As a Darhad family had adopted Erdemchimeg's mother when she was an infant, she did not know any of these places. However, it turned out that Solnoi knew the location and histories of these places quite well; he knew the sacrificial places of most clans and lineages in the taiga. Here is an extract from what he told Erdemchimeg:

For many years, I lived in the land of Nariin Khoroo and I often migrated through the land of Khogor Bish. So I know this land very well. Elders used to say that the corpse of the shaman, Deer Kyz, your grandmother, was left at a mountain slope in the land of Nariin Khoroo. One elderly man once told me that he had seen that shaman's head, lying openly exposed among the rocks, when he migrated through the land of Nariin Khoroo. Close by, at that beautiful place of the river of Khoroo, there is also a sacrificial tree. This is the sacrificial tree of your grandmother. In the old days, people used to say that the shamanic dress and drum of Deer Kyz were placed at that tree. Deer Kyz was your grandmother. Her Mongolian name was Tsendyan, but people called her Deer Kyz [heavenly girl, in Tuvan], because she was such a great shaman. People used to say that she even sacrificed one of her eyes to heal a child. Your grandmother's shamanic lineage (*böögiin udam*) had many powerful shamans who combatted magically with Buddhist lamas in the old days. [...] While hunting, I have often passed the land of Orkhashih; this

area has a sacrificial tree of the Urat clan, a tree with eight branches. Your great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather's shamanic paraphernalia were placed here in the past. Also, all the people of your grandmother's clan, the Urat clan, worship the tree with one hundred branches. So you ought to worship this tree. I do not know your grandfather [mother's father]. I only know that he was of the Khotod clan.

The aim of highlighting this event is to discuss how Duha clans are endowed with the histories of past kin, which are remembered and enacted through the practices in people's everyday lives. This chapter provides an overview of how the policies and imaginaries of surrounding states (the Qing Empire and the Mongolian People's Republic) historically have both conditioned and hampered the Duha livelihood of hunting and herding through which the Duha's tie between past and present kin and humans and non-humans is sensed and enacted. It argues that Duha shamanism historically has grown strong when state or local administrative policies supported the Duha livelihood in the taiga, and weak, when the state or local administration tried to settle the Duha in the steppe. It thus contributes to the broader question of the thesis - namely, how the return to Duha shamanism is fashioned by the return to the taiga - by showing how the Duha historically has reproduced relations to ancestral clan and lineage' spirits through the livelihood of hunting and herding in the taiga.

Scholars have shown how clan affiliation has historically played a central role in the shamanic traditions of indigenous people in Mongolia (Badamhatan 1962; Diózegei 1963; Dulam 1992). Vilmos Diózegei (1963) has described how Darhad and Duha shamans were tied to particular clans through hereditary spirits. However, by the time Morten Axel Pedersen (2001) conducted fieldwork among the Darhad in the late 1990s, the role of the clan in the shamanic traditions and the daily life of the Darhad had, according to Pedersen (2011), become 'essentially defunct' (2011: 14). Based on her fieldwork among the Darhad in the early 2000s, Judith Hangartner observed that many Darhad shamans used their clan affiliation and genealogical descent to enhance their shamanic legitimation (Hangartner 2011: 205). Hangartner does not see the association of Darhad shamans with clans as evidence of the tenacity of a primordial Darhad clan system. Instead, she argues that we are dealing with an invention of tradition fashioned by Soviet Union policies and ethnographies depicting the Darhad as a backward shamanic clan society, and refashioned by post-socialist evocations of

shamanism and clans as markers of the virtuous Mongolian past and new national identity (Hangartner 2011: 215).

Turning to the Duha, the Japanese anthropologist Tetsuya Inamura (2005: 29) wrote in 2005 that the Duha clans today 'serve no other special purpose aside from the role of exogamy'. In contrast to Inamura, I found that each Duha clan has certain 'traditions' (*yos*), of which exogamy is only one among many, for proper interaction with various natural entities and beings (humans, spirits and animals). Among the Duha clan affiliations are also reflected in the physical location of *urts* within the camps, the attendants of shamanic séances and the worshippers of sacrificial places and trees and in the act of abstaining from hunting certain wild species.

Scholars have argued that the 'clan system' of the Mongolians, regardless of whether we view it as 'a corporate unit' (Bulag 1998; Pop 1986), 'a political unit' (Sneath 2007) or part of 'shamanism' (Badamhatan 1962; Diózegi 1963; Dulam 1992), has disintegrated in recent times. In present day Mongolia, the term clan (*ovog*) is mainly used to denote surnames or patronyms (or matronyms) on the ID cards of Mongolian citizens<sup>7</sup> (Bulag 1998; Sneath 2007). The post-socialist government has, however, tried to revive the former 'clan system'; it has even launched a campaign to reintroduce written genealogies (Bulag 1998) in an attempt to revive a post-socialist identity and to circumvent what the government saw as the threat of 'inbreeding' toward the 'Mongolian gene pool' (Bulag 1998; Hangartner 2011: 215). This campaign may certainly have strengthened the role of the clan among the Duha, as Hangartner has shown was the case among the Darhad. However, as I will show in this chapter, the Duha clans are not merely a 'modern' re-invention. Instead I propose that the tenacity of the Duha clans has arisen from the manner in which historical policies and imaginaries of past states consolidated the Duha clans as patrilineal hunting units tied to certain lands, and endowed the Duha hunters with 'chiefly' (Humphrey 1997 [1995]) powers to master the land of the taiga.

My analysis thus attempts to fuse two rather disparate theoretical orientations on how historical processes shape indigenous shamanic traditions. First, I extend on Tim Ingold's

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<sup>7</sup> This is a legacy of the legislation the Mongolian government's issued in 1925, obliging people to register their clan affiliation if they knew it and if they did not, to adopt any name of their paternal or maternal predecessors as their clan name, whereby the term *ovog* came to denote surname (Bulag 1998; Sneath 2007).

(1980; 2000: 61-76) phenomenological studies on how historical shifts in livelihood initiates changes in indigenous perceptions of the relation between human and non-humans.

Discussing the shift from hunter-gathering to pastoralism, Tim Ingold (2000) has argued that 'any qualitative transformation in environmental relations is likely to be manifested both in the relationships that humans extend toward animals and in those that obtain among themselves in society' (2000: 61). I show how the relation between the Duha and their ancestral clan or lineage spirits historically has been strengthened or weakened dependent on whether state policies supported or restrained the Duha livelihood in the taiga.

Ingold (2000) proposes that the shift from hunting to pastoralism universally initiates a shift from a relationship between humans and non-humans (animals) based on trust to one of domination (Ingold 2000: 69-73). While I do agree with Ingold that indigenous relations to the non-human realm are enacted through hunter-gathering, I do not find that such relations automatically take the form of egalitarian relationships of trust. Instead I argue that the relation between humans and non-humans among the Duha involves both egalitarian and more hierarchical principles. I show how the first is based on local perceptions of kin-relations between humans, land and spirits and how the latter is based on local perception of relations between superior and inferior non-human and human masters. I argue that the Duha concept of 'master' (*ezen*) was strengthened and shaped by the policies and imaginaries of past states, which endowed the Duha clans and hunters the powers to master certain territories. The limit of Ingold's theory is thus that it only accounts for how shifts from one livelihood to another affect local spiritual perceptions, whereas it cannot account for politically enforced shifts *within* livelihoods, such as how changes in the social organization of the hunt may affect local spiritual perceptions of the relation between humans and non-humans (animals and spirits).

This leads me to my second theoretical approach, where I draw on Caroline Humphrey (1997 [1995]; 1996) and Michael Taussig's (1984; 1987) theories on shamanism as reactive to, and shaped by, broader political processes and imaginaries. I show how the Duha's livelihood of hunting and herding historically has been shaped by surrounding states and power holders, who constructed the Duha and their land as wild and untamed, while endowing the Duha hunters and their clans with the powers to master the wild land and its wild species. By combining the phenomenological approach of Ingold with the more political and historical

approaches of Taussig and Humphrey, I show how the persistence of Duha clans may have arisen from the way historical policies and imaginaries has conditioned and shaped the Duha's livelihood of hunting and herding in the taiga through which the relationship between human and non-humans is sensed and enacted.

### **The Duha Clan: A patrilineage and a Bilateral Shamanic Lineage**

In order to reach an understanding of the historical tenacity of the Duha clan, we first need to clarify how it refers to a patrilineal kin unit while still being part of a more bilateral shamanic lineage or kin unit.

The Duha are divided into four exogamous patrilineal clans<sup>8</sup> (*udam*) – Balygsh, Soyan, Urat and Zoot – of which the Soyan and Balygsh clans are further subdivided into several exogamous patrilineal sub-clans (also named *udam*). Each clan has one or several shamanic lineages (*böögiin udam*), whose *eren* (shamanic spirit) is said to originate in a historic shaman (female and male) within the clan. Each shamanic lineage tends to contain its own principle of inheritance, where some primarily are patrilineal, whereas others are more matrilineal. Yet, all shamanic lineages appear to contain a more bilateral potential, as patrilineal shamanic lineages sometimes are inherited through the maternal line, just as matrilineal shamanic lineages happen to be inherited through the paternal line. Now what puzzled me was that though there was a general agreement among the Duha that the inheritance of clan membership follows patrilineal principles, some Duha are considered to only be members of their maternal clan. For instance, two female shamans told me that they belonged to the Balygsh clan, as their mothers were Balygsh. It turned out that most shamans in their lineage were females and all were thought to originate from the Balygsh clan, hence their maternal clan. The question is: should the Duha clans be regarded as strictly patrilineal units?

Scholars have commonly described the Duha clans as patrilineal, exogamous kin units (Vainhstein 1980 [1972]; Inamura 2005; Wheeler 1999). This view is partly shared by my Duha informants, who frequently told me that clan affiliation is inherited through the paternal line and points toward the clan's fellow origin in a primordial bone (paternal ancestors). Yet,

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<sup>8</sup> According to my findings among the Duha in Zuun and Baruun Taiga, approximately 65% of the Duha are Balygsh, 20% Soyan, 10% Urat and 5 % Zoot.

people also told me that all clans originate from a primordial shaman (female or male) and their *eren*; hence, they have a potential maternal origin. Though people had different perception of the origin of clans, everyone agreed that the clan is a temporal unit, which over time<sup>9</sup> gives rise to new bones and *erens* and hence the development of new sub-clans and shamanic lineages. Several people said that the sub-clan and shamanic lineage are diverse. They explained that each sub-clan originate from a certain paternal predecessor, whose bone is inherited paternally within the sub-clan, whereas each shamanic lineage originates from its initial shamanic predecessor (female or male), whose *eren* is passed on in the lineage from shaman to shaman. Other people explained that the sub-clan and shamanic lineage is identical and refers to a lineage of people originating from a specific *eren* and historic shaman, whose bone is inherited bilaterally within the lineage/clan. These examples reveal that the Duha do not regard the clan solely as a patrilineal kin unit. Instead, the Duha clans contain both patrilineal and matrilineal principles of inheritance, and hence more bilateral principles of inheritance. This is also, as we will see, revealed in very terms the Duha use to denote a clan.

The Duha rarely use the Mongolian term for clan or tribe (*ovog*) to refer to their clan. Instead, they commonly use the Mongolian word origin (*udam*) both to refer to their clan and shamanic lineage. This may be because the term *ovog* in Mongolia mainly refers to the clan as a social or political patrilineage, whereas the term *udam*, at least as the Duha use it, refers to a fellow origin in a certain spiritual entity (*eren*) and/or bone (*yas*). Though clan affiliation is said to be inherited from the father, I found numerous exceptions to this patrilineal principle. For example, the children of single mothers were said to belong to their mother's clan and hence also affirmed the potential for matrilineal clan inheritance. An elder Duha lady once told me that her parents had been happy when they discovered that she was pregnant as a young girl, as it meant that her clan would live on through her child. These examples thus confirm that the clan contains more bilateral principles of inheritance.

Some of my informants, however, used the Mongolian word *yas* (bone) or the Tuvian word *sëëk* (bone) to denote their clans. In Mongolia, the term bone commonly refers to patrilineal inheritance (Bulag 1998, Park 2003), which attests to the clan being a patrilineal unit.

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<sup>9</sup> The Duha regard both the inheritance of 'bone' (sub-clan) and *eren* (both clan and lineage) as a temporal succession inherited in seven or nine generations after which the bone or *eren* somehow disperses and opens up for new bone-lines (sub-clans) and *erens* (shamanic lineages) within the broader clan.



Although the Duha commonly told me that bone refers to paternal descent, some elderly Duha said that bone simply refers to descent, i.e., both paternal and maternal. Interestingly, this point was also repeated when my informants explained why the shamanic gown of most Duha shamans contains the embroidery of a human skeleton.<sup>10</sup> The shaman Manduhai explained:

If a human skeleton is not present [on the shamanic dress] it is not a shamanic dress. If there is no skeleton the *eren* will not recognize the shaman. You see [pointing toward his shamanic dress] this is the spine, it is divided into nine bone-joints, the first is the clan origin and the next is the second shaman in the lineage and so on up until the ninth bone-joint, which is the ninth shaman.

The embroidery of a human skeleton (bone) is hence used to picture the shaman's origin in a specific and often bilateral shamanic lineage within the clan. That the clan and shamanic lineages should not be regarded as strictly different domains, but intersecting ones, was also evident in the stories I heard regarding the sacrificial places of the Duha clans and lineages.

Each clan and sub-clan has a sacrificial place in the landscape, commonly a mountain or tree, where its prehistoric *eren* is said to be located, whereas each shamanic lineage has a series of shamanic trees, each tied to a historic shaman and his or her *erens*. Solnoi once told me, that each clan, sub-clan and shamanic lineage initially was set-off by a historic predecessor somehow becoming mastered by an *eren*; i.e. suffering a 'shamanic illness' (*böögiin övchin*). However as the historic predecessor – as is the case of shamans in general – gained mastery over the *eren* he or she had become a shaman. Yet, as the historical predecessor gained mastery over the *eren* she inevitably also, Solnoi explained, 'entrusted' (*daatgadag*) her own life and that of her children and further descendants to the *eren*. During the shaman's lifetime, the shaman is thought to have mastered the *eren* and thus controlled its influence on her own and her children's lives. The death of the shaman is said to end the tie between the shaman and *eren*, but not the tie between kin and *eren*. After the death of the shaman, her shamanic paraphernalia should be placed by her kin at a particular cedar tree; the specific tree is often pointed out by the shaman before his death. The powers of the *eren* of the shaman is embodied in the shamanic paraphernalia, which is said to fuse with those of the *ezen* (master

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<sup>10</sup> Several scholars have noted that, historically, the Duha, the Tofa and the Tuvans had human skeletons embroidered onto their shamanic gowns (Diózegi 1963;1968; Djakonova 1979; Van Deusen 2004).

spirit) and *lus* (water deity or spirit) of the place transforming the tree into a sacrificial tree of worship for the living kin and their future descendants. Ideally, the kin members should pay their homage to such a tree on an annual basis, in spring or autumn, to renew their relation to it, which is essential for ensuring their own health, fortune and wellbeing.

Interestingly, the stories of sacrificial trees of sub-clans often revealed how sub-clans both are perceived as exogamous patrilineal units and bilateral shamanic lineages. Solnoi explained:

It sounds like we (the Balygsh) have the same origins but we do not, instead we have become two lineages. In the old days there was only one Balygsh clan consisting of approximately ten people. However, their number increased as all these people had children and as their children had children and eventually after seven 'generations' (*üye*) the population of the Balygsh people had increased greatly. So, the elders decided it was time to separate the ancestral origin and divided the Balygsh into the Adyg and Kytai Balygsh; the clan was split and each sent into a separate territory. The worship of Umai Mountain started nine generations ago, when the *eren* of the Kytai Balygsh was placed at a tree located on this mountain. The tree with one hundred branches in Bagtyn Hoshuun is the place where, we Adyg Balygsh people worship our *eren*.

According to this story (appendix B), the Balygsh clan was subdivided to create new bone-lines and hence additional exogamous sub-clans. Yet, the story also shows how the sub-clans intersect with the shamanic lineage as each sub-clan had its *eren* (shamanic spirit), which was placed at a certain sacrificial tree and hence founded the sub-clan as a shamanic lineage.

Interestingly, the name of the mountain worshipped by the Kytai Balygsh is Umai<sup>11</sup>, which is the Tuvan, Turkic and Mongolian word for uterus and mother and thus may point toward the origin of the Kytai Balygsh in a female shaman. I was informed that the majority of the Duha clans had an ancient mountain of worship, and though they were different mountains, they were all named Umai Mountain, which indicate a maternal origin of Duha clans. Though most of my informants told me that they worshipped their Mount Umai of their father's clan (patrilineage) they also insisted that their Mount Umai was 'a worship of the mother's lineage' (*eejiin talin shütleg*); i.e. indicating a maternal ancestor of the paternal clan.

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<sup>11</sup> Interestingly scholars has also shown how many indigenous Turkic people of Siberia and central Asia historically has worshipped a mother goddess or female spirits named Umai (Ashymov 2003: 134; Humphrey 1997 [1995]: 149; Sultanova 2011; Vinogradov 2003)

This suggests that the Duha clans, at some earlier historical period, were more bilateral or perhaps matrilineal shamanic lineages. We cannot know for certain, as historical sources on the Duha prior to Manchu rule are very limited. Nonetheless, I argue that the perceptions and practices that surround contemporary Duha clans reveal a tension between patrilineal, matrilineal and bilateral principles. This opens for the question of whether the patrilineal principle of contemporary clans, as described by David Sneath (2007) and which will be elaborated below, is a more recent invention possible influenced by the Manchu' promotion of patrilineal descent.

### **Imperial Hunters**

Several scholars have argued that Mongolian and Tuvan clans lost almost all of their prior significances, such as rules of exogamy and ties to local spirits and lands, during Manchu rule in Inner Asia (Bulag 1998; Humphrey 1980; Sneath 2007; Vainhstein 1980). According to Sergei Vainhstein (1980) and Russian explorer, Felikc Kon (1934), the Todjan reindeer herders were an exception; they continued to be strictly observant on clan exogamy and worship of the sacrificial places of their ancestral clan spirits during Manchu rule. This is an important point, as during Manchu reign, the Todjans included the Duha. Todjans refer to the reindeer-herding Tuvans settled in Todja (Tuva), while Duha refer to the Todjans who settled in Mongolia. This raises the following question: why did the clans of the Todjans persist, while they dissolved among many neighbouring people, though they were all subject to Manchu rule? In order to answer this question, we need to examine why the Manchu ruled the region of Tuva, and in particular the Todjans, in a substantially different way than the broader empire. This will aid us to see how the policies of the Manchu led to the dissolution of clans among the Mongolians and Western Tuvans, while it strengthened the Todjan' (Duha) clans and fashioned them as hunting units tied to particular lands.

David Sneath' (2007) has convincingly argued that during the reign of the Manchu,<sup>12</sup> Mongolia was not a pre-state 'kinship society' organized around egalitarian clans and tribes, but a decentralized and 'distributed, headless state formed by independent nobles and their

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<sup>12</sup> According to Sneath (2007) aristocratic orders and hence a 'headless state' has organized Mongolian, including present day Tuva, society historically - also prior to the reign of the Qing empire. While it would be interesting to explore the role of Duha clans prior to Qing reign, due to the limited historical sources from this period, it is beyond the scope of this thesis.

subjects sharing a common law code and aristocratic social order' (2007: 181). In Mongolia, the concept of *ovog* (clan) was, as Sneath writes, not primarily a kinship unit, but a political and administrative unit implemented by the Manchu state to guarantee the uninterrupted continuation of the political process (Sneath 2007: 101). The Manchu attempted to place all the operations of the state at the local level by organizing their Mongolian subjects into patrilineal clans (*ovog*), who became fixed to specific administrative units called banners (*khoshuu*), and were ruled by hereditary princes (*üherda*) (Sneath 2007: 96-97; 101-102). Each banner was allocated a specific territory for pasturing their livestock and was obliged to render their prince 'service, military and civil' (Sneath 2007: 44). The headless state used many of the power technologies associated with centralized states, such as stratification, territorialisation and military service (Sneath 2007: 5). However, the headless state was a decentralized state, which worked through aristocratic orders (*ovogs*), whose ruling nobles used principles of descent as 'technologies of power' to rule their vassals, i.e., collect taxes, conscribe people to military service and confine people to certain territories (Sneath 2007: 202).

During the Qing Empire, the Duha belonged to the northern Urianghai region (encompassing contemporary Tuva and most of the current homeland of the Duha in Northern Mongolia). In Manchu documents Urianghai is described as a 'wilderness' (Manchu: *bigan*) (Schlesinger 2012: 267: note 22), hard to access due to its high mountains and dense forests, rich in precious wild species and inhabited by native reindeer-herders and hunters who live like 'birds and beasts' surviving on hunting and trapping (Schlesinger 2012: 278). In contrast, the Mongolian land was defined by its accessible steppe environment, as a 'backcountry with roads' (Schlesinger 2012: 268), whose native inhabitants' (Mongolians) way of life was depicted as that of 'nomadic pastoralism' (Schlesinger 2012: 278) and hence substantially different from the Urianghai land and way of life.

Scholars have argued that the Manchu granted the Urianghai a degree of political and cultural autonomy unequalled perhaps to anywhere else in the empire (Ewing 1981; Wheeler 2000), as the Urianghai were governed by the Manchu to preserve their traditional 'way of life', defined as hunting and trapping (Schlesinger 2012: 278). Some scholars and foreign travellers have argued that the Urianghai were politically neglected by the Manchu due to their geographical isolation (Carruthers 1914a; Farkas 1981, Olsen 1915a). Otto Farkas (1981)

notes that during the Qing Empire the Duha were 'freely but orderly moving in this huge area of the country without any respect to administrative limits (e.g., so-called borders)' due to remoteness and inaccessibility of their homeland (1981: 5-6). Additionally, the Norwegian traveller, Ørjan Olsen (1915b), writes that the first Manchu governor to visit the Soyot (Todjan) advised the emperor to 'interfere as little as possible with their livelihood' since they are 'a wild people living as wild beasts in the mountains' who can only 'be reigned by leaving them alone' (1915b: 219). The Manchu thus perceived the Todjans and their land as savage and wild. However, the following question remains: Did the Manchu develop these policies on account of the perceived unapproachability of this wild land and people or as part of a deliberate political strategy?

I argue that the apparent lack of Manchu administration of Urianghai should not be viewed as political negligence. On the contrary, as the historian Jonathan Schlesinger (2012) has so remarkably revealed, the Manchu policies aimed at preserving the Urianghai way of life (defined as hunting and gathering) in order to make Urianghai a 'tailored economic zone for fur production' to provide the Manchu court with fur and pelts (Schlesinger 2012: 261). During the reign of the Qing Empire, Urianghai had the status of 'borderland' ruled by the Manchu to ensure its status as 'hunting ground' for the empire only (Schlesinger 2012: 261). Manchu guards patrolled the borderline between Urianghai territory and Mongolia in the south and Russia in the north in order to avoid outsiders (Chinese, Russian and Mongols) from poaching and trading in the Urianghai territory; however they often failed in this regard. They did so in an effort to ensure the long term sustainability of fur-bearing animals (Schlesinger 2012: 263).

The administrative structure within Urianghai was a replication of the banner system in Mongolia. Urianghai was divided into nine banners; which were further subdivided into broader administrative arrows (units) called *sumon* and smaller arrows termed *arban* (Vainhstein 1980 [1972]: 234). Yet, the purpose and content of the banners and its arrows differed from those in Mongolia. Whereas these administrative units in Mongolia served a broader governmental, taxation and military purpose, those in Urianghai were primarily aimed at administrating the production of furs for the empire (Ewing 1981; Vainhstein 1980 [1972]).

During the Qing Empire, most Duha lived in the Todja banner situated in eastern Tuva, and belonged to the Lake Khövsgöl Urianghai Borderland (Wheeler 2000). The Todja banner was, as was generally the case in Urianghai, divided into broader and smaller arrows (*sumon and arban*) of which the latter were formed out of the existing Duha clans (Ewing 1981: 185, Vainhstein 1980 [1972]: 239). Each of the Duha clans belonged to its own arrow (*arban*) and was assigned its own chief (*zalan*); the chief belonged to the same clan as those under his administration (see also Wheeler 1999, Olsen 1915a: 48). According to my elderly informants, Manchu officials governing the Todja banner were responsible for appointing a male member of each clan to the position of *zalan*, which granted the *zalan* the power to administer the collection of fur taxes within his banner, consisting of his clan members (male hunters). The *zalan* was required to collect and transfer the taxes of his arrow to the Tuvan noble-man (*noyon*) of the broader arrow (*sumon*), who then passed them on to the Tuvan prince of the Todja banner.

A glance at the geographical characteristic of Tuva shows that its western part mainly is steppe land, whereas its eastern part, historically inhabited by the Todjans and Duha, is elevated taiga land, hence the natural habit of all the wild species valued by the Manchu court. It is thus not surprising that the findings of Vainhstein (1980 [1972]) and Carruthers (1914a) indicate that a large part of the fur and pelts paid as tribute to the Manchu derived from the hunting activities of the Todjans. Carruthers writes that the steppe dwelling Tuvans paid their tribute in livestock, while the reindeer-herding Tuvans (Todjans) paid for theirs in fur (Carruthers 1914a: 206-207). This point is disputable, as others (Vainhstein 1980 [1972]) have pointed out that all Tuvans were obliged to pay some of their tribute in fur, inducing some of the steppe-dwelling Tuvans to exchange cattle for pelts with the hunter and reindeer herders of Todja (Vainhstein 1980 [1972]: 236, 256: note 6). We may thus assume that the Manchu administration of the Urianghai had the effect of centring the hunting activities of the Tuvans among the Todjans (and hence the predecessors of the Duha) and thus made hunting, which was already a crucial part of their subsistence, even more central.

The policies of the Manchu organized the Duha clans as hierarchically ordered administrative units; this was standard practice in the region. In most parts of Tuva, these policies led to the dissolution of the former clan system, which, according to Vainhstein, were replaced with the political administrative units of arrows (*arban* and *sumon*). This was reflected in the way

western Tuvans came to replace clan origin and worship of shamanic ancestral spirits with administrative allegiance and more Buddhist inspired worship of the patrilineage (Vainhstein 1980: 240). However, Vainhstein wrote that the Todjans continued to make a clear distinction between clan (*sëëk*) and arrow (*arban*) (1982: 238). Vainhstein does not purport to answer directly why this distinction remained among the Todjans while it disappeared among neighbouring people. Yet, what we do not know is that the Mongolian arrows were structured to serve a more political and military purpose, whereas the Todjan arrows were organized to preserve the Todjan way of life to ensure the flow of precious fur and pelts to the Manchu court. The Todjan arrows were thus hunting units based on former clans, whose hierarchical order provided the local *zalan* (ruler) with authority to collect fur tributes among his clan (vassals). As such, the tenacity of the Todjan clan was fashioned by the social organization of the Todjan arrows, which preserved the Duha practices of hunting through which, I propose, the Todjan's relations to ancestral spirits and sacrificial places of clans and lineages were enacted. Let us now turn to the question on how relations to spirits are enacted through the Todjan and Duha livelihood of hunting.

### **The Erratic Cosmic Economy**

Brian Donahoe (2012: 100) suggested – drawing on Bird-David (1992) and Tim Ingold (2000) – that the hunting traditions of the Todjan have historically been embedded in a cosmic economy of sharing between human hunters and non-humans (spirits and wild animals). He shows how contemporary Todjan hunters ‘feed’ (make offerings to) master spirits of the land before setting off on the hunt to ensure that the master spirits will, in return, feed the hunters with wild game (Donahoe 2012: 103-104). Also, among the Duha hunters, I found that the hunt was organised around practices of sharing; before setting off on a hunt, the hunter would feed his *eren* (spirit vessel) and make offerings (sprinkle tea in certain directions) to the land of Oron Hangai and his sacrificial places. During the hunt, Duha hunters shared most of the wild prey they caught, with the exception of small mammals, with each other and, in the case of a large mammal, such as an elk or a bear, among the entire camp upon their return. Hunters explained that, if one abstained from the traditions of sharing, one's ancestral spirits and the land of Oron Hangai would not recognize one as their kin and subsequently these spiritual powers would withhold their blessing and create all kinds of misfortunes in one's life. The Duha were – I was told - the kin of their ancestral spirits within the land and the ‘souls’ (*süns*)

and 'children' (*hüühed*) of Oron Hangai, because the Duha shared Oron Hangai's blessing, just as Oron Hangai shared it with them.

Although these examples reveal how the egalitarian principles of sharing between humans and non-humans circumscribe Duha practices of hunting, I also found that hierarchical principles of mastery and submission were evident in Duha practices and perceptions of hunting. During the hunt, wild game meat was distributed hierarchically according to the age of the hunters. While traversing the land, hunters were attentive not to hunt within – and sometimes not even enter – places felt to be owned by master spirits because, within such places, wild game was regarded as the property of the master spirit of the land. Hunters explained that Oron Hangai is the superior 'master of the taiga', who punishes those who violate its traditions, i.e. those who intrude upon the livelihood and land of its 'master spirits' (*ezed*). However, they also told me that, as long as Duha hunters and herders followed the tradition of Oron Hangai, they were the 'masters of the taiga' under the protection of Oron Hangai.

We are dealing here with a highly ambiguous cosmic economy of sharing and mastery, whereby Oron Hangai and its spirits both are perceived as kin, but also as masters and others to human hunters. Hunting is thus a highly ambiguous task, as the uncertain nature of the spirits means that the hunter must constantly interact with the land in ways that institutes him as kin and master of the land. The hunter should make offerings to the sacrificial places of his clan and lineage within the land in order to be acknowledged as their kin, and to receive the blessings of Oron Hangai. However, if the hunter happens to make an offering to a sacrificial tree of another clan or lineage the spirits of this tree are likely to perceive him as being an intruder; hence, Oron Hangai may view the hunter as a stranger and not as a master of the taiga. To become recognised by Oron Hangai as kin and master of the taiga worthy of its favours and protection, it is thus essential that the hunter regularly makes offerings to the sacrificial places of his own clan and lineage, and avoid approaching those of other kin-units.

Therefore, we have seen how clan and lineage affiliation is enacted via the Duha practice of hunting. This was probably also the case for the Todjan predecessors of contemporary Duha, at least according to the accounts of the elder informants. I thus propose that the Manchu administration of the Todjans fashioned the perpetuation of the Todjan clans, as the Manchu's



policies ensured the continuation of the Todjan livelihood of hunting through which the traditions of the Duha clans and lineage were enacted. However, I also propose that the perception of Oron Hangai being a kind of master and the Duha its (inferior) masters may have been strengthened or even established during the reign of the Manchu.

To summarize, the clans of the western Tuvans may have dissolved as they fused with the administrative units of arrows and became more political units (like in Mongolia proper), whereas the Todjan clans (and hence the Duha clans) persisted, because the Todjan arrows were structured as hunting units, which fashioned the perpetual tie between clan and ancestral spirits within the land. Though I have proposed a certain kind of continuity in the Duha clan system from prior Manchu rule up through to Manchu rule, I find that the policies of the Qing Empire may also have consolidated the Duha clans as competing hunting units and endowed them with 'chiefly' (Humphrey 1995 [1997]) powers. I will discuss this in more detail in the following section.

### **Masters of Clans and Land**

According to my elderly informants, prior to Manchu rule, the Todjan clans had no formal rulers. Instead, they seem to have been comprised of more egalitarian and bilateral kinship units. However, as the Manchu superimposed the relation of ruler (*zalan*) and ruled (ordinary clan members) upon the Todjan clans, they appear to have undertaken a more patriarchal form and hierarchical structure. This was evident in the numerous stories I heard in the taiga regarding the past *zalans*, who were depicted as the richest and most powerful men of their clans. The *zalans* were remembered for their numerous wives, large number of reindeer and valuable pelts, and in contrast to their poor kin, could buy whatever they desired. I frequently heard stories of *zalan* Hojashig and especially of *zalan* Pagmast, who were brothers and both belonged to the Kytai Balygsh sub-clan. Interestingly I found that the father of Hojashig and Pagmast were remembered as the 'powerful shaman' (*hüchtei zairan*) Kirgijak, from whom the shamanic lineage of Hojashig and that of Pagmast were said to originate (appendix B). In the following, I will turn to the stories of these past *zalans* to show how the policies of the Manchu endowed the *zalan* with patriarchal powers to master his clan or lineage and its territory, which came to establish some shamanic lineage and clans as conflicting

patrilineages. This organized the Todjan clans as conflicting hunting units and gave rise to magical combats between shamanic lineages and between clans.

The Manchu appointed each arrow a certain hunting ground and punished those who transgressed beyond its borders (Schlesinger 2012: 287); e.g., hunters caught outside the designated territory of their arrow were sentenced to forty lashes by whip (Schlesinger 2012: 287). According to my elderly informants, the *zalans* were regarded as the 'masters' of certain lands. It was the *zalans* who had to ensure that his vassals (his fellow clan men and hunters) hunted within their designated territory and that people of other arrows did not hunt within this territory. As the Manchu endowed the *zalans* with chiefly powers to master certain lands, the *zalans* appeared to have arisen as local masters of their clans and land. The idea of the Duha being masters of the land was probably not a new invention of the Manchu, but a part of a local cosmic economy of hunting. However, the perception of the *zalan* as a master of a clan and land differed, as the power of the *zalan* was a position granted by the state and not a state of being obtained in relation to Oron Hangai.

Yet, much in the same manner as the hunter who happened to hunt down a wild game in the land of a master spirit was thought to suffer the punishment of the land of Oron Hangai, the hunter who hunted within the territory of another *zalan* risked becoming subject to the corporeal punishment of the Manchu state. During Manchu rule, the cosmic economy of the Todjans thus appears to have come to include not only the land of Oron Hangai, but also the state, whose noblemen punished those who hunted beyond their assigned territories.

Annually, each arrow had to pay a certain amount of fur tribute to the noble man of the broader arrow, who then handed them on to the Tuvan prince of the Todja banner. However, the number of wild game and especially sable decreased dramatically in the 1800s, which gave rise to famine among the Duha and made it difficult for the Duha hunters of the local arrows to meet their tribute quota (Schlesinger 2012: 289). According to many of my elderly informants, disputes between clans broke out in the late 1800s, as many Duha hunters felt forced to hunt in the territory of, or steal livestock from, other arrows to combat famine. Several of my elderly informants recounted how these disputes gave rise to magical combats between shamans and *zalans* of different clans. People told me how shamans in those days were capable of transforming themselves into wild deer and grow impressive antlers, which

they fought each other with. I was told that the spirits of these past shamans still remember their enemies (other clans and their shamans and spirits). Once, my host mother, Aichurek, told me:

Though our clans today live peacefully together, one ought to avoid approaching a sacrificial tree of a shaman [of a clan] that one's predecessors fought with, because the spirits still remember past combats, and thus will see one (of an antagonistic clan) as an enemy

The words of Aichurek and the stories on historical fights between clans over land and wild game indicate that the Duha clans were consolidated as competing hunting units during the later periods of Manchu reign.

I also heard several stories regarding the historical tensions between the clans. These stories mostly recounted fights between clan members, usually shamans or *zalan*s, which had taken place during Manchu rule. People told me how both *zalan* Pagmast and *zalan* Hojashig were shamans and how they - though they were brothers - had engaged in magical combats with each other. They said that Pagmast and Hojashig had been assigned each their hunting territory of control during the Manchu. Moreover, I became aware that Hojashig were known as the predecessor of a shamanic lineage situated in Baruun Taiga, whereas Pagmast were known as the predecessor a shamanic lineage situated in Zuun Taiga. The historical conflicts between Pagmast and Hojashig were said to still to release conflicts between their descendants. Interestingly I also found that both these lineages were known to be inherited primarily patrilineally, which may indicate that the patrilineal principle of inheritance of some shamanic lineages was fashioned by Manchu administration. Also contemporary tensions between shamanic lineages and between clans can be traced back to Manchu reign.

At the beginning of my fieldwork, I wondered why the members of the Soyan and Balygsh clan within our camps in Zuun Taiga tended to place their *urts* at a safe distance from each other. Also, members of these clans almost solely participated in shamanic séances of shamans of their own clan; they told me, 'though we are friends today our spirits still remember how we fought in the past'. During my divinations, some of my Balygsh inquirers explained that they preferred to place their *urts* at a safe distance from members of the Soyan clan, as they feared that living too close would stir their ancestral spirit's anger. During interviews, I asked my

informants about these historic disputes; it turned out that most people in the camp were aware of the details of these events.

I was told that the tension between the Balygsh and Soyan' clan originated from the 'magical fights' (*jatga*) between *zalan* Pagmast of the Balygsh clan and shaman Tol of the Soyan clan. According to the story, Pagmast's only son, Shagdar, fell in love with a young girl of the Soyan clan and to please his son, Pagmast stole the girl and presented her to his son. Realizing their daughter had been abducted, her parents turned to shaman Tol of their Soyan clan, who threw 'curses' (*jatga*) on the Balygsh clan, which helped the young girl escape. This raised the anger of *zalan* Pagmast, who began to throw curses on shaman Tol. Soon, shaman Tol and his clan members suffered all kinds of misfortune due to *zalan* Pagmast's immense magical powers. Recounting these events, my informants depicted the shamanic powers of *zalan* Pagmast and shaman Tol as being fairly equal: they both possessed the capability of hurting the other, which still continued to mark the relation between the Balygsh and Soyan clan. However, the stories about *zalan* Pagmast depict his shamanic powers as superior to those of the Darhad shamans of the steppe. This was evident in the stories of how *zalan* Pagmast eventually managed to buy a Darhad wife for his son.

Many of my elderly Duha and Darhad informants told me that, subsequent to the Soyan girls escape, *zalan* Pagmast sought advice from a Buddhist lama on the choice of wife for his son. According to an elderly Duha man, the Buddhist lama told *zalan* Pagmast that 'the future wife of your son lives in Mongolian land. She belongs to a family of seven people; she is the third daughter of five children.' *Zalan* Pagmast is said to have travelled to Mongolian land searching for the girl. He eventually found a fifteen-year-old girl named Badam in a household of a female shaman with five children. When *zalan* Pagmast asked the shaman to give her daughter away, she said: 'Never will I give my daughter away to such a savage folk and land as that of the taiga'. *Zalan* Pagmast then offered the shaman thirty horses and fifty sable skins for her daughter and said that if she would not willingly give up her daughter, he would take her by the powers of 'the *Tagna* [tuv. Taiga] shaman'. The shaman then, I was told, knew that she could do nothing but agree; crying she gave her daughter Badam away to *zalan* Pagmast's son. In this story, as well as many others I heard about *zalan* Pagmast, the mother of Badam describes the Duha and the taiga as more savage and wild than the steppe and its inhabitants, which is reminiscent of the Manchu's descriptions of the taiga and its native inhabitants.

Moreover, the superior shamanic powers of *zalan* Pagmast to combat that of the Darhad shaman is explained as due to *zalan* Pagmast embodying the powers of the taiga and the legendary taiga (*tagna*) shaman. The story suggests the Manchu's perception of the taiga and its inhabitants as being wild endowed the local *zalans* with shamanic powers that were considered superior to those of surrounding groups.

My informants disagreed on whether *zalan* Pagmast had been a shaman or not. Some said that he had been a shaman in the local sense of the term, who summoned spirits during nightly drum rituals. Others said that he was merely a *zalan* of shamanic powers, capable of casting 'magic spells' (*jatga*). Yet, everyone appeared to agree that *zalan* Pagmast was a man of immense chiefly and shamanic powers, who could contest the powers of shamans of other clans and overcome that of Darhad shamans. During Manchu rule, the new superimposition of the role of the *zalan* upon the clans thus appears to have endowed the *zalans* with shaman like powers to master their clans and lands. Moreover, during Manchu rule, we can locate a shift in the traditions of the Todjan clans, from more bilateral traditions of worship and inheritance of clan spirits toward more patrilineal ones, which, I propose, was propagated by Manchu policies and, as we will see, Buddhism.

### **The Influence of Buddhism on Duha Clans**

An elderly Duha, Ulaanhüü, once told me how his Urat clan had almost become extinct in the early 1900s, as clan members were dying in their early youth. He said that the Urat clan had been struck by sudden deaths when they moved away from their ancestral land, where their sacrificial trees were located. Being separated from the land of their sacrificial trees, they ceased to worship them and consequently clan members began dying in their youth. Ulaanhüü did not know why his clan moved away from their ancestral land, yet, drawing on historical material, we may assume that it was the Manchu governors who ordered them to move to a new land. As Schlesinger (2012: 289) has shown, the number of wild game in Todja declined rapidly throughout the 1800s. This forced the Manchu to relocate some Todjan arrows to new territories. This relocation of the Duha appears to have given rise to the founding of new places and practices of clan worship.

Ulaanhüü told me how one of his predecessors had visited a Buddhist lama to ask how to put an end to the premature deaths tormenting the Urat clan. The lama answered that the Urat

man had to travel to Mongolian land to search for and initiate a worship of a tree with one hundred branches. According to the Buddhist lama, only male members of the Urat clan were to worship this tree and only through their regular worship could the clan prosper one again. The ancestor of Ulaanhüü indeed found a tree with one hundred branches in Mongolian land; they founded its tradition of worship, that is still practiced widely among the male members of the Urat' clan.

This story shows how some Duha sought the advice of Buddhist clergy on how to re-establish ties to ancestral spirits, which had been lost when they were removed from their ancestral land following the decrease in the number of wild game during the late Manchu reign. It also reveals how the Urat clan's patrilineal form of worship can be traced back to the advice of a Buddhist lama. This opens up questions of how the decline of wild game may have been felt by the Duha as evidence of a disruption in the relation between humans and ancestral spirits and how the influence of Buddhism may have shaped the Duha effort to restore such relations.

In all banners in Tuva and Mongolia, the Manchu established Buddhist monasteries, whose religious practices and values worked to reproduce and confirm the power of the Manchu state and its hierarchical political administration of the region (Djakonova 2001; Humphrey 1980: 32). Ørjan Olsen (1915a) has described how noblemen, *zalans* and laypeople in the early 1900s were positioned according to rank and gender during Buddhist ceremonies in a local monastery in Todja. This confirms the point made by several scholars (Bulag 1998; Humphrey 1996 [1994]) that the clan system of the indigenous people of Mongolia and Tuva was shaped both by the political and religious ideology of the Manchu.

Uradyn Bulag (1998) traces the decline of the Mongolian 'clan system' to the shift in religious orientation during the Manchu empire from a mainly shamanic worship ideology towards a more Buddhist ideology. Buddhism was, according to Bulag, a complete antithesis to the genealogy principle of shamanism being more concerned with 'the karmic fate of individuals' to obtain 'the ultimate rebirth' (Bulag 1998: 123). I agree with Bulag that genealogies indeed matter in shamanism; yet, I question his assumption of Buddhism being opposed to genealogy. If we look solely at the philosophy of Buddhism, he is certainly right. However, if we examine the actual practices of the ecclesiastical elite during Manchu rule, it turns out that Buddhism actually, as Sneath (2007) and Humphrey (1996 [1994]) have shown, gave rise to

patrilineages of ruling nobles. The story of Ulaanhüü reveals how the influence of Buddhism constituted the Duha clans, or at least some of them, as patrilineages. It also shows how Buddhism confirmed the more shamanic elements of the clan, as it was the advice of a Buddhist lama that led to the discovery and constitution of a new sacrificial tree of the Urat clan, which came to perpetuate their ties to its shamanic lineages.

The influence of Buddhism during Manchu rule appears to have left its patrilineal marks on the Duha perception of clans in particular, and the land (sacrificial trees and mountains) in general. Travelling through the taiga, Solnoi often told me how I should not approach this or that mountain, as Buddhist lamas in the past had erected *ovoos*, which could only be worshipped by males. Though there are no Buddhist monasteries today in the province of Tsagaannuur, the influence of Buddhism appears to live on in the perception of clans and land. Yet, the patriarchal ideology of Buddhism never gained the upper hand among the Duha. Instead, Buddhist lamas and shamans appear to have coexisted and competed during Manchu rule.

Whereas I was told that the Urat clan had historically sought advice from Buddhist lamas, several members of other clans informed me that shamans had fought magically with Buddhist lamas during Manchu rule. In the taiga, as among the neighbouring Darhad (Badamhatan 1965; Hangartner 2011; Pedersen 2011), stories abounded on how shamans historically had engaged in magical battles with Buddhist lamas. The question is what marks did these battles between shamans and Buddhist clergy leave on the Duha clans?

One young Duha woman, Tsend, told me how her mother, who was a shaman, had advised her neither to allow a Buddhist lama enter her *urts* nor to bring any kind of Buddhist object into her home, as her maternal clan spirits would be ferocious upon encountering anything and anyone associated with their antagonists. Tsend told me how her great grandmother had fought magically with a Buddhist monk:

My grandmother used to tell me that her mother, shaman Urel, once became aware that a monk from the monastery of Zuulungiin Huree had cursed her. When she discovered this, she put a *seter* (amulet enlivened with spirits thought to ride on the amulet) around the neck of a reindeer and sent it toward the monastery. The reindeer ran to the monastery and dropped dead right at its gate causing the monk to die from shaman

Urel's curse. The shamans of our Soyan clan used to be this strong. But today nobody is capable of taking on this power and that is why we have all this trouble.

This story illustrates how the Duha clans are endowed with the 'mythic images' (Taussig 1987) of past disputes between shamans and Buddhist clergy, which are believed to have taken place during Manchu rule. Such stories conduct a kind of 'historical sorcery' (Taussig 1984), because they work as living reminders of how present misfortune is caused by an absence of powerful shamanic heirs, who are capable of mastering the spiritual powers of their predecessors. Simultaneously, stories of past shamans and *zalans* appears to work as living reminders of the Duha being the true masters of the taiga, endowed with the powers of past shamans and hence capable of overthrowing the powers of surrounding power holders.

During Manchu rule, some Duha clans undertook a more patriarchal and patrilineal form, whereas others retained a more bilateral or matrilineal form. This is reminiscent of the historical shift within Mongolia, described by Humphrey (1996[1994]), between a mainly 'patriarchal' and a more 'transformational' kind of shamanism. According to Humphrey, the patriarchal kind of shamanism used rituals of sacrifice to the heavens to confirm the reproduction of the patrilineal clan, state or polity (Humphrey 1996 [1994]: 199), whereas, the transformational kind of shamanism engaged 'trance' and 'possession' to summon non-human and human spirits thought to be immanent in the world in order to reproduce the shamanic lineage (Humphrey 1996 [1994]: 199). In the case of the Duha, I find that we may engage this analytical division to point towards how Duha shamanism during the Qing Empire somehow arose within the tension between a more patriarchal and transformational kind of shamanism.

The very politically and religiously enforced hierarchical order of the clans appears to have endowed the Duha clans with a more patriarchal kind of shamanism. Here the *zalan* arose as a shaman-like master or chief of a clan of male hunters, and a master of a specific territory. At the same time, the policies of the Manchu appear to have boosted a more transformational kind of shamanism. This was evident in the story of the shamanic powers of *zalan* Pagmast and in the legendary stories of shamans, who during the reign of the Manchu, were said to have transformed themselves into wild animals (deer or bear) to combat magically with other shamans or Buddhist clergy. I propose that one of the reasons why Manchu policies never



managed to fully diminish the influence of shamanism, despite succeeding in reconstituting some of the Duha in patrilineal clans, was because Manchu policies strengthened the role of hunting in which some of the more transformational shamanic practices subsists. During Qing rule, the Duha clans thus appear to have arisen as ambiguous kin units containing the competing structures and values of the patrilineage and the more bilateral shamanic lineage.

In line with Humphrey, we thus need to acknowledge that shamanism and clans are not ahistorical entities; rather, they are unsettled ones, whose form and content may vary and shift due to the broader environmental, religious, historical and political circumstances. Among the Duha, Qing policies appear to have conditioned the rise of clans involved in the reproduction of competing kinds of agencies, that of the 'master' and that of the 'shaman', which since then came to intermingle in ambiguous ways. The Duha concept of clan refers both to the more political unit of a patrilineage of male hunters (masters of the land), and a more bilateral shamanic unit of humans and non-humans. Today, this is reflected in the way each clan is thought to share both fellow bone (patrilineage) and *eren* (spiritual entity), whose particularities entail certain 'traditions' (*yos*) for proper interaction with other living beings (humans, animals and spirits).

Let us now turn toward how the Duha appear to have turned away from the more patriarchal mode of worship of ancestral spirits and towards a more transformational, one following the demise of the Qing Empire.

### **People of the Forest**

The dissolution of the Qing Empire in 1911 initiated a decade of political upheaval, where the Mongolians, Chinese, white Russians and red Russians battled over control of the Urianghai region (Forsyth 1992: 279-282). In 1921, the red Russians eventually gained control over the region and the Tuvan People's Republic and the Mongolian People's Republic were established as 'independent' satellites of the Soviet Union. The Duha became part of the Tuvan People's Republic, as the Lake Hövsgöl Urianghai Borderland fell within its borders. In the first years after independence, Mongolia made attempts to regain control of Tuva, however, the Soviets were unwilling to give the entire territory of Tuva back to the Mongols. Yet, in 1924, the Soviets granted Mongolia 'a strip of territory, sparsely inhabited and small in size (about 16,000 sq. km.), called Darhad - west of Khöbsögöl' (Friters 1949: 131). This had

enormous consequences for the Duha as the Mongolian/Tuvan border came to divide their homeland in two; this raised the question of what to do with the Duha who remained in Mongolia but were seen by the Mongolian government as belonging to Tuva due to their Tuvan ethnicity.

In 1924, the Mongolian government decided that the Duha, due to their Tuvan ethnicity, were supposed to live in Tuva, and began a series of campaigns – lasting from 1927 until 1951 – to expel them from Mongolia (Farkas 1992: 7-8). Yet, within a few years of each eviction, many Duha returned to Mongolia – only to be driven out again (Wheeler 1999: 41). Between 1940 and 1950, many Duha fled from Tuva to Mongolia because they feared the brutal collectivization and enforced military service during the Second World War (Inamura 2005: 142). During this period, many of my informants fled with their parents to Mongolia, where they lived illegally in the taiga until the mid-1950s.

My elderly informants' accounts of their childhood in the taiga between the 1940s and early 1950s often contained socialist discourse of how they had lived as 'savage folk' (*zerleg omog*) struggling for everyday survival in the taiga. Yet, they also stated that people in those days understood how to live in accordance with the shamanic traditions of the ancestors. During a hunt, an elderly Duha man, Ulaanhüü, told me of his childhood:

I lived in this land with my parents when I was eight or nine years old [in the 1940s]. We used to migrate through the taiga. We had few reindeer in those days and it was a very hard life. We had no flour, nor rice, we ate the meat of wild game and picked yellow potatoes to eat and drank reindeer milk. We lived as a savage folk: we did not have clothes like today, but made our clothing from the skin of wild deer and other wild animals. In the taiga, you can find wild potatoes, fish and other food everywhere, so we used to migrate following the places where edible plants grew. I always went hunting with my father. He taught me everything; he told me that to receive the gifts of Oron Hangai one needs to follow the traditions. He said: 'We [our lineage or clan] originate from a wolf, so we are not allowed to shoot a wolf'. He taught me things like that. [...] In those days, we lived according to 300 years customs. We lived to preserve the traditions of our ancestors. Today, young people do not even know their clan and its traditions. They only know half of the history of last 30 years.

In the period when the Duha lived as stateless forest dwellers, clan and lineage affiliation appears to have played an important role in the practice of hunting and herding and in the very identity of the Duha. As my host father told me:

When I was a boy I did not really know anything about Russia or Mongolia. I only knew we were the people of the taiga. I also knew I was Balygsh [clan] and my father taught me about our traditions – how to honour and worship our sacrificial places.

According to Solnoi, each clan or sub-clan also had its specific hunting and herding territory during his childhood.<sup>13</sup> For instance, the Kytai Balygsh lived along the Bus River right on the border between contemporary Tuva and Mongolia, while the Adyg Balygsh lived in the areas between the Bilen River in Tuva and the Tengis River in Mongolia (Appendix A). These clan territories are still remembered and enacted through worship, as most Kytai Balygsh still worship a series of sacrificial trees and a Mount Umai situated along the Bus River, whereas the Kytai Balygsh worship a series of sacrificial trees located in the vicinity of the Tengis River and a Mount Umai situated at the river Bilen.

Interestingly, I found that all sacrificial places or trees worshipped by whole clans were initiated as sacrificial entities, at least according to my informants, prior to the demise of the Qing Empire. On the contrary, all sacrificial trees which had been initiated after the breakdown of the Manchu state were established following the death of historic and remembered shamans of particular lineages within clans. These shamans were still remembered for their transformational powers evident in their perceived capability to transform themselves into various wild animals during rituals or materialize<sup>14</sup> in other places than that of their ordinary physical location. Following the death of these legendary shamans, their shamanic paraphernalia were placed at sacrificial trees, which were, and still are, worshipped by particular shamanic lineages and seldom by the broader clan. This may indicate that following the demise of the Qing Empire, the worship of patrilineal clans

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<sup>13</sup> The memories of Solnoi (and other Duha) regarding the territories of Duha clans during the early to mid-1900s might indicate that clan territories did not completely dissolve during the 1800s, as Vainhstein (1980) has argued, but prevailed at least among the Duha group of the Todjans.

<sup>14</sup> During the years of statelessness, the hardships forced several Duha families to give their children to Darhad families so they could adopt them. Two of these families included the family of a Balygsh shaman (male) and that of an Urat shaman (male). Some of their children who had been given up for adoption told me how they remembered that their father had materialized magically during the night in their new Darhad families to comfort them, when they were tormented with grief, as they missed their parents.

vanished and was taken over by more bilateral worship and inheritance of shamanic lineages.

We can thus locate a shift in Duha shamanism from more patriarchal shamanic practices during the Qing Empire toward more transformational shamanic practices and more bilateral worship of shamanic lineages during the years of statelessness. I propose that the demise of the Qing Empire led to the dissolution of the political organization of the Todjan clans, which had fashioned the more patriarchal worship of clans. Living as stateless forest dwellers, the clans' former role as an administrative hunting unit and its hierarchical organization around a *zalan* dissolved. Instead, the Duha appear to have turned toward their shamans and the worship of the shamanic lineage (sacrificial tree) in an effort to combat the general misfortune and hardships of the early to mid-1900s. Yet, as we will see in chapter 6 some of the Duha men, who fought state authorities during the years of statelessness are still remembered as the heroic masters and patriarchs of the taiga.

### **Citizens of the State**

Now let us turn toward the question on how the integration of the Duha into the Mongolian People's Republic in 1954 left its mark on the relationship between the Duha and their ancestral spirits. The lives of the Duha changed dramatically after being granted Mongolian citizenship in the mid-1950s. The Duha were employed by the local collective farms (*negdel*), where many were settled and employed in the farms lumber and fishing industries; others were employed as state herders or hunters in the taiga. If, as I have proposed, the Duha enact their ties to clans through the livelihood of hunting and herding in the taiga, it would follow that the clans disintegrated with the shift in the livelihood of the Duha, which took place during socialism. Indeed, many of my elderly informants told me that they had given up the worship of sacrificial places during socialism, because their integration in state collectives situated on the steppe had separated them from their homeland and made them subject to socialist repression with regards to religion. Yet, many of the Duha who had been employed as state herders and hunters in the taiga recounted how they secretly continued to worship their sacrificial places. Thus the question is: how did socialist policies and imaginaries shape the Duha livelihood and the Duha perception of, and relation to, their ancestral spirits and land?

To my surprise, I found that approximately five people of the Soyan clan and the shamanic lineage of Hojashig (Kytai Balygsh) became shamans and held secret séances during socialism, whereas Urat clan, Adyg Balygsh and the descendants of Pagmast (Kytai Balygsh) appear to have had no shamans during this period. Stories abounded on how some of the shamans of the Soyan clan and Hojashig's lineage of the Kytai Balygsh had been imprisoned for their religious activities during socialism, yet, treated better than their fellow prisoner or even released, because the police officers feared the magical powers of these shamans. On the contrary, the Urat clan, the Adyg Balygsh clan and the descendants of Pagmast's lineage (Kytai Balygsh) recounted how several of their clan members had suffered from shamanic illness, but not had the possibility to actually become shamans during socialism due to socialist repression of religion.

Turning to the sacrificial places of these clans, I also found some striking differences. I was told that several of the sacrificial places of the Urat clan and of Pagmast's lineage (Kytai Balygsh) situated in Zuun Taiga were dangerous to approach, even for their kin, and should be worshipped from a distance. The spirits of these places were commonly said to have turned ferocious due to several, though not all, of their clan-members having given up the tradition of worship during socialism. On the contrary, many contemporary clan members of the Soyan clan and Kytai Balygsh (Hojashig's kin) regularly went to worship their sacrificial places situated in Baruun Taiga. Some of these places were also regarded as wild, but in a substantially different way, as their wild character was said to derive from the innate powers of its spirits and not from the spirits being estranged from contemporary kin. The question is thus why the Duha of the contemporary Baruun Taiga appear to have secretly practised shamanism in socialist times, whereas those of the contemporary Zuun Taiga appear to have turned away from their shamanic tradition during socialism?

The Duha of Zuun Taiga recounted how they had fled their lands in northern Todja and travelled into Mongolian land where they entered Renchinlhumbe and Hanh Sum in the 1950s. In 1954, they were all integrated in the 'Golden steppe' *negdel* located in and around the village of Renchinlhumpe. In 1956, most of them were relocated to the village of Tsagaannuur, where they were employed by the fishing industry run by the 'Golden Steppe' *negdel*. According to my informants, only around five elderly couples were employed as reindeer herders in the taiga, while several Duha men later became employed as state

hunters. The Duha presently living in Baruun Taiga mostly travelled into Mongolia from the southern areas of Todja, where they entered the districts of Ulaan Uul or Bayanzürkh. They became integrated in the 'Happy Life' *negdel* located in the district of Ulaan Uul. In this *negdel*, one half of the Duha were employed as reindeer herders, while the other half worked at the local lumber enterprise (Inamura 2005: 143). However, as the reindeer herds increased during the late 1960s, the majority of the Duha families working in the lumber industry were allowed to return to the taiga to work as state herders. In the 1970s, hunting became a part of the production of both the *negdel* in Ulaan Uul and Tsagaannuur, where many Duha men became employed as state hunters, with a focus on sable production (Farkas 1992, Wheeler 2000, Inamura 2005).

In an effort to sedentarize the Duha, in 1962, the Mongolian government granted each Duha family tied to the Golden Steppe and Happy Life *negdels* a fully furnished and newly built stationary house in the villages of Tsagaannuur and Ulaan Uul (Mróz & Wasilewski 2003: 157). In Tsagaannuur, the Duha appeared to have willingly moved into the houses, which suited their new livelihood as workers in the fishery industry. However, as most Duha in Ulaan Uul lived in the taiga herding reindeer, the houses were simply used during sporadic visits to the village or settled by Duha children, when they went to school in Ulaan Uul. An elderly man, Batzayaa, recounted:

Back then, the taiga people were brought to live in the village of Ulaan Uul. However, they wanted to stay in the taiga to look after their reindeer, so they moved back to the taiga. However, the houses remained. So, whenever people went to the village, they could stay in their house. Those houses had everything; tables, chairs, radio and all necessary furniture. I moved into the house when I was seven years old together with my elder sister, Otgon, who was ten years old. We lived in our house until we graduated from school. We never lived in the dormitory, as we had the house. Our parents stayed in the taiga herding the reindeer. Sometimes they came to town to visit us and when the spring came, the school closed and we would lock our house and travel to the taiga. We would return in the fall for school. I still wonder how we lived back then.

According to my informants, life in the *negdel* in Tsagaannuur was quite different from that of Ulaan Uul *negdel*. In Tsagaannuur, most Duha were employed by the *negdel's* fish farm – an

industry that was booming. A 1959 Mongolian documentary<sup>15</sup> claims that a fisherman could catch 'seven tons of fish daily'. When I asked people to describe their former life in the fishing *negdel*, they often described it as a time of prosperity and easy living. They recounted how they had caught or processed tons of fish and how they had received a good salary for their work, which had made life 'good' and 'easy'. Though fishing, like hunting, would seem to involve the spiritual realm, no one ever mentioned a word about precautions undertaken in regard to spirits connected with fish. It was puzzling as the stories from state hunters abounded with descriptions of encounters with, and worship of, various spiritual entities, however, these issues was absent in the stories about fishing.

As Pedersen argued in relation to the Darhad people, the spirits were perhaps 'unable to move within the 'frozen' (immutable and changeless) infrastructure of everyday *negdel* life' (Pedersen 2011: 51). In making this proposition, Pedersen is drawing on Alexei Yurchak's (1997: 167-169) theory on how the 'hegemony of representation' in the Soviet Union, understood as 'the sameness of Soviet space', gave citizens the feeling that they had little choice other than to pretend that they believed in these representations, though they sometimes did not. Pedersen asserts that it was not so much the case that the Darhad had stopped believing in spirits during socialism; rather, that they were 'not admitted into the [socialist] hegemony of representations' (Pedersen 2011: 52). Something similar appears to have been the case of the *negdel* in Tsagaannuur, where shamanic practices turned into the background of Duha life. In contrast the Duha who lived as state herders and hunters in Baruun Taiga (Ulaan Uul) – outside the socialist hegemony of representations - continued secretly to hold shamanic séances and worship their sacrificial places.

I also believe that the reason why shamanism became less prevalent in Duha life in the *negdel* in Tsagaannuur and more prevalent in the *negdel* of Ulaan Uul was due to their different 'economies'. I here use the term 'economies' as processes involved in cycles of profit or gain. In Tsagaannuur the Duha were employed in the *negdel's* newly establish fishing industry, where work 'automatically' released state salaries. In contrast, the Duha attached to the *negdel* in Ulaan Uul were primarily employed as state herders and hunters in the taiga, whereby they remained part of the 'cosmic economy' of Oron Hangai. In the taiga, the health of the herd and the luck of the hunter were felt as being dependent on the ability to interact

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zITb9M62iDc&hd=1>

appropriately with the spiritual powers of the land. This dependency may even have been strengthened by the policies of the *negdel* in Ulaan Uul, as the salaries of its state hunters relied on their gains; this was in contrast to the fishery in Tsagaannuur, which – I was told – paid employees a regular salary for their work.

Interestingly my informants frequently referred to the taiga as the land of Oron Hangai mastered by its multiple spirits, whereas the village of Tsagaannuur and the steppe was depicted as a space overseen by the state. One of these informants was a seventy-year-old Duha man, who told me of his life as a state hunter. This is an extract from one of our conversations:

During socialism, I was employed as a state hunter in the Tsagaannuur Fishing and Hunting State Farm. I even received the title of ‘excellent Mongolian state hunter’ (*Mongol ulsyn sain anchin*). I used to travel through the taiga hunting sable. In those days, most taiga people worked as state hunters, hunting sable according to the state plan. During hunting I regularly went to worship my sacrificial trees and places. Nobody knew when I went to the mountains to pray or when I made my tea offering to the land of Oron Hangai. It would, of course, have been impossible if some state official had seen me. But travelling through the wild forest, I could pray as I wanted, nobody could see me. However, the land of Oron Hangai was watching over me observing whether I followed the traditions. Even though there might be many sables in a land, a hunter may fail to shoot any, if he has not worshipped the sacrificial trees of his clan and the land of Oron Hangai properly.

Among the Duha in the *negdel* in Tsagaannuur, shamanic practices appear largely to have been confined to the taiga. However, in both *negdels*, the state hunters appear to have been constituted as heroic servants of the state, evident in the way the state regularly ordained skilful Duha hunters the title of ‘excellent Mongolian state hunter’. In each taiga, one or two Duha hunters were given the status of ‘chief of the hunting section’ (*angiin brigadin darga*). Such hunting chiefs had the authority to oversee and control that the other state hunters met the quota of pelts prescribed by the local *negdels*. As such, the position as chief of a certain hunting section replicated in overall terms that of the *zalan* during the Qing Empire, since both were entitled to master a certain territory and people to serve the state. Hence



both the administrative hunting policies of the Qing Empire and those of the Socialist states fashioned Duha hunters as masters of the taiga.

Interestingly, I found that Mongolian socialist documentaries also depict the Duha and in particular the state hunters as ‘masters of the taiga’ (*taigyn ezed*), who use their skills of mastery to serve the state. A 1959 socialist propaganda documentary from Mongolia shows images of a Duha hunter leading a group of Duha hunters through the taiga, while we are told how the hunters ‘headed by Gongor [local Duha] carefully are surveying the location of wild-species in Hövsgöl, especially sable growth [...] to help survey, hunt and ensure the increase of wild species for the country’. The image of the Duha as masters of the taiga is even more explicit in a 1983 documentary of the Duha called ‘Masters of the Taiga’. This documentary depicts the Duha as the heroic masters of the taiga, who are capable of surviving in the wild forest by herding reindeers and hunting. We are told that Duha hunters not even are able to feel cold, when temperatures in the taiga drop down to minus fifty degree. The documentary portrays the Duha and their hunters as the true masters of the taiga, who due to their super-human qualities, reminiscent of that of shamans, are capable of living in the taiga.

In the documentary, we meet the Duha state hunter Sodov, who uses his skills to master the taiga to serve the state. It announces that Sodov has received ‘the honourable title of chief of the hunting’ section of Tsagaannuur’, because he is a ‘hard-working man’ who has ‘never ceased to fulfil his appointed job of providing pelts for the country’. In both these documentaries, the Duha and their hunters are thus depicted as masters of the taiga and servants of the state. Whereas the Manchu bestowed each Duha clan a *zalan*, who was entitled to master his demarcated territory and the hunters of his clan, the socialist state appears to have constituted the Duha ‘chiefs of the hunting sections’ in particular, and the state hunters in general, as the heroic masters of the taiga serving the needs of the state. Yet, though Duha hunters were depicted as servants of the state, the image of them being the masters of the taiga appears to have constituted them as shamanic ‘others’ to the state. This was evident in my elderly informants – earlier employed as state hunters - descriptions of how Mongolian officials commonly had feared their shamanic powers. Many of these former state hunters said that during socialism none of the Mongolian

officials in Tsagaannuur had dared interfere with their work as state hunters in the taiga, because Mongolian officials feared the shamanic powers of Duha state hunters.

Most of the Duha affiliated to the *negdel* in Ulaan Uul were employed in the taiga, where the everyday practices of herding and hunting appears to have perpetuated their shamanic practices. Dagjii, a 58- year-old Duha, often recounted the stories his father had told him about the land and its spirits during their hunting trips in the 1960s. Particular one of the stories Dagjii told me pointed toward the 'cosmic economy' involved in hunting:

My father, grandfather and the elders used to tell us children this story to show us how the land of Oron Hangai punishes those who do not worship their sacrificial trees. This is what they said: In Tuva there is a river named Oya-le that begins in the land called Jalamyn Taiga, close to the village of Kungurtug. On the banks of the river there is a sacrificial tree worshipped by the Khaalgalyg clan [Todjan clan]. In the old days, one man from the Khaalgalyg clan neither worshipped Oron Hangai nor his sacrificial trees. Once he passed his sacrificial tree and found a big hammer lying next to the tree. He took the hammer and knocked on the tree. Then he heard a woman's voice say: 'Why did you come here?' 'I wanted to see what you are', he answered. 'If you have come to see me, what gifts did you bring me?' the woman asked. 'Is a gift necessary to look at you? Come on, just show yourself, if you really exist', the man shouted. The woman replied: 'That is enough! Keep your horse away from the two dogs on your way back and take care of your health when you reach home'. So the man returned home and on the way two bears attacked and ate his horse. The man ran all the way back to his home and when he arrived, he fell to the ground and died.

Stories of spirits told in the taiga might have coexisted with socialist propaganda, where the stories of spirits confirmed the necessity of practices of shamanic worship while traversing the taiga.

In order to fulfil the duties implied in the Duha's occupation of state herder or state hunter within the socialist state, the Duha turned toward the traditions of the land of Oron Hangai to ensure growth of their herd and bountiful hunting opportunities. The vitality of shamanism among the Ulaan Uul Duha was also evident by number of their shamans. On

the contrary, the Duha<sup>16</sup> affiliated to the *negdel* in Tsagaannuur had no shamans. Yet, I was told that two Duha woman in Tsagaannuur had suffered the ‘shamanic illness’, but never managed to become shamans.

One of these women’s was an old Duha lady called Tsend, who at the time of my fieldwork was in her 70s. I met with her frequently during my visits to the village of Tsagaannuur. Often she would show up in people’s houses, sit down for a short while and, to the fright of local children, begin talking to herself in strange and incomprehensible ways. People explained that Tsend had become ‘mad in her mind’ (*uhaan mangar*) in the 1960s while she was working in the fishing industry in Tsagaannuur. I was told that when Tsend became ill, everyone knew that it was a sign that she was to become a shaman, because her father was ‘the great Kytai Balygsh shaman Natsag’. However, people told me that Tsend’s relatives ‘had not allowed her to become a shaman’, because ‘they feared the officials in Tsagaannuur as shamanism was forbidden during socialism’. According to my informants, for more than fifty years, Tsend had been caught in a state of madness incurable by any shaman, as she had not ‘taken on her spirits in time’.

Tsend’s fate also affected the spirits and sacrificial place of her father, shaman Natsag, located in Zuun Taiga. This place was generally known to have turned wild, as its spirits had not been successfully passed on to any shaman since shaman Natsag’s death. Many of my informants in the Kytai Balygsh clan told me that they worshipped the sacrificial tree of shaman Natsag. However, everyone worshipped it from a distance, as no one dared to approach the tree, as it was known to be ferocious.

The administrative policies of the *negdels* during socialism appear to have left its mark on the Duha landscape; most of the sacrificial places in Zuun Taiga are said to have turned ferocious due to their kin having abandoned worship during socialism. In Baruun Taiga, on the other hand, members of the Soyán and Balygsh clan regularly travelled to worship their sacrificial trees in the taiga. The spirits of these places were said to recognize their human kin, because the shamanic lineages of the Soyán and Hojashig (Kytai Balygsh) had not been broken by the absence of shamans.

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<sup>16</sup> The Duha in Tsagaannuur were mainly members of the Kytai Balygsh (Pagmast’s lineage), Adyg Balygsh and Urat clans.

The difference in the production of the *negdels* in Ulaan Uul (lumber, herding and hunting) and Tsagaannuur (primarily fishing) thus restored the ties between humans and spirits in the Baruun taiga and disrupted the ties between humans and spirits in Zuun Taiga.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have argued that the Duha clans are a deeply localized phenomenon enmeshed in the practices of hunting and herding in the taiga, yet also fashioned and moulded by the historical imaginaries and policies of surrounding states and local administrations. I showed how the Manchu reined the Duha to protect and strengthen the Duha livelihood of hunting in order to ensure Urianghai was a tailored zone for the empire's fur production, whereby the Manchu came to condition the very practices through which the Duha's ties to clans, spirits and land were sensed and enacted. However, Manchu policies not simply perpetuated Duha clans. Rather the administrative policies of the Manchu and the religious ideology of Buddhism consolidated the Duha clans as patrilineal hunting units tied to particular territories.

During socialism, the worship of the sacrificial places of clans and lineages vanished among the Duha settled in the *negdel* in Tsagaannuur, whereas it thrived among the Duha connected to the *negdel* in Ulaan Uul. I have argued that this difference derived from the different 'economies' these groups became part of during socialism. As the Duha in Tsagaannuur became settled in the steppe and incorporated as workers in the socialist state, they became separated from the 'cosmic economy' of the taiga and integrated into the economy, and subject to 'hegemony of representations' of the socialist state. Hence among the Duha in Tsagaannuur shamanism turned into the background of everyday *negdel* life. On the contrary, most Duha in Ulaan Uul were living outside the 'hegemony of representations' as they were employed as state herders and hunters in the taiga. Living as state herders in the taiga, the 'cosmic economy' of Oron Hangai was felt to reign over the health of the herd and the gains of the hunter making it essential for hunters to reproduce ties to ancestral clan and lineage spirits. Among the Duha in Ulaan Uul, secret shamanic practices thus proliferated in the taiga conditioned by the administrative policies of the local *negdel*. However, as the *negdel* in Ulaan Uul and later Tsagaannuur aimed at making the taiga a tailored zone for the fur production of

the Mongolian People's republic, they came to condition Duha state hunters perpetuation of shamanic practices and hence state hunters' ties to their ancestral spirits and land.

We have seen how the policies and imaginaries of both the Qing Empire and the socialist state constituted the Duha as the masters of the taiga. This image of the Duha still appeared to shape the general Mongolian perception of the Duha. For the Duha, socialism also left its mark on their ties to their ancestral kin and land. This was evident in the 2010s where I found that the Duha in Baruun Taiga struggled to control the immense powers of their shamanic predecessors, who were thought to have lived as heroic outlaws in Baruun Taiga during socialism. The challenge of the Duha in Baruun Taiga was hence to master places thought to be enlivened with the spirits of these legendary shamans. In Zuun Taiga, on the other hand, contemporary kin felt that socialist repression has estranged them from their shamanic lineages and clans. This was reflected in the efforts of the Duha in Zuun Taiga to reconstitute themselves as heirs of their estranged ancestral spirits and land.

## Chapter 3

### The Forest of Precarious Relations

Every autumn, my host father Solnoi cutted down a small cedar tree, fastened several white cotton ribbons to its branches and placed it in the direction of Tuva. He told me that he did this to 'pass his prayers on' (*zalbirlyg damjuulj ögdög*) to the sacrificial tree of his paternal grandmother's lineage located on the Tuvan side of the border. After praying to his grandmother's sacrificial tree he saddled his horse and rode, sometimes for several days to pay his homage to the sacrificial tree of his Balygsh clan situated in the mountainous area of Bagtyn Hoshuun in Zuun taiga. Solnoi told me that he had to 'renew' (*shinechilj*) his sacrificial trees annually, through the act of worship, as his life was 'entrusted' (*daatgadag*) to them. Living in Mongolia, it was too risky for Solnoi to cross the border to visit the sacrificial tree of his paternal grandmother, yet, he worshipped it from a distance. However, Solnoi had never worshipped the sacrificial trees within his mother's clan, though he knew its location and were certain that his grandmother had been a powerful shaman. Solnoi told me that he once had passed the mountain in Baruun Taiga where the sacrificial tree of his maternal grandmother was located, yet, he had never dared to actually approach it. When I asked him why, he answered:

I never go there, because I have not been there earlier. It is not right just to go there. It is difficult to approach a sacrificial place, where one has not been for many years. It is bad to approach such places. So that is the reason, why I do not go there.

Solnoi's words open up for the overall question of this chapter: how are the Duha concepts of clan and lineage tied to sacrificial places within the local landscape and how do the Duha sense, renew and control their kinship ties to clans and lineages through practical and ritual engagement with their lived landscape?

In Chapter 2 we saw how state and local administrative policies have historically facilitated, shaped and alienated relations between the Duha and their land and spirits. In

this chapter, we move forward to the present day to examine how the Duha return to the taiga has fashioned a return to known albeit uncertain and estranged kinship relations. This chapter examines why Duha kinship evolves as an unstable state, potentialized but not pre-given by descent. It argues that their clan and lineage kinship consist of precarious relations between humans and sacrificial entities. The chapter also discusses how people become kin through regular ritual renewal of sacrificial places and turn into strangers if they withdrew from renewing sacrificial places.

The Duha worship of sacrificial entities is framed by local notions of kinship. Clan affiliation is generally said to be pre-given by paternal descent (inheritance of bone). Nonetheless, the Duha say that to be recognized as kin by one's ancestral spirits (*eren*), and hence summon their protection, one ought to worship the sacrificial places of one's clan regularly. Lineage affiliation is merely a potential of descent (paternal, maternal and adoptive) effectuated if the ancestral spirit (*eren*) of the lineage somehow is 'passed on' to the individual.

The question is how we may conceptualize the kinship relation between humans and non-humans (*erens* and sacrificial trees), which constitute the Duha clans and lineages. Scholars have argued that hunter-gatherer' perceptions of the relationship between humans and non-humans agencies (animals, spirits, land) is often perceived as similar to that between parent and child, and is structured around principles of mutual identification and intimate sharing (Bird-David 1990: 190; Ingold 2000: 43; Turnbull 1962: 92). In a similar manner, Marshall Sahlins (2011) has recently made the ontological proposition that kinship is 'a mutuality of being', since 'kinsmen are persons who belong to one another, who are members of one another, who are co-present in each other, whose lives are joined and interdependent' (2011: 11).

The Duha notions of clan and lineage indeed do point toward a 'mutuality of being' between human and non-human kin. This is evident in the way clans are thought to share a fellow origin in a common bone (*yas*) and spirit (*eren*) and the way its lineages are said to originate in a fellow *eren*. Likewise, the relationship between human kin and *eren* (both human and non-human) and hence human and sacrificial tree involves ideas of a mutual being. This was apparent in the common Duha notion that the relationship between a sacrificial entity and a human worshipper is similar to that of parent and child. The act of the worshipper (child) is

said to shape the character of the sacrificial entity (parent) just as the character of the sacrificial entity shape the life and wellbeing of the worshipper, hence their 'lives' are joined and interdependent. Still I find that the Duha's perception of the relationship between human kin and sacrificial tree is more precarious than that of 'mutual being'.

Though each clan is said to share a fellow bone (mutual being), each clan member is considered innately different from others, because each person has her own affiliation to one or several shamanic lineage(s) within her maternal or paternal clan. Likewise, though the fellow origin of human and sacrificial tree in a certain historic shaman and her spirit (*eren*) points toward their mutual being, their hierarchical relation (parent and child) and diverse being (human vs. erratic spirit) points toward their 'mutual strangeness' or 'mutual otherness' (Stasch 2009: 272). The relation between humans and sacrificial tree is not a stable one, but oscillates between one of primary mutual being and one of mutual otherness activated by human worship or the absence of worship; hence, I perceive Duha kinship as more ambiguous and precarious than Sahlins or the other above mentioned scholars would appear to do.

In my analysis of the relationship between humans and non-humans within the Duha clans and lineages, I am inspired by Rupert Stasch's (2009) revealing studies of social relations among the Korowai of Papua New Guinea. Stasch proposes that 'otherness' serves as the basis of social relations among the Korowai, as it is the 'quality through and around which people are mutually close' (Stasch 2009:4). Among the Duha, sacrificial entities appear to be envisioned as fellow kin, yet latent 'others'. This is reflected in the way sacrificial places are described as 'ferocious' (*dogshin*) places, endowed with – and fusing – the powers of shamanic *erens* (enlivened with both human and non-human powers) and the powers of master spirits (*ezed*) or water spirits (*lus*) of the place. I propose that the very 'otherness' of sacrificial entities gives rise to a precarious relationship between human kin and sacrificial entities, which continually needs to be harnessed as a relation of mutual kinship (parent and child) in order to ensure the wellbeing of the worshipper and the broader kin.



In line with chapter 2, I argue that relations to clans and lineages are sensed and enacted through the practices of hunting and herding in the landscape. I propose that we view the landscape not merely as representing the Duha clans and lineage, but that we, as suggested by James Leach (2003: 31), perceive the creation of kin and landscape as mutually constitutive. As stated by Solnoi at the beginning of this chapter, he was not affiliated to his mother's sacrificial tree, because he had never visited the area where the tree is located. On the other hand, he was affiliated to those of his father's clan and lineages precisely because he had lived and hunted within the land of some of these trees during his childhood and lived within the land of other of these trees during his adulthood as a state hunter and herder and upon his return to the taiga. Among the Duha, kin-relations are thus sensed and enacted through the lived landscape. It is through events within the land that the Duha – as Rupert Stasch (2009: 17) has described among the Korowai – search for relational meaning and come to know relations between humans and ancestral clan or lineage spirits. I thus perceive clan and lineage affiliation among the Duha as 'indigenous ways of acting out and conceptualizing relations between people, as distinct from notions derived from anthropological theory' (Carsten 1995: 224), yet, pay particular attention to how 'relatedness' among the Duha is framed by their shamanic ontology and experienced and enacted through practical engagement with the land and its places.

To substantiate these arguments ethnographically, I begin the chapter with a story about my journey with Solnoi to his sacrificial tree, which illustrates how the precarious nature of sacrificial places evolves from their perceived ability to instigate binding kinship relations to those who attend them.

### **Entrusting one's Life to a Tree**

In 2012, I convinced my host father, Solnoi, to take my family and me with him on his annual visit to the sacrificial tree of his Balygsh clan, commonly known as 'the tree with one hundred branches' (*zuun salaa mod*). Having heard many stories of this particular tree and its powers since my first fieldtrip to the taiga in 1999, I was curious to see the tree.

In 1999, an elderly Duha man, Ulaanhüü, repeatedly told me that the tree with one hundred branches had warded off the extinction of his Urat clan. Most of the sacrificial trees of the Duha are only attached to one particular clan or lineage, yet to my surprise, I found that the worship

of this tree was not limited to the Urat clan, but also counted several, though not all, sub-clans and shamanic lineages within the Balygsh clan. Each of these kin units has particular traditions for worship. Among the Urat, for instance, worship is restricted to males, whereas both female and male members of a Balygsh sub-clan and two shamanic lineages actively worship the tree. When I asked Solnoi why all these different clans and lineages were worshipping the same tree, he answered that it was because they all, for different reasons, had entrusted their lives to the tree.

Solnoi told me that he had entrusted his life to the tree during his childhood. When Solnoi was twelve years old, he embarked on a month long hunt with his father; during this trip, they lost their hunting luck and had not succeeded in hitting any game, though they had encountered several wild animals. As they were travelling through the land of Bagtyn Hoshuun, his father told him that their lack of hunting luck might be a sign that Solnoi ought to worship the tree with one hundred branches located in this land. Solnoi's father thus brought him to the tree with one hundred branches and taught him the essentials of prayer and worship. His father said: 'After this day, the tree will always wait for his son to return'. During their travels back to their camp, they came across a flock of deer and managed to kill one of them. They had, according to Solnoi received 'a gift offered by the tree with one hundred branches'.

Solnoi told me that he had always followed his father's advice to worship the tree with one hundred branches annually. He told me that the worship of the tree had been 'passed on' (*damjuulan*) within his lineage of the Balygsh clan from the old days up until now and said with a serious tone that: 'if a person visits the tree once, he ought to worship it regularly'.

At first, I did not pay much attention to this point. Later, however, I realized that the Duha perceive lineage affiliation as a potential of genealogy, which is passed on through the worship of sacrificial trees or the will of the spirits. On the one hand, sudden illness or misfortune may indicate that a certain shamanic 'lineage has been passed on' (*udmyg üye damjuulan*) to the sufferer, who ought to 'take and carry on' (*avah javaj*) the lineage to overcome her suffering. If an individual suffers a shamanic illness, it is a sign that she ought to pass on the lineage and carry on its spirits by becoming a shaman. In a similar vein, individual misfortune is commonly understood as being caused by the influence of lineage spirits, which only can be harnessed through the individual's worship of a sacrificial tree(s). On the other

hand, relations between humans and sacrificial trees are also activated through people's movement within the lands of these trees. This was evident in the stories Duha hunters told me: during a hunt, they worship sacrificial trees within their lineage as they enter their lands. They explained that if a hunter enters the land of a sacrificial tree without worshipping it, the tree would perceive the hunter as an intruder and invoke all kinds of misfortune in the life of the intruder. However, if the hunter worships the tree according to its traditions, the tree would recognize the hunter as kin and grant him its favours and protection.

An initial worship of a sacrificial tree is not perceived as an isolated event, but as an event of 'entrustment', which initiates a permanent, unbreakable and inherently risky relationship between worshipper and spiritual entity. This relation is not limited to the worshipper but is potentially passed on to one or several of the worshipper's descendants. Scholars have described how Mongolians tends to avoid engaging both with 'known' spiritual powers to escape 'the reciprocal obligation of formalized exchange' evolving from such relations (Højer 2009: 587; see also Højer 2003, Buyandelgeiyn 2007) and 'unknown' spiritual powers to evade 'the uncertain relations implicated in exchanges with the unknown' (Højer 2009: 587). Such perceptions also appear to be present among the Duha, where people said they abstained from worshipping certain sacrificial trees, because they 'did not know their traditions', feared their 'ferocious' powers or were situated 'too far away to worship regularly'.

However, the Duha case differs from the more general Mongolian one, as among the Duha, it is first and foremost kinship affiliation and practical emplacement in the land, which directs people to worship certain sacrificial trees and to evade the worship of other sacrificial trees within the land. This is connected to the common Duha perception that only people of a similar kin to that of a sacrificial tree ought to approach it. If a person approaches a sacrificial place or tree of an alien clan or lineage it is believed that he will suffer from various kinds of spiritual retribution. Additionally if the approached tree for some reason – absence of worship or improper offerings – does not recognize the human worshipper as its kin, the worshipper is likely to invoke the anger of the tree. The Duha perception of the landscape and its spiritual powers is thus a deeply localized one, tied to local notions of kinship enacted through the livelihood of hunting and herding

During many of my stays among the Duha, I often asked Solnoi, if I could accompany him on his annual visit to the tree with one hundred branches. Each time Solnoi seemed excited about bringing me along and would immediately agree and start to plan our trip. Several times, he enthusiastically drew up a map on the track from our camp to the tree, telling me where we could hunt and fish along the way, where we could camp and which places we would pass on the journey. However, at the time of our departure, Solnoi always ended up cancelling our trip, saying 'we better not go' due to the bad weather conditions or it being an 'unfortunate day'.

This was also the case during my fieldwork in 2011, when Solnoi and I had planned to visit the tree on the sixth lunar day of the first autumn month. This departure date would enable us to arrive at the tree on the seventh lunar day, which, according to Solnoi, was an auspicious day for approaching the tree. Luckily our departure day turned out to be a beautiful autumn day with a clear blue sky. When the horses were packed, Solnoi suggested that we drank a cup of tea in his *urts* before leaving. As we were discussing where to camp for the first night, Solnoi suddenly pointed toward a tiny fly circulating around the stove and said: 'see that fly Tuya [my Mongolian name]. It is a sign that the sky will darken and it will rain for three consecutive days. The water in Tengis River will rise and it will be hard to cross'. I looked at the tiny fly and thought: 'This is just a bad excuse; such a stupid fly does not tell anything about the weather'. Yet, I kept my irritation to myself and simply said: 'All right, maybe we can go next year'. As I returned to my own *urts*, the sky darkened and soon it started to rain heavily. It continued for exactly three days. However, two days later, Solnoi left to visit the tree with one hundred branches; he did not ask me to join him.

The next year, Solnoi again agreed to take my family and I with him on his annual visit to the tree, and to my surprise, we actually ended up going. We left the camp on the eighth day in the first autumn month to ensure that we could reach the tree on the ninth lunar day of the first autumn month as it was an auspicious day. We left early in the morning to be sure to arrive at the tree before noon, as Solnoi said it was dangerous to approach the tree after midday. Having ridden through the dense forest for three hours, Solnoi lost his way and became increasingly irritated. Additionally my youngest daughter was crying loudly, tired from the long ride, making the atmosphere tense. Solnoi ordered us to take a rest in the forest, while he continued his search for the tree. Ten minutes later, he returned smiling and said that he had

found the tree, and asked us to mount the horses. We rode with him and after a short ride, we arrived at a clearing in the forest; we saw a huge larch tree covered with cotton and silk ribbons in blue, white and red colours – we had arrived to the tree with one hundred branches.

My youngest daughter was still crying, but as she saw the tree, she immediately stopped crying and started to laugh. Solnoi looked at her, smiled and said in a soft tone: ‘You see the tree has accepted you, the little one stopped crying’. He looked at the tree and said in a serious tone:

You know Baatar, the son of Ulaanhüü, he goes here every year to worship. Yet, one year he failed and that year his son died. The people of the old days said, that if you go here once, then you have to come back on a regular basis. Now the tree knows you, from your first visit, so it will always wait for you to come back again.

I looked at my daughters who were sitting on the ground sharing a bar of chocolate and suddenly felt frightened; I realized that Solnoi had refrained from taking me with him to the tree, because to worship a sacrificial tree is to entrust, not only your own, but also your children’s life to it. My unease only worsened the week after, when I interviewed Ulaanhüü, an elderly Duha man from the Urat clan. During the interview, I asked Ulaanhüü why his wife never visited the tree and he answered: ‘She is of another clan and has her own places of worship, so if she were to approach the tree with one hundred branches, its master spirit would not recognize her and it would indeed be dangerous’. At this moment, I realized that whether the act of worshipping a sacrificial tree had a beneficial or harmful effect on the worshipper for the Duha depends on the resemblance or dissimilarity between the clan or lineage of the tree and the worshipper.

### **Land of Relatedness**

Among the Duha, kinship is obviously a crucial aspect of both clan and lineage affiliation. Both are said to require genealogical descent either through a paternal bone, maternal blood or adoption. Whereas clan affiliation is pre-given by paternal descent through birth or adoption, lineage affiliation is merely a potential of both paternal and maternal descent. Duha clan affiliation is not simply a question of genealogy. Instead, I propose that both Duha clan and

lineage affiliation consists of certain relations between humans and spirits (*eren*), which are experienced and enacted through people's practical and ritual engagement with the land and its sacrificial places.

Scholars have argued that one of the principal problems with anthropological studies of indigenous notions of kinship is that they are constructed on Western ideas of kinship grounded in biological reproduction and genealogy, which ignores how kinship is constructed locally (Schneider 1972; 1984: 194; Needham 1971; Carsten 2000). However, biological procreation is not necessarily central in local concepts of kinship; i.e., among the Duha, to be a heir of a shamanic lineage is not pre-given by birth but effectuated through the choice of the spirit or the act of worshipping a sacrificial entity within the lineage. The limitations of the category of kinship is thus, as Schneider argued, that it is a Western 'sociocultural construction' based on Euro-American folk concepts imported into anthropological analysis (Schneider 1984: 141).

In her effort to overcome some of the preconceptions embedded in the Western concept of kinship, Janet Carsten (1995, 2000) has proposed that we shift our focus from 'kinship' to 'relatedness' understood as 'indigenous ways of acting out and conceptualizing relations between people, as distinct from notions derived from anthropological theory' (Carsten 1995: 224). Carsten (1995) has argued against viewing kinship as a fixed state and proposes that we view it as a process, where people become kin through the everyday social interaction – such as living together and sharing food with others - rather than merely by birth. In order to grasp the Duha notion of kinship, we have to include not merely local practices and notions of relatedness between human beings, but also those between human and non-human beings, such as spirits, sacrificial entities, places and land. Drawing on Carsten's ideas, I argue that it is through hunting and herding in lands felt to be enlivened with ancestral spirits that the Duha come to perceive themselves and others as attached to particular clans and lineages.

Several anthropologists (Fox 1997; Gow 1997 [1995]; Leach 2003; Humphrey 1997 [1995]; Myers 1986; Wagner 1986; Weiner 1991) have asserted that indigenous notions of kinship frequently arise from local conceptions of, and interactions with, the surrounding landscape. In general terms, we may differentiate between scholars (Myers 1986; Munn 1970; 1973; Strehlow 1947; Weiner 1994) who perceive local landscapes and places as representing or

'objectifying' (Myers 1986) indigenous conceptions of kinship and those (Gow 1997 [1997]; Leach 2003; Wagner 1986) who view local landscapes and kinship as constitutive of each other. According to James Weiner (1994), indigenous conceptualisations of landscape are often iconic of human history, where individual lives are 'detotalized' (Lévi-Straus 1963b) into a series of place names that, taken in their entirety, stand for the totality of a person's history (see Weiner 1994: 600). If we focus on the structural aspects of Weiner's argument, something similar appears to apply to the Duha case. Each shamanic lineage has a series of sacrificial places, which taken in its entirety, embodies the entire history of the lineage, as each of its sacrificial trees is enlivened with the spirits of a specific historical shaman within the lineage. Moreover, each clan has several shamanic lineages with each their own series of sacrificial trees, which taken in their entirety stand for the totality of the clan's history. We are here dealing with, what Humphrey (1997 [1995]) terms, a 'shamanic landscape'; i.e., a 'personalized' landscape where human genealogy can be traced through the land as a series of spirit-rulers located in different places (1997 [1995]: 153).

In the shamanic landscape of the Duha sacrificial places and trees not merely represent a given clan or lineage; rather, they point toward the mutual being of present and past kin, human and sacrificial entity (spirit). This is evident in the way the Duha perceive sacrificial entities not merely as fixed images of the past representing the history of their clans or lineages, but as the past enlivened and continually shaped by present kin. The character of sacrificial places and their spirits are thought to be shaped by the deeds, interventions or absence of their past and present human kin, which again are thought to animate the lives of their living kin.

As James Leach (2003: 214) has argued is the case among the Nekgini speakers on the Rai coast of New Guinea, the creation of kin and place is part and parcel of the same process. Among the Nekgini, 'kinship is geography, or landscape' (Leach 2003: 31) as 'the relation between land and person is not one of containment with the land outside and the essence of the person inside, but of integration' (Leach 2003: 30), making 'the constitution of persons and places mutually entailed aspects of the same process' (Leach 2003: 31). Whereas relatedness among the Nekgini emerge from the processes of being 'grown' on, nurtured by the same land, clan and lineage (Leach 2003: 30), relatedness among the Duha appears to derive from the way the Duha practices of hunting and herding are oriented around renewing

kinship ties felt essential for the health of herds and the gains of hunters. The Duha land evolves as a kind of living map of Duha kinship, as its sacrificial places are animated by the ancestral spirits of particular kin units and their shamans, who continue to animate and be animated by its living kin (see also Kristensen 2004). Such a perception of the landscape may be termed animistic in Viveiros de Castro's (1998) sense of the term, as it is based on an ontology 'which postulates the social character of relations between humans and non-humans' making the space between nature and society itself social (1998: 473).

While the Duha perception of their land and its beings is certainly grounded in an animistic ontology, it is important to note that the Duha establish relations to their clan and lineage(s) through engaging animistically with the land and its places. Drawing on Tim Ingold (2000: 112), I view animism as a kind of 'orientation' that is 'deeply embedded in everyday practice' and not as an 'explicitly articulated doctrinal system'. Several scholars have argued that animism among hunter-gathers is part and parcel of the hunting activities in which they are engaged (Bird-David 1999; Ingold 2000; Willerslev 2007). Following this line of thought, Nurit Bird-David (1999) frames animism as 'a relational epistemology', where 'the knowing grows from and *is* the knower's skill of maintaining relatedness with the known' (1999: 69). Among the Nayaka people studied by Bird-David (1999: 77), such a 'relational epistemology' is evident in the local phenomenon of 'talking with trees'; perceive what a tree *does* as one acts toward it, 'being aware concurrent of changes in oneself and the tree'. During my fieldwork, I observed something similar among the Duha. My host father often instructed me to sense the spirits' presence in the land through the odd look of a tree, the sudden change in the weather, the appearance of a flock of ravens, through my baby daughter's unexpected crying out or my own sensation of a sudden stomach ache. I thus agree with Bird-David that knowledge of, or maybe more appropriately, awareness of spirits in animistic traditions derives from practical engagement with natural entities.

Bird-David (1999: 78) wrote that 'maintaining relationships with neighbouring others [non-humans]' involves turning attention toward the 'we-ness', rather than the 'otherness', of humans and non-human others. Among the Nayaka studied by Bird-David, this 'we-ness' absorbs the differences between humans and non-humans, making room for the Nayaka perception of spirits as 'friends and relatives', who are approached 'in a personal, friendly and immediate way' (Bird-David 1999: 78). By using the Nayaka case to construct a general



theory on animism, which revolves around a relation of 'we-ness' between humans and non-humans, Bird-David constructs a somehow simplified picture of animistic traditions. By focusing on 'we-ness', she ignores how the relationship between humans and non-humans in shamanic traditions is often conceptualized as one of 'mutual otherness' (Stasch 2009: 272) and characterized by violence, danger and risk (Fausto 2004, Riboli & Torri 2013; Whitehead & Wright). In animism, I propose, we are not merely dealing with relatedness with the known, but also with relatedness with the unknown. Such relations may work to confirm the 'otherness', rather than the 'sameness' of humans and spirits.

In his stimulating analysis of social relations among the Korowai people of West Papuan, Rupert Stasch (2009) has shown how 'otherness' serves as a basis of Korowai social experience and relations (see also Højer 2003; 2004). Whereas scholars have often depicted social relations in small-scale, kinship based communities as 'stable relations of mutual identification' (Stasch 2009: 272) founded on people's intimate sharing of experience, Stasch has argued that Korowai sociality is founded on quite the opposite. The Korowai 'experience each other as mutually strange', but it is this strangeness or 'otherness', which according to Stasch, works as 'points of relatedness' (Stasch 2009: 63) or as qualities through and around which people are close. This 'otherness' is for instance reflected in the way the Korowai perceive new-born babies as demonic non-human others. Yet it is the mother's engagement with the repulsive otherness of her new-born, which form the basis of an attachment of indebtedness between child and mother (Stasch 2009: 157). Korowai social bonds are thus 'created around boundaries of otherness that are at once separative and connective' (Stasch 2009: 73. Among the Duha, it appears to be the disturbing 'otherness' of sacrificial trees and their spirits (*eren*) which form the basis for a risky, yet necessary, relationship between a particular clan or lineage member and a sacrificial place or tree.

### **Precarious Relations**

Among the Duha, the initial worship of a sacrificial entity is thought to place the worshipper in a binding relationship of 'entrustment' to his sacrificial entity, which has to be perpetuated through regular ritual renewal of the sacrificial entity. Though no Duha appeared to doubt the necessity of such regular worship, they frequently seemed uncertain and anxious about how to carry it out. This especially the case of the Duha in Zuun Taiga, where many Duha consulted

with shamans and elders on how and when to worship their sacrificial trees; they also spoke to me about this matter. Some people told me that they worshipped their sacrificial tree from a distance, as the tree and its land were ferocious and hence risky to approach. Those who did attend and worship their sacrificial tree(s) often seemed nervous about whether their offerings were appropriate. When I travelled with Solnoi to visit the tree with one hundred branches, I was surprised to learn that he was uncertain of how many white cotton ribbons he ought to tie to its branches. First he said that three cotton ribbons would be the appropriate number and then he changed his mind to seven. When he began tying the ribbons to the tree, I saw that his hands were trembling; he ended up only fastening three cotton ribbons to the tree. I did not dare to ask him why as he appeared annoyed at my questions. However, the tense atmosphere gave me the feeling that, though Solnoi repeatedly had told me that *he knew* how to worship as *he knew* the traditions of his kin, being in the vicinity of the tree somehow made Solnoi less confident about his own knowledge on tradition. The question is thus: why is the worship of sacrificial trees commonly circumscribed by uncertainty and anxiety? To answer this question, let us first turn to some of the stories on worship I heard in the Zuun Taiga.

When I lived in Zuun Taiga in 2000 one of the families - a middle-aged Duha man named Mergen and his wife Dalai - experienced immense hardship. During winter, they lost most of their reindeer to wolves and two of their children became seriously ill. Also, Mergen's relatives in Tsagaannuur experienced a number of misfortunes, such as illness, alcoholism and sudden death. In the taiga, people told me that the hardship of Mergen and his siblings had arisen from their father's misdeeds. Mergen's father's elder sister was shaman Tseveenjig; her shamanic paraphernalia was placed at a sacrificial tree in the 1940s. However, during socialism the shaman's brother, Mergen's father, abandoned the worship of his sister's sacrificial tree. During early spring in 2000, Mergen went to worship the sacrificial tree of shaman Tseveenjig - as he told me - to 'soften' (*zöölrüülj hiih*) its character to overcome the wrongdoings of his father and combat his own misfortune. Yet, his hardships continued and by the end of spring 2000, the wolves had made such a heavy impact on his herd, that he only had three reindeer left. One elderly woman in the taiga said:

Since the time of socialism that family has had a hard life. People say it is because their father did not show them how to pay respect to their shamanic lineage. Now some of

them worship their sacrificial tree, but their hardships continue, as they do not know its traditions for worship. Also people say that the 'grievance' (*gomdol*) of a shaman continues to haunt the offender's kin for three generations.

This story sums up how the socialist legacy of the Duha in the Zuun Taiga is commonly thought to have left its marks on the relationship between kin and sacrificial trees. Many families felt they had become estranged from the ancestral spirits of their clans or lineages, as they had abandoned the worship of their sacrificial trees during socialism. As the lineage had not properly been passed on, its spirits and sacrificial places were thought to have turned strangers and/or angry to their living kin. Hence, many were caught in a dilemma: they felt they had to worship their sacrificial trees to combat contemporary hardship, however, the very act of worshipping was thought to potentially call forth the estranged powers of their ancestral spirits. Many people thought that socialist repression of religion had deprived their family of knowledge on how to properly worship their sacrificial trees. Each sacrificial trees was said to have its particular tradition for proper worship, yet, the hardship of everyday life in the taiga was often experienced as evidence of how kin units had lost knowledge on their ancestral traditions. Without knowledge of ancestral traditions, the relationship between human kin and ancestral spirits remains in the risky state of being of mutual strangeness. The loss of tradition was thus felt to leave human kin vulnerable to their own ancestral spirits.

As such, life in the taiga made the Duha painfully aware of how human lives were entangled with ancestral spirits (mutual being) and how ancestral spirits had turned alien to their human kin (mutual otherness). The Duha return to the worship of sacrificial trees can be seen as an attempt to harness the mutual otherness of sacrificial trees and human kin into one of mutual being. Yet, the perpetual hardship of life in the taiga was seen as evidence of how the ancestral spirits of particular families had turned so alien to their human kin that even acts of worship were not sufficient to repair and soften their kinship ties into one of mutual being. Instead acts of worship commonly confirmed the relation of kin and sacrificial entities as one of mutual otherness, which was revealed in the way ancestral spirits were thought to have turned against their own kin.

The precarious nature of the relationship between individual or kin units and sacrificial entity is, however, not merely because socialist rule of the Duha in Zuun Taiga was felt to have

estranged human kin from ancestral land, spirits and traditions. As we have seen the Duha who were employed as state hunters continued to secretly worship their sacrificial trees during socialism. Many of these state hunters also brought their children to the taiga, where they taught them how to worship. I will now focus on one of these families to examine why the Duha perceive the worship of sacrificial trees, practiced through generations, as being potentially risky.

One of these families was that of an elderly Duha, Ulaanhüü. He told me that he has never abstained from his annual worship of the tree with one hundred branches - the sacrificial tree of his Urat clan. Ulaanhüü said: 'Even during revolutionary times, I went to worship the tree with one hundred branches and when my sons were old enough [approximately ten years old] I brought them to the tree and taught them how to worship'. One of Ulaanhüü's sons, Mönköö, later explained why it is necessary to understand the traditions for worshipping one's sacrificial tree:

If a person worships his *eren* or sacrificial trees incorrectly, it is very dangerous. It is important to learn its traditions from your parents and worship according to these traditions. If you do not know its traditions, you better not worship. When I was a boy, my father brought me to the tree with one hundred branches and said to me: 'now the *eren* knows you, so you have to return regularly'. My father also taught me that I should do the following: Twice a year, in spring and autumn, I need travel to the taiga to pay homage to my father's *eren* [kept in the household of the father's elder sister]. Before travelling to the tree with one hundred branches, I need to tie green, blue and white cotton ribbons to the *eren*. If I do not do this, my elder sister's *eren* would reject my prayers, so even if I were praying at the tree, they would not reach the *erens*. They would I think I had forgotten them and become angry. When I arrive at my tree, I walk clockwise around the tree. Of course I first tie my horse, far away from the tree. Then I walk ten steps and stop to say a prayer. Then I walk another ten steps and say another prayer. I do this three times. Only then am I allowed to approach the tree. I reach out my hand and touch it. My father told me it is forbidden to visit the tree in any other way. He taught me many things like this.

The above story reveals how the Duha perceive the various sacrificial entities within a clan or shamanic lineage as interrelated. It shows how spirit vessels (*eren*) of certain shamanic lineages, such as the one mentioned above, may be regarded as a kind of cosmological tool, which transmits the worshippers prayers to the sacrificial entity of his clan. Hence the spirit vessel appears to establish a relation between the particular (the shamanic lineage) and the general (the clan). As the worshipper prays to his lineage *eren*, his prayers are said to be passed on to his sacrificial tree, which ensures that upon approaching the tree, he will be recognized as its kin. It is through the worshipper's enactment of such traditions, that he renews his kinship relation to his sacrificial tree and the trees kinship relation to him; and hence renews their 'mutual being'. Although the character of the tree and the life of the worshipper are thought to be interdependent, it is not a relationship between two similar beings or natures. On the contrary, sacrificial trees are perceived as innately alien to their human worshippers. This is evident in the hierarchical relationship between a worshipper and a sacrificial entity, which though pointing toward their kinship ties (parent and child) also refers to the superior position of the tree (parent) to that of the worshipper (child), and to the different natures or powers of the sacrificial tree (spirit kin) and the worshipper (human kin). Sacrificial trees are thought to embody and fuse the non-human master spirit (*ezen*) of the tree's location and the spirit (*eren*) of past shamans. Such *erens* are said to consist of a multitude of non-human and human spirits, which constitute a being of an innate erratic nature substantially different from that of ordinary humans.

The eldest son of Ulaanhüü, Battömör, told me that one autumn, he was prevented from worshipping the tree with one hundred branches, as he had been assigned work as a border guard in another province. When he returned home in the winter, Battömör discovered, to his horror that his four-year-old son had died from a sudden disease. With a trembling voice Battömör whispered: 'The tree took him, because I abandoned it, that year'. The story shows how the relationship between a worshipper and a sacrificial tree is inherently labile and their mutual being is continually at risk of becoming a fatal one of mutual otherness.

Another of Ulaanhüü's sons, Davaa, told me that he once saw black cotton ribbon tied to the branches of the tree with one hundred branches. He thought this was against the tradition of the tree, however, he had not dared to remove it. He believed that a member of another

lineage with different traditions of worship might have tied the black ribbon to the tree. On his way home, Davaa fell off his horse and almost broke his leg; he felt this was evidence of the tree having turned ferocious due to the presence of the black ribbon. The content of the relationship between a worshipper and a sacrificial tree is thus not merely shaped by the worship of the individual, but also by those of other kin members. As the above story has revealed, the precarious nature of Duha relations to sacrificial trees has not merely evolved from the perceived loss of tradition and estrangement from spirits, but also from the innately erratic and hence uncertain character of sacrificial trees.

We may thus conclude that the anxiety, which characterizes the worship of sacrificial entities, points toward the precarious character of the relationship between human kin and sacrificial entities. Such local anxieties with regards to worship have been furthered by the Duha return to the taiga, which people feel have tied them to kindred spirits estranged by their socialist legacies.

### **Topogenic or Rhizomic Relations to the Land**

During my fieldwork, I was often impressed by how many of my informants could recount the names of clans and lineage members from several generations back - some as far back as seven generations - even though they did not, like the Buryat (Empson 2007: 48), have any historical tradition of written genealogies. Instead, I found that the Duha memory of clans is embedded in the land, where sacrificial places of clans and shamanic lineages continue to enliven the thoughts, emotions and actions of those who traverse the land. Most of my informants could name the location of multiple sacrificial places within their clans and lineages; however, they frequently told me that they abstained from worshipping some of these places, as they had not been passed on to them. This raises the following question: how does the Duha landscape serve as a genealogical map of people's potential kinship ties, and how do individuals become tied to certain clans and lineages - and detached from others - through practical movement within the land?

To obtain an overview of the location of remembered sacrificial trees, I asked some of my informants to point out the location of all the sacrificial trees they knew the location of onto a map of the region. The men were particularly keen to participate in this task, whereas most women were more reluctant; some women said that though they knew the 'name' (*ner*) and

'direction' (*zug*) of their sacrificial trees, they were not sure of their location, as they had never 'visited these places' as they were not hunters. The men generally had more intricate knowledge of the local landscape than the women. This is probably due to the fact that most Duha men are hunters and through traversing the land come to know its sacrificial places. Women usually stayed in the camp to look after the reindeer and therefore had limited knowledge on the exact location of sacrificial trees.

In order to ensure a prosperous hunt, it was not only important to master the practical skills of handling a gun and tracking down the wild animals. Rather, as Solnoi explained, one needed to 'know the land' (*gazar medej*) and be able to recognize whether one had entered a land owned by master spirits or enlivened with the spirits (*eren*) of a sacrificial trees, since it is 'forbidden to hunt' (*ang agnaj bolohgüi*) in such places. The hunter who happens to hunt within the vicinity of a sacrificial tree or within the land of master spirits is, according to Duha hunters, likely to suffer various kinds of misfortune; i.e., they could lose their hunting luck or fall ill. Duha men regularly visited their sacrificial trees during a hunt, whereas women usually conducted their offerings from the camp, by sprinkling tea in the direction of their sacrificial tree(s).

Solnoi possessed extensive knowledge of the location of sacrificial trees and he eagerly plotted their location onto my map. As other hunters, he remembered the location of sacrificial trees from his life as a hunter, yet, in contrast to most of my informants, he also knew how to locate them on my map, having been trained in cartography during his military service. Solnoi and I spent hours plotting sacrificial places onto the map. Solnoi told me the histories of clans, shamanic lineages and historical shamans; he also talked about the historical migration and enforced resettlement of the Duha, while he plotted the location of sacrificial trees, former hunting grounds, camps and migration routes onto the map (Appendix A). This is an extract from one of our conversations:

This place, just next to Tsagaannuur, is called Gurvan Saihan. This is the place where shaman Tömgöö's shamanic dress was placed, after she passed away two years ago. She was the daughter of the great Balygsh shaman Natsag; his sacrificial place is here - in a place called Kadyrhylyg. It is said that the drums of two male and one female shaman is placed in Kadyrhylyg. When I was a child, I spent the summer in this area. We used to

pick lily bulbs in these mountains. My mother always told us not to approach the sacrificial place of Kadyrhylyg. She said it is a ferocious land. People still say so; one should only worship it from a distance. Hunters passing the land of Kadyrhylyg often hear the sound of a drum, so everyone abstains from hunting in this land. Natsag's grandmother was a Darhad and her sister was a great shaman. Her sacrificial tree is here, close to river Tengis. She was Darhad, so this place is also worshipped by Darhad people. In the old days [seven generations back], there was a shaman in Natsag's generation called Kirgijak. His sacrificial place is right here – at the Bus River right across the border. The *eren* of many Balygsh shamans were placed here in the old days. Shaman Goost is also a relative of Kirgijak. However, Natsag and Goost are not from the same lineage. Kirgijak had two sons, Pagmast and Hojashig, from whom two shamanic lineages originate. Pagmast is Natsag's lineage and Hojashig is shaman Goost's lineage. I will show you the sacrificial places of Goost. They are located over here in Baruun Taiga.

It turned out that the succession of sacrificial trees in a given clan reflects its genealogy and history; this can often be traced back to a sacrificial place worshipped by most members of the clan. Such primordial sacrificial places were often located in Tuva, whereas more recently, established sacrificial trees have been located in Mongolian land, reflecting the historical movement of the Duha. Moreover, each clan had several series of sacrificial trees spread out over the landscape, which were only worshipped by certain sub-clans and shamanic lineages. These trees reflected the historical split of the clan into numerous sub-clans and shamanic lineages only worshipped by people who could trace their descent back to the initial paternal forefather (sub-clan) or shaman (shamanic lineage) of these sacrificial trees. Most of my informants remembered the names and histories of the shaman in their kin from two to three generations back, while a few informants could even recount the names of shamans from seven generations back. However, many remembered the names of the places where the shamanic paraphernalia of shamans had been placed from three to nine generations back.

The maps Solnoi and I constructed of the sacrificial places of the Duha made me first perceive the succession of sacrificial places and trees of clans and lineages within the land as 'topogeny' – a term coined by James Fox (1997) which refers to indigenous practices where 'the recitation of an ordered succession of place names' is engaged as a 'distinct means for the ordering and transmission of social knowledge' (1997: 8). Fox perceives 'the recitation of a



topogeny as analogous to the recitation of genealogy' as both consist of an ordered succession of names that establish precedence in relation to a particular starting point — 'a point of origin' (Fox 1997: 89). Yet, with regards to the Duha, topogenies are not merely analogous to genealogies. Rather I view them in a similar manner to Thomas (2009), namely as 'constituent of genealogy', since 'personal relations form through engaging with the same landscape as one's contemporaries and predecessors' (2009: 95).

My informants pointed out the sacrificial trees of their clan and lineages in a classical topological way. They would explain how genealogical succession within the clan or lineages was reflected in the succession of sacrificial trees in the land. However, when I talked with them about which sacrificial trees they actually worshipped, the picture was much more complex, as they commonly pointed out sacrificial trees in both their maternal and paternal clan and sometimes those of other clans. Moreover, when I asked them why they worshipped this particular tree and not one of the trees from their paternal clan, which I presumed (drawing on what people had told me) they were obliged to worship, they explained that a particular event in their life, such as the advice of a shaman, passing the tree on a hunt or the experience of misfortune had triggered them to worship this particular tree.

On the one hand, I propose that clan affiliation among the Duha is partly topogenic, since the succession of the sacrificial places and trees is commonly used to account for the genealogy of specific clans. On the other hand, I propose that the model of topogeny, with its implied notion of a chronological time moving forward from a point of origin, is inadequate to depict the Duha affiliation to shamanic lineages. This affiliation is not merely a matter of locating oneself onto the genealogical order of sacrificial trees inscribed onto the land. Rather, it is through living in particular lands that the Duha come to experience specific sacrificial places and their influence upon their own life. It is when a hunter experiences a sudden hailstorm, an odd looking animal or his own loss of hunting luck that he becomes aware of how the powers of the sacrificial places within this land are tied to his own life. Such experiences often tempt people to worship, and entrust their life to, a sacrificial tree. At times, the hunter decides to initiate a worship of a sacrificial tree due to his own experience in its vicinity or in the hunter's own life. Other times, such worship is initiated following the advice of a shaman or fellow hunters, who have pointed out the necessity of worshipping this particular tree.

In order to enhance our understanding of the Duha concept of shamanic lineage, we may draw on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's (1987) concept of the 'rhizome', which in contrast to 'topogeny', 'has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo' (1987: 25). This means that it 'pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entrances and exits and its own lines of flight' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 21). The theory of topology envisioned by Fox and elaborated by Thomas views genealogy as a root system with a beginning and an end, whereas the rhizomic model offered by Deleuze and Guattari enables us to view the sacrificial trees of the Duha as a rhizomic web of relationships with no beginning or end. This enables us to see that the Duha's understanding of clan and lineage affiliation is a process enacted through their practical experiences within the land and hence a matter of relatedness continually in the making. However, it is not merely experiences within the land, but also, as we will see, events within their lives which are used to uncover their own heritage.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated how Duha relatedness to clans and lineages is not merely a fact pre-given by genealogical descent, but an unstable relation passed on and enacted through people's practical and ritual interaction with sacrificial places within the landscape. During socialism, many of the Duha who were settled as workers in the village of Tsagaannuur appear to have given up their worship of the sacrificial places of their clans and lineages. As employees of the local fishery in Tsagaannuur they were, at least partly, separated from the land and practices in which the ancestral spirits of the Duha clans and lineages subsist.

As many of the Duha in Tsagaannuur returned to their traditional livelihood as hunters and herders in the 1990s, they became enmeshed in the cosmic economy of the taiga in which Duha kinship (clan and lineage) subsists. The Duha return to the taiga was thus a return to a land felt to be enlivened with the ancestral spirits of Duha clans and lineages; it was also a return to the practices through which the relations between ancestral spirits and humans - which constitute the Duha clans and lineages - are sensed and enacted.

The chapter has shown how Duha clan and lineage affiliation arises through people's practical and ritual interaction with their lived landscape. As the Duha move away from the land of certain sacrificial places of their lineages, they are likely to abandon the worship of these places simply because the Duha hunter and herder not living in this land are no longer dependent on the good will of its spirits to protect his herd and obtain wild game. However, an exception is the sacrificial places of clans, which though people might have moved away from their lands, continue to worship from a distance. This may be because clan affiliation is thought to be pre-given by birth or adoption, whereas lineage affiliation is perceived to arise from the choice of the spirits or people's practical involvement with their lineage spirits. It is thus through people practical movement and life within certain lands that they come entangled with their lineage spirits. Hence, while moving within a certain land, it is absolutely vital that the hunter or herders regularly worship its sacrificial places – particular those of his own sub-clan and lineage – to ensure that its spirits recognizes him as its kin and grant health and gifts of prey.

I have argued that the Duha clans and lineages consist of precarious and uncertain relations between human kin and between humans and ancestral spirits (*eren*) enacted through the livelihood of hunting and herding in the taiga. Though clan members are thought to share a kind of mutual being (share fellow bone and sometimes *eren*) they are experienced as mutual others, as each clan member is thought to have her own unique and often uncertain lineage affiliation. Clan affiliation thus points toward the general, whereas lineages affiliation points toward the particular, yet, as clan and lineages are thought to intermingle, each clan evolves as a mutual being of mutual others. This is evident in the very worship of sacrificial places of clans, where the complexity of offerings (cotton ribbons in different colours) is felt – as we saw in the case of Davaa - to reflect the origin of clan members in different shamanic lineages of potentially contradictory powers.

The relationship between human kin and sacrificial entity is one of mutual being due to their fellow origin in one or several historic shaman(s) and her *eren* (ancestral spirit), and their relationship being seen as comparable to that of a parent and child. This mutual being is also experienced through the land; this was reflected in Solnoi's story of how the tree with one hundred branches had treated him as its child (granted him a gift a prey) after his initial worship of it. However, the parent-child relationship between human and sacrificial entity is

not one of pure mutual being; it is also, simultaneously, one of mutual otherness, as it points towards a hierarchical division between a worshipper and their sacrificial tree, as well as the being of a sacrificial tree being more erratic and wild than that of its human kin. The parent-child (clan or lineage relation) relationship between a human worshipper and a sacrificial tree is thus an inherently fragile state of being, which continually ought to be renewed so it does not to turn into one of pure mutual strangeness. I have argued that it is this tension between the mutual being and mutual otherness of humans and sacrificial entities, which constitutes Duha relatedness as a precarious state of becoming. The very practices of hunting and herding in the taiga are thus oriented around sensing and renewing such precarious relations to one's ancestral clan and lineage spirits.

## Chapter 4

### Allergic Spirits

How can I become a shaman, when my shaman teacher never explains anything to me about the spirits? He just confuses me. He only talks about my shamanic equipment, the things it should be made of. And my relatives make me even more confused. They keep telling me that this and that thing is a 'bad thing' (*muu yum*) that does 'not fit together with' (*taarahgüi*) my ancestral spirits. But they all have different opinions about how I should make my shamanic gown, so I really do not know whom to trust. I do not understand why they keep talking about all these bad things.

These are the words of Oyunaa, a middle-aged Mongolian woman of Duha descent, who had arrived in the taiga to meet her distant relatives, learn about the shamanic traditions of her ancestors and potentially become a shaman. In the taiga, Oyunaa's relatives told her that only if her shamanic paraphernalia was made according to the traditions of her lineage would the 'shamanic spirit' (*eren*) of her lineage be able to recognize her as its kin; and hence a shaman to be.

During the summer of 2011, I followed Oyunaa as she went from shaman to shaman and from relative to relative asking them about the traditions of her kin, and how to become a shaman. Oyunaa's initial shamanic teacher, who was Darhad, said that as Oyunaa's grandfather was a 'taiga shaman' (Duha) her shamanic gown ought to contain the furs of various wild animals (sable, bear, deer etc.) of the taiga. However, when Oyunaa showed her newly manufactured and highly impressive gown to her cousin, he was horrified. He explained that Oyunaa's *eren* was 'repelled' (*jigshdeg*) by - and 'allergic' (*harshildag*) to - such expensive things and was likely to become angry upon seeing the costume. He advised Oyunaa to throw out the costume altogether, obtain a 'mouth harp' (*hüür*) and place it in the nest of a raven for a week to enliven it with her ancestral *eren*. When Oyunaa later recounted this advice to her uncle, he shook his head and said it was entirely wrong, as her lineage was allergic to the raven. He told Oyunaa that she certainly needed a shamanic dress made by a relative of hers, which, following the tradition of her lineage, ought to contain fur and skin of deer and reindeer and a

three-headed snake made out of cotton. One night, Oyunaa said to me: 'I realize that it [her shamanic paraphernalia] should be made according to the tradition, but no one seems to be quite certain of what the tradition entails, The above statement summarizes how Oyunaa, as well as many other Duha, felt that they had lost knowledge about their traditions.

The story of Oyunaa raises the following question, which this chapter seeks to address: why did the Duha turn toward their shamanic artefacts following their return to the taiga? In order to understand this, we need to examine how the shamanic tradition of the Duha is enacted through shamanic artefacts. Morten Axel Pedersen (2007) has argued that Darhad shamanist ontology is embedded in different religious artefacts, whose design trigger people's momentary conceptualization of social and spiritual relations which is otherwise hidden or concealed in ordinary life (2007: 141). In a similar vein the shamanic artefacts and sacrificial places of the Duha serve as a living reminder of what the spirits is: erratic spiritual powers tied to particular individual and kin-units. Yet, precisely because these artefacts appear to offer the worshipper a glimpse into the erratic nature of spirits it also reveals that people can never quite be certain of spirits current state of being or of the worshipper actual relation to it. Concurrently the return to the taiga has raised Duha awareness of the erratic nature of spirits and reminded people of the need to control these beings through particular traditions, which often are felt to have been lost during socialism.

Scholars has long shown how indigenous 'cosmologies' are 'living knowledge traditions in continual change' (Barth 1987: 87), and how local 'spiritual knowledge' is 'essentially confused, incoherent and vague' (Willerslev 2004: 396) or a kind of indigenous 'chaos-theory' (Swancutt 2012: 6). In order to understand the fluid character of local spiritual knowledge, such as that of the Duha, we thus need to study the means involved in its reproduction (Barth 1987; Humphrey 1996; Willerslev 2004). Following this line of thought this chapter argue that Duha shamanic knowledge is not a coherent system, but an assemblage of highly diverse kinship traditions, which is enacted through people's practical and ritual engagement with shamanic artefacts tied to their kin. The Duha commonly believe that the lives of people, and especially shamans and shamans to be, are influenced by the *erens* within their family, lineage or clan. Though many Duha felt that socialism had deprived them of their ancestral knowledge on tradition I was puzzled to find that most Duha had an intricate knowledge on the spirits (*erens*) felt to enliven their sacrificial places in the land and their spirit-vessels (amulets also

called *erens*) kept in their home. Spirit-vessels had often been inherited in families for generations and people recounted how their spirit-vessel had been made by a particular historic shaman – often of legendary powers - who had enlivened the spirit vessel with certain spiritual powers (non-human and human spirits) to combat a certain misfortune in the family.

The challenge for the Duha is that though people possess an intricate knowledge of ancestral *erens*, particularly those within their own kin, they can never be quite sure of the contemporary character of the *erens*. However, what appears to concern people the most is not so much the ‘true’ character of their *erens*, but their traditions, including how to properly interact with them. We are thus dealing with a shamanic tradition where many doubts and uncertainties exist with regards to its practices.

Caroline Humphrey has illustrated how the ‘interest’ in the spiritual realm among the Mongolians is highly specialized and limited to certain spiritual domains (1996: 83). This was also reflected in the case of Oyunaa who first thought that she needed to *understand* the broader spiritual realm to become a shaman, but later realized that her task was to uncover the traditions of her lineage in order to summon and control her ancestral *erens*. I argue that the way the Duha continually fabricate and refabricate their shamanic paraphernalia is a way of *gambling* with the *erens*. The outcome of manufacturing a shamanic costume or offering a spirit vessel an offering cannot be known in advance. Instead the Duha use their own lives and bodily sensations or experiences (dizziness, nightmares, illnesses) to evaluate whether or not they have engaged properly with their *erens*.

This does not mean that all the shamanic traditions of the Duha are circumscribed by uncertainty. Indeed many traditions have a more conventional nature. For instance, there was a general agreement that the shamanic gown of Duha shamans ought to contain the embroidery of a human skeleton, as the spirits would otherwise not be able to settle in the gown. I do thus not purport to argue that all the shamanic traditions of the Duha undertake the form of *gambling*, however, I found that people’s ritual interaction with *erens* were often circumscribed by doubts on tradition, which forced people to gamble with tradition in an effort to summon and control their ancestral *erens*.

This was also evident in the way people in the taiga often feared the presence of a ‘bad thing’ within their spirit-vessel (*eren*) or among their general possessions and decided to throw

things away out of fear of their potential detrimental effects upon human life. Almost daily, shaman Ariunaa showed up in my *urts* to tell me her worries about whether this or that thing ‘fitted together’ with her *eren* or whether it was a ‘bad thing’. When I asked her once why she thought that a bracelet she had received from a tourist was bad, she said: ‘You know the wolves took my reindeer calf the other day, so it made me wonder whether my *eren* is allergic to the bracelet’. The Duha concept of *harshildah* translates as ‘be allergic to’ or ‘be contrary to’. However, I have chosen to view it in the allergic sense, as the Duha use the term to denote how certain things cause detrimental reactions in - or transform the being of - specific beings (humans and non-humans). As such, the term shares similarities with the more conventional term of allergy referring to ‘reactions occurring when a person’s immune system reacts to normally harmless substances in the environment’.<sup>17</sup> When the Duha talk about their *erens* being allergic to certain things, they are obviously not referring to a reaction within the immune system of the *eren*. Rather, what they are saying is that ‘bad things’ much like ‘allergens’ may be harmless or suitable to certain *erens* and cause detrimental reactions in others, depending on the nature and history of the given *eren*. We are thus dealing with an animistic ontology, which appears to be directed by a principle of what I term ‘inter-animation’, referring to how things are thought to animate other things (*erens*), which again are thought to animate the very lives of humans.

In this chapter, I attempt to uncover how the Duha perceive the very being of certain lineages and lineage members as tied to their *erens*. I will show how the Duha understanding of *eren* is shaped by local animistic notions of non-humans and humans (*eren* and human kin), and non-humans and non-humans (*eren* and thing) as mutually inter-animating entities. I explore how the Duha effort to control their own being through the acts of adding or detaching certain things to their shamanic paraphernalia and placing, acquiring or removing things from the household.

In order to provide the ethnographic context of this chapter, I will discuss my meeting with Oyunaa and follow her quest to become a shaman.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allergy>



## A Shaman's Story

In summer 2011, Oyunaa arrived in the taiga with her mother, younger brother and Mongolian shaman teacher. Oyunaa had travelled to the taiga to learn about her shamanic heritage and potential for becoming a shaman. Her grandfather was shaman Natsag, who was remembered among the Duha as 'a very powerful shaman' and one of 'the last genuine shamans' in the region. However, as a Darhad family had adopted Oyunaa's mother (the daughter of shaman Natsag), she was not raised in the taiga and hardly knew anything about her grandfather or the shamanic traditions of the Duha.

Oyunaa was raised in the city of Darhan by a 'modern' family who largely cultivated 'socialist' and 'atheist' values. As an adult, she studied economics in Ulaanbaatar and later married a German man and settled in Germany. Oyunaa 'never gave much thought to her shamanic heritage' until she met a shaman in Ulaanbaatar, while holidaying in Mongolia. The shaman told her that her undiagnosed schizophrenic symptoms, which had tormented her for years, were due to her grandfather's spirits begging her to follow in his footsteps and become a shaman. Subsequently, she decided to travel to the taiga with a Darhad shaman in search of her shamanic heritage in order to potentially become a shaman.

I first heard about Oyunaa when my host mother, Aichurek, told me that one of her distant relatives had arrived in an area called Hogrog on the steppe. Aichurek said: 'Oyunaa has arrived in our homeland to become a shaman. She is the granddaughter of the great shaman Natsag – the shaman who made our *eren*. She is his granddaughter, so she will become a great shaman'. My host father, Solnoi, was rolling a cigarette out of a piece of old newspaper. He lit the cigarette and said to me: 'Let us ride to Hogrog tomorrow and meet Oyunaa'.

The next day we rode toward Hogrog. After eight hours of uninterrupted riding through steep mountains, across deep rivers and through dense larch forests, the landscape suddenly changed to the open brown and yellow colours of a steppe landscape, where flocks of sheep and horses were grazing. We had arrived in Hogrog, the homeland of the neighbouring Darhad people. We stopped at a camp with tree tiny wooden cabins and a single *ger* (Mongolian felt tent) surrounded by a wooden fence. It was the home of Oyunaa's maternal relatives; Oyunaa was currently staying with her teacher in the *ger*.

I followed Solnoi into the *ger* and sat to his left. While the *ger* was crowded with people, I knew immediately who Oyunaa was, as her western clothes and short hair stood in sharp contrast to the more traditional appearance of local women. Also, Oyunaa's shamanic teacher was easy to spot as he sat in the northern area of the *ger* smoking Marlboro cigarettes dressed in a brand new *del* (Mongolian traditional coat). Around his waist, he was wearing a leather belt tied together by a huge buckle, which contained Mongolian ornaments made of pure silver. He announced that he was shaman Davaa and Oyunaa's teacher. He shook my hand and told me that I was welcome to join his shamanic séance, which would take place over the next days. Oyunaa offered me milk-tea and I explained that I was an anthropologist and would like to follow her efforts to become a shaman. The teacher nodded; Oyunaa smiled and said that I was very welcome to accompany her during her initiation. Shortly afterwards, Solnoi announced that he had a bottle of vodka; the shaman teacher and the rest of the crowd left the *ger* to enjoy a drink in the sun, leaving me alone with Oyunaa. She instantly turned to me and said in English: 'This teacher just makes me so confused. He does not explain anything to me. How can I learn to become a shaman, when he does not explain anything?'

The back area of the *ger* was decorated with shamanic paraphernalia. Various shamanic paraphernalia belonging to the shaman teacher lay in the western area of the *ger*, including a triangular-shaped drum made of black bear skin, a shamanic costume decorated with iron different bells, skins and furs from fourteen different kinds of wild animals, a multi coloured spirit vessel and a black spirit vessels made from a raven and black cotton ribbons., Oyunaa's recently manufactured shamanic paraphernalia sat in the eastern area of the *ger*. The paraphernalia included a shaman gown, a drum and an *eren*; they had an elegant appearance and looked very different from the simple and worn-out appearance of the shamanic costumes and *erens* I had seen among the Duha. Oyunaa explained: 'It has taken us weeks to collect the right materials for it [shamanic costume, drum and *eren*]. My teacher tells me that it is crucial to make them in the proper way. It is important to include the skin of certain animals'.

The next day, Oyunaa performed a séance guided by her shamanic teacher. Around noon, just before the séance, I travelled with Oyunaa, her shamanic teacher, and sixteen of her relatives – among whom several were so drunk that they had to be carried into the car – to a mountain where it would take place. She wore her shamanic costume and drum for the first time in an

attempt to call her grandfather's spirits; this was the first step to becoming a shaman. This particular séance drew a crowd: Close and distant relatives as well as locals from the area crowded in jeeps in order to witness the granddaughter of the great shaman Natsag partake in this séance.

When we arrived at the mountain, two of Oyunaa's uncles pulled her three drunken cousins out of the car and into the grass. Paralyzed from drunkenness, they did not react at all. Oyunaa's mother sat down in the grass together with three elderly men and opened a bottle of vodka. She poured vodka into a glass and handed it to the eldest man in the group. Oyunaa gave her mother an irritated look and cried out loudly: 'Do you *have* to drink now?' Her mother yelled back angrily and continued to drink giving Oyunaa a defiant look. Oyunaa turned to me and pronounced: 'I really do not understand *these* people. All they have in their mind is the next drink and my shaman teacher has not even told me what this séance is all about'. The shamanic teacher, Davaa, was busy placing offering on a wooden plate: First, he placed the breast bone of a sheep, then candy and finally cigarettes onto the plate. He signalled for Oyunaa to light a bonfire, which she immediately started doing. After the fire had started to burn, Davaa handed Oyunaa a wooden spoon and a porcelain bowl filled with milk, and signalled that she had to make offerings. Concentrating, she dipped the spoon in the milk and sprinkled it in four directions. Davaa returned carrying Oyunaa's shamanic costume and helped her to put it on. In the background, a couple of elderly Duha men were laughing and whispering: 'Have you ever heard about *erens* arriving in daylight? Ha, ha, ha I never heard anything like this. And if they arrive and see that expensive shamanic costume, they will surely not recognize her...ha, ha, ha'.

Clearly irritated, the shaman teacher declared in a loud voice that the séance was about to begin. Women and men gathered together and sat down on the grass. Slightly drunk, Solnoi yelled in a loud voice: 'It is all wrong, according to our traditions women should sit there and men here'. The shaman teacher responded in a loud voice: 'I know how it *should* be done'. Oyunaa's elder brother grabbed Solnoi and dragged him away shouting: 'You are spoiling it'. Solnoi responded: 'Peaceful, peaceful (*taivan, taivan*). Oyunaa will become a great shaman. She will be powerful like the shaman Natsag'.

Oyunaa, her shamanic teacher, a younger cousin and I were the only ones who were not completely drunk when the séance was finally to begin. Davaa handed Oyunaa her drum and she started drumming; it made a monotonous sound. Shortly after, people seemed more sober and focused on Oyunaa's drumming. They whispered among themselves, wondering whether small changes in the rhythm of the drum might indicate the arrival of the spirits. People were searching for signs that Oyunaa might start to sing – which traditionally signals the arrival of the spirits. After twenty minutes of continual drumming, there were no changes in the rhythm of the drum; the elderly men started to loudly discuss the manner in which her shamanic gown was incorrectly made. An elderly man shouted: 'There should be a three-headed snake, it should not be made from sable skin and it looks way too expensive'. Davaa angrily responded: 'I know how it must be done'. For a moment people were silent; I then heard people whisper: 'She has paid him two million *tögrögs* [approximately 1000 euro]', 'he is only a market shaman' and 'he knows nothing about *our* traditions'. After 30 more minutes of drumming, Oyunaa gave up and whispered to me in English: 'I felt nothing and I do not even know what I am supposed to feel'. Davaa helped Oyunaa to undress and said in a loud voice: 'I felt the presence of your *erens*. They are very powerful and wild, soon they will arrive; maybe next time they will arrive'.

A couple of days later, Oyunaa performed another séance with the same result. In the camp, everyone seemed to agree that Oyunaa's teacher was to blame, as he was not Duha, he did not understand the Duha traditions and he had not manufactured Oyunaa's shamanic paraphernalia according to the traditions of her lineage and clan. Several people told me that Oyunaa's progress of becoming a shaman would now be hindered and that the experience might make her mad or ultimately kill her. They explained that the spirits of Oyunaa's kin were allergic to lavish and expensive things, such as the animal furs tied to her shamanic costume. My host father, Solnoi, explained:

The shamans from Oyunaa's clan never used golden sable skin. Such expensive things disgust the *erens*. Golden sable skin is a bad thing. Some expensive things carry bad deeds with them. In the old days, shamans did not use expensive materials; they only made their gowns out of simple, natural materials such as deerskin. [...] In my opinion, the utensils of shaman Natsag [and hence Oyunaa] must contain a three-headed snake. It must be there for certain. Her headdress was also made incorrectly. The feathers were

correct, but they were not placed in the right way. If a shamanic gown is not made according to the rules, the *eren* will not be able to recognize the shaman.

According to Solnoi and many others, Oyunaa's effort to become a shaman was thus hindered by the presence of 'bad things' in her shamanic costume. These things were considered bad, as her ancestral *eren* somehow was allergic to them and as the presence of these bad things would hinder the *eren* in recognizing Oyunaa as its heir. To understand the full implications of the notion of allergy, let us now examine the Duha concept of *eren*.

### **The Nature and Character of *Eren***

There are four different kinds of *eren* among the Duha, which all refer to a spirit vessel or amulets and its spirit(s): 1) the shamanic *eren* (*böögiin eren*) attached to particular shamanic lineages; 2) the home *eren* (*geeriin eren*) connected to particular families; 3) the *eren* of an individual which is simply denoted *eren*; 4) the hunting *eren* (*angiin eren*) tied to a particular or several hunters within a single household or family. In everyday language, most of my informants simply termed all of these entities as *eren*, as its specific nature was implicit in the conversation. However, it may also be due the unsettled attachment of *eren*, where an *eren* originally attached to an individual through time may be attached to the broader family or lineage. This was the case of the *eren* kept by the shaman Ariunaa. This *eren* was originally made as the home *eren* of Ariunaa's parents to protect their children's health. However, as these children had their own families, their offsprings began to worship the home *eren* whereby it became an *eren* of their lineage, and when Ariunaa became a shaman, she started to use the home *eren* to summon her ancestral spirits; consequently, she made it her shamanic *eren*. The *eren* is thus an unsettled entity, whose attachment is unsettled and fluid, while simultaneously bounded to the kin of its origin.

Much like the Mongolian *ongon* (Hangartner 2011: 71; Purev & Purvee 2005; Pedersen 2007; Vajnshtein 1978: 458) and the Mongolian and Duha *seter*<sup>18</sup> (Purev & Purvee 2005: 255) – a spirit and amulet attached to livestock - the Duha concept of *eren* refers to a certain human and non-human spirit helper and its materialization in a certain spirit vessel (amulet),

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<sup>18</sup> Much like the *ongon* and *eren*, the *seter* is a spirit vessel commonly made of cotton ribbons. The *seter* is intimately tied to the *ongon* or *eren*, as it is regarded as their mount (Purev & Purvee 2005: 255). *Seters* are commonly tied to a domestic animal, becoming the protector of the broader herd (Fijn 2011: 43).

sacrificial tree or shamanic costume. Yet, they also differ, as *ongons* primarily are of human origin (Pedersen 2007; 2011; Humphrey 2007), whereas *erens* tend to be both of a human and non-human (animal or natural element) origin. According to Sergei Vajnshtein (1978: 458), the Tuvans traditionally differentiated between anthropomorphic and zoomorphic *erens*. During my fieldwork, I did not find such differentiation. Instead, my informants commonly traced the origin of their *erens* back to a certain animal (wolf, wolverine, bear, lizard etc.) or natural element (I only heard of water) whose powers were thought to fuse with those of its ancestral shamans. Yet, the overall form of the *eren* is similar to that of the *ongon*, which consists of a ‘multiplicity’ (Even in Pedersen 2007: 155) of spirits encapsulated in a single form. The Duha’s *eren* may, drawing on Pedersen’s (2007) definition of the Darhad’s *ongon*, be defined as:

[A] complex amalgamation of events, social relationships and material substances which continuously absorb ever more events, social relationships and material substances in accordance with the particular spatio-temporal trajectory defined by the original event from which the spirit was created (Pedersen 2007: 155).

This definition reveals how the character of the *ongon*, as the *eren*, is labile, yet somehow bounded to its origin in a certain spirit. Among the Duha, each *eren* is thought to have the particular nature of its non-human and human spirits. For instance, an *eren* with the origin in a bear is thought to have bear-like powers enmeshed with the specific powers, historical disputes, misdeeds or heroic deeds of its ancestral shamans or other influential ancestors. Both among the Mongolian and the Duha the shamanic *ongon* or *eren* is inherited from shaman to shaman. However, among the Duha, the *eren* is not merely thought to be passed onto shamans to be but also to ordinary lay-people, whose misfortune or illnesses are commonly regarded as a sign of the *eren* being passed onto them, though they are not supposed to become shamans. According to the Duha, shamans – at least if powerful – ‘protects’ (*hamgaaldag*) their clans or lineages by mastering the powers of their *eren*. Yet, today many Duha lament that lack of shamans – or absence of shamans capable of mastering their *erens* – has left clans and lineages ‘without protection’ (*hamgaalaltgüi bolchoo baigaa*). Hence many Duha feel that the only mean to gain control over their *erens* – and hence their lives – is to try to master the powers passed on to them, through offerings.

Though the Duha would tell me of the necessity of shamans to control lineage *erens*, they had quite ambiguous feelings about their kindred shamans, who were thought also to be a threat to their kin. This was certainly the case for Oyunaa. Her aunt once explained:

We want someone to rise [become a shaman]. If Oyunaa becomes a shaman it may be good for all of us [referring to the lineage]. Now our lineage has no protection, as we do not have a shaman. So, we want someone to become a shaman to pass on the lineage and control the powers of our *eren*. But if an unskilful person rises, it is not good. You know that relative of ours, shaman Tömgöö, who is now dead, she took our ancestral *eren* [became a shaman] and then she presented it with red raw meat. This was very disrespectful, but we could not say anything, because she was a shaman, and we thought she knew what she was doing. But she did not, she angered our *eren* and shortly after she died. Her acts gave rise to the *chötgör* (demon), which spread death and illnesses among our relatives. Many of our people passed away during those years.

As this story illustrates, the act of feeding an *eren* with an improper gift of offering is regarded as an inherently dangerous act. It may cause the *eren* to become angry and influence its wider kin in violent ways. The *erens* are thought to pass on misfortune, misdeeds, death, fertility, health and prosperity to its wider kin depending on its character. Offerings presented to the *eren* should possess a similar nature to that of its own, otherwise they may provoke the anger of the *eren*.

As the Duha often do not know the nature of their *eren*, they are uncertain about how to appropriately interact with it. The anger of the *eren* could be provoked if something of an alien nature, or a human being of an alien kin to those of the *eren* is brought into its vicinity. For instance, only kin members are ordinarily allowed to touch or sleep next to their *eren*; they are also the only ones permitted to make offerings. However, as it is the *erens* who decide who is part of their kin, the Duha can never be quite sure of whether they are heir of a certain *eren* within their kin. For instance, one of my elderly informants, Bat, told me how he had placed the *eren* of his deceased father in the wild forest, as he had felt that it was not suitable for him to keep it because it had been made for his father. Shortly after, Bat experienced all kinds of misfortunes: he broke his leg, his son become severely ill and wolves killed several of his reindeer. Confused by these incidents and anxious about whether it had been wrong to

give up his father's *eren*, Bat visited a shaman. The shaman told Bat that his hardship was caused by Bat having wrongly abandoned his father's *eren*, even though it was passed on to him. Bat then retrieved the *eren* from the place where he had left it and brought it back to his home in order to begin worshipping it. A similar uncertainty regarding the kin of an *eren* was apparent during Oyunaa's visit in the taiga.

One of Oyunaa's aunts had advised her to pay homage to the *eren* of her lineage kept in the Ariunaa household. The aunt had told Oyunaa that this *eren* was of Oyunaa's kin, because it was Oyunaa's grandfather who had made it for his elder brother's children to protect them from illness. This *eren* was widely worshipped by shaman Ariunaa and her kin.

On most days, Ariunaa hid the family *eren* in a brown cotton bag in the northern area of her *urts*. On the day Oyunaa and I visited Ariunaa, it was hanging uncovered from the wooden poles in the north eastern corner of the *urts*. According to the lunar calendar,<sup>19</sup> it was the first day of summer - a particularly auspicious day, where people were supposed to make offering to their *erens*. Ariunaa's *eren* consisted of a large bundle of blue and white cotton ribbons. From the middle of the bundle, Ariunaa's elder sister, Aichurek, drew out a leather string with an eagle claw fastened to its end and said:

Our father's elder brother, shaman Natsag, made this *eren* more than 60 years ago. He was the one that fastened the eagle claw and the initial cotton ribbons and enlivened it [with the *eren* as spirit]. It has the power of an eagle, shaman Natsag and well, I do not really know, something more. It is something only shamans know about. He made it when we were small, because we were ill. He made it to protect us. Now it protects us all, our lineage. He was a very good, white and powerful shaman.

Shaman Ariunaa told Oyunaa to fasten three white cotton ribbons to her *eren* as an offering. Oyunaa followed her advice. Ariunaa later told me that she was uncertain on whether the three cotton ribbons were 'good' (*sain*) or 'bad things' and whether she should keep them or remove them from her *eren*. Later Oyunaa's elder sister, Aichurek, elaborated:

This *eren* was made for *our* people and though Oyunaa is a relative of ours, the *eren* might not recognize her as kin. It might be angered by her offering [the three cotton

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<sup>19</sup> The Duha use of the lunar calendar is likely due to the historical influence of Buddhism on shamanism.



ribbons]. Oyunaa ought to worship her own *eren* at the sacrificial tree in Tengis. I have told Ariunaa to remove the ribbons, but she did not listen.

To understand why Oyunaa tying a cotton ribbon to Ariunaa's *eren* was seen as potentially risky for Ariunaa's kin, we need to examine how the Duha perceive the relationship between an *eren* and its kin unit. This will be the focus of the following section.



Old Duha lady displays the *eren* of her Urat lineage.

### **The relationship between *Eren* and Human Kin**

Many years ago, Oyunchimeg gave birth to a boy. But you know what she did to the poor child? She simply left him to die in the woods. So when she became pregnant again, her relatives watched over her. One day, she went to the woods to collect firewood and when she returned people could see that she had given birth. But there was no child. So her brother ran to the forest, but when he finally found the poor child, it had passed

away. She is a bad woman. It is all because of the *eren* of her lineage. It is red and black. They are the colours of blood and death; because of this, people in her lineage conduct black magic and do bad things.

This story, told by an elderly woman in the taiga, was particularly harsh. Yet, in the taiga I heard many similar stories about how the characters and deeds of members of particular kin units reflect the inner nature or character of their *eren*. In order to grasp how the Duha perceive the relationship between specific *erens* and their human kin units as sharing a mutual being or nature inherently different from those of others, we need to examine the shamanic ontology of the Duha. In this regard, I draw on classical and more contemporary theories on 'totemism' (Lévi-Strauss 1963b; Descola 1996; Pedersen 2001) and 'animism' (Tylor 1929 [1871]; Descola 1996; Pedersen 2001) to illustrate how the shamanic ontology of the Duha is founded upon a tension between differentiation and identification with other beings (humans and non-humans).

According to Descola (1996: 85), human conceptualizations of non-humans are universally 'predicated by reference to the human domain'. Descola (1996: 87-88) identifies the following three modes of objectifying non-humans: totemic, animistic and naturalistic. Totemism is a mode of identification, where the discontinuities between natural species are used to represent differences within social units. Animism is the mode of identification where 'human dispositions and social attributes' are extended onto non-humans, thus constructing continuity between humans and non-humans. Finally, naturalism is the mode implied in most conventional western ontologies that posit an ontological duality between nature and culture (Descola 1996: 87- 88).

The Duha concept of *eren* cannot be reduced to any of these modes. Rather, the Duha appears to view the relationship between a given *eren* and its human kin as one of 'social continuity' (the animistic mode), whereas the differences between *erens* are engaged to differentiate human kin units ('the totemic mode'). In his classical theory of totemism, Lévi-Strauss (1963b: 83) famously argued that totemism engages natural species to represent clans not because they 'are good to eat' but because they are 'good to think'. Species are thus, according to Lévi-Strauss (1963b), useful as they may be engaged as classificatory forms to denote division within human society. While the *eren* is obviously not a natural species in the strict

Western sense of the term, among the Duha, it is commonly referred to as a species, as each *eren* is thought to have its own inherent nature, different from those of others; accordingly, it may be seen as a classificatory device. However, the *erens* are not merely engaged as classificatory devices pointing toward the differences between kin units (mutual otherness). Rather, they are engaged to point toward the particular content or nature of each kin unit, which is thought to have its particular nature - that of their *eren* - (mutuality of being) which is inherently different from those of others; this implies a more animistic mode of conceptualizing the *eren*.

Pedersen (2001) has proposed that the ontologies of the indigenous people of Mongolia are largely governed by a totemic mode and only partly by a more animistic mode. The totemic mode is, according to Pedersen (2001: 418), reflected in the historical differentiation between religious specialists in Mongolia who, as also argued by Humphrey (1996), each had certain natural objects or beings as the focus of their inspirational knowledge and ritual practice. This means that the relationship between humans and non-humans in Mongolia is commonly perceived as one of 'social discontinuity' (Pedersen 2001: 424), i.e., the world is thought to consist of 'mutually independent domains inhabited by humans as well as non-humans' (Pedersen 2001: 418). This gives rise to the indigenous Mongolian perception that the power of non-humans cannot be harnessed by any human, but only by particular ritual specialists (Pedersen 2001; Humphrey 1996).

Though the Duha ontology shares some structural similarities with the Mongolian one depicted by Humphrey and Pedersen, it differs in content. In the Mongolian case, the spiritual world is divided into natural objects which each have their religious specialists, whereas the spiritual world of the Duha is structured around divisions between *erens*, which reflects local notions of kinship. Each *eren* constitutes its independent kinship domain as it enlivens a relationship between a certain ancestral *eren* and its human kin. Among the Duha, each kinship unit (family, lineage and clan) thus evolves as distinctive spiritual domains or beings, as each originate from a particular *eren*, thought to have its own unique 'nature' that is substantially different from those of other kin units. Only people (shamans or laymen) related to a given *eren* are said to be capable of mastering its powers. While each *eren* and its human kin are confined to their distinctive spiritual domain, they can still be affected by other spiritual domains (*erens* and their kin). For instance, it is generally said that if two *erens* of

different origins<sup>20</sup> are kept within the same household, they are likely to contaminate each other, turn ferocious and spread misfortune within the household. It is thus the task of human kin to ensure the separation of their own *eren* from other spiritual domains (*erens* and their kin), which could contaminate the kin's own spiritual domain. Among the Duha, 'the mutual independence' of *erens* is not a pre-given ontological state, but a state which is accomplished or suspended through human interaction with various entities in the world, including the land, various possessions and spiritual artefacts in the household.

Among the Duha, the relationship between a given spiritual domain (*eren* and human kin) to that of other domains appears to be founded on a principle of what we may term 'inter-animation', as the act of bringing *erens* of different origins into each other's vicinity are thought to mould – cause allergic reactions within - the character and being of both; hence it is an act of inter-animation. Moreover, the character of an *eren* may transmute in dangerous ways if brought into the proximity of all kinds of things (meat, cotton-ribbons, clothes or a human being) of a dissimilar nature to that of its own.

It would thus be wrong to reduce the *eren* to a representational entity, as it is not merely 'good to think with' but is thought to animate the very being of its human worshipper and wider kin. Among the Duha, people's practical and ritual engagement with *erens* first serve to maintain 'the social discontinuity' between *erens*, i.e., uphold their separation to avoid the transmutation of their beings. Secondly, it aims to renew the 'social continuity' of *eren* and its human kin to ensure that they arise as a mutuality of being and hence kin. The Duha engagement with their *erens* is thus aimed at controlling their animation and hence reflects an 'animistic mode' of viewing not merely the relationship between humans and non-humans (*eren*) but also that between non-humans and non-humans (*eren* and *eren*).

According to Pedersen (2001), the fundamental animistic principle is one of 'analogous identification', understood as 'the ability to imagine oneself in someone else's position, and the ability to imagine someone else in one's own position (Pedersen 2001: 416). Such

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<sup>20</sup> Many of my Duha inquirers told me that they considered given up their inherited *eren*, because their husband or wife also had an *eren* within the household. Some explained that their *eren* might not fit together with that of their spouse's, due to their contrary origins. Hence people were caught in a dilemma: they often felt that they needed to preserve their own *eren* to protect themselves against various kinds of misfortune, yet, they were concerned that their *eren* might turn against them if it was kept in the same household as the *eren* of their spouse.

‘analogous identification’ is, as Pedersen notes, not a matter of ‘full identifications’ but of ‘partial ones’ (Pedersen 2001: 416). Returning to the Duha, the relationship between kin unit and *eren* may be seen as one of ‘analogous identification’, as kin-members (particularly shamans and shamans to be) are thought to be endowed to a smaller or lesser degree with the characteristic (nature, character, temper, inclinations, skills and fate) of their *eren*, just as each *eren* is thought to embody certain characteristics of its human kin.

The Duha notion of *eren* is thus shaped in the tension between a totemic and an animistic mode of perceiving the relationship between humans and non-humans. This gives rise to an ontology where the world is perceived as divided into a multitude of different kinship domains of particular *erens* and their human heirs. The challenge for the Duha is to control their *erens* from various outside forces – bad things and beings – which may provoke their anger and give rise to various misfortunes. This is a difficult task, as most Duha are not aware of the inherent nature of their *eren* and hence cannot know in advance which things or beings best suit, or conflict with, their *eren*.

### **The Allergies of *Erens***

The concept of a ‘bad thing’ is not unique to the Duha; rather, it is a common notion in the region that has been discussed by several scholars (Højer 2009; Empson 2011; High 2008a & b; 2013; High & Schlesinger 2010; Humphrey 2002). Mongolian notions of ‘bad things’ generally refer to how human emotions or actions may leave a negative imprint on things. Duha notions of ‘bad things’ are more extensive, as they also refer to how ‘ordinary’ things, which are commonly perceived as neutral, may turn bad or beneficial, or come to life when brought into the vicinity of an *eren*.

Scholars point toward two overall principles for why Mongolians perceive certain things as potentially bad and posing a danger to their possessors. Firstly, gains (*olz*) from nature (wild game meat, berries or precious stones) are thought to be dangerous, heavy or polluted if humans have used socially or cosmologically subversive means to obtain them (Empson 2011; High 2008b: 13; Humphrey et al. 1993; High & Schlesinger 2010; Højer 2012). For instance, in Mongolia, gold has historically been perceived as a polluted and dangerous thing, as Mongolians perceive the act of digging holes in the ground as an improper interference with the land and its spirits (High & Schlesinger 2010: 292). In the case of hunting, the purity

or pollutive state of the game meat has traditionally been seen as dependent on whether the hunter has interacted properly or improperly with the land and its spirits during the hunt (Empson 2011; High 2008b; Humphrey et al. 1993). Secondly, the emotions or capabilities of beholders are said to linger to their possessions, which may enrich or pollute new beholders depending on the character of its former possessor (Empson 2011; Højer 2003, 2012; Humphrey 2002a). According to Humphrey (2002a), personal properties in Mongolia are 'expressive and transformative of persons-in-society' (Humphrey 2002a:83), since the relationship with possessions is 'constituted as a matter of character or personality, as an ethical rather than a legal relation' (Humphrey 2002a: 65). In these examples we are thus dealing with a kind of deferred or 'secondary human agency' (Gell 1998: 20), where it is the intentions, emotions or acts of human beholders which makes their possessions agentic, rather than the thing itself.

The above points are applicable to the Duha. Yet, what is important to note for now, is that the Duha concept of 'bad things' also encompasses the idea that the character of things are relational and arises from the encounter between the innate nature of things. For instance the piece of raw mutton meat that shaman Tömgöö placed in front of Ariunaa's *eren* was not a 'bad thing' in itself. On the contrary it became a 'bad thing' when Tömgöö placed it in front of Ariunaa's *eren* as a gift of offering, because Ariunaa's *eren* having an eagle origin was allergic to mutton meat. Hence the case shows how things, such as raw mutton meat, arise as 'bad things' in their encounter with *erens* of a contrary nature. People told me that all Duha' *erens* due to their origin in the taiga and in its wild animal species and shamans (Duha) was allergic to livestock meat from the steppe. On the contrary Darhad *ongon's* was due to their origin in sheep and cattle breeding Darhad shamans said to require offering of mutton. Likewise some Duha *erens* were thought to require offerings in black colours (black tea, black cotton ribbons) because of their perceived origin in black shamans and dark coloured animals (bear, wild boar). On the contrary *erens* known to originate in light coloured animals (reindeer, eagle) were said to demand offering in white colours and be allergic to dark coloured things.

The above cases reveal how the Duha notion of 'bad thing' is not an isolated event; rather, it is reminiscent of Mary Douglas' (1995 [1966]) classic definition of dirt as a kind of 'matter out of place' (1995 [1966]: 36). Douglas defined dirt as a 'by-product of systematic ordering and classification of matter' (Douglas 1995 [1966]: 36). While the 'bad thing' accentuates

difference between natures, people (Darhad and Duha) and kin units, they do not merely represent social and spiritual differences. On the contrary, the 'bad thing' has the capacity to transform the nature and character of *erens* and hence the 'bad thing' reveals animistic principles rather than purely classificatory (totemic) ones. The 'bad thing' may thus be understood in accordance with Gell's (1998) definition of an 'agent', whose character 'is a function of the social-relational matrix in which it is embedded' (1998: 7). Contrary to Gell, I do not perceive the agency of the 'bad thing' as entirely a matter of deferred or abducted human agency, but as a kind of animated by-product of its encounter with the innate nature of an *eren*.

Among the Duha, things with a contrary nature to that of the *eren* and those with a parallel nature to that of the *eren* are thought to become 'bad things' when brought into the vicinity of the *eren*. As one middle-aged Duha woman told me: 'The *eren* of our lineage is allergic to bear meat, because it [the *eren*] is of bear origin. We are even prohibited to bring bear meat into our home. If we did this, our *eren* would feel afraid and horrified'. To renew an *eren*, one ought to grant it offerings of things with a similar nature. For instance, a bear *eren* is commonly thought to require offerings of a black colour (black tea or black cotton ribbons), which is said to fit with the nature of the bear. On the contrary, to offer a bear *eren* a piece of bear meat is thought to imply a cannibalistic act, which is likely to frighten and possibly anger the bear *eren*.

I will now examine how the Duha differentiate between things which are inherently bad (the general) and things which are bad in certain circumstances (the specific). The first point is reminiscent of the more general Mongolian notions of 'polluted' and 'heavy' things, which may influence any human beholder negatively. Such notions are certainly present among the Duha. For instance, the sable skin tied to Oyunaa's shamanic costume was considered, by my host father and many other Duha, as 'a bad thing' because it was an expensive object likely to have been endowed with the human emotion of greed. Yet, to my confusion, my host father later told me that some Darhad shamans used and indeed needed sable skin on their costumes, as they had spirits of sable origin. However, as Oyunaa's lineage did not have, at least according to Solnoi, an origin in a sable spirit, her *eren* was likely to react angrily to the presence of sable skin. This brings us to what I perceive as the more particular aspects of the Duha concept of 'bad thing', which evolve from the discrepant nature of entities (an *eren* and a thing) or

'cannibalistic' encounter (as in the bear case) between natures. These principles are condensed in the Duha term of 'allergy' (*harshil*), which is used to denote how an *eren* become 'angry', 'anxious' or 'wild' (change character) or turn into a *chötgör* upon encountering a 'bad thing'. This illustrates how the nature of an *eren* changes when it encounters thing of a contrary or parallel nature to that of its own.

The Duha notion of allergy, where non-human entities (such as the *eren*) are thought to be allergic to certain other non-human entities, may be termed animistic. However, to understand this indigenous animistic notion, we need to examine how Duha animism was not merely founded on a principle of 'analogous identification', as outlined by Pedersen, but also on a principle of 'inter-animation'. Whereas the first is a matter of identification between humans and non-humans, Duha animistic notions also include the idea of inter-animation: that humans may animate non-humans and vice versa and that non-humans (things) may animate other non-humans (*erens*) and vice versa.

Among the Duha, I found numerous examples of such 'inter-animation'. In an attempt to explain the Duha concept of allergy, an elderly Duha hunter pointed towards his *erens* and said: 'If I took these three *erens* and placed them in another household, bad things would happen, because *erens* of different origins are allergic to each other; they would both become angry and begin to fight'. Another old lady, Tseren, told me how she had become severely ill after she had bought new cups from the village Tsagaannuur. When she drank from the cups, she noticed that her stomach ache almost always worsened. She realized that it was probably the dark colours of the cups that were somehow angering her *eren*. She then decided to give the cups to her neighbour, who was of another lineage, and immediately her health improved. Her neighbour never had any problems, as she 'had a black *eren*'. The principle of inter-animation also appears to extend to the treatment of food during the cooking process; it is commonly perceived as improper to mix fish and dairy products. My host mother explained:

One should not mix fish with milk, because fish originate from *lus* (water-spirits) while milk is of an animal origin. Each origin should be kept separate, just as each *eren* should be kept away from other *erens*. If milk is mixed with fish, the *lus* will become angry and the reindeer will stop producing milk and the herd will decrease.



The above example highlights how the Duha, and according to Humphrey (1997 [1995]), the Mongolians in general view the world as divided into discrete natural domains each with their ongoing form of being, which should not be disturbed by the activities of humans (Humphrey 1997[1995]: 141). In Mongolia, it is generally perceived as wrong to wash directly in rivers, not because it pollutes water as a substance, but because it pollutes the river as a spiritual entity (Humphrey 1997 [1995]: 141).

In a similar vein, the Duha perceive it as wrong to mix fish and milk because of their different spiritual origins and natures. Fish is said to originate from the water spirits (*lus*), whereas reindeer is said to be overseen by the *erens* of their human beholders. A person who mixes milk and fish is said to raise the anger of her *eren* and that of the *lus*, which will have a negative impact on the person's reindeers.

Evidently, the Duha perceive the act of bringing certain non-human entities into the proximity of others non-human entities or beings as potentially causing their mutual inter-animation. If the worshipper offers her *eren* a thing of a similar character to that of the *eren's* inherent nature - that of its origin in a certain shaman, spirit and wild animal - the thing becomes enlivened with the powers of the *eren* and empowers the *eren*, as the thing is thought to renew and strengthen the *eren's* inherent nature. Yet, if a worshipper offers her *eren* an offering of a contrary character or nature to that of her *eren*, it is believed that it will provoke an allergic reaction in the *eren*, which may invoke various misfortunes among its human kin. It is this perceived capacity of things to mould the character of other things, which I term 'inter-animation'.

It is thus the task of the Duha to regularly renew their *eren* by granting it offerings of a similar character, yet not parallel nature, to that of their *eren* to control its erratic nature and its influence upon its human kin. However, not merely things of contrasting natures, but also humans of contrary descent are, as we will see, thought to shape the character of *erens*.

### **The *Eren* Never Forgets**

When Oyunaa arrived in the taiga, she only knew that she was part Duha, as her mother was Duha. However, she had never heard about her mother's clan affiliation and had never thought about herself as belonging to any particular clan or lineage. However, in the taiga,

people repeatedly referred to her and her shamanic quest in kinship terms making her aware that her maternal clan and lineage affiliation indeed played a crucial role in her potential for becoming a shaman.

Upon a visit to her aunt and uncle, her uncle spent a considerable amount of time telling her how she ought to worship certain sacrificial places in the landscape due to her clan affiliation. This is an extract from his talk:

You are a Balygsh person [belonging to the Balygsh clan], because your grandfather [mother's father] was Balygsh. He was a great shaman of the Balygsh clan - so you will become a great shaman. His sacrificial place is in Tengis, so you should go there to make offerings. [.....] Your grandmother was an Urat person [belonging to the Urat clan] so you might also have *eren* of an Urat origin. Urat people worship the tree with one hundred branches, so I guess it would be good for you to go there.

Though Oyunaa was formally a member of her father's Buryat clan, her shamanic illness was seen as evidence that the spirits of her maternal clan had been passed onto her. Her shamanic illness could only be overcome if she managed to gain mastery over these spirits and thus became a shaman. In order to master her spirits, however, she first needed to be recognized as a kin member by her spirits, which was not a simple task.

In the taiga, Oyunaa's quest to become a shaman was an issue of recurrent discussion. Most people seemed to be convinced that the *eren* of shaman Natsag indeed had chosen Oyunaa to become a shaman. Yet, many were certain that her shamanic teacher hindered her from being recognized as a shaman by her spirits. One elderly relative of Oyunaa, Darimaa, said: 'That Darhad teacher cannot do it, because the *eren* does "not know" (*tanihgüi*) him. The *eren* does not understand Darhad language. Only a person who knows Tuvan language may do it.' Shortly after, Oyunaa had an argument with her teacher, which ended with her actually firing him. Oyunaa then travelled with Solnoi and me to our camp in Zuun Taiga in order to seek the advice of her relatives and potentially find herself a new shaman teacher. Our camp was home to shaman Ariunaa who was of the Balygsh clan and indeed a close relative of Oyunaa and shaman Batzayaa, who was of the Soyán clan and married to Oyunaa's aunt.

During her first days in the camp, Oyunaa frequently visited Ariunaa to ask her questions about the family *eren* kept in her *urts* and to ask her advice on how to become a shaman. When Oyunaa entered the *urts*, Ariunaa often seemed nervous and eager to find an excuse not to talk with Oyunaa. Ariunaa usually answered Oyunaa's questions simply with a nod or a quiet *yes* or *no*, and then left the *urts*, saying that she had to go and look for the reindeer. Oyunaa seemed more and more confused by Ariunaa's vague answers and tried to force her to come up with more complex ones by asking her intricate questions about the spirits. This did not have the desired effect; rather, it appeared to make Ariunaa even more insecure and nervous in Oyunaa's presence.

Once Ariunaa complied to make a divination for Oyunaa, but according to Oyunaa, she 'really did not tell me anything. She is a very quiet person, she never really says anything'. Though Ariunaa was the shaman among the Duha who was most closely related to Oyunaa, as shaman Natsag and the father of Ariunaa were brothers, Oyunaa did not want to engage Ariunaa as a teacher. Ariunaa explained: 'I do not believe she is strong enough' and 'I am sorry to say, but I find her being a bit retarded'.

Ariunaa had only been a shaman for five years and people in the camp all seemed to question her shamanic powers; in fact, Ariunaa also doubted about her abilities. Several of her relatives told me that she was indeed 'to become a powerful shaman', but had not yet fully received her powers. Others, primarily non-relatives but also her close kin, told me that she 'was not a real shaman', but 'only a tourist shaman, shamanizing for money'.

Like Ariunaa, Batzayaa was also a relatively new shaman. Similar to Ariunaa, his power and genuineness was also questioned in the camp. People gossiped that Batzayaa was 'merely a market shaman', who only performed séances in response to the request of foreign tourists, and rarely for locals. In contrast to Ariunaa, Batzayaa's close family (his sister, wife and children) always participated actively in his séances. Also, Batzayaa was commonly known as an intelligent and well-spoken man. Besides being a shaman, he was a veterinarian.

During Oyunaa's stay in our camp, she often talked with shaman Batzayaa. Oyunaa commented: 'I like him a lot, he is very kind and he seems like a wise and very educated man'. Yet, when Oyunaa told her aunt that she considered taking Batzayaa as her teacher, her aunt told her off with the following words:

You should certainly not take him as your teacher. He belongs to the Soyan clan and since the old days, his clan and our Balygsh clan have been allergic to each other. You must have a teacher from the Balygsh clan. If you take a teacher from the Soyan clan, your *eren* will be angered. Nowadays, we [the Balygsh clan] are at peace with Soyan people, we even marry each other. Even though we are at peace, our *erens* only know what happened many years ago - during its lifetime. The *erens* never forget, they are still filled with vengeance from the past. This is the reason why you should not take Batzayaa as your teacher. Even though he has no hostile feelings towards our people, his *eren* may. Because the *eren* was once a man, his anger may still linger. And if our *eren* encounters their *eren*, all kinds of bad things may happen.

In the above quote, Aichurek is referring to the historical dispute between *zalan* Pagmast of the Balygsh clan and shaman Tol of the Soyan clan, which I described in Chapter 2. Aichurek's warning not to take Batzayaa as a shamanic teacher thus shows how the nature and histories of *erens* are thought to animate each other, precisely because the histories of *erens* have become part of their nature. Among the Duha, the very physical object of *eren* appears to offer the worshipper insights in terms of how her own life is part and parcel of the broader history of her kin.

### **Gambling with the Spirits**

Several contemporary anthropological studies of the material culture of different Mongolian groups are influenced by the 'the ontological turn' in anthropology (Henare et al 2007; Kristensen 2013; Holbraad 2014 et al; Pedersen 2007; Viveiros de Castro 1998; 2004; 2007), which opposes the 'a priori distinction between persons and things, matter and meaning, representation and reality' (Henare et al 2007: 2). Proponents of the ontological turn suggest that we view things from shamanic gowns (Pedersen 2007) to household chests (Empson 2007), as 'enunciations of other ontologies' (Henare et al 2007: 10) and 'sui generis meanings' (2007: 3). I will show how the insights of the 'ontologists' may help us to understand how the Duha's shamanic paraphernalia offers worshippers a glimpse into uncertain local spiritual worlds (the ontological).

The ontological turn has certainly made a valuable contribution both to the study of shamanism (Viveiros de Castro 1998) and to the study of materiality (Henare et al 2007,

Pedersen 2011). In the introduction to the volume 'Thinking Through Things', Henare et al. (2007: 10) proposed that we need to take our informants' statement 'seriously' by treating them as 'enunciations of different "worlds" or "natures"' (ontologies). This means, as Henare et al. (2007: 11) polemically argued, that we need to withdraw from the conventional anthropological assumption that humans live in the same 'world', which different people, cultural and social groups represent and understand in various ways. Instead, they proposed that we need to acknowledge that humans inhabit not a single but numerous 'worlds' implying that local concepts, such as the *eren*, should not be reduced to cultural representations (Henare et al. 2007: 10-11). On the contrary, Henare et al. has argued that we ought to 'treat meaning and thing as an identity' (Henare et al. 2007: 4). Though I agree that we indeed need to take our informants seriously, as most anthropologists since Malinowski (2002 [1922]) have acknowledged, I question the assumption of the 'ontologists' that things in themselves somehow elicit ontologies. Drawing on Højer (2013), I find that the ontological is always part and parcel of the relational and cannot be detached from the social processes through which it is enacted. Moreover, the ontological turn appears to presuppose that things are inherently meaningful, which cannot account for how things may also elicit uncertainties, ambiguities and doubts (Højer 2013; Kristensen 2013; Bille 2013; Pelkman 2013).

Still I find that some of the insights of 'thinking through things' may help us to understand how the *eren* of the Duha offer the worshipper a glimpse into the ontological. According to Pedersen, both the *ongon* and the shamanic costumes of the Darhad 'constitute powerful talismans of thought' (2007: 142), which enable people to 'think their shamanic spirits in certain esoteric ways' (2007: 157). Among the Duha, I propose that the very physical composition of the *eren* may indeed offer the worshipper a picture of how his own life is enmeshed in a trajectory of past and present kin, and human and non-human powers. The lineage *eren* of the Duha consists of an interior part of the often worn leather ribbons and body parts from a certain animal of the original *eren*, which is hidden behind multiple cotton ribbons the kin have tied to it through its history. The ribbons do not merely represent the kin, but appear, reminiscent of Rebecca Empson's (2007: 68) descriptions of things inside a household chest among the Buryat, to become the site through which relations between past and present kin are maintained. When the Duha worshipper fastens a cotton ribbon to her lineage *eren*, the cotton ribbon becomes enmeshed in the totality of the *eren* and thus in that

of the lineage. Viewing her own cotton ribbon within the bundle the worshipper may gain a glimpse into the multitude of past and present kin, human and non-human powers, which may be a part of her own life.

However, much is concealed, yet distressingly present, for the worshipper: the worshipper can neither be quite sure of whether she is heir of the *eren* of her worship nor can she be sure of what constitute the *eren's* traditions of worship. Each *eren* consists, as formerly shown, of a multitude of beings whose totality constitutes its nature. To worship an *eren* according to its tradition is to renew it according to its inherent nature, which is wholly or partly concealed for ordinary humans, hence its tradition of worship is uncertain. This was apparent in the way Ariunaa thought about getting rid of the three white cotton ribbons Oyunaa had tied to her *eren*, as she was not quite sure how they fitted together with the nature of her *eren*; it was also evident in the inquirers' questions about whether they should keep or get rid of their *erens*. I propose that what the *erens* offer to the human worshipper is, as Humphrey (2007: 175) has argued is the case of shamanic mirrors, a 'glimpse' into a 'transcendent world' which encourages 'a progression of thought' instantiating reflections rather than answers to 'the eternal question of being' (2007: 190). Humphrey takes the insights and criticism of the ontological turn seriously, by proposing that the shamanic mirror rather than providing direct accesses to the ontological encourages reflections on the ontological.

During my readings among the Duha, both laypeople and, to my surprise, also shamans told me their fears, doubts and uncertainties on how their *erens* were currently affecting their lives. This was reflected in the questions they often presented to me, such as: 'I do not really know the tradition of my *eren*, my parents never told me, so I wonder whether I should get rid of it?' Or 'I wonder whether I should keep my father's *eren* or give it on to my sister, a lot of things happened after I was given that *eren*. Or maybe it is just because I should place it somewhere else in my home.' These questions made me aware of how the Duha *erens* elicit reflections on tradition and on the relationship between human and non-human kin (*eren*).

I thus propose that the *eren* gains its particular power through simultaneously revealing the presence of a relationship between human and non-human spirits while concealing the content of it. This elicits reflections and also prompts people to search for means to control the power of the *eren* upon their lives. These means includes everyday discussions and more

ritualized interrogations (shamanic séances and divination) on how to control a given *eren* and its impact in the life of the lineage. Moreover, it includes what I call a *gamble* with the uncertain spiritual powers of shamanic paraphernalia, where both shamans and lay people attempt to control the influence of their *eren* upon their own lives by discarding or applying things from it, or by discarding the *eren* altogether. People's lives become the ultimate test concerning the outcome of this gamble with 'tradition'.

I propose that the uncertainty surrounding the shamanic traditions of the Duha is an intrinsic part of their shamanic ontology; moreover, it has been boosted by the Duha imagination of socialism as having estranged them from their traditions. Højer (2009) has proposed that we can only understand certain magico-religious practices if we include 'absent knowledge' in our studies (2009: 575). According to Højer, 'absent knowledge' is an intrinsic part of the religious sphere, particularly in a post-socialist context. First, religious objects, he claims, gain their particular power as they 'conjure up layer upon layer of concealment' directing people's attention towards a compelling unknown (Højer 2009: 585-586). Secondly, the socialist state's effort to destroy 'superstition' also had the unintended consequence of bringing 'superstition' into being as 'superstition', understood as the presence of 'something which was important and powerful enough to necessitate destruction' (Højer 2009: 579). In the post-socialist context, this sense of the presence of something powerful, yet absent, unknown and lost, appear to shape people's imagination of religious objects as inherently 'erratic and uncontrolled' (Højer 2009: 578).

Among the Duha, the separation from land and livelihood of many Duha and the repression of religion during socialism appears to have given rise to an imagined space of lost shamanic traditions which fuels people's imagination of having lost knowledge of their former traditions. Indeed, several Duha told me how they felt confused that, though their parents had worshipped their *erens* secretly during socialism, they had not passed this knowledge on to them. Now, many were left with *erens* of their parents, which they knew were powerful, as their parents had worshipped them, however, which could subject them to penalties due to their lack of knowledge about the tradition. Many Duha felt uncertain about how to deal with their inherited *erens*, as they did not know how to control their powers. The dilemma was that many felt that they could not simply abandon their *erens*, as they might be of crucial importance for their own well-being, yet keeping them was also risky, as they did not know

how to worship properly, and this could instantiate the *eren's* anger. Still, I find that the Duha case differs from the Mongolian one discussed by Højer, since the religious objects of the Duha does not so much confront people with an 'absence of knowledge' as such but more with 'uncertain knowledge' about their traditions. Many Duha indeed have an intricate knowledge of the history and powers of their *erens*, yet, this knowledge only appeared to strengthen their awareness of not knowing their *eren's* traditions.

Many of my Duha informants told me that they felt uncertain about whether to keep or get rid of their *eren*. Some told me that various experiences, such as strange bodily sensations, dreams or an increasing number of misfortunes, had made them unsure of whether some 'bad thing' was affecting the character of their *eren*. One of my close Duha friends told me how she had felt dizzy and almost lost consciousness when she had secretly touched her grandfather's *eren* when she was a child. She said that this had made her aware that it was 'dangerous' (*ayultai*). She told me, she felt anxious when entering her brother's *urts* where her grandfather's *eren* was kept, as she was not quite sure whether it was appropriate for her to approach it. Another informant told me that she knew her *eren* was very powerful, as outsiders who slept close to it always had strange dreams. Still, she was uncertain about the types of offerings she ought to offer her *eren*; she was also unsure about whether the *eren* fitted together with her at all or whether she ought to get rid of it. Still, she told me that she thought it was fit for her, as she and her child never had nightmares while sleeping in its proximity. Among the Duha, bodily sensations and spiritual experiences are used to ascertain whether one is engaging properly or improperly with one's *eren*.

We have seen how the shamanic paraphernalia of the Duha not so much provides the worshipper with knowledge of what the spiritual realm is (the ontological), but rather elicits doubts and uncertainties on the spiritual realm and its relationship to specific human individuals or kin units. It is, as we have seen, these uncertainties that inspire the Duha to engage with their spirits – almost as a gamble - in an effort to control the unknown.

## **Conclusion**

The story of Oyunaa has revealed how the spiritual knowledge of the Duha does not refer to a coherent cosmology, but to an assemblage of highly diverse kinship traditions each aimed at summoning and controlling their own unique *erens* (ancestral spirits).



I propose that the contemporary Duha preoccupation with 'bad things' is caused by the Duha return to the taiga. Living in the taiga, many Duha feel that they have become entangled with their ancestral spirits; Oyunaa is one example in this regard. Yet, the return to the taiga also confronted the Duha with the absence of shamans capable of mastering spiritual forces felt to have been released upon clans and lineages return to their ancestral land. Concurrently the Duha effort to master their own *erens* confronted them with a perceived loss of ancestral traditions, as it made many Duha painfully aware of how they had been separated from their ancestral land, livelihood and traditions during socialism. It was partly, I suggest, this uncertainty on tradition that compelled many Duha to gamble with their ancestral spirits – refabricating shamanic paraphernalia, getting rid of presumed 'bad things' – in an effort to gain control of their spirits. I also propose that this gambling mode of engaging with things is tied to the way the animistic ontology of the Duha is founded on indigenous notions of spirits having an erratic nature. I have shown how the Duha animistic ontology is based on principles of inter-animation, where the nature of things arise in the encounter with spiritual entities and where the spiritual entities' characters are shaped by things in their vicinity. Among the Duha, shamanic practices are thus oriented around trying to control such processes of inter-animation. Yet, because the nature of spiritual entities is often felt to be uncertain, the nature of things in general is circumscribed by such uncertainties.

I propose that Duha life in the taiga is oriented around animistic – and partly totemic modes – of viewing the relationship between humans and non-humans. The challenge for the Duha hunter is to interact with the land and its beings in ways that institutes him as part of the kin domain of his *eren(s)* (the animistic mode) and differentiates him from the kin domains of other *eren(s)* (the totemic mode). In a similar vein, the *eren(s)* kept in the households and the shamanic gowns of the Duha constitutes a type of micro-landscape, which is reminiscent of, and tied to, the broader landscape of the taiga and its sacrificial places. Indeed, the manner in which people place their *urts* in the camp, treat game meat, visit shamans and worship *erens* all appear to be oriented around renewing the innate nature of one's own *eren* and ensuring its separation from other *erens* or kin domains. I find that the contemporary Duha preoccupation with things and gambling mode of engaging with things are a matter of people trying to direct processes of inter-animation in order to sustain their own being as kin.

The chapter has thus shown how indigenous uncertainty on practical interaction with the spiritual realm may give rise to an experimental or *gambling* way of dealing with the unknown; i.e. the spiritual realm. Among the Duha, the outcome of this *gamble* is sensed through the allergic reaction it invokes in non-human and human lives. The supposition that a given *eren* may have turned malicious due to the presence of a bad thing has evolved from people's experiences of intangible sensations or an increase in the number of misfortunes. Such experiences are seen as suggesting the presence of some kind of 'bad thing', and framed by the Duha concepts of kinship and allergy.

## Chapter 5

### Demons of History

One evening in the spring of 2010 Aichurek said: 'Every spring some of our people pass away. There must be a reason behind all these deaths'. During the last three springs, Aichurek witnessed the death of her two nephews, her son and her younger brother. They had died of mysterious causes, which had left the bereaved relatives feeling puzzled and anxious. According to Aichurek, the deaths of her relatives could not be a matter of unfortunate coincidence, as all the deceased were close kin and all had died during spring.

In the camp, rumours circulated about how this or that family member's improper dealings with the spiritual realm had 'aroused' (*bosgoston*) the *chötgör* (demon) and led to the deaths in Aichurek's family. Several of these rumours concerned Aichurek's cousin, a middle-aged woman called Tömgöö, who lived as a shaman in Ulaanbaatar. Aichurek told me that Tömgöö was a market shaman (*zahzeliin böö*), who had moved to the city to shamanize for money. In spring 2009, Tömgöö visited the taiga to pay homage to her ancestral spirits. According to Aichurek and other people in the camp, Tömgöö had offended the traditions of her ancestral *eren* while in the taiga. She had angered her *eren* and 'stirred up the *chötgör*' (*chötgör hödölgösön*), which had since haunted her kin. Some said that the *chötgör* had been aroused because Tömgöö had approached the sacrificial tree of her grandfather, shaman Natsag. People from the taiga had warned Tömgöö not to approach this tree. They had told Tömgöö that the tree was 'ferocious' (*dogshin*) due to its kin having abandoned its worship during socialism. Tömgöö, however, refused to listen. Others said that the *chötgör* was caused by Tömgöö having placed an improper offering – red raw mutton – in front of Aichurek's and her kin's *eren* during her visit to the taiga. That Tömgöö's visit had something to do with the deaths in Aichurek's family was, according to the rumours, clear from the fact that shortly after her visit, Tömgöö had suffered a heart attack and died; moreover, immediately after this event, people in the taiga claimed that 'our people began to die'.

However, rumours also abounded about how it was the deceased themselves who had stirred up the demonic forces that provoked the deaths. All the rumours described how, prior to their

death, the deceased had interacted improperly with the land, its natural entities and spirits. Many people told me that one of the deceased, a man in his late fifties named Bazar, had cut down a tree, which he later realized was a 'shamanic tree' (*böö mod*), three weeks before his death. The rest of the deceased were all young men who, 'though they knew it is against the traditions of the Duha to dig holes in the ground' had travelled to Baruun Taiga to mine for gold. Rumours circulated about how these young men had caused their own deaths by ignoring the local taboo against digging holes in the ground. The Duha, as Mongolians in general (Højer 2012; High 2008, 2013; Empson 2012), consider the act of mining and the possession of precious stones as pollutive and likely to cause misfortune in the life of the excavator and beholder. Nonetheless, enticed by the chance to make money, many Duha travelled to the newly established gold mines in Baruun Taiga in the 2010s. In the taiga, stories abounded about how the gold rush had 'polluted' (*bohirduulsan*) the Duha land and spirits. This pollution was thought to have instigated a violent flood of misfortune, assaults and murders in the land of Baruun Taiga and within the families of the miners.

The atmosphere in the camp was tense during spring 2010. Aichurek's kin members feared that further people may die. Though they seldom voiced their fears in public, they were expressed in the precautions they took in their everyday life. Once the son of one of the deceased decided to travel to the village of Tsagaannuur to buy goods together with his girlfriend; however, they eventually decided to cancel the trip and stay in the camp. His girlfriend told me: 'My boyfriend's aunts will not let us travel. They keep saying it is better to wait. They do not want us to go, because it is spring and they are afraid something may happen to us'. Later, a group of men decided to go hunting, as the camp had run out of meat. Prior to the hunters' departure, my host mother repeatedly visited her younger brother's household, which she usually, at least according to my observations, did not do that frequently. On several occasions, she advised her brother not go, because 'your reindeer need to rest', 'we soon have to migrate' or 'it is not a good day to go hunting in our family'. She did not voice her fears directly, yet, I had the feeling that she was afraid that another of her relatives would fall victim to the demonic forces, which haunt her kin during spring.

One evening as I was falling sleep, Aichurek entered my tent and whispered: 'Do you think it will happen again?' The next evening her younger sister, Ariunaa, suddenly appeared in my tent as I was breastfeeding my youngest daughter in my sleeping bag. Although she could see

that I was getting ready to sleep, she did not leave as was customary. Instead, she sat down next to me without saying a word. As I was really exhausted after a long day, I pretended I was asleep; however, Ariunaa did not leave and as I opened my eyes she said: 'They all died in spring. What do you think will happen this year?'

In this chapter, I show how disturbing new demonic agencies and economic enterprises within the Duha land were felt to disrupt the relationship between humans and the land, and between kin and spirits. It explores how this spiritual and economic turmoil led to the release of an increasing number of demonic agencies - animated with present and past misdeeds and violations - and how this, in turn, also furthered the Duha turn toward shamanism.

One could argue, drawing on the works of scholars within the framework of the modernity of occult phenomena, that the Duha used the demons to articulate or explain the uncertainties of the new market and the illegal economy of post-socialist society (Buyandelgeryin 2007: 121; Comaroff & Comaroff 1999; Geschiere 1997). However, while the arousal of demonic agencies among the Duha are certainly tied to the introduction of new economic enterprises, I do not perceive *chötgör* as solely signifying a response to modern phenomena. 'Modernity' alone does not explain why the gold mines in Baruun Taiga were perceived as 'demonic places' (*chötgörtei gazar*) that left a fatal pollutive mark on miners and kin units. Rather than new occult economies, I will following Pedersen (2011: 79) argue that the mines emerged as 'shamanic phenomena' in their own right. The new market had taken the labile form of spirits (Pedersen 2007: 79), or in the Duha case demons, rather than the other way around.

The fear and anxieties of demonic agencies that seemed to permeate the Duha camps in the 2010s in many ways resemble the way the neighbouring Darhad found themselves exposed to a violent intrusion of invisible spiritual forces in the late 1990s (Pedersen 2011: 8). Pedersen argues that the Darhad experienced the post-socialist transition as an almost total breakdown of the boundaries between official and non-official realms. According to Pedersen, this collapse released a hoard of spirits from the non-official realm, where they had slumbered during socialism (Pedersen 2007: 53). Among the Darhad the breakdown of socialism gave rise to what Pedersen has termed 'the shamanism of modernity' where new market forces and the liberal state were felt to have undertaken the same labile form as the spirits (Pedersen 2007: 79).

Among the Duha, however, it was not so much the breakdown of the institutional structures of socialism that led to the upsurge of demons. Rather, demonic agencies were aroused by the manner in which new economic and spiritual enterprises were thought to pollute spirits and lands, and disrupt the relationship between spirits and kin and the very cosmic economy of the taiga. I argue that the Duha demons actualized the aggressive state of being that spirits and lands were felt to have acquired in the 2010s, drawing forward concealed memories of the historical oppression and violation suffered by Duha families (Buyandelger 2013; Buyandelgeryin 2007; Taussig 1984).

Rumours about *chötgör* made the Duha painfully aware of how past events had estranged and continue to estrange the Duha from their ancestral spirits and land. As such, the Duha *chötgör* may be perceived, drawing on the work of Michael Taussig (1984), as conducting a 'sorcery of history', enchanting contemporary misfortunes with the sorcerers' powers of concealed memories and images of the historical past, which continue to live on as spirits empowering and haunting the living (Taussig 1984: 105). Consequently, it would seem that the upsurge of demonic agencies among the Duha in the 2010s was akin to a 'sorcery of history', unleashed by the spiritually subversive acts of shamans and miners, which were felt to capture the Duha, their spirits and land in a demonic state of being.

### **A Series of deaths**

During my initial rounds of fieldwork among the Duha in the early 2000s, people frequently told me about their hardships. The reindeer herd was decreasing, which left many families fully dependent on hunting. As the populations of wild game were also on the decline, many families had to survive solely on flour and rice for long periods of time. The social benefits provided by the socialist state had ceased with its breakdown and the new era of a market economy caused people to struggle for their very survival. Whereas the general hardship of Duha life in the taiga was commonly ascribed to the breakdown of socialism, individual loss of hunting luck or reindeer was often depicted as spiritual retribution against the hunter or herder for having upset the master spirits of the land. Yet, in the 2000s, I rarely heard stories of whole families being haunted by *chötgör* that had been aroused from their *eren*, and when I did, these stories always concerned the close family of shamans.

In the 2000s, people frequently gossiped about how this or that shaman had caused the misery or even death of her own children. It was believed that some of these shamans used their spirits to conduct black magic; however, due to their inability to master their own spirits, they had struck their children instead. Other shamans were known to have travelled to the city in order to perform séances for money. Rumours circulated about how these shamans had unleashed the disastrous power of *chötgör* upon their own children because they had transgressed the taboo against drumming away from their own hearth (Kristensen 2004). Nonetheless, in the 2010s, rumours abounded about how almost all families and shamanic lineages - not only the close family of shamans - were haunted by *chötgör*.

When I returned to Zuun Taiga in 2010, the very appearance of the camp and its inhabitants revealed that life had improved economically. Outside each *urts* stood a solar panel, granted by the government in 2010, providing each household with electricity. Two families had television and all adults had at least one mobile phone. Since the mid-2000s, people had received goods regularly (canvas for tents, flour, rice and clothes) from various national and international NGOs and earned money from tourism and mining. Many of my old friends said that their life had improved since my earlier fieldwork in 2000. My host mother explained: 'In the past, we rarely had enough money to buy more than five kilos of flour at a time, do you remember? And see now, nobody travels to Tsagaannuur to buy less than twenty kilos of flour'.

Though Ariunaa welcomed the improvement in the local economy, she believed that there were also some negative effects. This was evident in the way she frequently warned me to be careful while travelling in and visiting the other camps of the taiga. When I told her that I planned to visit and travel to the Duha camp in Baruun Taiga, she said with a serious tone:

The taiga is not as peaceful (*taivan*) as it used to be. It has become a demonic (*chötgörtei*) place. You see, gold was discovered in Baruun Taiga which has drawn many bad people to this land. The people of Baruun Taiga have become rich because of gold, they drink a lot and it has 'poisoned' (*horlold*) their 'heart and mind' (*sanaa setgel*). They have turned ferocious because of the gold. You probably heard about this young man, who chopped his wife into pieces. Such bad things never happened before. You need to be careful.

Around 2005, a rich gold reserve was discovered in Baruun Taiga, which attracted *ninjas* (people who mine without the necessary mining license) from all over Mongolia, who travelled to the taiga to try their luck in the gold rush. My informants, in ways reminiscent of the general public's view of the *ninjas* in Mongolia (High 2008), described the *ninjas* as acting carelessly and unscrupulously toward the Duha and their land. They told me how *ninjas* threw garbage and defecated next to sacrificial places and caused forest fires due to an inability to extinguish their camp fires properly. As the gold rush was spoiling many traditional pastures, the Duha felt that mining was a threat to their very livelihood as hunters and herders. Stories also abounded on how *ninjas* would ruthlessly rob or kill to obtain gold and how also local Duha had started to turn violent against their own people. Concurrently, rumours spread about how these violent assaults were caused by demonic powers unleashed by the pollutive acts of miners. The violence that followed with the gold rush was experienced as a violent intrusion of demonic powers which captured the Duha in a state of fear.

To my horror, people told me that Bayar, a young man I knew well from my former fieldtrips, had stabbed, killed and dismembered his wife, burnt down their *ger* and eventually hung himself. We were all puzzled about why Bayar, who 'was such a decent and kind young man', had performed this atrocity. Rumours circulated about how it was the arrival of gold mining in Baruun Taiga, Bayar's homeland, which had stirred up the *chötgör* that caused Bayar to kill his wife. Though the violence of this incident was particularly severe, comparably violent assaults also haunted the families in Zuun Taiga – in particular Aichurek's family - who were subject to a series of more or less violent deaths.

The first of these deaths happened in spring 2008. Two young Duha men, Aichurek's nephews, had travelled to the village of Tsagaannuur to buy goods for their families. In the evening, they met up with friends and after finishing two bottles of vodka, left to buy another bottle. They never returned. The next morning Aichurek's daughter-in-law, Otgonbayar, who worked as a school teacher in Tsagaannuur went to fetch water from the lake in Tsagaannuur. She found two bodies at the edge of the water. Quickly she ran back to her house to find her husband and together they returned to the lake. Her husband dragged the two dead boys to the shore; only then did he realize they were his cousins from the taiga. Otgonbayar later explained:



It was clear they had been murdered. We saw prints in the sand revealing that their bodies had been dragged into the water. Still, the police did not care, because they were just Tsaatan boys. They claimed they had drowned because they were drunk. But I am sure - I saw the prints in the sand - that they were killed.

The second death took place in spring 2009. Otgonbayar's husband and Aichurek's son, Mönköö, had, like many other men from the taiga, travelled to Baruun Taiga in search of gold, hoping to make some easy money to support his family. In the meantime, his wife and three kids had moved to Ulaanbaatar, where his eldest daughter attended a circus school. Mönköö's brother-in-law told me:

We went to look for gold together. I clearly remember the last night I saw him alive. We were sitting at the campfire drinking, when he [Mönköö] came up to us and happily proclaimed that he had found something good. He looked so happy and said that *now* he had enough money to visit his family in Ulaanbaatar.

However, he never succeeded. The next day his brother-in-law found him dead in a mine with a broken skull. Later his widow told me:

The police said that his death was an accident and not a murder. They told us that he had fallen into the mine, because he was drunk. But I saw his body. He had bruises all over his face. They were not the kind of bruises you get from falling. It was clear that he had been hit severely and died. He was killed and it was never investigated. I am sure he was killed by his own brother-in-law. They were together that night and he was always jealous of my husband and now he cannot even look at me.

The last death took place in spring 2010, when Aichurek's younger brother, Bazar, suffered a stroke and died. His daughter-in-law, Chimeg, told me: 'He died at the time when Bold [his eldest son] was drinking like crazy. I guess he was stressed from that and that might be why he had a stroke'. Bazar was on his way back from Tsagaannuur to his home in the taiga, when he decided to spend the night with his girlfriend in her cabin in the steppe. In the days prior to his death, he had been drinking heavily in Tsagaannuur, which worried his son and daughter-in-law, Chimeg told me: 'We had planned to send him a horse or a reindeer [so he could ride back to the taiga] because we were worried about him drinking too much in Tsagaannuur. If

he had been with us, it might have turned out differently.’ However, Bazar never returned to the taiga; he died in his girlfriend’s cabin. Chimeg said: ‘He had been drinking a lot that day. So he was tired and before he went to sleep he got up to go to the toilet. But then he just fell and fainted - he had a stroke’. Bazar’s girlfriend called the hospital in Tsagaannuur for assistance and asked them to send the hospital jeep and a doctor to aid him. However, the hospital only sent a nurse, who according to Chimeg, was not of much help:

She came totally unprepared with no medicine. She did not know a thing. She was saying: what should I do, where do I make injections and then she gave him a lot of liquid. You could tell that she was having trouble finding the veins, because the veins had broken everywhere; she also forgot to take the needle out. She was in such a rush, she just wrote down the day and the time of death. And then she said, ‘I just got a call from somebody else, I’ve got to go,’ and then she left. He was a healthy man, so I believe he would have survived if that stupid nurse had done something. But she did not do anything.

My informants were painfully aware that these unfortunate deaths appear to be linked to ‘the violence of everyday life’ (Scheper-Hughes 1992; Kleinman 2000), such as alcohol abuse, poverty, crime and the absence of proper medical care brought about by the breakdown of socialism and boosted by the new illegal economic enterprises of mining. Drawing on scholars working within the framework of occult economies (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999), one could argue that the misery and uncertainty brought about by the liberal Mongolian state and new market forces were being expressed and explained through the shamanic tradition (Buyandelgeryin 2007: 142), i.e., rumours about *chötgör*. Though the rumours about demons which circulated in the 2010s contained various spiritual explanations of the causes behind contemporary misfortunes, I do not perceive these rumours only as an indigenous effort to make sense of the uncertain mechanisms of the new market and illegal economies. Instead I will show how the arrival of the mining industry within the Duha land occasioned its own kind of sorcery because it was felt to disrupt the cosmic economy of the taiga, and to release demonic agencies that infected families with misfortune.

## Bloody Gold

During my fieldwork among the Duha in the early 2000s, people often told me that certain places in the taiga were devilish (*chötgörtei*) and haunted by *chötgör* that were aroused by the pollutive acts of Russian and Mongolian geologists, who had excavated for precious stones in these places during socialism. They told me that the act of digging holes in the ground was 'bad' (*muu*) or 'wrong' (*buruu*) because it was against the tradition of the Duha and could pollute places and transform their master spirits into malevolent *chötgör* (Kristensen 2004). I was thus surprised that most Duha men and several women had tried their luck in gold or jade mining during the 2010s. Although people still seemed to fear the risks involved in excavation, many had - enticed by the opportunity to improve their often hopeless economic conditions - tried their luck in mining. An elderly woman explained:

I tell my children to pray to Oron Hangai when they find even a tiny piece of gold. They search for gold because they do not have any other option. They make a lot of money. They cannot survive on the few reindeer they have or from hunting. So going for gold is their only option.

People in the camp all seemed to agree that the escalation of violence in the region somehow was tied to the gold rush. Solnoi explained this by referring to the statistics he had read in a newspaper:

The discovery of gold affects us in a very bad way. If I should talk about this year, Tsagaannuur was the municipality with the highest number of deceased people in Hövsgöl province. Many young people passed away because of gold.

I never dared ask Solnoi about his son's (Mönköö) death in the gold mine in Baruun Taiga and he rarely mentioned it. Yet, in the camp, rumours flourished on how Mönköö had died due to his discovery of a valuable piece of gold. An elderly woman in the camp said: 'Many people lost their lives because of gold. Mönköö also passed away because of gold. So you see, the yellow way of gold is really red (*alt ööröö shar zamnulaan*)'. When I asked her what it meant she explained:

It means that though gold has a delightful golden colour, its colour is really red and bloody because the ways to obtain and carry it are stained with blood. Gold 'provokes

greed in people's eyes' (*hünii nüdnii shunal hürčen*) and carries many bad things, so gold attracts illness, death and murder. You see, once my elder brother went searching for gold and found a small piece of gold. When he came home, he wrapped that piece of gold in a piece of cotton and tied it to the *urts*'s wooden poles. Yet, in the middle of the night, he woke up and noticed that his head was covered in blood, which was dripping from the wooden poles above his head. So you see gold is *really* bloody.

The 'bad things' carried by gold are the human sentiments they give rise to, such as greed, envy and craving, which according to the *Duha* may attract human misdeeds, such as theft, cheating and murder. It is thus not the gold in itself, but the human and non-human sentiments it may provoke, which makes it an object of risk and danger (High 2008a; Højer 2012). However, the danger of gold also arises from the means of its discovery. The *Duha*, like Mongolians (High 2013), perceive the very act of digging for gold as cosmologically subversive. As Solnoi explained:

Gold 'itself is all right' (*öröö zügeer*). But people have to dig holes in the ground to find it and that is wrong. You find gold hidden in wild places, so people have to dig into these wild places and that is surely wrong. The land and the water become polluted, the master spirits of the land turn angry and so do 'the master spirits of the water' (*lus*) and hence all kind of misfortune strikes humans.

The risks of mining, however, are also dependent on the miners' relationship to the land and its spirits. As Solnoi explained:

It may be OK for outsiders to mine for gold in the taiga. But it is certainly wrong when taiga people [*Duha*] mine for gold in the taiga. People should not mine in their own homeland. They ought to protect their own homeland [...] The taiga people should submit to the traditions of *Oron Hangai* and avoid angering its spirits by digging holes in the ground. We should be the 'protectors' (*hamgaalagch*) of our homeland. [...] However, young people have forgotten this and it affects us very much. So places have become demonic. This is very serious: robberies are happening, people are hit by rocks or trees and some are even murdered, such things are happening today.

The words of Solnoi reveal how the Duha perceive their own involvement in gold mining as particularly risky, as it is thought to disrupt their position as protectors and hence masters within the cosmic economy of the taiga. To obtain the position as masters within the cosmic economy of the taiga, worthy of the protection of Oron Hangai, the hunter needs – as we saw in chapter 2 - to act as a protector of the taiga. The hunter should follow Oron Hangai and its places' innate traditions which outline the proper manner in which to interact with its places, entities and beings. In an effort to circumvent these traditions, Duha diggers try to appease the spirits of the land with offerings before or after mining. A young Duha gold digger told me: 'When I go for gold I always make sure to make an offering to the *ezen* of the land; also, when I find gold, I pray to the land of Oron Hangai and make an offering'.

Mönköö's wife told me that right before her husband went to search for gold, she had given him three white cotton ribbons and told him to tie them to a sacrificial tree (tied to the place and not to a kin-unit), which she knew stood close to the gold mine. She said:

It is our tradition that one should tie three white cotton ribbons to the tree as an offering to the *ezen* of the place. This is a way of asking the *ezen* permission to dig into its land. After my husband died, I found the three cotton ribbons in his pockets. I wonder why he forgot to tie them. Maybe the *ezen* became angry at him for stealing its gold without asking permission.

Though Duha miners commonly tried to appease the spirits of the land, the increasing numbers of brutal assaults and murders in the taiga was felt to be evidence that mining had brought out violent demonic forces. In a similar vein, Mette High (2013) has shown how gold mining in Mongolia confronts local miners with questions about how humans and spirits can coexist when human desire disrupts the fragile cosmological balance (High 2013: 62). Such spiritual anxieties have, according to High, strengthened local people's awareness of – and belief in – spirits (High 2013: 76). In a similar vein, gold mining among the Duha appears to have elicited new fears and uncertainties about the Duha position as masters of the taiga within the cosmic economy of the land of Oron Hangai. Such fears appear to have made the Duha more aware of the spiritual aspects of the land. The violence of the 2010s was seen as painful evidence of how the pollutive acts of miners had estranged the Duha from their

position as masters and kin of the taiga. The time prior to the arrival of the mining industry came to be imagined as a time when the Duha adhered to the tradition of the land and hence were under the protection of the land of Oron Hangai and its spirits. In contrast, contemporary Duha involvement in mining gave rise to new uncertainties and fears about the durability of the protective relation between the Duha and the land of Oron Hangai. Mining was thought to have transformed spirits and lands into demonic beings and places, and was felt to have made the Duha more vulnerable to attacks from these powers.

### **History Released by Fear**

Now let us take a closer look at the Duha concept of *chötgör* in order to understand what it was that haunted so many Duha in the 2010s. Among the Duha, and in Mongolia in general, the concept of *chötgör* commonly refers to ghost-like beings arising from the souls of dead people, who are captured in this world as ghosts (Delaplace 2014; Kristensen 2014; Swancutt 2008). In addition, among the Duha, *chötgör* refers to a demonic state of being of non-human spirits, shamanic spirits (*eren*) and even places. If such beings or places are subject to cosmologically subversive acts, they may become demonic and spread misfortune among their kin (in the case of shamanic spirits) or among trespassers (in the case of a master-spirit and/or a place).

In the 2000s, my Duha friends often warned me not to approach this or that place in the land, because it was demonic and hence potentially dangerous to approach. As I listened to the stories about these places, it became apparent how demonic beings and powers commonly were thought to have arisen from the intervention of socialism in the lives and land of the Duha. Many people told me how their homeland (the taiga) had been 'pure' (*tsever*) before the advent of socialism. The geological richness and variety of the taiga made the homeland of the Duha subject to several geological expeditions and excavations during socialism. People said that the excavations of Russian and Mongolian geologist had polluted (*bohirduulsan*) certain mountains in the taiga, angered their master spirits and turned them into *chötgör*. Also, a steppe area outside the village of Tsagaannuur was known to be a demonic place. A story circulated about how a young Darhad man, while herding sheep in this area, had turned mad from encountering a *chötgör*. People told me that this place was haunted by the 'souls' (*süns*) of deceased humans who had been trapped in this world, because they did not receive a

proper ‘open-air funeral’ (*il tavah*) during socialism; rather, they were buried (Kristensen 2014). During socialism, the Mongolian government introduced compulsory burials and introduced a ban against open-air funerals (Delaplace 2006: 47). The intervention of the socialist state thus appears to have animated certain places within the Duha land with demonic agencies still thought to linger in these places, haunting the living (Kristensen 2014).

Some places within the taiga were also said to be haunted by ghosts of humans who had suffered a violent death. Yet, during my fieldwork in the 2000s, I never managed to collect any stories about these places. People usually said that a place was haunted by *chötgör* as someone in the past had suffered a violent death at that location. Yet, they commonly insisted that they neither knew when it had happened, nor who had been involved. In the 2010s, I was surprised to find that many of my Duha friends appeared to know a lot of the origin of *chötgörs* within their land. In the 2010s I frequently heard people recounting stories on how certain violent historical events had given rise to the *chötgörs* of particular places.

During summer in 2011, Solnoi and I were taking a rest in a valley called Morlig, on our way back from visiting a shaman in the steppe. The year before, the summer camp had been raised in Morlig, where I had often noted that people scolded their children when they approached a particular hill. When I asked why the children should not play close to this hill, they simply laughed and said ‘it is not a good place’. Solnoi had bought a bottle of vodka and as we rested in Morlig he offered me a drink. I had one or two glasses, but Solnoi continued until he had emptied half the bottle. He then started to cry and told me how much he missed his son, Mönköö, who had died in the gold mine. For a while, he stared at a hill covered in high grass and orange flowers, and I recalled how people used to scold children for approaching this hill. Solnoi began to cry loudly and with a trembling voice recounted this story:

When I was a child, we camped in this valley and over there [pointing toward the northern end of the valley] the Buryat’s had their camp. Yak, cattle and sheep were grazing in these fields. During the war [1940-45], the Russians were conscripting young Buryat men by force and in order to avoid conscription, they migrated to Mongolia and secretly established their camps by the Tengis River. One night, Russian soldiers killed all the Buryats at this camp. They shot them all, even children and pregnant women. My grandmother used to tell me this story. My grandparents lived in these mountains at that

time. My grandmother said they heard continuous shooting for three days. On the third day, one Buryat woman arrived at my grandparents carrying her child. Her hand had been shot off; it was hanging loosely from its ligaments. She pleaded with them to cut her hand off, so my grandmother Dumyaa took a knife, cut the ligaments and cleaned and wrapped her hand with a cloth. The Buryat had a tiny baby boy and she wanted to give him to my grandmother. However, my grandmother was afraid to take him. She was afraid that the Russian soldiers would shoot her for hiding a Buryat child. My grandmother felt sorry for poor woman, so she helped her to escape with her child. She prepared food and gave it to the Buryat woman. Then my grandmother and grandfather escorted the Buryat woman to the Buryat [Russian] border. My grandfather's name was Densenmei. Many years later, that one-armed woman looked for my grandparents, asking people about them.

When I asked other people about this event, it became evident that it was a commonly known story among the Duha. People told me how the skulls and bones of the Buryat's had been visible up until the early 1990s; several people also told me how they had encountered *chötgörs* close to the hill where the Buryat's had been executed. One young Duha hunter told me:

Last year I was camping close to that hill and during the night I woke up to the sound of somebody cutting a tree. My dog started to howl and as I got up, I could see that even my reindeer were scared. I believe it was the *chötgörs* of the Buryat who were shot at that place many years ago. Several people heard that noise. However, I managed to keep calm, so nothing happened.

Why were the stories about the historical origin of *chötgör* silenced in the 2000s? Further, why were the stories suddenly recounted again in the 2010s? Perhaps my informants' silence about the story of *chötgör* in the 2000s was due to it being what Michael Taussig (1999) has termed a 'public secret', i.e., 'that which is generally known, but cannot be articulated' (Taussig 1999: 5). Up until 1990, speaking about acts of violence perpetrated by representatives of the state was risky for political reasons; in fact, subsequent to 1990, it was possibly still considered to be dangerous in the years after. Also, the act of speaking about violent events is perceived by the Duha as inherently dangerous, as it is likely to distressing



sensations, such as sorrow and fear. Among the Duha, as is also the case among the Mongols in general (Højer 2004; Swancutt 2012; Humphrey 2013), fear is perceived as an inherently risky and dangerous sentiment, which should be withheld and not voiced, as fear may activate the object of one's fear. As a Duha shaman told me:

*Chötgör* is a mirage [*hii üzegdel*]. So, one should not be afraid of it. It is very dangerous if one becomes frightened by a *chötgör*. In the old days, people used to say that if you are fearful, your mind will blur, you will become ill and you might lose your soul.

Hence, we may argue that the public secrecy surrounding *chötgör* in the 2000s worked to withhold the powers of *chötgör*, which is locally perceived to be elicited through fear.

During my stay among the Duha I was often puzzled as to whether or not the Duha believed in the existence of *chötgör*. People would often tell me that *chötgör* 'exist' and 'are real', while pointing out that *chötgör* are a 'mirage (*hii üzegdel*)' and a product of one's 'own mind and heart' (*Sanaa setgel*). I first took this as evidence of people's doubts about the existence of *chötgör*, but I later came to realize that it was not the case. Instead, I propose that statements such as '*chötgör* exist' and '*chötgör* are a mirage' are not contradictory. On the contrary, they reveal that *chötgör* is a public secret that exists as a 'mirage,' in the sense that the perception of *chötgör* arises when one, for some reason, is incapable of controlling one's fear. Among the Duha the experience of a *chötgör* thus arises from a certain sensational perception provoked by fear.

A similar point has been made by Gregory Delaplace (2013), who writes that in Mongolia, ghosts are first and foremost 'a matter of perception' (2013: 53). To perceive a *chötgör* is, according to Delaplace, a matter of a specific 'perceptual modality' characterized by incomplete sensations (2013: 63). Is it possible that the cosmologically subversive acts of miners and the violent events of the 2010 captured the Duha in a state of fear that made them more vulnerable to such a perceptual modality?

Among the Duha, the ability to perceive *chötgör* is said to arise when the individual for some reason is overwhelmed by fear. Likewise, the perception of *chötgör* is thought to be more or less blocked when the individual is capable of controlling his fear. The latter was the case for an elderly Duha named Baatar, who told me:

When someone is afraid of *chötgör* they will see them, they will have terrifying nightmares and possibly become sick. Being afraid affects the body and the soul. When I was a young man serving in the military, our commander passed away and the troops were set to guard him in shifts. Some said they were afraid. As for me, I could lean on a corpse and fall asleep. So everything depends on one's state of mind.

However, when Solnoi recalled his son's unfortunate death in the gold mine in 2011, he was not able to control his sorrow. Is it possible that the Duhas' awareness that their land, spirits and traditions were being polluted somehow prompted concealed memories to resurface? As Taussig has shown, the act of defacement of a religious entity may unmask the secret behind the mask (the public secret) (Taussig 1999: 2-3). Similarly, I argue that the Duhas' experience of their land and lives being subjected to violent defacement in the 2010s made them painfully aware of past violent events; consequently, they had to give voice to these memories. Nonetheless, voicing the past did not appear to demystify or limit the perceived powers of *chötgör*. Interestingly, I found that whereas Morlig frequently had been used as a summer camp up until 2010 on account of its rich pastures and proximity to Tsagaannuur, it was abandoned as a summer camp in 2011 and 2012. When I asked people why they no longer camped in Morlig, some said it was because 'it is a bad place' or 'it is a demonic place'. Thus, the fact that people had begun to speak about the violations that occurred in Morlig did not demystify the powers of its *chötgör*. Instead, it intensified people's awareness of the demonic powers in Morlig. The very act of revealing the mystery behind a public secret, as Taussig has argued, has the effect of making the mystery revealed even more mysterious, as the fact that it has been concealed reveal it as something powerful - something which needs to be concealed (Taussig 1999: 3). Thus, when the Duha started to talk about the violent events that had taken place in Morlig, they infused the area with the horrors and demonic powers of the past. I propose that it was this horror which made Solnoi and other Duha unable to suppress their fears of the demonic powers of Morlig. Such fears made people feel vulnerable to the powers of *chötgör*, which may be the reason why the Duha no longer dared to camp in the land of Morlig.

The violence that struck Duha society in the 2010s appeared to trap many Duha in a state of fear. In the 2000s, I seldom heard stories of hunters who had encountered *chötgör* during the hunt. In contrast, during the 2010s, I found that hunters frequently reported encounters with

*chötgör*. Often these beings revealed themselves at night through the uncanny sensation of being strangled by invisible hands.

Interestingly, some of the stories about *chötgör* reflected how *chötgör* arose historically as a result of political circumstances, such as the annexation of Tuva by the Soviet Union; these stories permeated Duha society with fear and anxiety. My host mother told me how *chötgör* had caused the Duha to flee from Tuva to Mongolia in the 1940s:

There was a *chötgör* in the boarding school in Tuva. It roamed around the school, scaring the children, who slept in the dormitories. It looked like a bear. One child became so scared that she died. So people fled to Mongolia because they were afraid of collectivization, the war and the *chötgör*. They said that this animal [*chötgör*] was walking on the stairs at night.

Echoing Taussig (1984), it seems that the fear of the war and collectivization became objectified in the shamanic repertoire as a 'magically empowered imagery' of *chötgör* who were able to cause all kinds of misfortunes (Taussig 1984: 87). In the 2010s, Duha society was again struck by fear, not of war and collectivization, but of demonic forces felt to be unleashed by the new economic enterprises. I suggest that these fears awakened hidden memories of past horrors which, by their own kind of sorcery, brought to the fore concealed *chötgörs* and made the Duha vulnerable to their uncanny powers. However, in the 2010s, it was not only the land of the Duha, but also their kin groups that were the target of violent demonic forces.

### **Rumours of Sorcery**

In the 2010s, there were many rumours that the cosmologically subversive acts of miners and contemporary shamans were leaving a violent mark on the land, spirits and kin units. Several shamans were accused of being money-shamans, who did not pay appropriate attention to their ancestral tradition. There were rumours about various shamans, who had somehow offended the tradition of their ancestral spirits; this stirred up their anger and caused the shaman's kin to experience various misfortunes. Commonly, these rumours depicted shamans as ignoring the tradition of their ancestors because contemporary shamans were driven by the urge to make money. From the outside, these rumours could be interpreted as indigenous ways to make ambiguous events and present misfortunes meaningful (Shibutani 1966;

Kapferer 1990). However, while the rumours explained present misfortunes, they simultaneously linked them to past misfortunes, which raised new uncertainties.

Many people believed shaman Ariunaa, my neighbour and Aichurek's younger sister, was responsible for Aichurek's family being haunted by a *chötgör*. Ariunaa came to visit me and my family several times each day. During these visits, it became clear that though Ariunaa never voiced it directly, she feared her own shamanic powers. 'I lost all of my horses, almost all of my reindeer and then, you know, I lost my son. Maybe something is wrong with my shamanic dress,' she said one night with a trembling voice. Her worries were hardly surprising as most people in the camp, including her relatives, gossiped about how 'something terrible' always happened following Ariunaa's séances. People said that Ariunaa had given rise to the *chötgör* which killed her own son and several other family members, because she was unable to master her ancestral spirits. Yet, the rumours about Ariunaa did not simply depict her as a wrongdoer, but also as a victim of the demonic powers, which her cousin Tömgöö had aroused in Ariunaa's *eren*. This also appeared to worry Ariunaa, who said in unusually angry and loud voice: 'I believe all of this happened [referring to the death of her son and the son's cousin], because that shaman placed red meat in front of our *eren*. It was wrong'. Later I tried to inquire further into this question during an interview with Ariunaa:

Me: You told me about a shaman who placed red meat in front of your *eren*?

Ariunaa: It was shaman Tömgöö.

Me: Why did she do it?

Ariunaa: Yes, why did she?

Me: Why was it wrong?

Ariunaa: It was wrong.

Me: Yes, but why was it wrong?

Ariunaa: It is wrong, because it was bad.

At this point in our conversation Ariunaa's two elder sisters came into the *urts* and without being asked, the eldest sister, Aichurek, started to explain:

Two years ago, this relative of ours, a woman called Tömgöö, daughter of shaman Natsag, came to the camp. She wanted to take her father's *eren* [become a shaman] but instead she aroused the *chötgör*. She told us she had become a shaman and then she placed plates of meat and a bottle of vodka in front of our *eren*. It looked very disrespectful. My father never offered meat to our *eren*. 'It is prohibited to offer it meat'; he used to say. We were never even allowed to handle meat in the northern area of the *urts* (*hoimoor*); it was always handled far from the *eren*. For some families, it may be fine to make offerings of meat, as nothing bad will happen, but our family is not like this. But we did not say anything, because she was a shaman, so we thought maybe she knew better. Later, she travelled to our sacrificial place in Tengis. She went all the way up to the sacrificial tree and made offerings. This is a very wild place, so you should only make offerings from a distance. But she did not care and just went all the way up to the tree. Shortly after, she had a stroke and died; then all these deaths started. First, Ariunaa's child died followed by five or six other people. It was Tömgöö who aroused all the *chötgörs* on our family. Many of our people passed away during the last four years because she made our *eren* angry.

From the outset, the rumours about Ariunaa and Tömgöö depict *chötgör* as a kind of witchcraft according to Evans-Pritchard's (1937) classical understanding of the term, as explanations of misfortunes or coincidences. Evans-Pritchard (1937) likened Azande witchcraft with a 'natural philosophy' explaining unfortunate events. Among the Duha, *chötgör*, as witchcraft among the Azande, seems to explain misfortune; i.e., people are dying in my family every spring because shaman Tömgöö aroused a *chötgör* within our family. Each rumour about *chötgör* tends to uncover a link between a victim or several victims of misfortune (the deaths within Aichurek's family) and a specific misdeed conducted by a certain wrongdoer (the spiritually subversive offerings of Tömgöö). As such, rumours appear to explain misfortune by pointing out a victim and wrongdoer. As the rumours also revealed how the offender was a victim of spiritual powers or historical violations, the division between victim and offender was, yet, blurred. Rather than explaining misfortune the Duha *chötgörs*, as Buyandelger (2007; 2013) has convincingly shown is the case of shamanic spirits in Buryat shamanism, appear to draw forward new uncertainties as they unravel the ambiguous and tragic stories of kin units (2007: 142). This was evident in the rumours about

Ariunaa, which portrayed her both as a wrongdoer having aroused the *chötgör* haunting her kin, and as a victim of her cousin Tömgöö's misdeeds.

Interestingly, I also found that the rumours which blamed Tömgöö for having aroused the *chötgör* often were accompanied by stories about how Tömgöö herself was a victim of her kin's historical estrangement from their ancestral spirits and tradition. People would explain how Tömgöö, daughter of shaman Natsag - widely remembered in the taiga as an exceptionally powerful shaman - had indeed been the heir of immense shamanic powers. Yet, as Tömgöö's father had died in the early 1950s, when the Duha lived in severe hardship as stateless forest people, her mother had been forced to give up most of her children - including Tömgöö - for adoption to Darhad families. Growing up in a Darhad family, Tömgöö had become estranged from her biological family and their shamanic tradition. In Ulaanbaatar, I interviewed the daughter of Tömgöö. She told me a story which was fairly similar to those I had heard in the taiga about Tömgöö. This is part of the story Tömgöö's daughter told me:

Forced by the conditions of her life she [Tömgöö's mother] had to give up half of her children for adoption. The family who adopted my mother was very ill-tempered, they even starved my mother; when they prepared a meal, they would not offer her anything. They treated her as a servant. She said that she suffered a lot during her childhood. Then she inherited her father's *eren* and became a shaman. She was a very good shaman and helped a lot of people, but it was difficult because the *eren* had turned ferocious due to her sister Tsend, who had inherited the *eren* before my mother, but had not been able to master it properly.

Also, my host mother told me that Natsag's *eren* had become ferocious, as Tsend had been unable to master it:

Tsend was supposed to become a shaman. The *eren* of Natsag came to her, but her relatives told her not to take it, because it was prohibited at the time because of socialism. So, she was unable to do anything and then Tsend simply turned mad.

The rumours and stories about Tömgöö and Tsend reveal how many contemporary *chötgörs* originated during the years of statelessness which had split families apart; they were also a response to socialist policies which estranged kin units from their shamanic tradition. I argue

that these rumours strengthened people's awareness of how historical and contemporary violations and misdeeds had elicited demonic agencies within Duha kin units and lands. As such, rumours seem to have elicited a kind of 'historical sorcery' (Taussig 1984) as they unravelled the tragic histories of kin units and animated them with the demonic powers of history.

The *chötgör* of the Duha may thus be viewed as 'mythic images' (Taussig 1984) enlivened with concealed memories of historical violations and estrangement suffered by kin units, which continue to haunt their kin through contemporary misfortunes. This was particularly evident in a story I heard about Tsend, who said to have lost her mind during socialism on account of not being able to become a shaman (master her spirits). Once an elderly woman in our camp named Punsel told me that Tsend had not become mad as a result of not accepting her ancestral *eren*. Rather, her illness, according to Punsel, stemmed from Punsel being the victim of a brutal rape during her youth:

I do not think that Tsend became mad because she rejected her *eren*. You see me and Tsend used to work at the fishery in Hatgal when we were young. Tsend was a very beautiful young woman. Also she was in good health when she left Tsagaannuur for Hatgal. Many Mongolian geologists worked at Hatgal and they would chase the women working at the fishery. I mean they used to wait for the women to get off from work. One day, I was sleeping outside our tent beside some piled bags of cement. Tsend was sleeping just at the entrance of the tent. At night, several geologists raped her. After a while, she cried out calling my name. When I asked her *what is the matter*, she said that all these men are on the top of me and not letting me sleep. So I got up and chased them away. I felt really upset that she had not called me before. If she had called me before, I could have helped her. The next day, she came to me and cried that she was peeing milk-white matter and blood. Since that day, she became mad. People say she became mad because of the *eren*; eventually some relative gave her the *eren* of her father and of course it made things even worse, because being mad, how could she master these powers? So it [*eren*] became *chötgör*.

According to this story, the *chötgör* within Aichurek's family could thus be traced back to Tsend being raped. The rumours about the *chötgör* which haunt Aichurek's family evoked a

disorderly image of past and present misfortunes where every point (misfortune/violation/estrangement) was connected to an infinitude of other points (misfortunes/violations/estrangements), making the division between wrongdoer and victim unclear. Yet, this made it painfully clear that Aichurek's kin were the heirs of estranged and contaminated spirits, whereby any kin member - and especially shamans - became a potential suspect of the unfortunate deaths. Thus, instead of explaining contemporary misfortune, Duha rumours about *chötgör* appear, in a similar way to the Mongolian gossip described by Højer (2004), to be a cultural force creating disintegration by generating mistrust, distance and suspense (Højer 2004: 92). That the *chötgör* are often talked about through rumours may thus work to create further uncertainties, as rumours create disorder and reflect problematic relations in social orders (Højer 2004: 101). In the Duha case, rumours about *chötgör* generated mistrust within kin units, which infected kin units with internal suspicion and even made shamans, at least Ariunaa, suspicious of themselves and their own role in the upsurge of *chötgör*.

The upsurge of *chötgör* also, as will be shown below, gave rise to fears of certain lands and kin units, which came to be seen as embodying demonic powers posing a latent threat to those around them.

### **Wild People and Land**

In July 2011, I travelled to Baruun Taiga to visit my old friends, Juvaan and Chuluujii, whose household I had lived in several times during my fieldwork in the 2000s. Sadly it was Juvaan and Chuluujii's son, Bayar, who had brutally killed his wife and committed suicide in spring 2011. In Zuun Taiga, my host family had warned me against travelling to Baruun Taiga. My host mother, Aichurek, had repeatedly told me that following the gold rush, the people in Baruun Taiga had become a 'wild people' (*dogshin hümüüs*); they drank, fought and even killed each other. She said that if I insisted on travelling to Baruun Taiga I should at least make sure not to live in the household of Juvaan and Chuluujii. According to Aichurek, Juvaan had become an alcoholic and rather aggressive after he started to sell vodka to passing miners. One night, she told me that she even suspected Juvaan of having murdered his daughter-in-law. Aichurek said:



Maybe it was not the young man who killed his wife. You know his father [Juvaan] has a very bad temper and he was in his son's *ger* drinking the night it happened. People say that he was badly hurt, was covered in blood and was stabbed in the arm. Maybe it was because he was the one who killed his daughter-in-law.

Later she told me that Juvaan had become aggressive after marrying Chuluujii. She said that Chuluujii was a 'bad person', because she came from a family of black shamans. She explained that Chuluujii's uncle was shaman Goost, who – as other shamans in his lineage - had used his 'black spirits to conduct black magic and even kill people'. Aichurek explained that these black spirits was demonic (*chötgörtei*) and made the kin of shaman Goost act in violent and aggressive ways. Aichurek believed that if it was not Juvaan who had killed his daughter in law, it was the demonic powers of Goost that had led Bayar to kill his own wife. Nonetheless, Aichurek, like people in Zuun Taiga in general, described the shamans (Goost and Manduhai) in Chuluujii's kin as dangerous people, who ought to be approached with utmost caution; they were also seen as the most powerful shamans in the taiga, who were capable of 'repairing' (*zazal hiina*) all kinds of misfortune. For instance, Aichurek would frequently tell me that she considered asking shaman Goost to conduct a ritual to put an end to the deaths among her kin. She told me that Goost was the most powerful shaman in the taiga and as they (Goost and Aichurek) were both Balygsh (clan) – though of different shamanic lineages – Goost would be able – had the necessary black powers (*chötgör*) - to combat the hardship of Aichurek's kin.

Here we see how stories about the destructive powers of contemporary gold mining and of past and present shamans in Chuluujii's kin somehow all became condensed into the 'imagery' of *chötgör*, which are perceived as 'capable of causing as well as relieving misfortune' (Taussig 1984: 87) at least within the same kin-unit. This was also, as we will see, evident in the camp in Baruun Taiga.

When I arrived in Baruun Taiga, it became painfully apparent how Chuluujii and Juvaan were treated with suspicion and caution by the rest of the camp. During a previous fieldtrip to Baruun Taiga, their tent had been a natural meeting point for the camp, because Juvaan had a radiophone. Twice a day people would gather in Juvaan's household to listen to the latest news from Tsagaannuur announced through the radiophone. Despite the fact that the summer

camp consisted of fourteen households, and despite the fact that Juvaan still had one of the camp's two radiophones, people rarely visited his household.

Though Juvaan and Chuluujii and their three daughters gave me a warm welcome and seemed happy that I would stay with them, it became painful and frightening to live in their household. Chuluujii was once an easy-going woman who would laugh easily; however, now each time she spoke, her voice trembled and often she would burst into tears. Most of the time, Juvaan would sit in a corner drinking vodka and telling jokes, but he never laughed. Instead, his face seemed hardened by pain. The children of the family never appeared to play with the rest of the children from the camp. Instead, they hung around their parents' *urts*, because, as Chuluujii told me, 'the other kids won't play with them anymore'. During the first evening, my host family drank heavily. For five days in a row, they drank until they were so drunk that they could barely speak – this was likely due to their sorrows. Instead, they screamed, cried and shouted at each other from early morning to late evening, when they often fell asleep covered in their own puke. Several of the surrounding families told me that I had better move away from the household, as the family were 'bad' (*muu*), 'wild' (*dogshin*) and even 'dangerous' (*ayultai*) people. Many people offered me a place to stay, however, I decided to put up my own tent next to that of Juvaan and Chuluujii, as moving would have been disrespectful.

In Zuun Taiga, Baruun Taiga was considered as a danger zone which ought to be avoided, as its black powers could strike anyone at any moment. In Baruun Taiga, the summer camp was divided between the family of the man who murdered his wife, all of whom were thought to embody various black powers, and the rest of the camp, who took all kinds of precautions, had new *erens* made, and avoided this family to protect themselves against their demonic powers.

One day, Chuluujii's sister-in-law told me how she had begun to fear the shamanic powers of her own husband (Chuluujii's brother). She said: 'There are many black powers in my husband's family. You know that the son killed his wife and shaman Goost has also done many bad things. For example, shaman Goost once placed a curse on a woman, who then fell to the ground and died. Lately, I have even feared my own husband – I fear what he might do'. She continued telling me how she had started to make offerings to her husband's *eren*, even though it was not her kin, in order to protect herself against its powers.

While people in Baruun Taiga appeared to fear the shamans in Chuluujii's kin, they visited these shamans to have new *erens* made to protect themselves against further violence. The orphan child of Bayar, who had killed his wife and committed suicide, was now living with his grandparents (his mother's parents) in the camp. His grandmother once told me in a trembling voice that though she was sure the death of her daughter was caused by the black shamanic powers of Bayar's kin, she had turned to a shaman in Bayar's kin to relieve her grandchild from his suffering:

After his parents died, he became ill. In the evenings, he was always scared and when he looked at the moon he saw a *chötgör*. He was so scared that he just cried all the time. We went to see shaman Manduhai [the brother of Goost] and he made an *eren* for the child in spring. This *eren* made his illness disappear.

It is noteworthy that when the Duha in Baruun Taiga felt they were haunted or threatened by the black shamanic powers of the shamans (Manduhai and Goost) from Chuluujii's kin, they turned toward these same powers to combat them. It was the rumours about the past and present involvement of Chuluujii kin's in black magic, murder and business with miners that had strengthened the perception that they possessed dangerous demonic powers. Yet, precisely due to the perceived powers of this kin, people turned toward their shamans to combat misfortunes, which were thought to have arisen from the interventions of this family. However, as the magical aid of these shamans offered people relief, it also strengthened the belief and fear of the black powers of this family.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how the arrival of gold mining and the return of shamans within the Duha land were felt to disrupt the cosmic economy of the land of Oron Hangai and its shamanic lineages. The gold rush was thought to transform the protective relationship (mutual being) between Duha and Oron Hangai into a relationship of mutual harm (mutual otherness). Many kin units felt that they were haunted by the demonic forces unleashed by the spiritually subversive acts of miners and kindred shamans. Miners and shamans were thought to disrupt the protective relationship between the Duha and the land of Oron Hangai, and between kin and ancestral spirits. It was these disrupted relations between the Duha and the land of Oron Hangai and its spirits, I have argued, that became condensed in the

phenomena of *chötgör*. As the Duha *chötgör* actualized the aggressive state of being which Duha spirits, people and land were felt to have entered in the 2010s, they elicited new uncertainties and fears. These fears drew out concealed memories of past violations and religious repression suffered within the Duha land and kin units during the years of statelessness and socialism. This was evident in the upsurge of rumours and stories about the historical origin of *chötgör*, which flourished in the Duha camps. Such rumours and stories - as I have shown - infused places and kin units with the sorcerous powers of history and aroused suspicion among kin units.

As the relationship between the Duha and Oron Hangai and kin units and ancestral spirits were felt to be disrupted, many Duha thought they had no other option than to turn toward their shamans. Ironically, the attempt to find healing appeared to have backfired, because as the Duha turned toward their shamans to eliminate demonic powers, they also brought them into being as demonic powers.

## Chapter 6

### The Unruly Forest

Everybody is afraid of the Hövsgöl region. People from Hövsgöl frighten everyone by saying 'I am a shaman'. Halh, Darhad and Buryat people are all different. All people, except Tuvan [Duha] people, are afraid of this region. I believe every Mongolian has magic inside of himself. [...] Tuvan people in particular have magical powers, as we all originate from shamans and have a better feel for all sorts of things. People think we are hot blooded, because we are the masters of the spirits [*ongon*] of Oron Hangai. So you see Tuvan shamans are a folk that is able to rule the world with their spirits. Professor Purev has studied shamans from all over the world including from Mongolia. It is believed that when someone asked him about shamans, he used to say that the shamans from the taiga are the most powerful.

These are the words of Aldaraa, a shaman of Duha descent, who lives in Ulaanbaatar. Aldaraa's perception of the innate powers of the Duha to rule the taiga in many ways resembled that of many of the Mongolian border guards and rangers I encountered in the taiga. During their patrols in the taiga, Mongolian state officials sometimes asked me to divine. It was during these sessions that some of the border guards and rangers told me about their fears of patrolling the taiga. A ranger once told me how he suspected that his current bad health was caused by a magic spell cast by a taiga shaman. He told me that he had arrested a Duha hunter for poaching years ago and assumed that it was this hunter who had cast a spell on him, causing his bad health. Listening to the words of the ranger, a border guard, who was sitting in my tent, said that he always tried 'not to interfere with the lives of the Duha during his patrols, as they were 'shamans and the true masters of the taiga'.

Mongolian state officials feared the shamanic powers of the Duha as well as those of the taiga. A border guard said that one of his colleagues had become severely ill to a point where he was unable to work after patrolling the taiga. 'Today he is just sitting motionless, unable to recognize anyone around him', the border-guard told me. When I asked him why this had happened, he explained that his colleague had angered a Duha 'spirit' (*ongon*) by camping on

its territory. Stories such as this one flourished among the border guards, creating a general sense of fear of patrolling the taiga.

Several Duha indeed stated that although rangers frequently patrolled the taiga, they rarely convicted Duha hunters for poaching because 'they know us and they know we only hunt to survive' or because 'they fear our shamanic powers'. Yet, while the Duha partly appreciated the absence of state interference in their life, they also lamented it. Many Duha felt that state officials perceived them as 'animal-like people' or 'brute criminals' whose illness or death, as we saw in chapter 5, were not worth the attention of the state. Also, in Ulaanbaatar I frequently heard Mongolians describe the Duha as somehow beyond the reach of law. Some Mongolians portrayed the Duha as wise shamans and heroic outlaws capable of mastering the taiga, its wild animals and spirits. Others depicted the Duha as brute criminals and savages who 'poach, steal and lie' and do not want to conform to Mongolian law.

The popular Mongolian image of the Duha as heroic or brute outlaws and shamans appears to be linked to the way surrounding people and states, as we saw in Chapter 2, historically have depicted the Duha and their homeland in the taiga as more wild and shamanic than the land and people of the surrounding steppe. Today, this image is strengthened by Mongolian popular media, newspaper articles and everyday discourse that tends to portray the Duha as powerful shamans, heroic outlaws or mischievous bandits living in the wild and mysterious taiga, on the edge of civilization and beyond the reach of the law. The contemporary Mongolian image of the taiga as an inherently wild land is reminiscent of Taussig's (1987) depiction of the Colombian jungle as a 'colonially generated wildness' (1987: 127) that has arisen from the imaginaries of the colonizers. While the colonizers of Taussig's studies responded to this wilderness by engaging in a realm of terror, whereby they replicated the very savagery of their imaginary, Mongolians appear partly to acknowledge and surrender to the 'wild' powers of the Duha and their land. This is evident in the way state officials somehow appears to limit their implementation of state law while in the taiga or when dealing with people of Duha descent.

The images of the Duha and their land as a wild territory ruled by the Duha and their spirits appear to constitute it as a sovereign power, a power that has the ability 'to determine conduct within the territory or polity without external legal constraint' (Humphrey 2004:

418). The sovereign power of the taiga shares similarities with what has been defined as 'cultural sovereignty', referring to indigenous 'strategies to maintain and develop cultural alterity, as well as assert autonomy from external control' (Bernstein 2012: 266; Coffey and Tsosie 2001). Anya Bernstein has described how Buddhist body politics of the corpses of deceased lamas in Buryatia constitute a metaphysical and cosmological kind of 'cultural sovereignty' of deities and lamas capable of controlling life and rebirth (Bernstein 2012: 279). In a similar vein, Mongolian and Duha stories on how the taiga and its spirits punish state officials who dare to convict Duha hunters for poaching appear to craft the taiga as a spiritual sovereignty, which is governed by Duha spirits thought to punish those who interfere with the traditional hunting livelihood of the Duha. Whereas the 'cultural sovereignty' of the Buryat is a more strategic political device, I will argue that the sovereign power of the taiga is equally a spiritual and ontological one, which arises from national and local imaginaries of the taiga and its native Duha inhabitants as invested with wild and unruly spiritual powers.

In this chapter, I examine how the policies of past states along with the contemporary media depiction of the Duha have positioned the Duha and their land in a state of exception within the Mongolian state. It explores how historical and contemporary images of the Duha and their land have created the taiga as a kind of spiritual sovereignty capable of determining the conduct of Mongolian officials without external legal constraint. It thus shows how the perceived sovereign power of the taiga both empower the Duha, granting them an informal legal immunity, yet trap them in a position as lawless criminals deprived of legal rights within the Mongolian state.

### **Life in the Margins**

Situated right in the borderland between Mongolia and Russia (Tuva), the Duha has historically lived in the 'periphery of the periphery' (Tsing 1993: 28) of waxing and waning empires and states in Inner Asia. Living in 'the margins' where nature was imagined to be wild and uncontrolled and where states constantly were changing their modes of order and law making (Das & Poole 2004), the Duha has historically been pushed into what we may term 'a state of exception' within the state (Agamben 1998: 12). Agamben has defined the nucleus of sovereign power as the inclusion of bare life in the political realm (Agamben 1998: 6). He argued that the sovereign has the power to strip individuals of their humanity and reduce

them to 'bare lives' banished to a 'state of exception: at once excluding bare life from and capturing it within the political order' (Agamben 1998: 12). For Agamben 'bare life' is 'bare' because it may be executed by anyone and yet not incurring the guilt of murder. In the chapter 5, we saw how the suspected murder of Mönköö and the illness of Bazar were met with indifference by state officials (police and healthcare workers), as the victims were Duha. Many Duha indeed told me that the local hospital only had 'bad' (*muu*) nurses and doctors because 'no one cares about securing our health, because to them we are merely Tsaatan people'. In the 2010s, the Duha were - at least from many of my informants' point of view - treated as 'bare life' banished to a state of exception within the state. The elderly informants' recounts of the years of statelessness (1920-1954) also reveal how the violent campaigns of the Mongolian and Soviet state to expel the Duha from the Mongolian part of their homeland reduced the Duha to 'a state of exception' between and within states. During this period, many of my informants fled with their parents to Mongolia, where they lived illegally in the taiga until the mid-1950s. Often my elderly informants recounted the violent character of the campaigns. My host mother, Aichurek, once said:

My family fled from Tuva in 1952 when I was just two years old. They said they left because there was a Great War in Tuva [referring to the collectivization campaign]. But the Russian soldiers followed us and forced my parents to return to Tuva. They even tied all the women together and drove them back like they were cattle. After three months, my parents started talking about how beautiful Mongolia was and decided to flee again. My father was the first to flee, because he wanted to be with his mother, who lived in Mongolia [she was a native Darhad]. Even though the soldiers were chasing him, he managed to escape and arrive in Mongolia. Afterwards, my mother fled with me, my older sister and some other relatives. It was very hard, because my mother was pregnant and was just about to give birth. Also, my eldest sister was left in Tuva. They could not take her, because she was in boarding school. In those days, there were many soldiers and gold miners in the area so we had to move very quietly in order not to be caught. But then my older sister began to cry. People have told me how Togbat's father [an uncle of Aichurek] became really angry and scolded my mother saying: 'If she does not shut up I will rip her apart'. People were afraid because we had all heard of people, who had been shot by the patrols. Then it became night and people could not force the



reindeer to go any further - they were so exhausted. My mother felt that she was going into labour. Luckily some Darhad people saw us and helped my mother. My father wanted to visit my mother but he could not pass the Tengis River, however, some Mongolian herders helped him to cross the river and so they were reunited [...] My parents gave a Duha man, a reindeer in order to fetch my sister, but he never managed, so she never came back. She still lives there. Because of the border, my parents were not able to go back and fetch her.

This story is not unique. Many of the elderly informants recounted similar stories of how they had been driven out of their homeland 'like cattle' and how some had even been shot. These stories reflect how the territorial policies of the former Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic was not merely a matter of governing official borders and marking territorial rule, but also a question of states engaging their sovereign power to define who was to be included and excluded in the political community. During the campaigns, the Duha were thus 'exceptionalized' and treated as 'bare life' - not worthy of Mongolian citizenship, yet, subject to its violent force. During the time of the Qing Empire and socialism and in the present day, the 'state of exception' has both empowered and disempowered the Duha. As we saw in Chapter 2, surrounding states have historically imagined the Duha as noble savages and wild shamans; the states have deprived the Duha of their humanity, yet, endowed them with extra human powers pertaining to their spirits and land. The state of exception attributed to the Duha is therefore more ambiguous than that depicted by Agamben. The daughter of Solnoi and Aichurek, Atarmaa, once told me how her ethnic background influenced her life as a student in Ulaanbaatar. She said:

When people in Ulaanbaatar realize that I am from the taiga, they sometimes ask: Is it true that taiga people can grow antlers? Many people in the city believe we are different from other humans. They think we are savage people, 'like animals' [...] Once, I had no dormitory in Ulaanbaatar, so for a while I lived in shaman Goost's [Duha shaman] house. When my teacher heard I was living in the house of a shaman from the taiga, she seemed very scared [making a scared face] and started to give me good grades. Maybe she thought I also was a dangerous taiga shaman [laughing].

Indeed, many of the young Duha who were studying in Ulaanbaatar told me that they often did not tell people in the city that they were Duha. They explained that they concealed their ethnicity because if they revealed it, people would view them as 'different from ordinary humans' and as 'an animal-like people capable of growing antlers'. The popular imaginary of the Duha shares similarities with the 'werewolves' described by Agamben: banished to a zone of 'indistinction between the human and the animal' (1998: 105). The werewolf is to Agamben the *homo sacer* who is banished to the state of exception and reduced to 'bare life' (1998:8). In a similar vein the, Duha students felt that if they revealed their Duha ethnicity in the city, they were likely be viewed as animal-like. Still, it is crucial to note that they repeatedly told me that Mongolians would joke about whether the students were capable of growing antlers. In the Mongolian context, it is shamans, particular those from the taiga (Duha and Darhad shamans), who historically have been depicted as capable of growing antlers to engage in magical combats with other shamans, Buddhist clergy or state officials. Hence, the Mongolian jokes about the young Duha students being capable of growing antlers appear not only to dehumanize them – reduce them to 'bare lives' – but to exceptionalize them as extraordinary humans (shamans) empowered by the lack of distinction between the human and the animal part of their being. Atarmaa was uncertain whether her sudden higher grades were due to her own performance as a student or due to her teacher fearing her shamanic powers. Likewise many Duha hunters told me how they had been convicted for poaching, but released without penalty because state officials feared their shamanic powers. The perceived danger of the Duha is thus that of the 'dark shaman', which is 'the source or even symbols of a potent indigenous society that is capable of defending itself against the depredations of the outside world, be that the neighbouring village or the national state' (Whitehead & Wright 2004: 7).

As Veena Das and Deborah Poole (2004) have convincingly shown, 'spaces of exception are also those in which the creativity of the margins is visible' (Das & Poole 2004: 19). As people in the margins try to secure survival or seek justice, 'the conceptual boundaries' of the state may be extended and remade (Das & Poole 2004: 20). The complexities of lived experience may thus inflect formal notions of justice and law with more local forms of imaginaries making it crucial to examine how the 'norms' of local worlds and the 'laws' of the state become enmeshed in each other, rather than binary opposites (Das & Poole 2004: 22-23).

Interestingly, several of my Duha informants told me that they did not fear the local rangers, as they knew the hardship of the Duha and were aware that they had to hunt for survival. Thus, they did not interfere with their hunting activities. On the contrary, many Duha feared encountering unacquainted rangers, sent from the city to patrol the taiga, because they 'do not know our life. They only know the law'. Still, many of my informants said that all rangers, and in particular outsiders, commonly abstained from arresting Duha hunters out of fear of the Duha's shamanic powers and their land. Rumours circulated in the taiga about how the penalty for poaching was increasing; from time to time, Duha hunters indeed refrained from hunting out of fear of the legal consequences. The Duha's dependency on hunting for survival coupled with the common Mongolian image of the inherent shamanic powers of the Duha thus appears to shape law enforcement official's actual execution of the law. On the other hand, rumours about the law appear to impact the everyday practices of hunting among the Duha. The perceived shamanic powers of the Duha and their land and the powers of the Mongolian state and its laws thus appear to intersect in ambiguous ways.

### **Heroes of the Forest**

I heard many stories in the taiga about how Duha males had historically defeated the powers of state authorities, and how Duha shamans had escaped imprisonment during socialism due to their magical powers. The stories of legendary Duha shamans fighting state authorities are not unique for the Duha, but also thrive, as described by Judith Hangartner (2011), among the neighbouring Darhad. According to Hangartner, the ancestral shamans of the Darhad are generally represented as heroic outcasts fighting state and Buddhist authorities, both of which are depicted as foreign supreme powers exploiting the periphery (Hangartner 2011: 318). Among the Darhad, the main aim of recounting these legends is to construct contemporary shamans as powerless market shamans by comparing them with ancestral shamans capable of overthrowing the power of religious clergy and state officials (Hangartner 2011: 318). Among the Duha, legends of powerful past shamans was likewise brought forward to question the power and genuineness of contemporary shamans, but in a more ambiguous way, as they also depicted present day Duha as the heirs of the slumbering shamanic powers of their predecessors, which were about to be invoked. In contrast to the Darhad case, I thus propose that among the Duha, legends of heroic shamans and males also work to endow contemporary shamans with the hope of their ancestral powers returning. Interestingly, these legendary

stories also appear to fuse with those of contemporary hunters, whose shamanic powers are said to have caused their release from imprisonment. Is it possible that the recounting of stories of how their paternal ancestors relentlessly fought and overpowered state authorities endowed Duha clans with the heroic powers of their origin and designated Duha hunters as the heroic shamans of present times?

In most of the stories I heard with regards to historical shamans or convicts fighting state authorities, the protagonists were males and depicted as the ancestor of a certain clan, and in the case of one famous convict, the ancestor of all Duha. These stories, as we will see, depicted the paternal predecessors of clans as heroic males capable of challenging the power of the state and hence endowed the patrilineal clan with heroic powers. Some of these stories date back to the 1940s and 1950s, where the Duha were living in the taiga as stateless forest dwellers. One of these stories was recounted by an elderly Duha man, Baatar:

I will tell you what happened when I was ten years old. At that time, we lived in Mongolia without any citizenship. We were part Tuvan, part Mongolian and had the citizenship of neither; we were just a 'savage people' (*zerleg omog*). In 1951, my father helped many Duha to flee from Tuva to Mongolia. Some people were caught by Mongolians and brutally killed and when others witnessed this, they fled back to Tuva. For example, there was a Mongolian named Batsanaa Dagva. He was chasing and massacring people without citizenship in Mongolia. However, a strong Duha man of my clan refused to watch this and secretly followed Batsanaa Dagva to his home; he caught him and killed him. His parents were there, they witnessed him being killed and begged the people to kill them too. But he said: 'I killed the man I had to kill; I will not kill anyone now. I took revenge on behalf of my people. The Mongolian authorities never arrested this man. I wonder why; maybe they feared him because he was a taiga man or maybe they simply did not imprison him, because he had no Mongolian citizenship.'

The capability of the oppressed Duha to rise and fight state authorities while still upholding certain moral principles (not killing Batsanaa Dagva's parents and living according to the rules of Oron Hangai) is a crucial point in stories regarding contemporary Duha convicts. These stories seem to (re)confirm the Duha's own self image as a folk enlivened with the

powers and moral values of their ancestral clans, relentlessly fighting intruding state powers – which are represented as cruel and amoral.

Solnoi told me that many Mongolian officials fear the Duha on account of the stories about the powers of past Duha shamans. One evening he said:

I think they fear us because they have heard the great stories of the past. People say that once a Mongolian lama cast a magic spell in the shape of a giant dog on four Duha shamans living in a camp in the taiga. When the dog arrived, it attacked the shamans' dogs, injuring them severely. One of the taiga shamans came out of his tent and stabbed the giant dog to death. The shaman then performed a séance and revealed that the dog came from Mongolian land and was not an ordinary dog but a *chötgör* created from a spell cast by a Mongolian lama. The shaman then tightened an amulet consisting of nine different colours to a black reindeer and released it onto Mongolian land. It is said that the black reindeer were seen the last time at Mount Arbulag. Yet, some elderly people say that Mongolians still see that black reindeer on their land. It is the spell of the taiga shaman, which continues to haunt them.

This story recounts how Mongolian Buddhist lamas and Duha shamans (during Manchu rule) competed with each other and how these historical fights live on as a latent threat toward the Mongolians. However, most of the legendary stories about historical Duha shamans are said to have taken place during socialism and described how Duha shamans used their magical power to trick and fight state officials to ensure their own release from prison. One of the stories I heard most frequently was the story of shaman Damdyg, who was imprisoned in 1965. Ulaanhüü, a relative of Damdyg told me:

Shamans from the past were very powerful. They were able to turn into bears, snakes or birds when they shamanized. Some of them could even make a tree grow out of their heads. People who sat and observed them felt like they were watching a movie. Shamans of my Urat clan were like this. When a relative of mine, shaman Damdyg<sup>21</sup>, was shamanising during the repression, people suddenly heard police shooting rifles into the air. They had come to arrest Damdyg. The first night he stayed in prison, people saw that

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<sup>21</sup> Though Ulaanhüü and most other Duha told me that shaman Damdyg was a Duha shaman of the Urat clan, some Duha told me that shaman Damdyg was not Duha, but Darhad.

flames lit up the prison and were sure it was burning. But the next day, it looked like nothing had happened. In the prison, a police officer was ordered by his chief to interrogate Damdyg. The police officer repeatedly asked Damdyg if he was a true shaman or a fake one. During the interrogation, the police officer went mad. When the police officer was taken to hospital, his relatives went to visit shaman Damdyg and pleaded him to make the police officer well again. Damdyg replied 'I am in prison so how could I help him?' The next day, the chief ordered another police officer to interrogate Damdyg but he refused saying: 'I will not ask Damdyg even a single thing. I will rather lose my job than interrogate him'. All the police officers refused to interrogate Damdyg. Since no man dared to interrogate Damdyg, the police decided to release him and even gave him a certificate permitting him to shamanize freely in all the countries of the world. The shaman Damdyg was this powerful. When he shamanized, two cedar trees grew from his shoulders and baby bears played in the trees; also, a long spotted lizard and a snake appeared from his neck. The snake held people at bay as its tail was reaching out toward them. [He shows the movement of the lizard and snake with his hand]. [...] Our shamans of the past were this powerful, not due to their own will, but because they lived in the taiga all year and followed the traditions of the land of Oron Hangai.

The stories of legendary shamans and heroic males tend to endow contemporary clans and male hunters with the powers of their paternal predecessors to overthrow those of intruding power holders. Precisely because Duha male hunters – like shamans in the past – are known to have lived (state-hunters) and still live in the land according to its tradition, they are thought to be the masters of the taiga; capable of summoning the protective – and direct the violent powers - of Oron Hangai. Yet, whereas we have detected a certain historical continuity in the Duha hunt (chapter 2) most shamanic lineage – at least in Zuun Taiga – were broken during socialism. Hence the legendary stories of powerful shamans of the past also remind the Duha of how contemporary shamans have been estranged from their ancestral powers. However, as contemporary shamans are indeed thought to summon the legendary powers of their predecessor, stories of their predecessors also seem to give rise to new hopes, on how present shamans may return to their previous position. One elderly informant said:

I believe that most people today become shamans to earn money. People say that there are many shamans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and as their numbers increase these shamans will start to compete. The good shamans will eventually turn their magic against the bad ones. The elders of the old days used to say that the rule is that the good shamans will remain and the bad shamans will die. People say it will happen in this century.

According to this informant, as well as many others, the abundance of 'bad shamans' would eventually drive the *good shamans* to fight the *bad ones*, which eventually would lead to shamans possessing powers similar to the those of the past. I frequently heard the relatives of the two shamans in our camp talking about how their shamans, though being 'not powerful' (*hüchgüi*) were the heirs of the 'powerful' (*hüchtei*) spirits of their ancestors and hence were to 'become powerful shamans' (*hüchtei böö boloh baihaa*).

While there appeared to be general agreement on which ancestral shaman belonged to which clan, everyone in our camp claimed that they were related to the heroic outlaw, Uulyñ Tömör. Interestingly, the heroic tales of Uulyñ Tömör were often mentioned during conversations about hunters managing to evade imprisonment. I propose that the legends of Uulyñ Tömör somehow instantiate all Duha hunters as members of the paternal lineage of Uulyñ Tömör, investing them with his shaman-like capabilities to manipulate and evade national laws.

### **We are all Relatives of Uulyñ Tömör**

Among the Duha, one of the most famous stories of local convicts is the story of Uulyñ Tömör (Tömör of the mountains) who is said to have escaped from prison in the early 1970s. According to the stories, Uulyñ Tömör lived for many years in more or less solitude in the taiga hiding from the state authorities, who repeatedly tried to track him down and arrest him. My informant's accounts of Uulyñ Tömör were not consistent in terms of why Uulyñ Tömör was initially imprisoned. Some asserted that he was convicted for horse theft, while other said he was sentenced for murdering his own brother. Yet, others stated that he was convicted unjustly and had 'never committed any crime'. Though the accounts of Uulyñ Tömör varied in content, they all depicted him as a fellow relative of all Duha people and a true hero – a kind of local Robin Hood - stealing from the rich in order to give to the poor. In general terms, Uulyñ Tömör may, drawing on Eric Hobsbawm's (2003[1969]) works, be defined as a 'social bandit': regarded as a criminal by the state, yet, considered to be a hero by his own folk

(Hobsbawm 2003 [1969]: 20). As the Duha depicted Uulyн Төмөр not just as a historical Duha hero, but also as a fellow relative of all Duha, they created an image of themselves as innate heroic resistance fighters. This is evident in a story about Uulyн Төмөр recounted by Ganzorig, a middle-aged Duha hunter:

Tөмөр is the relative of all people in the taiga. He was my father's cousin. Everyone has heard about him. He was imprisoned but escaped and avoided recapture for 15 years. Төмөр was such a great man – he was a taiga man. No Mongolian man has ever managed to escape from prison and remain free for so many years. Only Төмөр managed to stay free for such a long time. It is said that he finally surrendered to the police willingly. A taiga [Duha] fugitive can never be caught. The land of Oron Hangai is so vast and taiga people know every tree and each rock so we are not easy to find. However, a Mongolian person escaping to the taiga would be an easy catch.

In the above story, Uulyн Төмөр and the Duha are compared to the Mongolians, where the Duha people are depicted as people capable of navigating in the taiga and evading the authorities, whereas the Mongolians are represented as being 'an easy catch'. Moreover, the law of the state is represented as lacking in morals, whereas Uulyн Төмөр is depicted as a lawless yet deeply virtuous man. This is evident in the following story recounted by Solnoi:

Tөмөр was imprisoned but I wonder for what crime. It had something to do with murder or theft. Anyway, people say that he was not really to blame. He rode a reindeer. People say that he had his reindeer at one of the taiga families. He lived from hunting and stealing horses, but he never stole anything from the three Darhad provinces [areas neighbouring the taiga]. He travelled back and forth between the taiga and the steppe. He rode to faraway provinces to steal horses and brought them to the taiga, where he gave them away to poor families for free. He was actually a good man. He was very kind to people. People say that he helped to herd people's livestock and built cabins for the people living in Kharmat [a steppe area next to Baruun Taiga].

In this tale, as most others, Uulyн Төмөр is depicted as a heroic outlaw, who takes the law in his own hands to serve the needs of the poor and who, echoing legendary shamans and contemporary hunters, was capable of escaping imprisonment. As an elderly Duha, Ulaanhüü, told me:



While in prison, Tömör met a builder who told him that he had built the prison and if Tömör had enough guts, he could dig a hole and escape. Tömör acquired a nail on one of his bathroom visits and started to dig into the wall. After a while, he kicked the wall and it collapsed revealing a hole. That hole led him to the sewer and Tömör followed it to the edge of the town.

Uulyn Tömör certainly had the *guts* to escape imprisonment and managed to evade the authorities while hiding in the taiga due to the help of his fellow Duha. As Ulaanhüü told:

He [Uulyn Tömör] made it back to his homeland and lived on the run in the taiga for 10 years. Being a fugitive, people from the taiga helped him, because all people from Zuun Taiga are closely related to Tömör. They helped him to cross the border in spring [in order to hide] and sheltered him in winter. He had a very nice Russian riffle. He would hunt with that riffle to survive during the winter. He was a very talented hunter.

In the above story, Uulyn Tömör's heroic deeds are depicted not merely as his accomplishment, but the collective triumph of the Duha – as fellow masters of the taiga - over the state authorities. The Duha thus seem to identify with Uulyn Tömör, whose heroic powers are said to have been acknowledged by the former Mongolian state laws. As Ulaanhüü stated:

Tömör survived on his own for 10 years, surviving from hunting in the taiga. Eventually, he gave himself up to the police. Back then, there was a law that offered amnesty to a fugitive that could escape prison without anyone's help. So the police simply released him.

Interestingly, both the legendary stories of Uulyn Tömör and that of the shaman Damdyg described how the state finally granted these convicts amnesty. Both Damdyg and Uulyn Tömör were said to have been released from prison due to their exceptional powers, which were portrayed as having arisen from their lives in the taiga. The powers the Duha obtain through their livelihood in the taiga are thus depicted as capable of somehow overpowering those of the state. I have not been able to verify or disprove whether the law described by Ulaanhüü actually existed. However, I find it highly unlikely that there ever were such a law. Still, the Duha's conception of the presence of such a law seems to confirm the image of themselves as masters of the taiga, who are capable of overruling the laws of the state.

## The Duha in the Media

It is not merely the Duha who identify themselves as heroic outlaws. Since the dissolution of socialism, Mongolian popular media has commonly depicted the Duha as heroic outlaws, noble savages and wise shamans. This appears to be part of a broader national shift toward the 'deep past' (Humphrey 1992) which followed in the aftermath of the breakdown of socialism, where many Mongolians turned toward tradition in an effort to create a new 'truly Mongolian moral society' and rebuild 'national identity' (Humphrey 1992; Hangartner 2011; Kaplonski 2004; Merli 2004). I propose that the popular media depiction of the Duha may be seen as yet another way to revitalize national identity and moral values. Yet, as these films depict the nation and its virtues as arising from 'unruly' others in the 'periphery of the periphery', they also point towards the ambiguity of the order of the nation.

The legend of Uulyн Төмөр is not only widely known among the Duha but also among Mongolians due to the 2005 Mongolian feature film, 'Uulyн Төмөр'.<sup>22</sup> The film is a romantic depiction of Uulyн Төмөр. It portrays him as a virtuous and heroic young man (a devoted son, faithful lover and a strong man capable of catching galloping horses with his bare hands), unjustly sentenced for murder. In the film, we see how a corrupt local police officer accuses Uulyн Төмөр of stealing forty horses in order to gain a promotion. Though Uulyн Төмөр's lawyer, a man called Judge Atarmaa, appears to believe that he is innocent, he fails to prove it in court; consequently, Uulyн Төмөр is sentenced to seven years in prison. However, Uulyн Төмөр manages to escape from prison and elope to the taiga. He lives in solitude surviving on hunting, tormented by the memories of his mother and girlfriend, and the grief of being separated from them; his only distraction is the fun of constantly evading state officials who are looking for him. The film's romantic portrayal of Uulyн Төмөр as a heroic outlaw echoes Mongolian folk literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which encompass so-called 'good fellows' (*sain er*) - Robin hood-like figures who are said to have robbed rich Manchu noble men to help poor Mongolian herders during the reign of the Qing state (Bawden 1968: 143). Mongolians indeed commonly used the term 'good fellow' to denote Uulyн Төмөр; many people believed he was a victim of the corrupt Mongolian socialist state and its unjust laws.

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<sup>22</sup><http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2w1w4Wkz1c>

The film portrays Uulyn Tömör as a lawless trickster with strong morals. It shows how he repeatedly manages to cheat state officials. When a state official tries to arrest Uulyn Tömör, we see how he steals his horse and clothes; he then appears behind the state official, aiming his gun at him. Despite his gun, he never actually harms or kills the state official. He is a hero who defeats, but never kills, his enemies; rather he supports and takes care of them. We see how the Lawyer Atarmaa travels to the taiga to confront Uulyn Tömör with his charges. Yet, again and again, Uulyn Tömör escapes from the lawyer, only to suddenly reappear behind the lawyer laughing. By portraying Uulyn Tömör as a kind of mischievous child, who uses the taiga to play hide-and-seek with state authorities, he is depicted as both a playful shamanic trickster and a true master of the taiga. Later, we see how Uulyn Tömör invites Lawyer Atarmaa to his tent in the taiga, offering him food, vodka and warm clothes. Uulyn Tömör jokingly asks the lawyer: 'So your Majesty, what are you doing in this remote place? Why are you not sitting behind your desk? Maybe you have come to meet with the *ongod* [spirits] of a shaman?' This joke conveys to the viewer that Uulyn Tömör is a potential shaman capable of tricking and overruling state authorities.

Some of my Mongolian informants depicted Uulyn Tömör as a kind of national 'good fellow' of the wild and undomesticated periphery. They would tell me how the heroic capabilities and shamanic powers of Uulyn Tömör, as the Duha in general, stemmed from living in the taiga. A Mongolian tourist guide told me that Mongolians love the film about Uulyn Tömör. He explained:

We like such good fellows. We have many stories of such good fellows from the past who fought the Chinese [Manchu] and stole from the rich to help poor families. Good fellows, like Uulyn Tömör, are said to live in the taiga and the mountains. They are said to be capable of mastering the brown bear and the snow leopard. Maybe this is why people feel that we should not interfere with the life of the Duha, because they are the masters of the taiga.

Yet, a couple of Mongolian informants became upset or even angry when I asked them about the film. One of my Mongolian friends, the granddaughter of the police officer who eventually caught and captured Uulyn Tömör, told me how it had made her 'really angry and sad' to see

the movie, as it had depicted her grandfather as a villain and Uulyn Tömör as a hero, though he was a murderer.

When I asked one of my Mongolian friends in Ulaanbaatar what he thought about the film, I was surprised by his harsh reaction. Virtually shouting, he said: 'I really hate that movie, because it romanticizes the Tsaatan people. That guy Uulin Tömör was not a hero. He was a murderer and a thief'. He said that he had tried to make a documentary about the Duha, but had given up, as they were dishonest, drunken and only interested in taking his money. Moreover, they were poachers involved in illegal trade causing the extinction of rare animal species. I quietly commented: 'I guess they have to hunt to survive?' This comment made my friend even more upset. He raised his voice and said: 'They [the Duha] do not want to live according to Mongolian law. They poach, cheat and lie. We have tried to civilize them, but nothing has helped. If they do not want to conform to Mongolian law, they should return to Tuva.'

The film thus appears to confirm the Mongolian image of the Duha as being somehow beyond the law of the Mongolian state on account of being the heroic and shamanic 'good fellows' or the irreversible criminals within the Mongolian nation. The first image of the Duha is also present in the 1989 Mongolian documentary called 'The Taiga Path Should Remain Forever'.<sup>23</sup> An elderly Duha in the documentary says: 'I can only live in the taiga [...] the taiga is my happiness and my soul. The taiga is my native land. I am a genuine living being of the blue taiga of Mongolia'. Later, we see a line of wooden cabins situated in the village of Tsagaannuur and the narrator recounts how the houses were built during socialism in an effort to civilize and settle the Duha:

Was it reasonable to build these houses? For sure it was not. One may settle cattle breeders, herdsmen and camel raisers [Mongolian herders] but any efforts to settle the reindeer breeder [Duha] are bound to fail. Reindeer breeders have left these houses to live in the taiga. They [Duha] felt they had no other option.

Much like Uulyn Tömör, this documentary depicts the Duha as victims of Mongolian state policies, who ideally should be left to live freely in the taiga, as their way of living somehow is impossible to govern.

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<sup>23</sup>Telecinema Studio of the State Committee for Information, Radio and Television of the MPR, Ulaanbaatar, 1989.

I argue that the images of the Duha as portrayed in the feature film, *Uulyн Төмөр*, and the documentary, 'The Taiga Path should Remain Forever', resonates with and works to confirm the contemporary popular perception of the Duha as either heroic noble savages and/or lawless dangerous shamans – or perhaps both at same time. Regardless of which, they are portrayed as people who are somehow beyond the governance of the state due to their taiga origins and the innate powers of the taiga Yet, simultaneously the Duha are depicted as upholding the true traditions and moral values of the Mongolian nation; however, their traditions and values are depicted as being impossible to institutionalize and govern by state law.

### **The Laws of the Lawless**

Throughout history, the region of Hövsgöl and in particular its northern areas, have been depicted by Mongolians as a wild region, and the centre of black shamanism practiced by 'the savage' indigenous Darhad and Duha people (Hangartner 2011; Humphrey 1997 [1995]; Pedersen 2011; Purev & Purvee 2005). As Pedersen (2011) has noted, Mongolians are often scared of Darhad people, who they commonly perceive as a 'wild, crude and poor and inherently shamanic' people (2011: 119.). Interestingly, the Darhad commonly perceive the Duha, in the same vein as the Mongolians view the Darhad; as one of my Darhad friends once said: 'The *halh* [Mongolian] fear the Darhad and the Darhad fear the *Tsaatan* [Duha]. Everyone knows that the shamans of the taiga are the most powerful'. A view which was also shared by many of my Mongolian and Darhad informants who said that the Duha have the strongest and most dangerous shamans due to the 'black' (*har*) character of their spirits and their origin in the taiga. Within the taiga, Duha people made a similar distinction between the shamans of different Duha clans; and the areas of Baruun Taiga and Zuun Taiga; clans considered to be of pure Duha origin were regarded as more powerful than those considered to be of mixed Darhad and Duha origin. Everybody appeared to agree that the Kytai Balygsh living in Baruun Taiga had the most powerful shamans due to their origin from 'pure' (*tsever*) black taiga spirits (*eren*). Likewise a shamanic lineage (un-named) within the Balygsh clan also situated mainly in Baruun Taiga were said to have had very powerful shamans all of which had spirits of a pure Duha origin. However, the last of their shamans had died in the mid-2000s. The descendants of Pagmast (Kytai Balygsh) in Zuun Taiga were in contrast said to contain shamanic spirits of both Duha and Darhad origin and were hence thought to possess inferior

powers to those of the descendants of Hojashig (Appendix B). The Urat clan in Baruun Taiga were also said to have spirits of a pure Duha origin, however, their last shaman passed away in the 1940s.

Living in the taiga, I became increasingly aware of how Mongolian law enforcement officials fear their duties in the taiga. At first, I always felt a sense of awe when the border guards, dressed in uniforms and armed with heavy machine guns, came to visit our camp. Though I had the special border permit needed for foreign citizens to stay in the taiga, I knew they had the authority to evict me from the taiga at their will; in the past, they had forced several tourists to leave. At the start of my fieldwork in 2010, I always felt a bit uneasy when the border guards visited our camp. However, I soon came realized that they had no interest in my border permit. They never asked to see my permit; rather, they repeatedly asked me to divine. They frequently questioned me on whether it would be safe for them to travel this or that way, whether their contemporary misfortune had arisen from interfering with a spirit or shaman in the taiga, where they had to make offerings and so on. These questions made me aware that many border guards perceive the taiga as a land with its own laws - those of the Duha and the spirits. Both Mongolians and Duha people told me various dramatic stories of how Mongolians entering the taiga had suffered all kinds of misfortunes initiated by their improper engagement with the *spirits* of the taiga. A middleaged Duha man, who had formerly worked as a border guard, told me the following story:

Our border patrols [referring to patrols of a non-Duha ethnicity] are struck by 'bad things' (*muu yum*), because they don't know how to deal with *lus savdag* (water and earth spirits) and how to make offerings. But people from the taiga [Duha] know how to worship *lus savdag* and behave well. If they pollute nature, they have the ability to clean it up again.

This former border guard told me how he once went on border patrol with a young Mongolian border guard. During the patrol, they encountered a beautiful moose in the vicinity of Mount Agi. The Mongolian border guard shot the moose, however, it did not die although it was shot in the heart. It escaped to the gorge of the northern side of the mountain, an area known by the Duha to be guarded by a master spirit named *Avlin*, which is said to manifest itself as a tiny child with yellow hair; this spirit is known for only having half a body (see also Pedersen

2009). The Mongolian border guard followed it to the gorge. According to the Duha, it was forbidden to approach this area. The border guard's transgression of this rule resulted in various misfortunes:

That year, my friend's [the young Mongolian border guard] house burned down and this autumn, his young wife passed away. He has experienced many hardships. Also, the son of our commander at the border post shot himself 10 years ago. It happened because of our commander's misbehaviour – he did not follow 'the laws of the taiga' (*taigyn yos*): It happened because he did not worship the upper *tenger* (the heavens), *lus* and Oron Hangai. These things occur because people don't know the places of *lus*, *chötgör*, *eren* and sacrificial places and the mountains with *ezen*.

Later, three border guards also recounted the story about the young border guard; one of them said: 'It is safer to travel in the taiga with a local, because they know the 'laws of the taiga'; they know the location of the *ezens* of the taiga. They know where to make libations'. The border guards thus seem to perceive the land of Oron Hangai as a potentially violent land, which is likely to punish – and potentially kill – those who violate its laws. Likewise, as will be discussed in the next chapter, many officials appear to avoid penalizing the Duha for poaching or illegal border crossing out of fear of spiritual retribution.

Mongolians generally perceive the Duha as embodying magic powers reminiscent of those of Uulyн Төмөр, making them capable of playing with people's lives and the law. This was evident in a story I heard from Chimeg, a young Mongolian woman living in our camp. The local border guards and even Mongolians in Ulaanbaatar told me that she ended up living in the taiga due to the power of a 'love spell' (*hovs*) cast on her by her Duha boyfriend or a Duha shaman. In Ulaanbaatar, a Mongolian film director told me his version of the story:

You know Chimeg came from a very rich Mongolian family and she studied at the best Universities in the United States and China. So who would ever have thought that she would end up among these savage Tsaatan people – living as a reindeer herder in the taiga? Nothing can explain this, so it must be some kind of magic. She went to the taiga to work for some organization and fell in love with this Tsaatan boy. Of course, her parents were confused; they wanted her to return to leading a normal life and continue her studies at university. But she refused – saying she wanted to live in the taiga with this

hunter. Her father then went to the taiga to bring her home, but she refused. He had some contacts at the border, so he decided to send the border guards to fetch his daughter, but she even refused to go with them. Right now, she still lives in the taiga. I am certain that it was the Tsaatan people who put a love spell on her. Such an educated girl would never choose to live in the taiga.

I heard several versions of this story in Tsagaannuur and in Ulaanbaatar, which often contained the rationale that no Mongolian, and certainly not a well-educated and attractive young woman from a good family, would ever choose to live among the Duha people in the taiga and that such a decision only could be explained by love magic. Moreover, all the stories recounted how various Mongolian officials (police, military and border officials) had tried to persuade Chimeg to leave the taiga, but failed. This last point, the magical powers of the Duha as defeating the powers of the state, is reminiscent of the legendary stories of Duha shamans and convicts overthrowing the power of the state.

### **The Sovereign Forest**

The powers my Duha and Mongolian informants ascribed to the taiga, or maybe more adequately to the land of Oron Hangai, seem to share similarities with the sovereign power usually ascribed to states and nations. Sovereignty is commonly defined as ‘the ability and will to employ overwhelming violence and to decide on life and death’ (Hansen & Stepputat 2009: 1) and ‘determine conduct within the territory of a polity without external legal constraint’ (Humphrey 2004: 418). Stories of how outsiders in general and Mongolian officials in particular have suffered the violent and sometimes fatal punishment of the spirits of Oron Hangai due to their intrusion in Duha lands and lives seem to generate a general fear of the powers of the taiga, which to some extent, disciplines officials to submit to its inherent rules – interacting properly with its spirits and avoiding the detention of Duha people. The ‘sovereign power’ of the taiga thus shares similarities with those of the state, as both engage violence to discipline their subjects, yet they differ in that the sovereign power of the state is more formalized in laws, whereas the fear of the sovereign power of the taiga derive from the uncertain and labile character of the spirits making the taiga a place, where, as my informants repeatedly told me, ‘anything could happen’. The taiga may thus be conceptualized as a kind of spiritual sovereignty governed by the perceived powers of the Duha and their spirits.



In the taiga, the laws of the Mongolian state seem to come to a halt to some extent and be replaced by those of the taiga. The taiga shares similarities with what Humphrey (2004) has described as a 'localized form of sovereignty' (2004: 420) 'nested' within the 'higher sovereignty' of the state. For example, the mafia in Buryatia established a 'localized sovereignty' in the form of an illegal *marshrut* system of local taxi-drivers 'nested' within the Russian state. According to Humphrey, this was achieved because the *marshrut* system ensured people's freedom of movement in the city. This was 'not provided for in the law' and hence was "invisible" to it' (Humphrey 2004: 423). In the Duha case, the 'localized sovereignty' of the taiga is a spiritual and ontological one, which arises from local and national imaginaries of the taiga and the perception of the Duha as being endowed with violent spiritual powers. This perception of the taiga appears to limit state officials' enforcement of the Mongolian law in the taiga and causes them to try to conform to the laws of the taiga. Thus, the localized sovereignty of the taiga is, in contrast to the one discussed by Humphrey, not nested within the Mongolian state. Rather, we are dealing with a sovereign power existing next to – or perhaps intermingling and interfering with – that of the state. The sovereign power of the taiga gains its force not because it upholds a function not provided for in the law, but due to its potential violent force, which commonly invokes fear among officials patrolling the taiga, which causes them to refrain from enforcing Mongolian laws.

The fear of the black powers of the taiga experienced by Mongolian officials may be viewed as a product of past and present imaginaries, as reproduced in stories, rumours and the media, concerning the Duha and their land as innately wild and unruly. We are here dealing with what Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat (2009) has described as 'the precarious construction and maintenance of localized sovereign power through exercise of actual or spectral violence – transmitted through rumours, tales or reputations' (Hansen & Stepputat 2009: 3-4). The image of the taiga and the Duha as infused with black and dangerous powers may be seen as having been brought to life by past and present imaginaries - rumours, stories and films - on how those who dare to interfere with the life of the Duha are punished violently by the shamanic spirits of the Duha. Interestingly, contemporary films and documentaries on the Duha often portray the failure of socialism to settle the Duha and eradicate their shamanic tradition. As such, they elicit what Højer (2009) drawing on Taussig (1999) term, the 'labour of the negative' of the former socialist state's repression of religion. Højer has shown how it

was the former socialist state's strategic effort to eradicate the so-called superstitious beliefs of the Mongolians that ironically brought superstition to life precisely because the efforts put into destroying it revealed it as 'something which was important and powerful enough to necessitate destruction' (Højer 2009: 579). In the Duha case, the stories and the film about Uulyн Төмөр involve a similar logic, because as they depict the fruitless, yet, continual effort of state officials to capture Uulyн Төмөр they also reveal that he was not a simple criminal, but a man of powers beyond those of the state. Likewise, the stories of state officials' effort to settle the Duha and destroy their shamanic traditions reveal that even the socialists perceived the Duha's way of life and religion as powerful enough to necessitate control or destruction.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how the taiga may be viewed as a kind of spiritual sovereignty capable of determining the conduct of Mongolian officials without external legal constraints. It has argued that the sovereign power of the taiga arises from national and local imaginaries, which historically has instilled the taiga and its inhabitants (the Duha) with wild and unruly shamanic powers. Today these imaginaries are re-enacted in stories and media depictions of the Duha and their land. We have seen how such perceptions tend to shape Mongolian state officials' interaction with the Duha and their land. While in the taiga, Mongolian officials appeared – at least partly – to abstain from their official duty of executing the national hunting or border laws. Instead, they commonly tried to submit to the laws of the taiga - which meant avoiding interfering with the spirits and the people (Duha) of the taiga - in an effort to evade falling prey to the presumed violent powers of the Duha and their land.

The spiritual sovereignty of the taiga appears to arise not merely as a cultural sovereignty deliberately enacted by indigenous people to assert cultural autonomy within the state. On the contrary, I found that the sovereign power of the taiga is more of an ontological power. This is reflected in the way state officials commonly appear to experience the taiga as a land where the laws of the state, to some extent, are overruled by those of the taiga and its beings (including the Duha).

The perceived sovereign powers of the taiga are sustained by Mongolian stories and movies on heroic Duha convicts and powerful and dangerous Duha shamans. Stories of heroic Duha convicts, such as that of Uulyн Төмөр, create and recreate the Mongolian and Duha perception

of the Duha being the spiritual masters of the taiga, who are somehow beyond the reach of the laws of the state. The story of Uulyн Төмөр also reveals how the Duha and their land historically have been confined to a 'state of exception' within the state and how this position has both disempowered and empowered them. I have argued that the historical imaginaries of the Duha as noble savages, dangerous shamans and outlaws have constituted the Duha as powerful shamans and virtuous, heroic outlaws and masters of the taiga. These imaginaries have constituted the Duha as more wild and animal-like than the Mongolian majority, yet, also constituted them as the present day 'genuine' shamans and 'good fellows' of Mongolia and hence living remnants of an authentic and virtuous Mongolian tradition and past. Likewise, these imaginaries have constructed the taiga as an ambiguous land being both a pristine, yet dangerous, wilderness.

On the one hand, historical and contemporary imaginaries appear to establish the Duha and their land as wild and unruly and hence a threat toward the order of the state and its laws. On the other hand, these imaginaries points toward the Mongolian state and its laws being a threat to 'genuine' Mongolian traditions and virtues. These imaginaries enable the Duha to surpass national hunting laws, yet, also trap them in a position as lawless savages whose lives are not worthy of the protection of the state.

That the sovereign power of the Duha and their land is indeed of an ambiguous kind became menacing clear for me during the summer of 2011. At that time, I suddenly found myself living in a land not merely governed by uncanny spiritual powers, but also beyond the protective powers of the state. In our camp, people gossiped about how a group of Russian prisoners were roaming the taiga stealing horses; it was believed that they had even killed a Darhad man. One night, a group of Russians entered the camp shouting and shooting their guns; fortunately, my family and I were in the village of Tsagaannuur. No one in the camp dared to go out of their tents to see what was happening. However, when the forest again fell silent, people went out of their tents and realized that most of the horses in the camp had stolen. Outside the camp, some men found the corpse of a skinny horse, which had been shot. People presumed that it was the horse of one of the Russian prisoners, who had shot it because of its bad condition and to ensure that no one could use it to track them. Following this incident, I was certain that the local police soon would come to investigate the case. However, I soon realized that the local police did not bother. Though the camp members did ask the police to

investigate the case, they declined. Instead, the police simply said that it was beyond their capabilities to track the horse thieves. 'You see they really do not care about the Tsaatan', my host mother explained. Our camp then moved deeper into the forest in an effort to hide from the prisoners.

## Chapter 7

### Unruly Hunters

During my fieldwork among the Duha in 2012, a large issue in the summer camp was what would happen to Nergüi, a middle-aged Duha man, who had been arrested by the local police in the early spring; he had been accused of illegal border crossing, poaching and, even more seriously, killing his Mongolian companion during the winter hunt. Nergüi was in a prison in the provincial capital of Mörön, awaiting his final trial, which had left his relatives anxious about the outcome. One day in July, I was sitting in the shaman Batzayaa's *urts* together with a crowd of people from the camp listening to news from Tsagaannuur transmitted through the radio phone. Due to the bad connection, I could not understand the announcements, but it was clear from everyone's silence that they were listening to serious news stories rather than the usual greetings from relatives. It turned out that the radio presenter, a relative of Nergüi, announced that charges against Nergüi had been dropped and he had been released; as a result, he would soon return to the taiga. When I later asked my host father Solnoi what had happened, he just laughed and said: 'It is probably the usual thing. They have given up the trial, because they are afraid of the taiga people. Maybe they knew his mother was a shaman'.

Today, hunting plays a crucial role in the subsistence of the Duha. However, as Mongolia has developed stricter hunting laws over the last two decades, many Duha are afraid of being caught poaching. Today, the majority of subsistence hunting of the Duha is legally defined as poaching and hence subject to legal retribution. Yet, though rangers and border guards frequently seize Duha hunters and illegal border crossers, they seldom arrest them; in the cases where they do, and the Duha are brought to court, they are rarely sentenced.

Extending on chapter 6 this chapter explores how the encounter between Duha criminal offenders and various Mongolian officials implies an encounter between the powers of the Mongolian state's laws and the shamanic powers of the Duha and their land. I discuss how the prevalent Mongolian image of the Duha, including convicts, as dangerous shamans – alongside other factors such as friendship and bribery – give rise to a general fear of the Duha, which limits officials' enforcement of Mongolian law among the Duha.

This chapter explores how the encounter between state officials and Duha hunters involves an encounter between the laws of the state and the more shamanic laws or rules of the taiga. I draw upon and contribute to the anthropological study of 'legal pluralism' that explores the relations between state law and other normative orders (Merry 1992: 358; Benda-Beckman 2001; 2008). I show how the tightening of the Mongolian hunting law has redefined Duha subsistence hunting as poaching, and hence an illegal activity. Yet, new laws do not automatically lead to new legal practices. On the contrary, as scholars have shown, other normative orders persist and have been re-mobilised to create complex situations of legal pluralism (Peleikis 2006; Benda-Beckman 2001).

In the Duha case, we are not dealing with a legal pluralism simply arising from different normative orders, where indigenous people turn toward their traditions to challenge state laws. Instead, I propose that the tension between state laws and the rules of the taiga evolves as a tension between two ontologically different orders, namely state law, on the one hand, and the taiga sovereignty ruled by spirits, on the other hand. As state officials enter the taiga, they appear to enter a sovereign power of a different nature than that of the state. This sovereign power does, however, not exist solely in itself; instead, I examine how it is reproduced in the encounter between Duha hunters and state officials. I argue - drawing on Taussig's (1993) theories on 'mimesis and alterity' - that this encounter is one of 'mimesis', where the Duha become exceptionalized from national law precisely because they mimic state officials image of them as 'dangerous shamans'.

### **In Prison I was a Great Shaman**

Since the breakdown of socialism, hunting has regained its focal role in the traditional livelihood and subsistence of the Duha. At the same time, hunting regulations have become a focus of Mongolian state legislation; this is reflected in the continual tightening of the hunting law since 1994. My informants frequently expressed their fear of the potential consequences of breaking the hunting law and lamented that they had to break the law to survive.

The Duha rarely hunt during spring and summer due to lack of snow making it more difficult to hunt in these seasons - where the absence of snow means that one cannot follow the footsteps of wild game in the snow - and also because it is perceived as wrong to hunt female game with young offspring. During summer, the Duha generate an alternative income from

tourism working as horse guides for, and selling souvenirs to, visiting tourists. During winter, almost no tourists arrive in the taiga and the Duha rely mostly on hunting to obtain meat for food and various animal parts for barter. Groups of Duha men secretly cross the Mongolian/Russian border during winter to hunt on their ancestral hunting grounds in the high mountains of Tuva, which is richer in wild game than their hunting grounds within Mongolia, where the number of wildlife species has suffered a serious decline following the dramatic escalation of poaching and overhunting taking place over the last two decades.

The Duha are cautious not to be caught by wildlife rangers and border guards and take various measures to hide their hunting activities. For instance, wild game is almost always skinned and cut up in the wild forest, far away from the camp. This is undertaken to ensure that the meat is not easily recognizable as wild game by outsiders and especially by various officials, who may turn up. When hunters returned to the camp, they would frequently present me and my family – as everyone else in the camp - with a share of game meat; they would tell me that in case any outsiders asked about the meat, I ought to tell them it is mutton or reindeer meat – and certainly never reveal that it is game meat.

Rangers and border guards had indeed seized some of my Duha acquaintances. Yet, only a few of them had actually been arrested; moreover, only few cases brought to court resulted in the individual being sentenced. Actually, very few Duha have, as far as I know, been sentenced for any criminal deed in the last ten years. This was also the case with Nergüi, who was never convicted for any of the crimes that he was accused of – poaching, illegal border crossing and murder – though there was ample evidence that he had been involved in at least the first two activities.

One day during the summer of 2012, I visited Nergüi's sister to ask her a couple of questions about the various offerings she had conducted when her family castrated a male reindeer. Though she explained the practical and ritual procedures in detail, she seemed absent minded and eager to finish our talk. As I was about to end the interview and go back to my *urts*, she asked me to have another cup of tea. She then told me that she was awaiting the result of her brother's forthcoming trial in Mörön: 'He was arrested in early spring and now we are just waiting for the trial, I wonder what will happen', she whispered in a nervous tone. She then

told me that her brother was innocent of murder, as his companion had died due to an accident:

It happened during the winter hunt. Nergüi, his son and a young Mongolian man from Gobi travelled far away to collect deer antlers [to sell to Chinese merchants]. They were ascending a high mountain and crossed some unstable snow patches when the accident happened. Nergüi was riding at the front, and right behind him was his son riding on his reindeer and behind him was the Mongolian man. When the snow patch broke, the young Mongolian man, five reindeer and two dogs were all carried away. Nothing could be done. They all died in the avalanche.

Everyone in the camp appeared to agree that Nergüi was innocent. Yet, some people thought that he was somehow responsible for the incident. When I asked my host father why Nergüi had been imprisoned he said:

Nergüi went to Mörön because of 'his own carelessness' (*öörin bolgoomjgüigees*). His companion died in an avalanche with all the reindeer and dogs because Nergüi went the wrong way during the hunting trip.

Yet, others thought that the black spirits in Nergüi's kin had caused the misfortune. One elderly woman in the camp told me:

You know the shaman Tsetegee [Nergüi's deceased mother] was a person with powerful and 'black spirits' (*har eren*) of the Urat clan. It all happened [the death of Nergüi's companion] because there is no person among them [in their lineage or clan] who is capable of carrying on her spirits. The spirits turn ferocious without a shaman to master them. There is not even a shaman in the whole taiga powerful enough to handle this.

According to this relative of Nergüi, the unfortunate death of Nergüi's companion was caused by the black *eren* of Nergüi's deceased mother, the shaman Tsetegee. She said that since Tsetegee's death, nobody in Nergüi's kin had been capable of mastering her black *eren*; hence, it had turned its powers against its own kin. Ironically, these black shamanic powers came to play a crucial role in Nergüi's release.



It was Nergüi's sister who explained to me what had been said over the radiophone. She proclaimed happily that all charges against her brother had been dropped. When I asked her what had happened at the trial, she said that she 'really did not know'. She only knew that her brother would soon return to the taiga. Upon Nergüi's return, I asked him why he had been released and he explained:

Because I am a Tsaatan, I believe this is the reason. When I arrived in prison, I overheard the policemen talking about me. They said repeatedly: 'The new prisoner is a Tsaatan!' They asked each other: 'Where is the taiga man?' When I was there, the police just sat in my room and then left; and they only gave me easy chores. The other prisoners had hard time, but not me. I believe it is all because I am from the taiga. The inspectors did not ask about the incident. They only asked me where I was from and before I could even answer, the border police answered: He is a 'real Tsaatan' (*jinhene tsaatan*) from the taiga. The inspectors would ask me if it was true. [...] They kept on asking me about my *origin* [local term for both ethnic and family origin] and when they realized that I am the son of shaman Tsetsegee, they stopped asking questions and just transferred me straight to the prosecutor. The prosecutor asked me a few questions and then he simply released me [laughing].

This case is not unique but characteristic of the encounter between Duha convicts and Mongolian officials, who regularly limit – or fully refrain from – convicting Duha people for poaching or illegal border crossing. The common Mongolian image of the Duha as dangerous shamans, including the Duha convicts – coupled with other factors such as a friendship and bribery – give rise to a general fear of the Duha, which limits officials' enforcement of Mongolian law among the Duha. Though Nergüi was not known in the taiga as a man with shamanic abilities, he told me with a laugh that 'in prison I was a great shaman. I read the fortune of the police and my inmates'.

In order to circumvent national law and gain agency over their own lives and land, the Duha thus appears to imitate the Mongolian image of them as the shamanic masters of the taiga, capable of controlling its powers. This imitation grants them agency to circumvent national law; however, it simultaneously appears to play a key role in maintaining the Mongolian view

of the Duha as savage, lawless criminals, who cannot be controlled by the law and thus should not have any particular legal rights and status.

### **Subsistence-hunters or Poachers?**

The subsistence of the Duha living in the taiga is highly dependent on their freedom of movement. When the Duha hunt great mammals (bear, elk moose and deer) they follow these wild animals over long distances. The Duha frequently hunt in the high mountains and wild forests located at the border zone between Russia and Mongolia, an uninhabited area richer in wild game than the more southern parts of their traditional homeland. The transition from socialism to a market economy in Mongolia has led to a dramatic increase in poaching and trade of the various rare wildlife species inhabiting the taiga. This has resulted in a rapid decline of various species; for instance, the number of red deer has declined by up to 90% (Zahler et al. 2004: 23; Scharf et al, 2010). The faltering economy and the rise of poverty which followed in the aftermath of the breakdown of socialism coupled with the concurrent increase in the demand for wild life products on the Asian market has enticed a large number of people from all over Mongolia to try their hunting luck in the taiga areas inhabited by the Duha, which for centuries has been known for its wide variety of wild game.

The Duha has historically been subject to a number of hunting regulations enforced by various states. However, the challenge today for the Duha is that their reliance on hunting for subsistence has increased and the hunting law has become stricter. During the Qing Empire, the Duha were only permitted to hunt within certain areas prescribed by the Manchu; during socialism, the Duha were obliged to submit to the national hunting regulation, which legally limited hunting to certain seasons of the year (Wheeler 2000: 47) and to those who were assigned to work as state hunters (Scharf et al. 2010). An elderly informant recalled: 'During socialism we received a salary from the state so we could survive without hunting, but today we cannot'. During socialism, the hunting legislation was not perceived as a threat toward the very subsistence of the Duha, because the state granted all Duha a salary.

Since 1994, the Mongolian government has fought to develop an environmental legal regime to control illegal hunting (Zahler et al. 2004: 23). This resulted in the development of 'The Law on Fauna' in 1995, which was updated in 2000, 2010 and 2012 (personal e-mail correspondence with Onon Bayasgalan from the Wildlife Conversation Society). The Law on

Fauna grants protection to certain wild animal species and regulates hunting on other species through permits, fees, closed seasons and banned hunting methods (Batjargal 1996, Johnsen et al. 2012). One major adjustment of the Law of Fauna in 2012 was the dramatic increase in the hunting permit fee; it was raised almost tenfold for each species, making it practically impossible for the Duha to hunt legally due to their limited economic means. The following extract from an interview with a young hunter called Sanjaa reflects the Duha perception and knowledge of the contemporary hunting law:

B: Can you tell me about the hunting law?

S: It is very strict, from 2010 it became worse. No permits may be obtained. Everything is banned now.

B: Have you read the hunting law?

S: No. Nobody here has read the hunting law. However, people have heard about it. But nobody brought it for us to read.

B: Do you know something about the content of the hunting law?

S: I guess it is permitted to hunt squirrel and sable. But if an official discovers that you are hunting, there will be problems. In the old times, President Bagabandi said [upon visiting the Duha] that sable and squirrel can be hunted. But it might be that it is forbidden to hunt any animal. Maybe one needs a permit to hunt certain animals. I know that one needs a permit to hold a gun, but only Solnoi has one [laughing].

The only man in the taiga who, according to my informants, held a gun license was Solnoi, who had obtained it directly from the Mongolian president Bagabandi as a gift during his presidential visit to the taiga in the winter of 2001. Solnoi's daughter, who had studied nature preservation in Ulaanbaatar, was also, at least according to my observations, the only Duha who had actually read the hunting law. Though the hunting law does not fully prohibit hunting, the high cost of hunting permits, the lack of knowledge on the content of the hunting law among the Duha and the rumours about hunting being banned has left the Duha with the perception that hunting has become entirely illegal.

The Mongolian law is founded on the principles of 'liberal democracy' and based on the idea that 'all are equal under the law and enjoy equal rights' (Sabloff 2010: 32). The legal status of the Duha is thus in principle equal to that of all other citizens of Mongolia. Still, as suggested by various Mongolian NGOs in their joint Mongolian Minorities Report<sup>24</sup> from 2010, Mongolian law includes 'no special rights or protections' for ethnic minorities such as the Duha (Mongolian Minorities Report 2010: 1). In the report, they state that in accordance with 'the International Labour Convention 169' the Duha should be awarded, 'the privileged use of natural resources, particular those on which groups have a historical subsistence dependence' (Mongolian Minorities Report 2010: 1; Johnsen et al. 2012). In practice, the legal status of the Duha is weaker than that of the Mongolian majority. Today the Duha's very subsistence is threatened by aggressive national hunting laws that make no concessions for subsistence use of natural resources by minority groups (Mongolian Minority Report 2010: 2). Additionally, the Duha have minor formal influence on local and national policies touching upon their land and livelihood, because they have no formal ownership of the taiga and no community members in elected positions at any level of government (Johnsen et al. 2012: 36). The weak political status of the Duha is further enforced by the common Mongolian perception of the Duha as the most 'savage' and 'backward' people in the country. Yet, the question is why the Duha are seldom subjected to the law even though they frequently seem to break it.

### **Dangerous Prisoners**

Several of my male Duha informants told me that they had been caught by rangers for illegal hunting or by border guards<sup>25</sup> for illegal border crossing. Yet, only a few of them had actually been penalized for these crimes: Two hunters had had their guns confiscated and another hunter was sentenced to two years in prison, while others had been detained for a short while – and then simply released. When I asked my Duha interlocutors why Mongolian officials often refrain from enforcing the law among them, some, occasionally with a laugh, proclaimed that it is because they fear our 'magic-powers', 'spirits' or 'shamans', while others simply explained that it was due to the Duha hunters having friends or relatives among local officials. As one young hunter told me:

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<sup>24</sup>[http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/session9/MN/LGBTC.LGBTCenter\\_JS.pdf](http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/session9/MN/LGBTC.LGBTCenter_JS.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> I have not heard of any contemporary cases of Duha being caught by Russian border guards and apparently the borderline in this area seems almost entirely to be guarded by Mongolian officials.

The rangers know us and we know them. They work in the taiga, so they know us very well. They know that everyone here hunts. Not a lot of wild game, but just one or two animals – they know hunting is our life source. So the rangers just come and go around visiting each family – and then leave. Most likely they then report to their superiors that they have checked us. No one will report on each other. And even if they report on us, the chief ranger will not make a big deal out of it, because he is a relative [married to a Duha] of the taiga people. If we did know the rangers, it might be difficult. We do not mass slaughter the wild game, we only hunt for food – so it is no problem.

Friendship and family ties thus seem to play an important role in the officials' enforcement of the law among the Duha. Yet, people also told me how Mongolian officials with no friendship or family ties to the Duha occasionally refrained from enforcing the law among the Duha. Based on my interviews with Mongolian officials and Duha hunters, I propose that the common Mongolian image of the Duha as dangerous shamans and the taiga as a dangerous land of Duha spirits plays an important role in Mongolian officials' implementation of the law among the Duha. I argue that as Mongolian officials commonly experience the taiga as a 'shamanic landscape' (Humphrey 1997 [1995]) and what I have termed a spiritual sovereignty, they become upon entering the taiga entangled in its 'sorcery of history' (Taussig 1987). This sorcery of history is evident in state officials' fear of the taiga and the Duha, which partly arises from past and contemporary imaginaries of the Duha and their land being infused with unruly and wild spiritual powers. Nonetheless, officials' fear of the Duha is also strengthened by the way Duha hunters tend to imitate the historical images of the Duha as powerful shaman upon encountering state officials.

Keeping the second point in mind, let us first examine how the laws of the state appear to become less significant than that of the taiga when Mongolian officials move from the steppe into the taiga. The laws of the state and those of the taiga are ontologically different. In the hunting law, the division between legal hunter and illegal poacher is a general one dependent on the species killed and the lack or presence of permits. In the taiga, interaction between

humans and non-humans (animals and spirits) is likewise experienced as a normative one, but a more specific one, where the challenge of humans is to interact with the land and its beings (spirits, animals and humans) in order not to interfere with their way of being. Hence in the taiga the Duha hunters arise as legitimate hunters and powerful guardians of the taiga, because their hunting way of life is what makes them the masters of the taiga.

In Mongolia, the Duha way of being has, as we saw in Chapter 2, historically been defined as that of reindeer herding and hunting. Hence, rangers are often caught in the dilemma that if they execute the hunting law upon the Duha in the taiga they violate the 'way of being' (hunting livelihood) of the Duha and hence violate the very laws of the land of the taiga. Such violations are commonly thought to cause various misfortunes and even death in the life of the offender.

Several of the young border guards in Tsagaannuur told me that though they did not fear implementing their duties in the taiga, many of their fellow border guards did. One border guard told me: 'I am not afraid of the Tsaatan, because I know them very well. But some of our border guards are scared of patrolling the taiga. People say that all Tsaatan are shamans. They say that anything may happen, if you imprison a man from the taiga'. During my fieldwork, I heard several stories of how Mongolian officials were forced to release Duha convicts out of fear of their shamanic powers. Below is a story commonly known in the taiga, which here is recounted by a young Duha hunter:

Three years ago, I went hunting with twelve other taiga men. For days we were tracking wild game. As we followed their footprints in the snow across the border, we were unaware that the border guards also had tracked us by following the footprints of our reindeer left in the snow. They had prepared an ambush just across the border, where they were hiding, waiting to catch us. So when we crossed the border, they caught us. They confiscated our five rifles and arrested us. First, they brought us to Tsagaannuur and then they drove us to the prison in Mörön. As we drove toward Mörön in the police car, we came to the thirteen *oboos* [stone cairns] in Ulaan Uul. The car stopped and we went out for a break – and made offerings. All of us made offerings. Just as we started to drive again, the sky darkened and a thunderstorm began. In the car, we could hear the policemen whisper: 'We caught thirteen taiga men and right after passing the thirteen

*oboo* the weather become bad. It cannot be a coincidence. Maybe it is a sign that it is a mistake to imprison these people?' Then we were detained for nearly a month. However, it was not difficult - they treated us really well. They even gave us money to buy meat. After a while, they set us free. I remember they told us they had been haunted by nightmares and all sorts of bad things had started to happen to them. They believed that we had cast shamanic spells on them.

When I asked this man whether he thought these misfortunes were initiated by some kind of shamanic spell, he laughed and answered: 'No, we did not do anything like that. Only some of us did divination for cigarettes. I also did it though I do not usually make divinations'. This event was not unique. Several former convicts told me how they had read the fortune of police officers while in prison. Correspondingly, one of the former convicts told me that his aunt was 'a very talkative person' who had told the police that: 'anything might happen to you because you have imprisoned these 13 taiga men'.

I propose that the Duha practice of fortune-telling in prison may be seen as a practice of 'mimesis': 'a copying of a copy in ways that draw on the character and power of the original, to the point whereby the representation may even assume that character and that power' (Taussig 1993: xiii). By acting as shamans, the Duha seem to copy the police officers' prevailing ideas and historic images of the Duha as a people with inherent shamanic powers, whereby they become this very image and obtain its powers.

I asked another of the former convicts, who was indeed a shaman, whether some kind of magic or spell had caused the nightmares and the misfortunes experienced by the Mongolian official who had detained him. Upon hearing this question the shaman laughed and replied:

No, no. I believe it is just an effect of their' own mind. It is the usual stuff, when someone from the border troops gets injured or dies, their relatives turn to 'someone who knows things' [a diviner or shaman] and they usually say that it derives from the 'black magic' (*har dom*) of a taiga person.

This shaman thus appears to perceive the fear of the officials as an effect of the officials' own mind, thus pointing to the officials' perception of the Duha hunters as dangerous shamans. Yet, this does not mean that the shaman, as well as other of my informants, perceived the

misfortunes of the officials as a matter of mere coincidence. Rather, as the shaman later elaborated, 'Things happen because the officials fear us. They become ill or even die of fright'. As we saw in Chapter 5, the Duha and Mongolians regard the sensation of fear as capable of activating the object of one's fear. This may also be why most Mongolian officials stated that while they did not fear the Duha, they knew other officials who did fear the Duha and their land.

My Duha informants commonly perceived the misfortunes of officials involved in detaining Duha hunters as caused by the fear of the officials. The way many of my informants laughingly told me they had acted as shamans in prison shows how Duha hunters mimic state officials' image of Duha hunters as dangerous shamans in order to arouse fear among officials to avoid legal consequences. However, this does not mean that my Duha informants saw their own release as caused by their own skills of trickery. On the contrary, many told me that they had been released due to the powers of their hereditary spirits or because they were under the protection of the land of Oron Hangai. While they did not regard themselves as shamans in the conventional sense of the term, they saw themselves as having shamanic powers due to their Duha heritage and life in the taiga.

When I asked Solnoi why Duha people only rarely are penalized for breaking the law, he answered:

Taiga people should live freely [without state law] in their own realm [*orchin*; referring to the taiga]. In the taiga, the *lus* [water spirits] are watching. When border officials arrested 13 Duha men for crossing the border, two officers died. So the *lus* are watching. This is why the officials fear us.

The Duha commonly view the taiga as a realm of its own rules, those of Oron Hangai and its spirits. Oron Hangai thus is regarded as a kind of spiritual sovereignty, which protects those who adhere to its laws and punishes those who transgress its laws and interfere with its beings. Though my Duha informants appeared to view the taiga as a realm somehow outside of Mongolian law, it did not mean that they considered it a lawless territory at all. Rather, they perceived it as a land with its own laws or rules; those of the realm of Oron Hangai.





Duha hunter

### **The Laws of the Forest**

According to the Duha one needs to know and follow the 'laws' (*yos*) of Oron Hangai in order to travel safely within the taiga; i.e. one needs to know how to interact properly with its various beings, its spirits and animals. These rules may be understood as laws pertaining to the spiritual economy and sovereign power of Oron Hangai. Those who trespass these laws are thought to suffer the punishment of the land of Oron Hangai and its spirits, whereas those who comply with them are said to be ordained with the gifts (wild game) and protective powers of Oron Hangai.

As one elderly Duha hunter explained:

At Mount Agi there is a place where two rivers meet. That place has a master spirit. That is why it is forbidden to hunt there. Also, nowadays we follow this law. [...] If rangers or police are patrolling this place, we would just continue to hunt one way or the other. But everyone from very young men to very old men refrains from hunting at this place, because they all know that this place has a master spirit.

This informant, as well as others, thus perceived the power of the spirits of Oron Hangai as somehow superior or, perhaps more appropriately, as riskier than the power of Mongolian state officials. Though the laws of the taiga may to a limited extent be circumvented by various ritual procedures, the Duha believe that one cannot escape the powers of Oron Hangai and its spirits, which simply are watching – and acting upon – human life in the taiga. In contrast Duha hunters may altogether manage to escape the legal consequences of breaking the law of the state, as he is under the protection of the land of Oron Hangai. In the following section, I will elaborate on how the Duha perceive the land of Oron Hangai as a kind of spiritual sovereignty, which violently punishes those who transgress its laws and protects those who adhere to its laws.

According to my Duha friends, while traversing the taiga, it is crucial that the hunter acts in accordance with the laws of Oron Hangai. If not, he may lose his hunting luck or fall prey to various misfortunes. Such laws include: interacting with the spirits of the land according to their nature, character and kin, refraining from hunting within the land of ancestral spirits or master spirits, avoiding spilling the blood of wild animals within waterways and killing bears during their hibernation etc. Whereas it is quite straight forward to adhere to the last two laws, adhering to the first two are more difficult, as the character and location of spirits is thought to potentially change over time. Thus, interacting properly with the spirits of the land requires intricate knowledge of the location of master spirits within the land and the ability to sense their current character and presence within the land. The challenge of the Duha hunter is to thus interpret the signs in nature that may indicate that he has entered a land of spirits of certain kinds (character, nature and kin).

Not all wild game is a potential object of prey. What appears to be a moose may turn out to be an *ezen*, a *chötgör* or even a shaman having transformed herself into a moose. If the hunter happens to kill such beings, all sorts of misfortunes are said to happen in the lives of the hunter. Hunters told me how they sometimes refrained from hunting a wild animal due to its unusual appearance (odd colours, twinkled antlers, unusual marks on its fur) or strange behaviour (a wolf trying to attack a human, a bear walking in a human like manner), which all were seen as an indication of encountering a wild animal that was not an ordinary animal. During my fieldwork in 2012, a middle-aged man went to collect wood just a few hundred meters from the summer camp where he was encircled by a wolf, who aggressively tried to

attack him. He later told me that even though he had a gun, he did not try to kill the wolf. Instead, he ran away, because 'a usual wolf would not attack a human being, so I guess it was not right to shoot it – it might have been a *chötgör*'.

According to the Duha, it is the land of Oron Hangai which grants the hunter the blessing of wild game. However, Oron Hangai does not grant its blessing randomly. Rather, it is only those who 'care for' (*hairlaf*) the land of Oron Hangai (those who follow its rules or laws) who are thought to be 'cared for' by the land of Oron Hangai and hence receive its blessing of wild game. As an elderly hunter explained:

When you go hunting you should pray to the land of Oron Hangai. If you don't, all kinds of bad things may happen. When you traverse the wild forest and have not caught anything, suddenly a wild game may appear in front of you. It does not matter what kind of gun you have, you will still hit the game. It does not matter, because the game is 'the blessing of Oron Hangai' (*Oron Hangain hishig*). Other times you may not be able to hit anything, even though you have an excellent gun. It only depends on whether you follow the hunting rules [of Oron Hangai] and how much you pray to Oron Hangai. If a man does not pray and just wants to prove his abilities to kill, Oron Hangai will not bless him with anything – such a man might fall and break his leg.

The hunt is thus full of dangers and requires intricate knowledge of the laws of Oron Hangai. The hunter needs to know how to interpret the signs in nature, indicating the presence - and character or kin – of the spirits to ensure a bountiful and safe hunt. If the hunter sticks to these rules, Oron Hangai will, according to my informants, bless him with wild game and general fortune. However, if he fails to adhere to one or several of these rules, he may fall prey to the anger of Oron Hangai and its spirits.

I propose that the laws of Oron Hangai first embody the Duha perception of the relationship between spirits and humans as hierarchical, where Oron Hangai and its master spirits are perceived as superior to humans. Secondly, the laws revolve around the Duha perception that each being and natural entity in the land has its own way of being, which humans ideally ought not to interfere with. Thirdly, the laws embody the idea that the position of humans and non-humans as subject and object, prey and predator within the land of Oron Hangai is erratic, rather than stable. We seem here to be dealing with the potential of symmetrical

inversions between predator and prey, widely described in the stimulating literature on perspectivism (Pedersen 2001; Kristensen 2007; Willerslev 2007; Viveiros de Castro 1998; 2007).

Pedersen (2001) has proposed that hunting among the neighbouring Darhad involve notions of symmetrical inversions between predator and prey comparable to the perspectivism of the Amerindian people described by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998). Perspectivism is related to the 'multi-natural' and 'uni-cultural' ontologies of the Amerindians, where human and non-humans differ in corporeal characteristic and are alike as they all possess a similar 'spirit' or 'subjectivity' (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 470). This gives rise to the principle of perspectivism where it is '*the point of view [which] creates the subject*' (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 476) and where animals and spirits *see* themselves as humans, and may *see* humans as non-humans, in the same way as humans *see* themselves as humans, spirits as spirits and animals as animals (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 470). In his comprehensive analysis, Pedersen illustrates how related perspectivist notions are evident in Darhad hunting where the hunter and the wild game may switch between being subject and object, predator and prey depending on 'who sees whom first' (Pedersen 2001: 422).

Also, among the Duha the hunter may turn into prey himself, falling victim to various misfortunes in case he hunts a wild animal which is somehow not a proper object of prey. Likewise, border guards may fall prey to various disasters if they transgress the laws of Oron Hangai by camping at a place inhabited by a master spirit or by imprisoning a Duha hunter. However, I do not perceive this as a matter of pure perspectivism, as these inversions between subject and object, prey and predator seems to be more a matter of the hunter or the official not acting according to their position in the hierarchy of living beings, or interfering with the way of being and subjective character of other living beings. In other words, whether the Duha hunter is the prey or predator in relation to the wild game and spirits he encounters in the land is dependent on his behavior and location within the land of Oron Hangai.

Charles Stépanoff (2009) has argued it is problematic to perceive the relationship between prey and predator among the indigenous people of Siberia through the lens of perspectivism. Stépanoff has asserted that among these people, the relationship between prey and predator is not so much a matter of perspective, but rather describes an 'empirical relation: the

interaction between humans and game-animals' (Stépanoff 2009: 289). The problem with perspectivism is that it views 'relational terms as ontological predicates' ignoring how the notions of prey as predator is 'a matter of different positions in interactions', rather than different perspectives (Stépanoff 2009: 289). Stépanoff has shown how it is the manner in which hunters move within a space which entails an inversion in relations (prey and predator, human and non-human) and hence of identities (Stépanoff 2009). In Siberia, the notion of prey and predator does not, according to Stépanoff, refer to different worlds (that of the spirits and that of humans) but to different relations within a common world inhabited by spirits and humans alike (Stépanoff 2009: 289). Here it is the hunter's position in space in relation to a spirit or animal which determines the identity (as prey or predator) of the hunter (Stépanoff 2009: 293).

Similarly, I argue that within the taiga, the Duha perceive themselves as part of the same world as that of the spirits of the taiga, as they all are part and parcel of the land of Oron Hangai and what I have termed its cosmic economy. In this cosmic economy, the position of human hunter and non-human being (animal or spirit) as either prey or predator is a relational one, which arises in the practical encounter between hunter and non-human being. For instance, if the hunter encounters a bear, whether it is a proper object of prey or not depends on its location in the physical land. First, if a bear or another wild animal is encountered in the land of ancestral spirits or master spirits, it is considered their property rather than the hunter's property and potentially not an animal at all, but a spirit. Secondly, it is considered wrong to hunt a bear when it is situated in a higher location than that of the hunter, e.g., the bear having climbed a tree or the bear wandering in the mountains. I heard many stories about how hunters who ignored this rule were killed by bears (became prey) or otherwise suffered various misfortunes. On the other hand, it is appropriate to hunt a bear which is situated in a lower location than that of the hunter. These examples demonstrate how it is the location of the hunter and the wild animal within a physical land which determines their position as prey or predator.

It is both the hunters' position and his general behavior within the land which constitutes him as either a predator (master of the taiga) or a prey (a stranger to the taiga). The land of Oron Hangai is said to recognize the Duha hunter who adheres to the laws of Oron Hangai as yet another master of the taiga (predator) worthy of its blessings (prey). In contrast, the hunter

who ignorantly hunts within the land of a master spirit or otherwise interferes with the land and its beings is said to suffer all kinds of misfortunes; hence they become prey to the land of Oron Hangai and its spirits. The task of the Duha hunter is thus to interact with places within the land to acknowledge his own minor position and yet mutual being to that of the master spirits and ancestral spirits of the land, confirming the hierarchical order of – and kinship relations between - living beings (spirits and humans), in order to avoid falling prey to the spiritual retribution of the land of Oron Hangai. Likewise, when state officials interfere with the Duha way of life by arresting them for poaching, the officials position themselves as prey in relation to the land of Oron Hangai and its beings (spirits and Duha).

To position oneself properly in the land is, however, not a simple task, due to the erratic nature of spirits. Duha elders teach youngsters how to sense and interact with the spirits of the household and the wild forest while they are engaging in daily tasks in the camp and hunting. What is taught is not formal knowledge or a coherent cosmology, but rather a series of skills as per Ingold's (2000) sense of the term, where 'skills are incorporated into the modus operandi of the developing human organism through training and experience in the performance of particular tasks' (Ingold 2000: 5; Willerslev 2004). In order to sense the position of spirits and animals in the hierarchy of living beings, Duha parents or older hunters will guide children and youngsters to sense the signs in nature or in the physical appearance of an animal, which hint at its position. For example, three young Duha men recounted how they had lost their hunting luck and became ill after they had unknowingly camped at a place owned by a master spirit. During the night, one of the young men suddenly woke up feeling as if he were being strangled. As he tried to remove the hands, he realized the grip around his throat had vanished. He got up to find out which of his companions had tried to strangle him, but realized that it was not any of them, as they all were fast asleep. The next morning, one of the other discovered his reindeer had black paint on its skin and the third man realized that somebody had taken his tobacco. One of the men later explained: 'An older hunter told us that all this happened because we had camped in an *ezentei* [a place with a masterspirit] place'. This story illustrates how older hunters guide younger ones on how to use strange experiences to sense the presence of master spirits within the land.

When the Duha traverse the taiga, they seem to engage similar skills to sense the presence of spirits and state officials within the land. For instance, nightmares were commonly seen as a

sign to be careful of the different kinds of beings (spirits and rangers) who might hide in the woods. Still, the Duha generally perceive the powers of Oron Hangai as superior to those of the state, because the land of Oron Hangai is thought to watch over the Duha, whereas state authorities may be tricked or overruled by the protective powers of Oron Hangai. As Solnoi explained:

Since the old times, every person living in the taiga, including those who were not shamans, has worshipped his own *eren* and prayed to Oron Hangai. They may not necessarily talk about these matters, but they do worship them, and in return the *eren* and Oron Hangai offers them protection.

### **Entering the Forest of Black Powers**

Scholars have argued that in Mongolia, the steppe has historically been associated with Buddhism, higher powers and more domesticated spiritual powers, while the taiga has been viewed as the land of shamanism, black powers and more wild and undomesticated spiritual powers (Humphrey 1997 [1995]; Pedersen 2011). However, what has not been fully investigated is how state officials working within the taiga are caught in the tension between state laws and the rules or laws of the taiga and its spirits. This will be discussed in more detail below.

My Mongolian and Darhad informants often talked with awe about travelling to the taiga, which they described as a land of 'black powers', 'black shamans' and 'ferocious' Tsaatan spirits where 'anything might happen'. The sharp contrast between the natural environment of the wide steppe land, characteristic of large parts of Mongolia and the forested mountain regions of the Duha homeland, thus seems to serve as a visual marker not merely of different homelands, but of different powers.

Driving on the dusty road from Mörön to the village of Tsagaannuur, I was often struck by the dramatic changes in the landscape. The first part of the journey takes one through a classical Mongolian steppe landscape with open grassland and rolling hills, which slowly starts to change as one passes the thirteen *oboos* in the Ulaan Uul districts. This marks the entry to the Shishged Depression and the homeland of the Darhad and Duha people which is characterized by a mixture of open steppe, dense forests and high mountains. All the jeeps I have shared

with locals on this journey have always made a stop to make offerings at the thirteen *oboos*; I have frequently overheard Mongolian passengers talk anxiously about how this was 'the land of dark shamans and spirits'.

Sometimes I would travel with Darhad friends, Mongolian tourists, tourist guides or border guards from the village of Tsagaannuur through the steppe region inhabited by the Darhad and further into the taiga and to the camps of the Duha. During these travels, I often experienced how my companions turned silent and more alert as we rode from the steppe into the taiga. One Mongolian tourist once told me with a shivering voice, shortly after we entered the taiga, 'the forest has become darker and darker. I can feel the powers of the Tsaatan shamans and their spirits all around us'. Once, while I was staying in the village of Tsagaannuur, I met two middle-aged Buryat women, who had arrived 'to seek the advice of the Tsaatan shamans' because they 'are the most powerful shamans in the region'. However, when I told them that there was no Duha shaman staying in the village or in the surrounding steppe area, but there were some in the taiga, the women looked anxious and said: 'Do you really mean we have to travel into the taiga to meet a Tsaatan shaman?' In the evening, the women came to the guesthouse where I was staying and told me that they had decided to meet one of the Darhad shamans in the village, because travelling into the taiga would be 'too dangerous, as it is guarded by the black Tsaatan spirits'.

Many of my Mongolian and Darhad interlocutors were concerned as they were not quite certain of how to deal with the spirits of the taiga. This was reflected in the following story, recounted by a young Darhad man:

I went to the taiga last week to cut down wood and after a long day I took a rest under a tree. When I woke up, I could not find my axe, so I went to search for it. It was very strange, because I was alone in the taiga. I passed this place where I saw a human skull, and I knew it was a Tsaatan funeral place. I realized that this man had taken my axe. I should not have cut down trees in his vicinity. Only Tsaatan may approach such a place.

Western tourists arriving in the taiga often recounted how their guides had warned them of the magical capabilities of the Duha and advised them to be careful not to reveal personal details to any shaman, as such information could be used to cast magic spells on them. One day, two young Australian tourists dropped by our *urts* to ask me some questions about Duha



shamanism. They told me that they had come to the taiga to experience a shamanic séance, but somehow felt unsure about whether or not it was a good idea, since 'our guide told us never to reveal your date of birth to a shaman. He said that if we did this, the shaman could cast all kinds of evil spells upon us'. After saying this, the young Australian laughed and said 'I do not really believe in it. It is really crazy, but still it makes me somehow scared'. Her companion nodded and said: 'I do not believe the shamans are evil. I really want to see a séance'.

In the evening, their Mongolian translator dropped by our *urts* and after drinking a cup of tea, she started to tell me her worries about travelling in the taiga. It was her first time in the taiga; and before departing she had been uncertain of whether to take the translation job in the taiga. A friend had warned her: 'Never tell your date of birth to a Tsaatan. If they know it, they may kill you'. Yet, she had agreed to take the job because she needed the money; however, she admitted that she felt terrified while riding into the taiga.

Indeed, it was my general impression that most Mongolian visitors and officials visiting the taiga were cautious not to interfere with the business of the Duha while in the taiga. This was also reflected in the way state officials seemed more concerned with asking me and the Duha about how to interact with the land and its beings while in the taiga, than on checking people's homes for wild game meat.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that the tightening of the Mongolian hunting law has furthered the common Mongolian perception of the Duha and their land being unruly and shamanic. I have shown how the perceived shamanic powers of the Duha and the taiga gives rise to a general fear of the Duha and their land, which tends to limit state officials actual enforcement of the law among the Duha. I propose that as state officials commonly submitted to the perceived shamanic laws of the taiga, they also (re)endowed the Duha and their land with shamanic powers and hence (re)created the taiga as a kind of spiritual sovereignty.

I have thus shown how the encounter between Duha poachers (hunters) and Mongolian state officials gives rise to an encounter between the laws of the state and the perceived shamanic powers of the Duha and their land. I have argued that Duha criminal offenders appear to

mimic the common Mongolian image of the Duha as dangerous shaman in an effort to circumvent national law and avoid legal retribution. However, this is not merely a political strategy used to trick state authorities. Instead, I found that the Duha who had been released from prison – often after having *acted as* shamans - commonly would tell me that they had been released due to the powers of their spirits or the land of Oron Hangai. Hence, I found that the Duha perceive their very livelihood in the taiga as summoning the powers of their spirits and the land of Oron Hangai to protect the Duha against various misfortunes, including state law. Living in the taiga as hunters and following its rules, the Duha become its spiritual masters – and hence latent shamans – capable of contesting the laws of the state. Simultaneously the very tightening of the hunting law and the growing number of Mongolian officials patrolling the taiga, compels the Duha to act as shamans and hence become the spiritual masters of the land. As such, I argue that the contemporary tightening of the Mongolian hunting law has indeed also furthered the Duha turn toward shamanism, because it has (re)installed Duha hunters as the masters of the taiga.

While the Duha have certainly tried to comply with the laws of the taiga, it does not mean that they have simply ignored Mongolian law. The general awareness of the hunting law being tightened gave rise to a general fear among the Duha of the potential legal consequences of breaking the law, which did indeed motivate many to abstain from poaching and illegal border crossing. Yet, it also furthered the Duha turn toward shamanism as many felt that if they submitted to the laws of the taiga, they would be protected against the legal retribution of the state. Also, Mongolian officials appeared to be caught in between the laws of the state and those of the taiga. This was reflected in the way officials asked Duha shamans and I to grant them guidance or protection against angering the spirits from patrolling the taiga or detaining Duha hunters. Hence Mongolian officials happened to turn toward shamanism to fulfill and overcome the perceived dangers of their legal duties

I have thus shown how the tension between the laws of the state and those of the taiga cannot merely be conceptualized as one of legal pluralism, i.e., an encounter between different normative orders. Instead, we are dealing with a tension between the ontological orders of state laws and the spiritual sovereignty of the taiga. When state officials enter the taiga or encounter a Duha criminal offender, the laws of the state appear – at least to a certain degree – to be overridden by that of the taiga and its shamanic powers. Nonetheless, as state officials

enact Mongolian laws through their patrols and sporadic arrest of Duha criminal offenders, the laws of the state continually intermingle with that of the spiritual sovereignty of the taiga. Hence, both Mongolian state officials and the Duha tend to turn toward the shamanic powers of the taiga to deal with the perceived dangers arising from tension between the laws of the state and that of the taiga.

## Chapter 8

### Risky Encounters

The shaman Goost used his powers to heal that American boy. A movie has even been made about it. It has been shown all over the world. But because the Americans only paid Goost a small amount of money, Goost suffered a serious stroke, paralyzing half of his body.

These are the words of Goost's niece, who like many other Duha, thought that Goost's illness had arisen on account of his *eren* being angered by the inadequate amount of money Goost received for healing the American boy. Interestingly, the story of how Goost healed an American autistic boy is also depicted in the bestselling book and documentary, 'The Horse Boy' (Isaacson 2009); the international success of the book and the documentary has resulted in a large number of tourists visiting the taiga.

The documentary follows an American couple on their journey with their autistic son from their home in North America to Mongolia in search of alternative ways to heal their son of the various dysfunctions arising from his autism. The father of the autistic boy had read that Duha shamans have a 'shamanic tradition unbroken for thousands of years' and are 'the most powerful shamans in the region' (Isaacson 2009: 45). This inspired the family to travel on horseback through the Mongolian taiga in search of a Duha shaman capable of healing their son.

In the taiga, the family fortunately encounters shaman Goost, whom they have heard 'is the most powerful shaman of the taiga'. The initial encounter with Goost, however, puzzles the father who is somehow 'taken aback' when Goost straight forwardly demands a payment of five hundred US dollars to conduct a shamanic séance (Isaacson 2009: 258). Yet, they decide to pay and, in the darkness of the night, Goost performs a shamanic séance for the boy which is so 'low-key' that it leaves the father perplexed, uncertain of what to expect (Isaacson 2009: 274). The next day, however, the result of the séance is evident: the boy's behaviour has changed dramatically, leaving his parents convinced that their son has indeed been

'miraculously' cured of the 'the terrible dysfunctions' which had afflicted him since his birth (Isaacson 2009: 289-300). However, what is not recounted in the documentary, and probably not even known by the American family, is that Goost suffered a severe stroke shortly after the séance because the money Goost received from the Americans, according to many Duha, invoked the anger of Goost's spirits.

The broadcast and publication of 'The Horse Boy' has attracted a great number of spiritual tourists who journey to the taiga in the hope of encountering Duha shamans and experiencing their shamanic séances to obtain personal healing, spiritual insights or simply experience the 'ancient shamanic tradition before it disappears'. A great number of the tourists I encountered in the taiga were concerned with how tourism might change, be commoditized and ultimately obliterate, what they perceived to be, the unique, genuine and ancient shamanic traditions of the Duha. Among the tourists, there was a common perception that it was bad to offer the shamans money for their services, as money somehow was thought to be contrary and detrimental to indigenous shamanic traditions. Instead, some tourists would present the shamans with various kinds of gifts (food, clothes, medicine etc.) which the tourists presumed was needed by the Duha and less detrimental to the Duha tradition. However, such gifts were often perceived by the Duha as greatly offending and contrary to their *erens*. Among the Duha, both tourists' improper offerings to the shamans' *erens* and their inappropriate behaviour during shamanic séance were felt to arouse the anger of the spirits, summon dangerous spiritual powers and disrupt the relationship between humans and spirits.

Yet, while many Duha shamans appear anxious about performing séances for tourists, they frequently comply. During my fieldtrips in the 2010s, the silence of many summer nights were indeed broken by the sound of shamans drumming; i.e., performing séances for tourists. The arrival of tourists had indeed, as many other places in the world, furthered the Duha turn toward shamanism. However, as we will, see in quite specific ways. Much scholarly work on spiritual tourism among indigenous people has revealed how tourism has contributed to the reinvention of indigenous shamanism as a symbol of ethnic or national identity, which is used in their struggle for political rights in a national space (Bernstein 2008; Lindquist 2005; 2011; Vitebsky 1995). In the Duha case, the arrival of spiritual tourism has yet not so much reconstituted Duha shamanism as a symbol of ethnic identity. Instead, I will show how the arrival of tourism has given rise to new spiritual uncertainties and challenges. I found that the

acts of spiritual tourists are felt to effectuate a dangerous release of spiritual powers among the Duha, which disrupt the relationship between humans and spirits. In order to show how tourism has shaped Duha shamanism, we thus ought to take the concerns of the Duha serious, and examine how shamanic séances for tourists, like gold mining, arises as 'shamanic phenomenon' (Pedersen 2011: 79) in their own right.

The chapter examines how the encounter between tourists and Duha shamans influence Duha shamanism, and in particular, how spiritual tourisms have created new spiritual uncertainties by boosting the flow of risky spiritual powers. It will show how tourists' presumption about indigenous shamanism and often noble intent of trying not to interfere with Duha livelihood and tradition is locally perceived to invoke the anger of the spirits and disrupt the relationship between humans and spirits. I will discuss how such spiritual disruptions have given rise to new spiritual challenges, which disempower and empower local shamans in ambiguous ways. As such, the encounter between Duha shamans and tourists in the taiga may be perceived as yet another element that has furthered the Duha turn toward shamanism.

### **Spiritual Tourism**

Since the breakdown of socialism, many indigenous people in the region have, like the Duha, become part of a global market that scholars refer to as: ethnographic tourism (Ross 1994), ethno-tourism (Sylvain 2005), spiritual tourism and shamanic-tourism (Davidov 2010). The Duha have increasingly become part of this global spiritual and ethnic marketplace, particularly following the broadcast and publication of 'The Horse Boy'. This is unsurprising, as their remote location, minority status, unique livelihood and shamanic religion fits perfectly into cultural and shamanic tourists' demand to experience 'cultural alterity' and gain access to indigenous shamanic knowledge (Davidov 2010: 388).

During socialism, only a limited number of Western travelers and tourists were capable of obtaining the necessary documents to visit the indigenous people of Siberia and Mongolia. The breakdown of socialism thus opened a treasure box of new lands inhabited by indigenous shamanic people for ethnographic and shamanic tourism – as well as for backpackers on the search for new, *unspoiled* destinies. Subsequently, Siberia and Mongolia became integrated in the itineraries of backpackers and tour companies specializing in ethnographic or shamanic tourism. Yet, only few scholars (Lindquist 2005, 2011, Bernstein 2008) have studied how

these global networks of tourism influence the shamanic traditions of indigenous people in Siberia and Mongolia.

Galina Lindquist (2005; 2011) has argued that in the Russian republic of Tuva, the arrival of shamanic tourism, Western shamanic organizations and shamanic scholars has contributed to the construction and constitution of Tuvan shamanic organizations and clinics, which serve as the primary vehicle to re-socialise Tuvan youth into their shamanic tradition (Lindquist 2005: 281). Moreover, Western shamanic organizations have succeeded in staging Tuva externally as a shamanic nation within the global market place of spiritual seekers (Lindquist 2011: 86). In a similar vein, Anya Bernstein (2008) has shown how shamanic tourism in Buryatia has provided Buryats with a new discourse on cultural heritage, which Buryats have used to reinvent Buryat shamanism as a symbol of their ethnic and religious identity as well as political activism (Bernstein 2008: 24). Both the Tuvan and Buryat cases demonstrate how shamanic tourism may contribute to reinventing local shamanism as a symbol of ethnic or national identity; consequently, this may be used in their struggle for political rights or to become part of the global spiritual market place. To some extent, this is the case for the Duha, who in their encounters with spiritual tourists and national or international NGOs, would commonly repeat the discourse of these visitors and depict Duha shamanism as their cultural heritage and ethnic identity. However, in the absence of tourists or NGOs, the Duha rarely talked about such political implications of shamanism. Though the arrival of these global networks have indeed made the Duha aware of how they may use shamanism to struggle for political rights, what appeared to concern the Duha even more was the fact that shamans were increasingly becoming ill due to having shamanized for tourists.

While the encounter between the Duha and spiritual tourism has partly refashioned Duha shamanism as a symbol of Duha ethnic and religious identity, I argue that spiritual tourism is perceived to disrupt the relationship between shamans and ancestral spirits, which has given rise to new spiritual uncertainties within kin units. I argue that this perceived contamination of the relation between human and spirits has furthered the Duha turn toward shamanism as a primary epistemological and ontological effort to regain control over the relationship between human kin and ancestral spirits.

## Tourism in the Forest

If Mongolia as Larry Yu and Munhtuya Goulden (2006: 1331) has written 'stirs up the nomadic, exotic and mystic image of an international tourist destination', the Duha's unique livelihood, remote and picturesque location and shamanic religion appears to constitute the Duha and their land as the ultimate destination for experiencing the nomadic, exotic and mystic within Mongolia. Tour companies actively use the image of the ancient, exotic and mystic to advertise tours to the Duha. The tour companies advertise that a journey to the Duha includes 'the possibility to travel in the mystical taiga'<sup>26</sup> and the opportunity to 'meet the Tsaatan people – a disappearing tribe still practicing shamanism'.<sup>27</sup> Tour companies claim that travelers will experience 'the extraordinary and ancient religion - Shamanism, being practiced from time immemorial'.<sup>28</sup> The tourist companies have succeeded in making the Duha one of the major attractions of the growing tourist industry in Mongolia by marketing the taiga as a land of mystery and the Duha as living remnants of the past.

*The 'Horse Boy'* has certainly also played a pivotal role in making the Duha and their land a celebrated destination of global shamanic tourism. This is reflected in an article from CNN (2011)<sup>29</sup> which places a visit to a Tsaatan shaman on a top ten list of the best places in the world to 'soothe your soul'. The Mongolian tour company, Nomadic Trails,<sup>30</sup> specialises in tours for spiritual seekers and parents with children with autism advertised; these tours are advertised as: 'Spiritual and Shamanic Healing Trip' and 'Horse Boy Movie Trail'.

Since the end of socialism, the Mongolian government has worked actively to promote the tourist industry by promoting Mongolia's 'nomadic culture' and introducing a number of legal reforms aimed at supporting the growth of tourism (Marin 2008). Subsequently, tourism has become an increasingly important sector in the Mongolian economy.<sup>31</sup> In 2014, the Mongolian Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism,<sup>32</sup> in collaboration with CNN Task, developed a new

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<sup>26</sup><http://www.tourmongolia.com/riding-to-tsaatan/>

<sup>27</sup><http://www.mongolia-expeditions.com/horse-riding-tours/tsaatan-shaman-horse-riding-tour.htm>

<sup>28</sup><http://www.destinationmongolia.com/en/tour/horse-trek-in-darkhad-valley.html>

<sup>29</sup><http://travel.cnn.com/explorations/life/ten-trips-save-your-soul-581368>

<sup>30</sup><http://www.nomadictrails.com/travel/shaman-healing-trip/>

<sup>31</sup> . <http://www.wttc.org/>

</media/files/reports/economic%20impact%20research/country%20reports/mongolia2014.pdf>

<sup>32</sup><http://www.google.dk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCEQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fmcst.gov.mn%2Fuploads%2Ffiles%2FCNN%2520TASK-Mongolia%2520Brand%2520Development%2520->



destination brand for Mongolia called 'Nomadic by Nature - Experience Mongolia'. The aim of this brand was to attract tourists who are 'adventurous, explorers and psychologically nomadic by nature' and 'appreciate living cultures'. Not surprisingly, the 'the Tsaatan community' has also been listed on the ministry's website as one of the main tourist attractions of Mongolia.

During my initial fieldwork among the Duha in 1999-2000, I encountered a limited number of tourists. Yet, when I returned to the taiga in the 2010s, the number of tourists had increased dramatically. Between June and September in the 2010s, tourists in groups of two to twenty-five people visited the camps almost every day. Yet, from October to May, only very few tourists visited the Duha, likely due to the harsh weather conditions (temperatures could drop to minus fifty degrees Celsius).

The Duha are generally eager to receive tourists, as it is seen as an opportunity to generate an additional income and a chance to engage in amusing and interesting encounters with outsiders. Nevertheless, people were frequently annoyed by tourists who either took photos without first asking permission or by tourists who stayed in the camp without 'giving anything back' (bought souvenirs, rented horses, presented gifts or simply visited the household of the Duha). Once, a group of eight Israeli youngsters arrived in the camp, jumped off their horses and without even greeting my host family started to shoot photos of them. My host father angrily turned away and told me to tell the Israelis that it was disrespectful and it is prohibited to take photos of the camp without first asking permission. The Israelis said they were sorry and asked me if I could ask Solnoi where they were allowed to put up their tents in the taiga. He laughed, pointed toward a place commonly used as a toilet and said: 'Tell them they are only allowed to camp at that spot'.

Travelling to the Duha is often a rather expensive adventure for the visiting tourists, yet the Duha appear to gain very limited profit from the endeavor (Johnsen et al. 2012: 52). In 2005, the Itgel Foundation in corporation with the Duha established the Tsaatan Community and Visitor Centre (TVCV)<sup>33</sup> in Tsagaannuur. The TVCV aims to ensure the Duha a 'participatory role in tourism' to guarantee the Duha a share of profits from tourism and develops

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[%2520Stage%25201%25202014%2520V2.pptx&ei=3VVXVJneGYXbat2Xgig&usg=AFQjCNG96dOR2VDwNy7GEMG0k1gpWPK1Rw&bvm=bv.78677474.d.ZWU](#)

<sup>33</sup><http://visittaiga.org/>

responsible and eco-friendly tourism to avoid the potential detrimental effect of tourism upon the culture of the Duha and the eco-system of their homeland.<sup>34</sup> The TVCV centre encourages tourists to book local horse guides, horse rides, packhorses and accommodation through them. Though the intent of the centre appears to reflect the requests of the Duha, its success has been limited due to managerial problems and internal disputes. In addition, most tourists are unaware of the services of the TCVC and thus end up organising their trips through national or international tour companies or hire private horse guides from the village of Hatgal on the shore Lake Hövsgöl.

The Duha earn a limited amount of money from selling souvenirs, renting horses to tourists, working as horse guides and performing shamanic séances for tourists. Still, the opportunity of earning some money from tourism prompts the Duha to set up their camps at places which are easily accessible for tourists. During summer, the Duha usually camp in their southern pastures within one or two days of travel on horseback from the village of Tsagaannuur. Yet, many Duha are aware that it would be better for the health of their reindeer to move to their more northern pastures situated in the high mountains bordering Tuva.

### **Between Light and Dark Shamanism**

A great number of the tourists I encountered among the Duha were actively engaged in the new age movement – in particular neo-shamanism. Many were well read in the extensive autobiographical and ‘do it yourself’ literature on shamanism and had participated in shamanic workshops and courses. Several tourists were practitioners of the ‘core shamanism’ developed by the anthropologist and neo-shaman Michael Harner (1980). Harner defines ‘core-shamanism’ as the ‘near universal principles and common features of shamanism [...] intended for Westerners to reacquire access to their rightful spiritual heritage’.<sup>35</sup> Although most tourists had a rather respectful and sometimes almost humble attitude toward the Duha - in particular towards Duha shamans - they also had a quite clear idea of what shamanism *was* and what it *was not*; this was often shaped by what we may term neo-shamanic and core shamanic notions of indigenous shamanism.

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<sup>34</sup><http://visittaiga.org/faqs.html>

<sup>35</sup><https://www.shamanism.org/workshops/coreshamanism.html>

As Piers Vitebsky (1995) has shown, Western neo-shamanism eclectically borrows and combines indigenous shamanic cosmologies with new age inspired forms of self-help and self-realization. Neo-shamanism is, as Lindquist (2000) has aptly demonstrated, constructed on the image of 'the exotic other', including both wild species and indigenous people (2000: 172). It commonly purifies indigenous people from history to depict them as living remnants of some kind of primordial and genuine ecological and spiritual wisdom. Likewise, neo-shamanism constructs wild species as symbols of wild nature to signify the authentic self (Lindquist 2000: 186). Much neo-shamanism is concerned with summoning so called 'power-animals'; a kind of spirit-helper which undertake the shape of wild-animals and are thought as inherently benign beings, who offer their wisdom, strength and guidance to humans (Lindquist 2000: 177). In their effort to universalize shamanism for a global Western audience, neo-shamanism thus supplants the dark, ambiguous (Whitehead & Wright 2004), eristic (Vitebsky 1995) and predatory (Fausto 2004) aspects of indigenous shamanism with a 'light shamanism' and 'loving animism' (Fausto 2004: 172). For instance, the 'core shamanism' of Harner finds much of its inspiration from the American Indians, yet, it is purified from sorcerous battles between shamans and cannibalistic encounters between humans and non-humans, which is central in American Indian spiritual and cosmological ideas (Whitehead & Wright 2004: 4; Fausto 2004).

The camps of the Duha, where tame reindeer rest among playing children, are usually located in breath-taking landscapes consisting of green valleys surrounded by high mountains. This appears to live up to the expectations of most tourists, as it confirms their ideas of the Duha being an 'exotic other' who live in harmony with their reindeer isolated from the rest of the world, where they harness the ancient wisdom of their shamans. Nevertheless, when Duha shamans raised their rather profane requests for money, tobacco or vodka to conduct shamanic séances, many tourists appeared disturbed about whether the shamanic traditions of the Duha were in the process of being spoiled by tourism. One Australian tourist, a woman in her 30s, told me:

I wonder whether it is a *real* ritual or just a show made for tourists. I want to experience a *real* shamanic ritual. The shaman said I had to pay one hundred US dollars to attend his séance. I have not come all this way just to witness a show for tourists.

As tourists were confronted with the rather profane requests and livelihood of Duha shamans, they were also confronted with their own preconceptions regarding the content and form of an authentic indigenous and shamanic culture. This raised doubts among tourists about whether Duha shamanic séances were authentic and anxieties about whether tourism was about to ruin Duha culture and shamanism. Such doubts and anxieties commonly – as we will see – shape tourists' interaction with Duha shamans.

### **Contagious Money**

When shamans requested money from tourists to perform a shamanic séance, most tourists were reluctant and would often consult me on whether they really *had* to pay money for the séance or whether it would be *more appropriate* to grant the shaman some kind of gift for her service. The reluctances to pay for shamanic séances were rarely due to the tourists being penny pinching. Indeed several of the tourists who somehow objected to pay money for rituals, spent a great amount of money buying souvenirs from the Duha; they said they felt 'obliged' to buy souvenirs 'to help' the community economically. The question is: why were the tourists reluctant to pay for shamanic séances?

Most of the tourists I encountered in the taiga expected Duha shamanism, as promised by their tour companies, to be an authentic and unspoiled tradition having stayed untouched from the surrounding world for thousands of years. Tourists viewed requests for money as a 'sad sign' of how Duha culture, society and particular shamanism were in the process of being spoiled and commoditized by tourism. One tourist even refused to participate in a shamanic séance after having heard its price. He explained: 'If I pay, I participate in the commoditization of the shamanic tradition of the Tsaatan'. Other tourists felt it as their moral obligation not to pay the shamans in cash, but in gifts, such as expensive raincoats, sun blocker, vitamins etc. They explained that it was 'better' to give these items as gifts for the shamans, as they were things the Duha 'needed', whereas money would probably just be used to buy cigarettes and alcohol. Tourists would tell me how the introduction of alcohol had ruined indigenous societies and cultures in many other places in the world and explained that if tourists continued to give Duha shamans alcohol, their society would likely suffer a similar fate. While several of the tourists I encountered did pay money for shamanic rituals, as they thought it

would be disrespectful to decline the shaman's request, they commonly told me that they felt it was wrong.

The issue of money puzzled the tourists I encountered in two interrelated ways. First, the request for money raised doubts regarding the 'authenticity' of the séance and the shaman. This troubled many tourists precisely because they had come to the taiga to experience what Dean MacCannel (1996) has defined as the 'authenticity' of other folks, traditions and places'. The request of money commonly gives tourists the feeling that what they have been invited to see is some kind of 'staged authenticity' and not the 'real' and 'authentic' backstage of tradition (MacCannel 1976; Bernstein 2008). However, as tourists' perceptions of the content of an authentic shamanic tradition often reflected that portrayed in the documentary, 'The Horse Boy', advertisements for spiritual tourism and literature on core shamanism, their efforts to experience the authentic tradition was not an easy one. Secondly, some tourists felt caught in a moral dilemma: they were unsure whether they ought to pay money for a séance to show respect to the involved shaman or whether they should resist in order not to participate in the perceived commoditization of shamanism. Interestingly, tourists appeared to instil money with some kind of 'supernatural' agency, as they saw money exchange not as an isolated event, but as capable of infecting the shamanic tradition of the Duha with the somehow polluting forces of the market economy.

The noble intent of many tourists not to pay shamans to avoid contributing to the commodification of Duha shamanism is reminiscent of many classical anthropological studies on the impact of money upon indigenous traditions. Paul Bohannan (1955; 1959; Bohannan & Bohannan 1968) famously argued that that the introduction of money had a detrimental impact on the morally differentiated exchange system of the Tiv in Northern Nigeria, as money universalized values and broke down the barriers between people. Several contemporary scholars have also pointed out how money and market forces have commoditized and disrupted indigenous shamanic traditions (Vitebsky 1995; Lindquist 2005, Schlehe 2004). For instance, Piers Vitebsky (1995) has argued that the inclusion of the indigenous Sora people of India into the modern market economy has caused the Sora to abandon their shamanic tradition. Vitebsky has shown how Sora shamanism is a deeply local tradition founded on a 'holistic' (Vitebsky 1995: 195) cycle between humans and spirits, where the soul force of ancestral spirits are transmitted to the living through the cycle of

planting and consuming crops (Vitebsky 1995: 186). This cycle was broken as crops endowed with the soul force of ancestors were sold for money (Vitebsky 1995: 186-187). While this may certainly be the case for the Sora, it is somewhat different in the case of the Duha; I will show that the inclusion of money in local shamanic traditions does not automatically lead to the disruption and abandonment of local shamanism. I argue that the inclusion of tourists and payment for shamanic séances somehow came to release spiritual agencies, which furthered the Duha turn toward shamanism.

### **Infuriated by Reluctant Payers**

During my fieldwork, Duha shamans' request for money for shamanic séances frequently caused tension between visiting tourists and Duha shamans and between the broader Duha community and the shamans. Interestingly, not only tourists, but also the Duha appeared to perceive payment for shamanic séances as a potentially risky practice. However, whereas tourists tended to view money as a threat toward the authenticity and purity of the shamanic tradition, the Duha perceived money as a threat toward the very health and fate of the involved shaman. Moreover, various gifts offered by tourists to shamans commonly turned out to be perceived by the Duha as a threat toward the well-being of the shamans. Why was that so?

A group of English tourists once attended a séance performed by shaman Ariunaa. When they entered her *urts*, they presented her a gift consisting of leftovers from their journey; packages of opened sweets, biscuits and a half bottle of vodka. The tourists had heard that these were the precise items required to attend her shamanic séance. Yet, what they did not know was that the Duha consider opened and partly eaten items as wasteful and potentially 'bad' – making this gift a great offense to Ariunaa and her *eren*. Nevertheless, Ariunaa accepted the gift as she believed it would have been 'disrespectful to refuse it'. However, the next day she vomited heavily and had a stomach ache; her elder sister believed this was due to her having received 'a bad' gift from the tourists.

Among the Duha, gifts (goods or money) exchanged during shamanic séances may be viewed, drawing on Marcel Mauss (1990 [1950] classical study of the gift, as a kind of gift exchange, which instantiates a series of reciprocal bonds between human giver and receiver and between shaman and spirits. Only if the attendants grant the shaman and his spirits a proper

gift – reflecting the character of the spirit and the scale of healing - will the attendant obtain healing. Likewise, it is only if the shaman grants his spirits a proper offering that his spirits will continue to protect him. The aim of gift exchange during Duha shamanic séance is thus, as Mauss (1990, 1959) has proposed in more general terms, to create social stability and bonds between members of society; i.e., both human and non-humans beings. Gifts among the Duha serve to stabilize the relationship between humans (shaman and attendant) and between humans and non-humans (attendant, shaman and spirits). Nonetheless, as revealed in the above case, gifts that are somehow improper are thought to potentially contaminate the spirits of the involved shaman and may thus be termed ‘poisonous’ (Raheja 1988). Such poisonous gifts are thought to disrupt the relationship between shaman and spirits in violent ways; i.e., polluted and infuriated spirits are thought to potentially turn their anger upon the shaman, his kin or the attendant, or all of them. Hence, I argue that the gift exchange of Duha shamanic séances is an inherently risky event, as it is may create social and spiritual disorder. This is particularly the case with regards to shamanic séances for tourists, as most tourists are not aware of the role of gifts, nor of the content of a proper offering in the context of Duha shamanism.

Some of the tourists were eager to follow the suggestions of shamans in order to respect the traditions of the Duha. For example, the parents of the American autistic boy agreed to pay Goost the one thousand US dollars he had requested to conduct a shamanic séance.

Nevertheless this was not, as we are about to see, enough to protect Goost against the powers which became released during the séance he held for the child.

Once I visited Goost in his home in Ulaanbaatar, where he was living with his niece in order to receive medical treatment. Goost was bed bound because two years earlier had suffered a series of strokes that had paralysed half of his body. Upon asking him about his health, he answered:

I healed the American boy, but it was very hard. The boy was very sick, but I managed to heal him and they even made a movie about it and became millionaires from it. Even though their boy was healed and they became rich, they only paid me one thousand US dollars. So my *erens* became furious for not being paid enough; they turned their anger upon me, which is why this has happened to me.

Goost thus perceived the thousand dollars, though a huge amount of money among the Duha, as an inappropriate amount, realizing that his shamanic séance had not merely improved the condition of the American boy but also enriched his parents' fortune dramatically.

The story of Goost reveals that the phenomenon of tourist paying shamans in cash for shamanic séances is not simply a matter of Duha shamanism turning into a 'monetary transaction', as Judith Schlehe (2004) has proposed. To understand how the exchange of money between tourists and Duha shamans influence the shamans and shamanism in general we need, as Maurice Bloch and Johnny Parry (1996 [1989]) has convincingly argued, to challenge the dominant scholarly notion that the introduction of money in indigenous communities has an intrinsic revolutionary power to subvert the moral economy of traditional societies (1996 [1989]: 12). Rather than looking into how 'money gives rise to a particular world view, I will look into how the shamanic world view of the Duha 'gives way to a particular way of representing money' (Bloch and Perry 1996 [1989]: 19).

Schlehe (2004: 287) has proposed that Duha' shamans 'practicing for money' is a new phenomenon arising from poverty. However, gifts of money in shamanic rituals is, as confirmed by several scholars (Vinogradov 2002, Hangartner 2011), not a new phenomenon in the region. Rather, the Duha, as well as other shamanic people of the region, have historically perceived gifts such as dairy products, candy, tobacco, livestock and money, as crucial for the effect of the shamanic ritual. As one middle-aged Duha friend of mine commented:

A person who is healed by a shaman is obliged to present the shaman with livestock or money. The *eren* of the shaman will turn angry if it only receives a small payment or if it is not paid for its services. *Erens* are similar to humans. A man who is not properly paid for his work will also cease to enjoy his work – *erens* are just like this. It is hard work for the *eren* to make someone well and if it do not even receive an adequate payment for its hard work it will become angry as a result of feeling undervalued. When the shaman receives a payment for his work, it is actually not the shaman who is paid; the shaman passes the payment onto his *erens*. If the *erens* only receive a small payment, they will direct their anger toward the shaman. The *erens* only knows the shaman. They do not know the attendant, as it is the shaman who asks his *erens* to make the attendant well.



The above reveals how the gift an attendant presents a shaman in return for a séance ought to reflect the scale of the received remedy. In cases where the gift is somehow of a lesser value to the actual outcome of a shamanic séance, the spirits of the shaman are said to reciprocate in violent ways, i.e., infect all kinds of misfortunes in the life of the shaman and potentially his close family or wider kin. If a Duha becomes aware that a séance has healed or enriched them beyond what was initially expected, it is common practice to return to the shaman to grant them an additional gift. This is a way to re-establish the reciprocal balance between humans and spirits to ensure that the involved shaman's spirits will not turn their powers against the attendant or the shaman. Tourists are felt to pose a risk toward Duha shamans precisely because they are separated from the delayed reciprocity of gift exchange crucial to uphold the balance between shaman and spirits due to their short stay in the community and lack of knowledge on Duha shamanic traditions.

Goost could obviously not know beforehand that his séance would result in the American family becoming rich and famous. Still, visiting tourists in those days frequently talked about 'The Horse Boy' and told their Duha horse guides and hosts how shaman Goost's miraculous cure of the autistic boy had become known all over the world. This had also made Goost, painfully aware that the payment he had received from the Americans did not reflect the actual scale of the séance he had performed for the American family. One young Duha student told that she, on behalf of Goost, had tried to e-mail the American family to request more money for Goost's séance. The Americans simply replied stating 'they were *not* going to pay more money, as they had already paid Goost a large sum of money'.

Shortly after, Goost suffered from a series of strokes. Many of my Duha friends were convinced that Goost's illness was caused by the anger of his ancestral spirits. The story of Goost hence reveals how the arrival of spiritual tourists creates new spiritual uncertainties, because tourists lack knowledge on the crucial role of gifts in Duha shamanic séances and as tourists are separated from the delayed reciprocity of gift exchange, which is regarded as focal to upholding the balance between shamans and spirits. As the arrival of spiritual tourism has shifted Duha séances from the local scale to a global scale, it has become increasingly difficult for shamans to set a price for their séances.

Subsequently, many shamans started to demand rather high amounts of money to conduct séances for tourists. One shaman told me that tourists ought to pay more than locals because ‘my *eren* know that tourists are rich’. Another shaman explained that he needed to ask tourists to pay him a large amount of money, because it ‘is hard to heal foreigners’ and because ‘some of them are like that American boy [the autistic boy]’. Nonetheless, the Duha community often perceived shamans requesting large amounts of money to conduct séances for tourists as mere ‘money-shamans’.

This was also evident in some of the stories which circulated in the taiga with regards to Goost’s illness. They revealed how some Duha did not believe that Goost had become ill due to the amount of money received from healing the American boy being too low. Instead, they stated that Goost had become ill because he had demanded ‘money’ or ‘a large a sum of money’ to heal the American boy. One Duha man told me:

People are not supposed to give money [for shamanic séances]. Nowadays people have started to pay money for shamanic séances. In the old days, those who received a difficult healing always paid the shaman in livestock. People had to find out exactly what kind of livestock the shaman’s *eren* was requesting. They had to make sure it was the right animal and colour. If a reindeer of a wrong colour were offered, the *eren* would become angry. When people present *erens* with money, bad things happen because money is a ‘hard’ (*hatuu*) thing. Money negatively affects people’s minds and thus the *erens* are negatively affected. They will start to demand more money, saying the amount they received is not enough. The *eren* may become angry due to money. I believe this is why Goost became ill. It is bad to shamanize for money. You see, none of Goost’s children have survived, they all died.

This case illustrates how some Duha perceive gifts of money as a potential threat toward their shamanic traditions, not due to their tradition being somehow commoditized by money, but because money is thought to turn *erens* into kinds of greedy capitalist subjects. Among the Duha there is no consensus on whether money is a proper payment for shamanic séances. Yet, rumours abounded in the taiga about how contemporary Duha shamans, and in particular Darhad and Mongolian shamans, were ‘fake-shamans’ (*hudlaa böö*) and ‘money-shamans’ because they ‘demand millions of *tögrögs* to shamanize’. Upon

hearing that this or that shaman was a fake shaman, most tourists thought that it meant that the shaman were just pretending to be a shaman and was not really able to summon spirits. However, for the Duha, 'fake shamans' were regarded as an actual risk toward the broader society. Being a fake or money shaman meant to engage wrongly with the spiritual realm in ways that could potentially capture the shaman's spirit(s) in a violent state of capitalist greed. Such a spirit were thought to turn its anger and greed upon its human heirs; i.e., making shamans act violently and causing all kinds of suffering among the shaman's kin and in the broader community.

The arrival of spiritual tourism thus confronted Duha shamans with the dilemma that if they did not request any money from the tourists who attended their rituals, they would likely arouse the anger of their spirits and hence risk their own and their children's well-being. Yet, if the shamans asked tourists to pay a specific amount of money for shamanizing, the shamans would likely turn their spirits into greedy and violent capitalist spirits, which also would invoke hardship in the life of the shaman and his kin.

### **Empowered by a Roaring Tourist**

The perceived risks of Duha shamans performing for tourists were not merely caused by inappropriate gifts offered by tourists. Duha shamans were also confronted with tourists who attempted to summon their own spirit helpers or power animals during the Duha shamans' séances. This aspiration puzzled many Duha shamans, who frequently would tell me that they thought this or that tourist was 'crazy' (*teneg*), because they wanted to summon such dangerous powers. According to the Duha, various kinds of spirits (*eren*, *ezen* and *chötgör*) may indeed materialize in the shape of wild animals to be seen not merely by shamans, but also by laypeople. It is only shamans and to a lesser extent hunters who are thought of as fully capable of dealing with these beings. The Duha believe it is a bad omen or a risky event if a layperson sees a spirit in the shape of a wild animal; i.e., the viewer may upon seeing such a spirit turn ill, mad or even die.

Unaware of the above and inspired by neo-shamanism, a large number of tourists I encountered in the taiga hoped that their participation in a Duha shamanic séance would be an occasion to encounter their own 'power-animal'. Most of these tourists had read books about, or participated in courses on, 'core shamanism' where they had learned how anyone

may travel to the so called upper and lower spiritual world to meet and seek guidance from their power-animal (Harner 1990). According to core-shamanism, each human has a power-animal, usually a wild animal, which one may summon to obtain protection and guidance (Harner 1990). This perception of spirits is quite far from the Duha, who perceive spirits as ambiguous, erratic and potentially dangerous beings that ought to be approached with utmost caution and in spiritually proper ways. The question is: how did neo-shamanic perceptions and actions of tourists influence Duha shamanism during the 2010s?

The neo-shamanic cosmology shared by a great number of the tourists may, as Whiteman and Wright (2004: 9) have proposed, be seen as 'a recapitulation of colonial ways of knowing through both the denial of radical cultural difference and the refusal to think through its consequences'. Though the cosmology of neo-shamanism may be viewed as a colonization of indigenous cosmologies to construct a shamanism fitting the values and needs of a new western audience, such as spiritual tourists, I do not propose that the encounter between spiritual tourists and the Duha has led to a form of colonization or purification of Duha shamanism. Rather, I propose that the very light and loving attitude of these new-age inspired tourists has *released* rather than *colonized* the dark spiritual powers of the Duha.

In the section on offering money as a gift, we saw how the tourists' effort to *protect* Duha shamanism against commoditization tended to release such dark spiritual powers disrupting the relationship between shamans and spirits. However, the outcome of such a release of dark spiritual powers is not fixed and delimited to one of disrupting spiritual relations. Instead, the perceived release of dark spiritual powers entangles shamans with these ambiguous powers and forces them to deal with the consequences. Hence, the effects these violent spiritual powers have upon the relationship between humans and spirits is continually changing and may both disrupt and stabilize such relations. Let us now turn to one encounter between the shamans in our camp and a group of spiritual tourists, which reveals how séances for tourists can both disempower and empower Duha shamans.

In August 2012, a young American couple and a middle-aged Italian lady visited shaman Batzayaa to ask him for a shamanic séance. Having paid the shaman several visits, the three travellers somehow 'had the feeling, he was a genuine and wise shaman'. However, Batzayaa politely refused to hold a séance, as the fifth day in the new lunar month was not an

appropriate day for him to shamanize. He asked me to explain to the tourists that the Duha regard an odd numbered day as inappropriate for shamanic séances. The American couple were 'deeply disappointed'. They explained that one of the main aims of their journey to the taiga was to 'experience a real shamanic ritual'. Later, the American couple and the Italian woman then went back to Batzayaa to ask him whether he was willing to conduct a séance for them on another day in the near future. To this question he simply answered: 'I might', leaving the American couple even more confused and the Italian woman in tears.

While I was sitting in my *urts* talking with the tourists, my host mother, Aichurek, turned up and whispered to me: 'Tell them that Ariunaa [her sister] will conduct a séance tonight. You know she needs the money'. I translated this, but did not mention the money part, which I knew was only intended for my ears. The Italian woman hugged me and said: 'I am so relieved. Please, can you go with us and ask her?' I agreed and we went together to Ariunaa's *urts*. As we were sat down, drinking the obligatory cups of salty tea, I asked: 'Elder sister, these three tourists would like to know whether you can conduct a séance for them tonight?' Ariunaa mumbled 'I might' and the tourists instantly asked me: 'What did she say? Did she agree?' I told them her answer and explained that this probably meant that she had to think it.

In the afternoon, the American tourists returned to my *urts* eager to discuss their worries. They had been speaking to a group of Australian tourists who had received a séance by shaman Batzayaa the night before; they were worried that the séance may 'not have been a genuine'. The Australians had paid a large amount of money for the séance and had expected it to be an 'authentic', 'intimate' and 'private' experience. Yet, the shaman had without warning them 'just permitted' a large group of American tourists to join the séance. The Australians felt that the Americans had completely spoiled the atmosphere, as they had taken photographs and talked during the séance. 'We have not come to see a show, Is Ariunaa a genuine shaman? The American tourists asked me. I told them that that although the shamans receive money to perform séances for tourists, the shamans were not putting on a show. I explained how shamans often were quite anxious about performing these séances, as they are never sure which kinds of spirits would be aroused when tourists were present. The tourists seemed relieved and said: 'Tell her that if she shamanize, we will certainly come tonight'.

Shortly after the tourists left my *urts*, shaman Ariunaa entered. She had a worried look on her face. After having drunk a cup of tea, she asked: 'Do you think it is OK for me to shamanize tonight?' Confused by the authority she was granting me I answered: 'I guess it is fine, but you better ask your spirits'. 'I believe in you. Tell them I will shamanize tonight' Ariunaa replied before leaving my *urts*.

After Ariunaa had left, I felt troubled. People from the camp had repeatedly told me how Ariunaa's séances always gave rise to various misfortunes. I started to wonder whether I was to blame if a misfortune arose following Ariunaa's séance. To calm my mind, I went down to the spring to collect water. As I approached the spring, I saw Ariunaa and Solnoi's daughter, Naran, searching the bushes next to the spring. It turned out that they were searching for Ariunaa's drumstick which one of the dogs of the camp had just run away with. After an hour of searching, Naran shouted 'Here it is'. Yet, the drumstick was un-repairable. It had been partly eaten up by the dog. Naran and I went with Ariunaa to her *urts* and helped her to make a new improvised drumstick. 'Maybe all this is happening because shaman Oyunaa tied cotton ribbons to my *eren*', Ariunaa said and removed the three cotton ribbons from her *eren*.

As I went back to my *urts*, Aichurek approached me and said: 'Please tell the tourists to pay ten thousand *tögrögs* (approximately five Euros) each to Ariunaa. It is dangerous to shamanize without being paid appropriately, but she feels uncomfortable asking'. Later I instructed the American woman that they were expected to pay ten thousand *tögrögs* each to attend the séance. 'Of course we will pay. We really want to show our respect and follow the traditions of the Duha' she answered.

Around ten o'clock in the evening, I went to Ariunaa's *urts* to join the séance. Ariunaa was alone in the *urts* and looked relieved to see me. She asked me to help her hang her shamanic drum on the wooden poles of the *urts* so the fire can harden its skin. Whereas most other Duha shamans had some of their close family' members to assist them in throughout the stages of their séances, Ariunaa's family members rarely assisted her. Sometimes her 22-year-old daughter and her young nieces (thirteen and eight years old) assisted her. I felt uncomfortable with asking people directly why they did not assist Ariunaa, but I had the feeling that they took precautions, because they generally thought that she was capable of summoning, but not mastering, the powers of her inherited *eren*.

While Ariunaa and I were tightening the drum, a group of eight German tourists and their Mongolian translator turned up in the *urts*. The translator asked Ariunaa if they could join the ritual. Ariunaa nodded and the Germans began preparing their cameras to record the séance. Although most Duha shamans prohibit the recording of séances, as *erens* are known to dislike electricity, Ariunaa simply looked nervous at the cameras, but said nothing. Shortly after, the American couple and the Italian tourist entered the *urts*. They looked distressed at the crowds of tourists seated in all areas of the *urts*. 'Are all of you also joining, we thought it was just a séance for the three of us', the American lady asked the crowd. The translator for the German tourists answered: 'In Mongolia, shamanic rituals are open for everyone'. 'Oh, I am sorry, I did not know', the American woman replied trying to find herself a place to sit in the crowded *urts*.

At the request of the Mongolian translator, each of the tourists handed Ariunaa a ten thousand *tögrög* note. 'Now, you are paying the entrance ticket for the show' the Mongolian translator said and laughed. A couple of Germans laugh, but the rest of the crowd was silent. The American and the Italian look irritated at the Mongolian translator. 'So what are your questions?' Ariunaa mumbled. The Mongolian translator said, on behalf of the German tourists, that they did not have any questions and just wanted to witness a shamanic séance. The Americans and the Italian had earlier visited Ariunaa in order to inform her intricately of their questions. The American woman wanted to know how she should deal with various family issues and the feeling of being the black sheep in the family, while her American boyfriend wanted to meet his power animal, which he had not yet felt ready to encounter. The Italian woman wanted to know the spiritual cause behind her husband's cancer.

As Ariunaa aided by her young nieces dressed in her heavy shamanic gown all of the tourists observed Ariunaa and her niece attentively and a sense of awe filled the *urts*. When Ariunaa was fully dressed in her shamanic gown she turned off the single electrical light of the *urts* leaving the audience in total darkness. Soon the air was filled with the sounds of Ariunaa's heavy monotonous drumming. During the first hour, the participants were gripped by séance, however, during the second hour, some of the German tourists seemed bored and five of them simply left.

The American woman mumbled: 'It is disrespectful to leave during the *séance*'. Shortly after, the monotonous sound of the drum was broken by a weird bear-like sound. At first, I thought it was Ariunaa, but then I realized that it was the American man, David, who was roaring. One of the Germans directed his torch toward David; he instantly stopped roaring, only to start biting himself heavily in his own arm – like a wild animal. 'Switch off the light' the Italian woman screamed and the *urts* fell into darkness again. Shortly after, David's heavy roaring again filled the *urts* and the sound of the drum stopped. Ariunaa turned on the electric light and stared at David who had stopped roaring, but was now digging violently into the ground with his bare hands – apparently not sensing anything around him.

'What should I do with this crazy man' Ariunaa asked me with an anxious tone. 'I do not really know. Maybe he needs healing', I answered. Ariunaa sat down next to David and lit a twig of juniper and gently swung it around his head. As he was inhaling the smoke, he stopped digging into the ground and seemed to return to himself. Tears ran down his face and he said: 'That was the most amazing experience. A black bear came to me. It was incredible'. He took Ariunaa's hands and, thanked her: 'I am so grateful for what you have done for me'. While I translated his words into Mongolian, Ariunaa nodded, looking rather confused. Ariunaa then turned toward the audience that was left and said: 'Come to my place tomorrow and I will give you something'. Everyone thanked Ariunaa and then left.

As Ariunaa and I were alone in the *urts* she said: 'That American man was really crazy'. I asked her what she meant and she did not answer but just made a roaring sound and then laughed nervously without explaining any further.

The next day, the American couple asked me to go with them to visit Ariunaa. On the way David said: '*This* experience has changed my life'. When we arrived at Ariunaa's *urts*, David took Ariunaa's hand and thanked her again for the 'powerful ritual' he had received. Ariunaa seemed rather uncomfortable with the situation and gave me an anxious look. She then took her mouth harp and held it in her hand, a means she commonly used to consult her *eren*; she sat silently for approximately ten minutes. When she finally spoke, her voice seemed unusually strong and confident. She said to David: 'You have a white bag, some kind of amulet, at home. This thing is influencing you'. David answered: 'Yes, yes, I have exactly such a bag. I had it from my early childhood. It is a Native American amulet, it contains some bear claws.'



Ariunaa said: 'You need to feed it with juniper [incense] and keep it in a high place. Also, I will give you these herbs. You must bathe with them - then the bear will no longer torment you'.

Interestingly, after this séance, Ariunaa appeared to gain a new confidence in her own powers. Usually she would abstain from shamanizing if her elder sisters instructed her to do so. However, when a new group of tourists asked her to conduct a séance the next day, she immediately agreed. Hearing this, Ariunaa's sisters tried to convince Ariunaa not to conduct the séance. They said it was 'a bad day for shamanizing' and told Ariunaa 'not to shamanize'. Yet, to her sisters' confusion, Ariunaa insisted that she would conduct the séance. On the evening of the séance, one of Ariunaa's elder sisters and Ariunaa's twenty-five-year-old nephew turned up to assist Ariunaa during the séance. I had participated in her séances numerous times but this time it somehow seemed different. Whereas Ariunaa usually granted the messages of the *erens* to the audience the day after her séance, on this occasion, her *erens* were talking directly to the audience through Ariunaa. The *erens* revealed a number of things, including how the hardships experienced by Ariunaa's sister and nephew were caused by the presence of certain 'bad things' in their household. The messages appeared to impress her family members. Subsequent to the séance, Ariunaa's family searched their households for the aforementioned items; they discovered that they indeed had the exact items as described by Ariunaa (a coin with Chinese characters and a green blouse with a burn mark). Ariunaa's sister then told me that 'maybe Ariunaa had indeed finally received her powers'.

Subsequent to these two séances, Ariunaa's reputation changed. Many people in our camp believed that she had become as powerful a shaman as her ancestral shamans – shaman Natsag and shaman Ujasjig.

David later told me that he had often felt that his power animal was a bear, but had not felt ready to receive its power and wisdom prior to Ariunaa's séance. Yet, now he felt that he was ready to confront the more fragile part of himself and to engage in the self-awareness and spiritual development the bear could provide. For David, the bear was thus a noble creature materializing an abstract natural other that he had to integrate in himself to ensure his personal spiritual and psychological development. In contrast, Ariunaa appeared to perceive the 'arrival' of the bear as a highly risky event. This was likely because the Duha commonly

perceive the bear as the most powerful shape an *eren* can undertake, which can only be mastered by the most powerful shamans. My host father once explained:

Bear *erens* can only arrive to 'very good' (*ih sain*) and powerful shamans. They do not arrive at anyone's request. You see the bear is a black-haired animal so it only arrives to shamans who are able to master such black powers. In the old days, shamans from all clans were able to call and bring forward such *erens*. However, nowadays no one from the taiga is capable of summoning such *erens*.

Yet, at another occasion Solnoi told me: 'Some shamans in the city summon bear *erens* though they are not capable of mastering these powers. It is very dangerous to summon a bear *eren*. Shamans die of this'.

In light of the above, it is unsurprising that Ariunaa felt uncertain about what to do when she realized that David had somehow become possessed by the spirit of a bear. Yet, Ariunaa's success in driving the bear out of David and returning him to his ordinary state of mind coupled with the fact that no misfortunes happened following this séance empowered Ariunaa and established her as a powerful shaman. This séance gave Ariunaa a new confidence in her own powers and appeared to convince the broader camp that she was a genuine and powerful shaman. While the arrival of spiritual tourism may have disrupted the relationship between shamans and spirits, the above case reveals how shamanic séances for tourists have also offered shamans the chance to gain mastery over their spirits and be acknowledged as genuine and powerful shamans within the Duha community.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated how the Duha encounter with spiritual tourism has boosted Duha shamanism in ambiguous ways. It has shown how the encounter between tourists and shamans has left its mark on the balance between shamans and *erens* and raised new concerns about how to deal with spiritual tourists. The Duha case has thus shown that we should neither limit our studies of spiritual tourism to how it may re-position shamanism into the political domain nor to how the light and loving neo-shamanic perceptions of spiritual tourists may *colonize* local shamanism. Instead, we need to acknowledge that spiritual

tourism may arise as a shamanic phenomenon in its own right and explore how local concerns about tourism may reflect more ontological and epistemological concerns.

The stories of Goost and Ariunaa have revealed how the participation of tourists in shamanic séances is felt to release dangerous spiritual powers, which may potentially contaminate the relationship between humans and spirits (shaman and *eren* and kin-units and *eren*).

Paradoxically this perceived release of spiritual powers is often set forth by tourists' efforts to comply with local shamanic traditions and attempts to protect Duha culture and society against the presumed devastating effects of money and other 'Western' inventions upon indigenous cultures and traditions. Tourists struggle to fulfil the requests of local shamans regarding certain gifts; they avoid certain request such as alcohol, tobacco or additional money, as tourists believe they could potentially ruin the presumed authenticity and harmony of Duha shamanism and society. The Duha shamans frequently perceive tourists' gifts as being spiritually subversive, which contaminate and anger the spirits and disrupt the relationship between shamans and *erens*. In a similar vein, we have seen how tourists' own spiritual quests - attempts to summon their own 'power animal' during Duha shamanic séances - is felt to be an inherently risky acts, which may release untameable and violent powers.

This contemporary release of dangerous spiritual powers is, however, not simply disrupting the relationship between humans and spirits. Instead, I have argued that the spiritual powers released by tourists confront Duha shamans' with unexpected spiritual powers, forcing shamans to deal with these powers. In the case of Ariunaa, she finally came to be seen by the Duha as a powerful shaman capable of mastering her inherited *eren* based on her perceived successful handling of the bear *eren* aroused by the American tourist. In contrast, the case of Goost – who had for years been regarded as the most powerful shaman of the taiga – showed how he came to be seen by most Duha as a 'money-shaman' who had fallen prey to powers released following his séance for 'The Horse Boy'. The arousal of uncertain spiritual powers by tourists is thus not a cause with a set effect. On the contrary, it is a cause with multiple and ambiguous effects, because the release of uncertain spiritual powers releases actions – forcing shamans to deal with spirits in new ways – which disempower or empower shamans and establishes or disrupts relations between human and spirits. Yet, the arrival of tourism has certainly furthered the Duha turn toward shamanism precisely because it is felt to entangle shamans and their kin in uncertain spiritual powers.

## Conclusion

‘The shaman Aldaraa has been imprisoned, because he cheated you [borrowed money he never returned] last year. Such things happen to a person who messes with a shaman of the taiga’, my Duha friend, Otgonbayar, told me when I arrived in Ulaanbaatar in 2012. Though Otgonbayar laughed while she told me this, she simultaneously insisted that it was my ‘shamanic powers that had caused Aldaraa’s imprisonment. I felt confused and puzzled by this allegation. I told Otgonbayar that I certainly did not have anything to do with Aldaraa’s imprisonment and that - after all - it was *he* and not *I* who was a taiga and Duha shaman. Otgonbayar then explained that, although Aldaraa presented himself as a Duha shaman and indeed had a Duha heritage – his grandmother being Duha – he was ‘not a genuine Duha shaman’, because ‘he has never lived in the taiga’. Then she looked at me and said, ‘In the taiga and Tsagaannuur, everybody knows that you are a genuine taiga shaman, because for so many years you lived with the family of Solnoi, you even survived a winter in the taiga and today the border-guards even fear your powers’. This final story from my fieldwork reveals how it was Aldaraa’s absence from his ancestral land and livelihood, and my recurrent stays in the taiga, which somehow came to constitute Aldaraa – the Duha – as not a taiga shaman and me – the foreigner – as a taiga shaman.

This thesis started out with recounting how Baatar, as he moved from the taiga to the city in his youth, had turned away from his shamanic traditions and how he, as he returned to the taiga, turned towards the shamanic tradition of his childhood. We saw how Baatar, as he picked medicinal herbs and hunted in the taiga, felt the presence of spiritual agencies within the land and – although he said he did not *believe* in spirits – took precautions not to invoke the anger of these spiritual agencies. Baatar insisted that, in the taiga, one simply ought to follow the rules of Oron Hangai because, in the taiga, Oron Hangai watches over people and punishes those who transgress its rules. For Baatar and the Duha in general, the taiga and steppe, or city, existed in different ontological domains; on the steppe or in the city, the spirits of the taiga did not exist – or existed only to a limited degree – but they could not be ignored

in the taiga because, in the practical livelihood of the taiga, the spirits existed regardless of belief or disbelief. Similarly, my life in the taiga and experiences within it came to make me – regardless of my efforts to reject my presumed powers - a shaman of the taiga.

The case of Baatar illustrated how the Duha's return to shamanism cannot merely be understood as a post-socialist phenomenon. Although the social and economic rupture that followed the breakdown of socialism has contributed to the Duha's turning towards shamanism, I have argued that the pivotal factor in this – and its particular form, content and scale – is the Duha's return to their traditional livelihood and land. I have argued that the Duha spirits are not simply '*expressed*' through, but *subsist* in, the Duha livelihood in the taiga (Willerslev 2004: 407; Ingold 2000: 162). I have shown how Duha shamanism, though a deeply local tradition and ontology enacted through a particular livelihood and land is a historic one, because the subsistence and land of the Duha has historically been fashioned and shaped as unruly, pristine and shamanic by the imaginaries and policies of surrounding states and people. Hence, the Duha's return to the taiga was a return to the livelihood and land in which Duha shamanism subsists as a local tradition and ontology – a tradition that is, however, also intrinsically animated by (sometimes non-local) historical imaginaries.

Returning to the taiga in 2012, I became aware that many Duha had heard the story of Aldaraa. Several of my Duha friends laughingly told me that Aldaraa had indeed been naïve to try to cheat me. 'He probably was not aware that you have lived in the taiga for so long and have become a shaman', Solnoi told me. The rumours about Aldaraa soon spread in the area and, to my surprise, a French documentarist once turned up at our camp searching for me. He told me that people on the steppe had told him that I was a powerful taiga shaman, and even had caused the imprisonment of a Duha shaman in the city. I politely declined, as I was not at all interested in furthering my own my growing reputation as a taiga shaman. The story (and chapter 1), however, reveals how I – reminiscent of Duha shamans and hunters in general – came to be perceived as a taiga shaman due to the ways in which my recurrent stays in the taiga and my regular divinations of Mongolian state officials had somehow entangled me in its spiritual powers and history.

## **Spirits of Livelihood and History**

The thesis has contributed to the anthropological study of the invention or revitalisation of tradition by showing how indigenous returns to tradition may be catalysed by returns to subsistence forms or landscapes animated by tradition and historical imaginaries on tradition.

It showed (Chapters 2 – 4) how the practical livelihood in the taiga has absorbed the Duha in the erratic cosmic economy of Oron Hangai, which induced them to return to their shamanic traditions. The Duha's return to hunting and herding has not simply placed them within a cosmic economy of unconditional sharing between humans and non-humans (forest and spirits), as scholars have proposed is characteristic of hunter-gatherers (Bird-David 1992; Ingold 2000). Instead, I have argued that the cosmic economy of Oron Hangai is an erratic one, founded on the (animistic) relationship of sharing between kin and more (totemic) hierarchical relations of reward and retribution among superior and inferior masters or kin of the land, and between masters and strangers of the land. On one hand, Oron Hangai was perceived as being like a parent, who shares his blessings (prey and healthy herds) with the human hunter or herder, who shares his prey with his fellow hunters and regularly renews his kinship bonds – through offerings – with his ancestral sacrificial places. On the other hand, Oron Hangai was envisioned as the chiefly master of the taiga, who protects those – non-human and human (Duha) spirit masters – who protect and master places within the taiga and punishes those – strangers - who intrude upon the taiga, its places and masters. I showed that the return to the taiga absorbed the Duha in the erratic cosmic economy of Oron Hangai, in which the position of humans – as kin, masters or strangers – was felt to be erratic and uncertain. In the taiga, it was therefore regarded essential to comply with the traditions of one's ancestral spirits and those of Oron Hangai in order to ascertain oneself as kin and master of the taiga, and thus as being worthy of Oron Hangai's favour and protection and not being subjected to his violent powers. Hence, the Duha's return to tradition was prompted by the return to the livelihood of hunting and herding in which the cosmic economy of Oron Hangai subsists.

I have argued that, although this cosmic economy is tied to a particular subsistence form and land, it is endowed with – and shaped by - the imaginaries and policies of past states, which envisioned and governed the taiga as an unruly shamanic land mastered by Duha hunters and

herders and their shamanic spirits. We have seen (Chapter 3) how the imaginaries and policies of the Qing' empire created the Duha and their land as wild and unruly, consolidated the Duha clans as patrilineal hunting units tied to certain lands, and endowed Duha hunters with 'chiefly' and 'shamanic' powers to master this wild and unruly land (Humphrey 1997 [1995]). I have argued that socialist policies also continued to endow Duha state hunters with chiefly powers that enabled them to master the taiga. I thus propose that particular the chiefly aspect of the cosmic economy of the taiga and the perception of the Duha as being the shamanic masters of the land has been boosted and shaped by the imaginaries and policies of past states. We have seen that it was through returning to the livelihood and land in which these images subsist that the Duha came to re-enact these historical imaginaries.

Might it then be, as Caroline Humphrey (1997 [1995]: 158) once proposed, that the proliferation of shamanic ways of being in the landscape in the northern forested regions of Mongolia arise as 'a response to the actual diversity, of species and habitats, touching upon people's lives' in these regions? Humphrey rejected this interpretation, arguing that it could not account for the social and political dynamics that shape Mongolian ways of being in the land (Humphrey 1997 [1995]: 158). However, as shown in this thesis (Chapters 2, 6 and 8), the taiga has historically been envisioned, governed and treated by surrounding states, neighbouring people and foreign visitors as shamanic and chiefly as a response to the natural diversity of wild species and the undomesticated environment of the Duha homeland. Hence, in the Duha's case we ought to take account of how the very natural characteristics of the Duha's land have contributed historically to shape state policies and imaginaries on the taiga and the Duha as unruly, pristine and shamanic.

The Duha's livelihood and land has historically been subject to state regulation and administration, precisely because surrounding empires and states aspired to purchase or protect the wild animal species of the Duha's land. The hunting policies of surrounding empires and states has thus shaped, perpetuated and delimited the Duha's practices of hunting and herding in which their spirits subsists as a local and historical ontology. That Duha shamanism is indeed tied to subsistence was also evident in the way shamanism moved into the background of everyday life among the Duha who were settled as workers in the *negdels* on the steppe during socialism. By contrast, shamanism remained at the forefront of local lives among the state hunters and herders in the taiga. The historical tenacity of the

livelihood in the taiga of some Duha kin-units and the separation from the livelihood and land of other kin-units was – as we have seen (Chapters 4-5) – felt to have left its ambiguous mark on the relationship between contemporary kin and ancestral spirits and land.

I have argued (Chapter 4) that the Duha's return to the taiga was a return to kinship (clans and landscape) precisely because it was a return to the land and practices through which the Duha's 'relatedness' to clans and lineages was sensed, founded and enacted (Carsten 1995; Leach 2003; Stasch 2009). Lack of hunting luck, loss of reindeer, human illness and strange events in the land were felt to testify to how hunters or herders, by passing through the places of ancestral sacrificial places, summoned kindred, yet estranged or infuriated ancestral spirits (*erens*). Sacrificial places enlivened the history of Duha clans or lineages, as events within their proximity were living reminders of how past kin entrusted their lives to these places and their beings, and how past kin abandoned the worship of these places and hence disrupted the relationship between human kin and sacrificial trees. Hence, I have argued that to entrust one's life to a sacrificial entity establishes a kinship relation of 'mutuality of being' (Sahlins 2011: 11) between humans and a sacrificial entity (and its *eren*), whereas to abandon worship estranges human kin from the sacrificial entity and transforms their relationship to one of 'mutual otherness' (Stasch 2009: 272).

By returning to the taiga, the Duha became entangled in relationships of 'mutual otherness' with their ancestral spirits. However, I have shown how this perceived otherness served 'as the basis of social relations' (Stasch 2009:9) and kinship relationships between the Duha and their ancestral spirits and land. I argued that it was peoples' perceived sense of being subjected to the violent powers (otherness) of their ancestral spirits that compelled them to (re)entrust their lives to their ancestral sacrificial entities (by worshipping spirit-vessels (*erens*), sacrificial trees or places, or by becoming a shaman). Among the Duha, such acts of entrustment (mutual being) were perceived to constitute the individual as an heir and master of the taiga worthy of the favours and protection of Oron Hangai. However, the act of entrusting oneself to a sacrificial entity was also perceived as inherently risky because, if one failed to worship regularly or properly, one was likely to suffer spiritual retribution.

By returning to the taiga and the subsistence of hunting and herding, the Duha became enmeshed in kindred, yet estranged spiritual relations founded by their predecessors. This



captured individuals and kin-units in an uncertain relationship of ‘mutual otherness’ and ‘mutual being’ with ancestral spirits empowered and estranged by historical events. In an effort to repair and renew relationships with their ancestral land and spirits, the Duha – as we saw in Chapters 3 and 4 – duly returned to their shamanic traditions.

### **Spiritual Intrusions**

This thesis has shown how contemporary interventions regarding the Duha’s land and livelihood – the arrival of mining, law-enforcement officials and spiritual tourism – was felt to increase the flow of dangerous spiritual powers, which further encouraged the Duha to turn towards shamanism. I have argued that it is precisely because these interventions affected in the livelihood and land in which Duha shamanism subsists that they were felt to touch upon the relationship between the Duha and their spirits, and between the Duha and Oron Hangai, in ambiguous ways. I have argued that these interventions arose as ‘shamanic phenomena’ (Pedersen 2011: 79) in their own right, and can hence only be fully understood as such.

While the Duha in the 2010s commonly felt estranged from their predecessors’ perceived shamanic and chiefly powers to master the taiga and its spirits, Mongolians seldom shared these doubts. On the contrary, it has been revealed (Chapter 6) that post-socialist Mongolian media portrayals of the Duha refurbished historical images of the Duha land as wild, pristine and shamanic, and reinforced the image of the Duha as being the unruly, yet virtuous, shamanic masters of the taiga. I have argued that, in the 2010s, the taiga arose as a spiritual sovereignty with the Duha as its shamanic masters in the common imagination of Mongolians precisely because the Duha had returned to the land and livelihood that mirrored these imaginaries. Ironically, the tightening of the Mongolian hunting laws and the concurrent increase of patrolling rangers in the taiga also came – as we have seen – to strengthen local and national perceptions of the sovereign spiritual powers of the taiga and of the Duha. I have shown (Chapter 7) that the tightening of the Mongolian hunting laws gave rise to a peculiar tension between the different ontological orders of the laws of the state and those of the spiritual sovereignty of the taiga. We saw how Mongolian state officials were caught in the dilemma that, as state officials, their legal duty was to execute state law – to arrest, judge or penalise poachers – yet within the taiga, state officials often felt that their challenge was to avoid interfering with the hunting livelihood of the masters of the taiga (the Duha) in order to

evade the punishment of the shamanic powers of the Duha and their land. Arresting a Duha hunter was thus commonly perceived as risky, precisely because the Duha's livelihood of hunting – defined as illegal by the state – was felt to constitute the Duha as shamanic masters of the taiga.

I have argued that the encounter between the Duha and state officials is one of 'mimesis' (Taussig 1993), in which the Duha became the shamanic masters of the taiga because they engaged with state officials in ways that mimicked the state officials' fear of the shamanic powers of the Duha and their land. This was, however, not merely a matter of tricking state authorities by preying on their preconceptions. Instead, the perceived legal immunity of Duha hunters was commonly felt by the Duha to testify to how they, by submitting to the laws of the cosmic economy of Oron Hangai, had summoned – and could continue to summon – protection, and thus become the shamanic masters of the land. This thesis has therefore revealed how the hunting law ironically compelled Duha hunters to return to the laws of the taiga – and hence their shamanic tradition – in order to circumvent the laws of the state.

While the hunting law contributed to strengthening the Duha's perception of their hunters (males) being the 'genuine shamans' and 'masters of the taiga' of contemporary times, Duha males' (hunters) increased involvement in mining raised new doubts regarding whether Duha hunters summoned protective or violent powers upon Duha kin-units and land. We have seen (Chapter 5) how the Duha's involvement in mining was felt to arouse demonic agencies within Duha land and kin-units, which were thought to disrupt and estrange relationships between kin and spirits, and between the Duha and Oron Hangai. We have seen how the violent assaults and deaths that struck Duha society in the 2010s were perceived as a violent arousal of demonic agencies (others) caused by miners' and shamans' spiritually subversive engagement with the ancestral land and spirits. Subsequently, new spiritual fears and internal suspicion permeated Duha society, and elicited concealed memories of past violations and religious repression suffered within the Duha land and kin-units during the years of statelessness and socialism. As tragic memories were unveiled by rumours and stories concerning particular kin-units and places, these memories also served to enchant families and places with the 'history of sorcery' (Taussig 1984), which captured certain families and places in a demonic state of being. In those days, it was not merely the relationship between human and spirits, but also relationships between families and relationships within families

that turned into ones of 'mutual otherness', which was evident in the way that fear and suspicion infected social relations. The perceived arousal of demonic agencies thus came to imbue the everyday life and the practices of hunting and herding in the taiga with new spiritual anxieties and doubts. This was evident in the way in which the Duha abandoned former camp sites, became more alert during the hunt, and in the way that internal suspicion infected kin-units.

Whereas Duha hunters in the 2010s arose as the ambiguous shamanic masters of the taiga, most Duha shamans – and particularly female ones – were regarded as the risky heirs of legendary and remembered shamanic powers. Duha shamans were commonly perceived as 'fakes', not due to their absence of shamanic powers as they were indeed thought to summon their ancestral spirits, but due to their perceived inability to master these powers. That Duha hunters, in general, were seen as somehow more 'genuine' shamans than were Duha shamans in the 2010s may be due to way in which socialism was felt to have perpetuated hunters' relationships with the spirits. By contrast, the enforced settlement of many Duha, and the concurrent socialist repression of religion were felt to have disrupted the relationships between the spirits and the shamans of most shamanic lineages. It is interesting that the two shamans who were generally acknowledged to being powerful and genuine were males who had been employed as state hunters and herders in Baruun Taiga during socialism. I found that the history of the Duha has indeed given rise to different spiritual challenges for men and women. However, it is beyond the scale of this study to research this gender topic. What I have shown is that the arrival of spiritual tourists in the taiga created new doubts about the shamanic powers of the hitherto most powerful male shaman of the taiga, and established the hitherto most powerless female shaman in the taiga as powerful.

I have shown how the arrival of spiritual tourism in the taiga and the participation of this new audience in Duha shamanic séances were felt to release risky spiritual powers, disrupting relationships between shamans and spirits. Paradoxically, it was often the noble intentions of tourists not to interfere with Duha culture and tradition, or tourists' personal spiritual quests that caused them to interact with shamans in ways that were locally regarded as spiritually subversive or risky. I have argued that it is precisely because shamanic séances for tourists enmeshed Duha shamans with unexpected powers that these séances came to both empower

and disempower local shamans, depending on whether they managed to gain mastery over the powers released during these séances.

When I bid farewell to my Duha friends in the taiga in 2012 and rode toward the steppe, the Duha's return to shamanism appeared to have undertaken an ambiguous form. Duha hunters had become the shamanic masters of the taiga and had also become the spiritual violators of the taiga. A male shaman and skilled hunter of hitherto legendary powers had fallen victim to spiritual forces released by an American documentary on the shaman's power, and a female shaman, hitherto regarded as powerless and even dim-witted, had come to be regarded as a powerful and wise shaman. In those days, the return to the taiga and the recent interventions regarding Duha land, tradition and livelihood had entangled the Duha in the erratic cosmic economy of the taiga in ambiguous ways, making every Duha within the taiga a shaman and a master of, and yet a stranger to, the taiga and its spirits.

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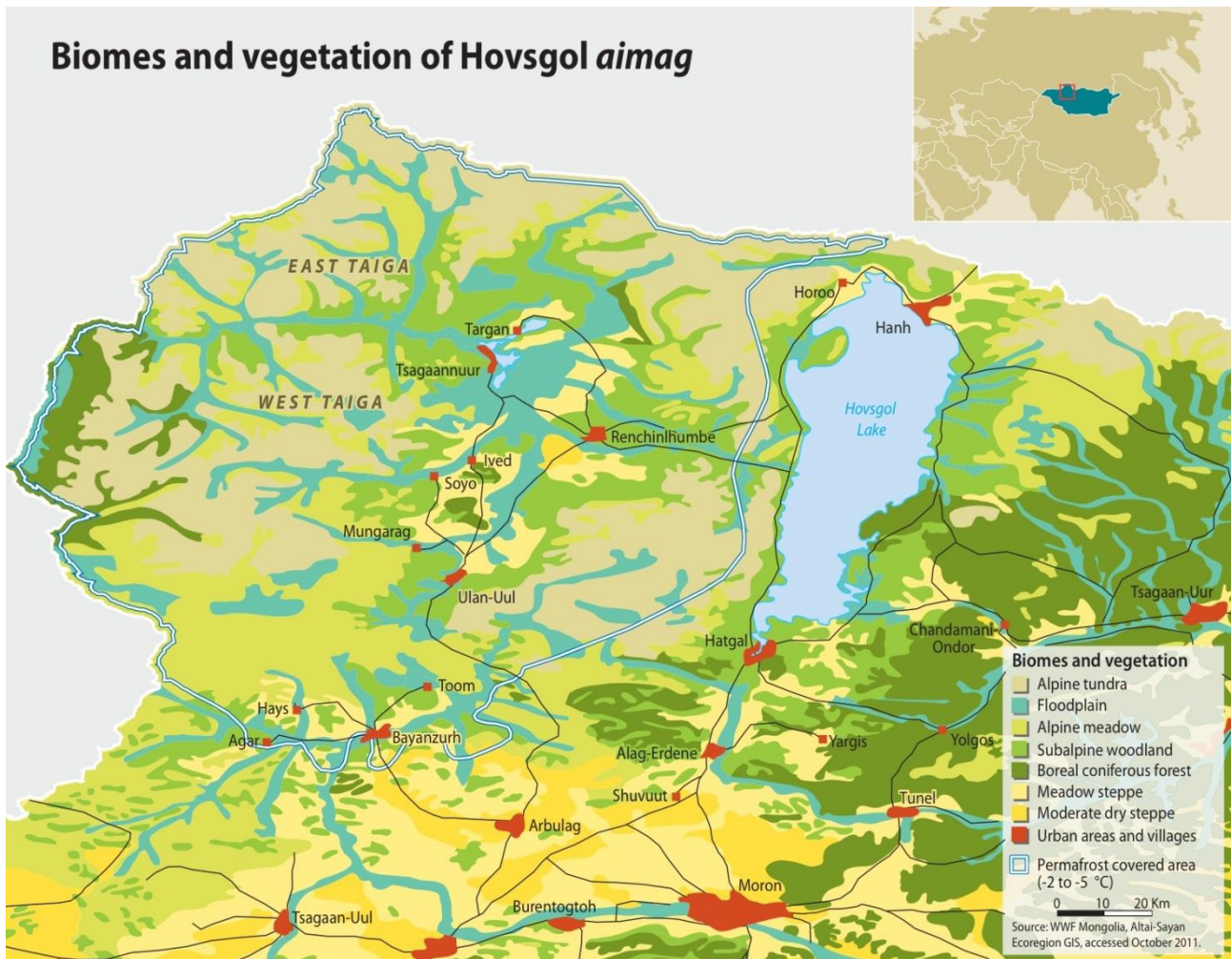
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## Map of Mongolia



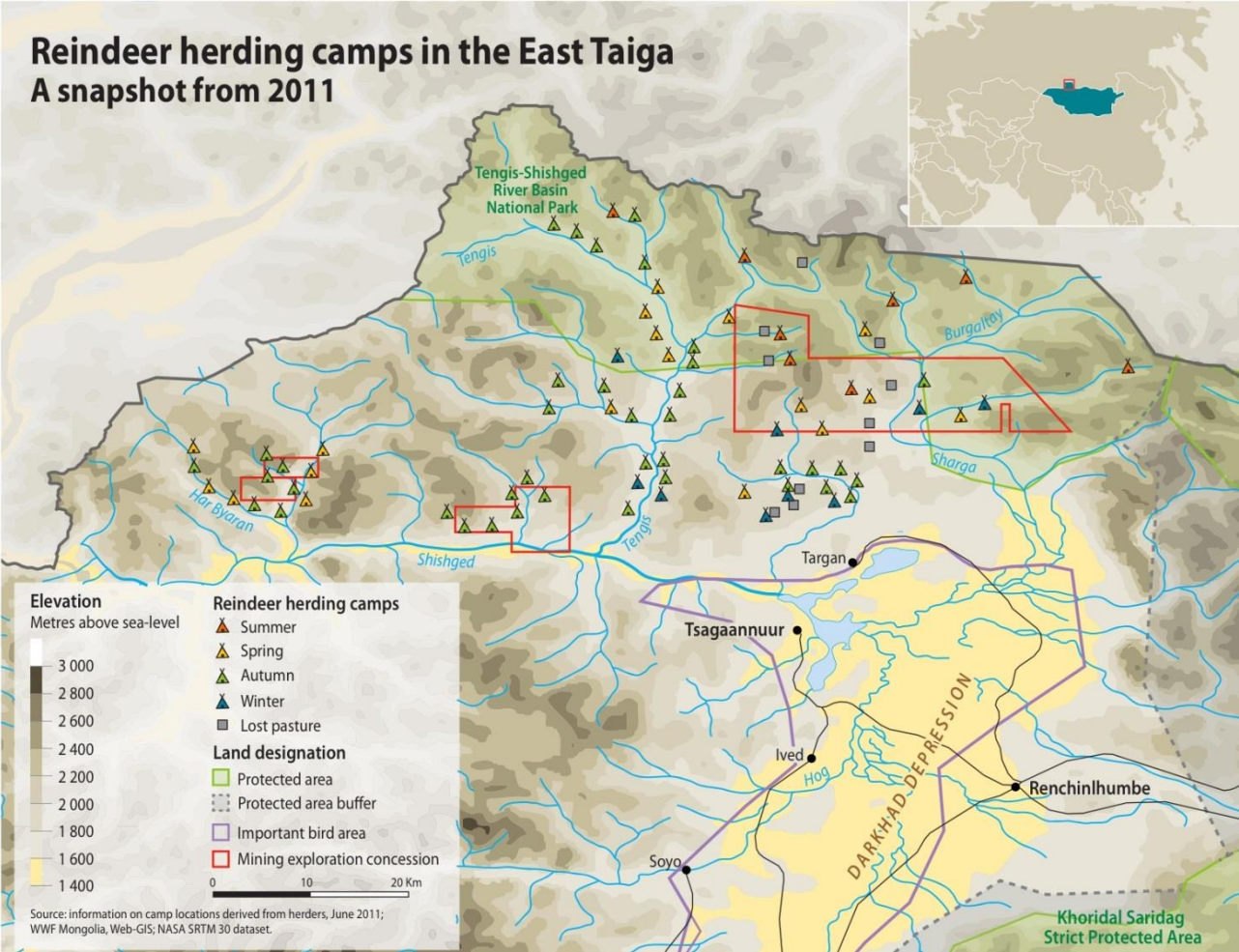
(Map from <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/mongolia.html>)

## Map of Zuun (eastern) and Baruun (western) Taiga.



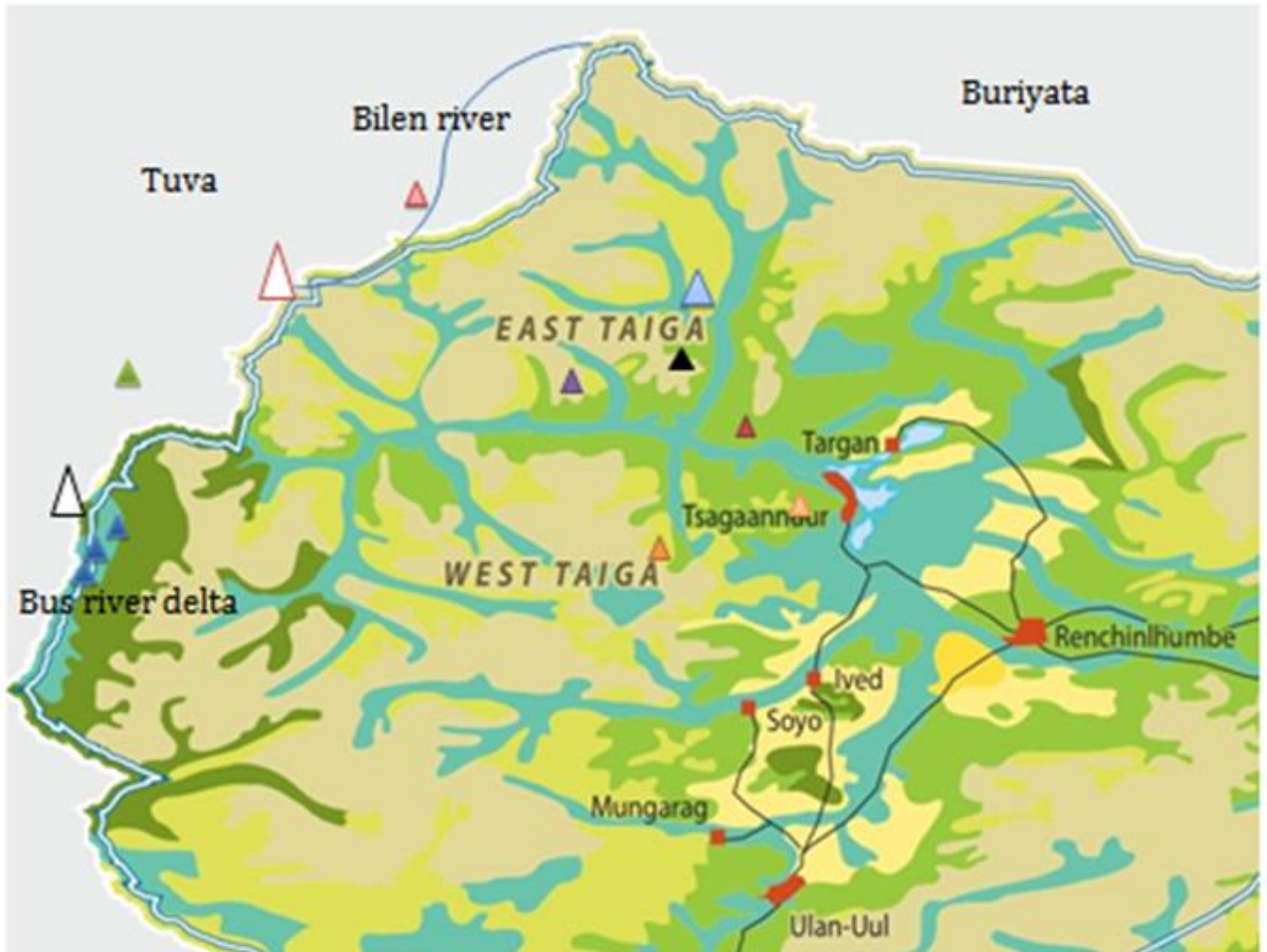
Map by Riccardo Pravettoni.

### Map of camps in Zuun (eastern) Taiga



Map by Riccardo Pravettoni.

## Appendix A: Map of Sacrificial Trees and Places<sup>36</sup>



<sup>36</sup> Only the most widely worshipped sacrificial trees and places of my Duha informants are included in this map (the figures are inserted by the author and the map is by Riccardo Pravettoni).



▲ The tree with one hundred branches (Urat and Balygsh).

▲ Sacrificial trees of shaman Natsag and Had (Kytai Balygsh).

▲ Sacrificial tree of shaman Tol (Soyan).

▲ Funeral place and sacrificial place of shaman Kirgijak (Balygsh).

▲ Sacrificial trees of the shamans Hojashig, Hodon & Agsal (Kytai Balygsh)

▲ Sacrificial tree of shaman Badam (Darhad)

▲ Sacrificial tree of shaman Tömgöo (Kytai Balygsh)

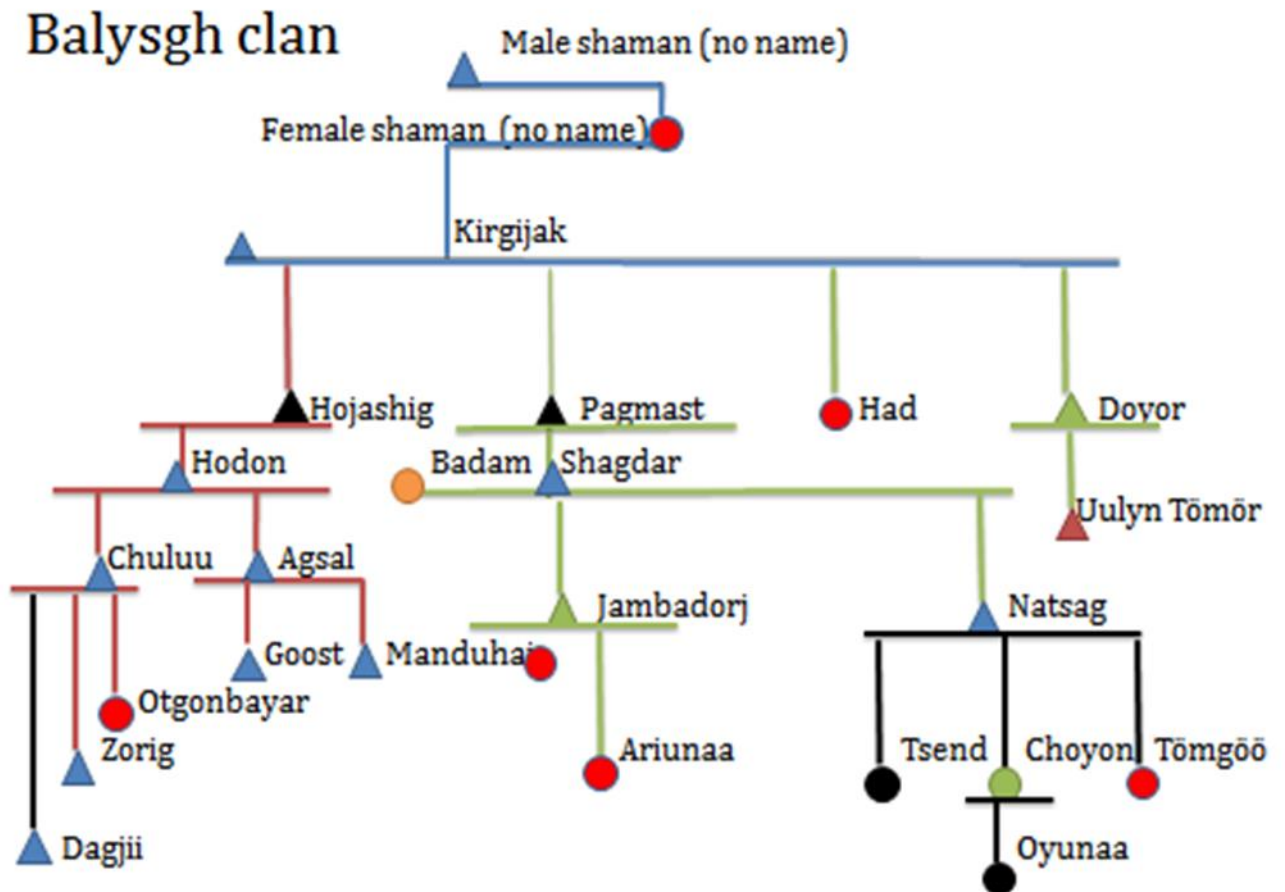
▲ Sacrificial tree of shaman Tsetsegee (Soyan)













▲ Sacrificial tree of shaman suv'yan (Soyan)

▲ Umai Mountai (Adyg Balygsh)

▲ Umai Mountai (Kytai Balygsh)

Appendix B: Two Shamanic lineages within the Kytai Balygsh Clan



-  Shaman
-  Shaman & Zalan
-  Heroic convict
-  Layman
-  Shaman
-  Darhad shaman
-  Person suffering a shamanic illness
-  Laywoman
-  Kytai-Balygsh sub-clan
-  Kytai-Balygsh lineage living in Baruun Taiga (River Bus Between Tuva and Mongolia)
-  Kytai-Balygsh lineage of living in Zuun Taiga (Tengis River & Bilen River, Tuva)
-  People tied to the Zuun taiga lineage, but having moved away from the Taiga.

## Appendix C: Transliteration and names

**On transliteration:** I have used the following system when transliterating Mongolian and Tuvian terms from the Mongolian' Cyrillic alphabet:

A (a)	Б (b)	В (v)	Г (g)	Д (d)	Е (ye)	Ё (yo)	Ж (j)	З (z)	И (i)	Й (i)	К (k)
Л (l)	М (m)	Н (n)	О (o)	Ө (ö)	П (p)	Р (r)	С (s)	Т (t)	У (u)	Ү (ü)	Ф (f)
Х (h)	Ц (ts)	Ч (ch)	Ш (sh)	Ъ (')	Ы (y)	Ь (')	Э (e)	Ю (yu)	Я (ya)		

As all of my interviews were conducted in Mongolian most local terms are Mongolian.

I have followed Mette High (2008: ix) in adding a Roman 's' to the end of Mongolian or Tuvian plural forms when they appear as an integrated part of an English sentence. In the case of relatively well-known Mongolian words or place names, I have used the transliteration that is most commonly used in English literature.

**On names:** Since hunting in Mongolia partly is illegal, the identity of all hunters and most other informants are protected through the use of pseudonyms. However, the shaman Goost and other historic Duha are identified by their real name in order to make it easier for the Duha to identify their predecessors, whose history many Duha wanted to be remembered by future generations.

## Appendix D: Glossary of Central Mongolian and Tuvinian Terms.

<i>Böö</i>	Shaman.
<i>Böö mod</i>	Shaman tree, sacrificial tree.
<i>Daatgah</i>	To entrust/insure (one' life to a given sacrificial entity).
<i>Chötgör</i>	Ghost, demon, demonic or evil deeds and forces.
<i>Eren</i>	Shamanic spirit and its physical manifestation in for instance a spirit vessel.
<i>Ezen</i>	Master, lord, ruler, owner, master-spirit.
<i>Gazryn ezen</i>	Master spirit of a land or place.
<i>Ger</i>	Felt tent. The <i>ger</i> is the traditional dwelling of the Mongolians.
<i>Harshil</i>	Allergy.
<i>Harshildah</i>	Be contrary to or allergic to or both. In the Duha sense of the term: things may be allergic to other things, because they are contrary to each other.
<i>Hovs</i>	Love spell, kind of hypnosis.
<i>Jatga</i>	Magic power, spell, curse, black magic and also used to denote magical combats.
<i>Lus</i>	Water deity or spirit, also a kind of master spirit of waterways.
<i>Muu Yum</i>	Bad thing.
<i>Negdel</i>	Collective farm.
<i>Ovoo</i>	Sacrificial stone cairn.
<i>Oron Hangai</i>	The forested hilly land (taiga) and the ultimate master of the taiga.
<i>Taigyn ezed</i>	Masters of the taiga.
<i>Tahij shütdeg gazar</i>	Sacrificial Place, place of worship.
<i>Tahij shütdeg mod</i>	Sacrificial tree, tree of worship.
<i>Udam</i>	Origin, clan, lineage.
<i>Udgan</i>	Female shaman.
<i>Urts</i>	A conical tent made of canvas and wooden poles. The <i>urts</i> is the traditional dwelling of the Duha.

## **Abstract**

This PhD thesis is about shamanism among the Duha in Mongolia. It is based on 22 months of fieldwork (1999-2012) among the Duha reindeer nomads in Northern Mongolia, and examines why the Duha return to their traditional livelihood as hunters and herders in the taiga has resulted in a turn toward their shamanic traditions.

The main argument of the study is that the Duha return to the taiga encapsulated a return to the practices and the land in which the Duha spirits subsist. It argues that Duha shamanism is a deeply local tradition centred on local animistic perceptions of kinship relations between humans and spirits, enacted through the practices of hunting and herding. The thesis also shows that the Duha livelihood and land has been historically shaped by the policies and imaginaries of surrounding states. These states envisioned the Duha and their land as wild and endowed the Duha with the powers to master the untamed land and its beings.

In light of the above, the Duha return to the taiga once again made them masters of the taiga in relation to the outside world. From their perspective, however, they felt they had become somewhat strangers to the taiga and its spiritual realm. Their return to the cosmic economy of the taiga – and to shamanism – meant they had to face the partly unknown and erratic powers of ancestral spirits, which had been actualized and fashioned by past and contemporary policies, imaginaries, and interventions in the Duha land.

The thesis contributes a new perspective to the regional study of shamanism and its revitalization in Inner and Northern Asia, and to the general debate in anthropology on the invention/inventiveness of tradition. It shows how the revival of tradition may be triggered by an indigenous return to subsistence forms or landscapes animated with tradition. Finally, the thesis is a methodological contribution to the debate on experiential anthropology, based on how the author involuntarily came to be regarded as a diviner among the Duha. It shows how data produced through divination as a field method may be used to direct our gaze and explore aspects of tradition that we might not have become aware of, if we had not been actively engaged in them.

## Resumé

Denne afhandling beskæftiger sig med shamanisme blandt Duhaerne i Mongoliet. Den er baseret på 22 måneders feltarbejde (1999-2012) blandt Duha rensdyrnomader og jægere i det nordlige Mongoliet. Afhandlingen undersøger hvorfor Duhaernes tilbagevenden til deres traditionelle levevis som rensdyrhyrder og jægere i taigaen er blevet efterfulgt af en tilbagevenden til deres shamanistiske traditioner.

Hovedargumentet i afhandlingen er, at Duhaernes tilbagevenden til deres historiske levevis og hjemland var en tilbagevenden til de praksisser og de landområder, som Duha-shamanisme udgøres af. Afhandlingen argumenterer for at Duha-shamanisme er en lokal tradition baseret på lokale animistiske forestillinger om slægtskabsrelationer mellem mennesker og ånder. Denne tradition er forankret i – og udspilles igennem – Duha-nomade- og jagtpraksis i et landskab opfattet som besjælet af ånder. Samtidig viser afhandlingen, hvordan omgivende staters politiske administration af taigaen og af Duhaerne historisk set har bidraget til at konstituere taigaen som et utæmmet og vildt shamanistisk land, og derved medvirket til at etablere Duha-jægere som shamanistiske herskere over taigaen. Afhandlingen argumenterer for, at Duhaernes tilbagevenden til taigaen på nationalt og lokalt plan bidrog til at (re)konstituere taigaen som en spirituel suverænitet, og Duhaerne som dette landområdes shamanistiske herskere. Hjemkomsten til taigaen konfronterede imidlertid også Duha-folket med uregerlige og voldelige ånder fremkaldt af Duha-slægters historiske separation fra samt nutidig minedrift og spirituel turismes indgriben i deres shamanistiske tradition og landskab. Afhandlingen viser at ovenstående kompleks skabte nye spirituelle usikkerheder og udfordringer, som styrkede Duha-shamanisme på tvetydig vis.

Afhandlingen bidrager således med nye perspektiver til regionale studier af shamanisme og dens revitalisering i Centralasien og Nordasien, og til det generelle antropologiske studie af genopfindelse og revitalisering af traditioner. Endeligt er afhandlingen et metodisk bidrag til den antropologiske debat om erfaringsbaseret antropologi, da den diskuterer hvordan antropologens egen rolle som shaman under feltarbejde kan anvendes til at opnå nye indsigter i lokale traditioner.