



THE RITUAL EQUIPMENT OF A FEMALE SHAMAN IN MONGOLIA FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE NÁPRSTEK MUSEUM

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ABSTRACT: In 1954 the Náprstek Museum gained a collection of objects from Mongolia donated by the Slovak writer Dominik Tatarka² (1913–1989), containing the ritual equipment of the female shaman Bariada, who came from the Alak Erdene somon³ in the Khövsgöl aimag.⁴ It is not known how Tatarka came by the items, which are usually sacred for the particular society.

The collection contains a shaman's cloak, two hats, a drum and beater, a mouth harp case and a bear's paw with charms. The aim of this article is to analyse the various items in the shaman's equipment, and to ascertain their symbolism and function, important for an understanding of current shamanism in this region.

KEY WORDS: shamanism – Mongolian shamanism – Siberian shamanism – shamanic costume

Introduction

Geographical location plays an important role in identifying and understanding the various parts of the ritual equipment, their symbolism and function. The Khövsgöl aimag is in the north of Mongolia, adjoining Tuva in the west and Buryatia in the east. The boundary with Tuva is reflected in the Khövsgöl aimag's ethnic makeup, which consists mostly of groups of Turkic origin. These ethnic groups include, in particular, the Darkhad (Mon. *darkhan* – untouchable) who inhabit the area to the west of lake Khövsgöl, and the Tsaatan (Mon. *tsaa* – reindeer) who live mostly in the southern somons. The Darkhad and Tsaatan are considered to be Mongolianised Tuvans.⁵ A further group is that known as the

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² Description of Tatarka's journeys over Mongolia see: Tatarka, D. (1963): *Človek na cestách*. Bratislava.

³ Somon – a smaller administrative unit within aimag – district.

⁴ Aimag – a larger administrative unit – province, region.

⁵ Чебоксаров (1965), p. 702–703.

Uriankhai. In northern Mongolia, more precisely the area called Shishged, this name was originally used for hunters and herders who spoke both Turkic and Mongolian languages. The term was thus used both for Mongolian Uriankhai and Mongolianised Turkic ethnic groups. There is also a further concept, Tuva Uriankhai, used for Mongolianised Tuvans.⁶ The Mongolian groups who live in this area are the Buryats in the eastern part of the Khövsgöl aimag, with some scattered Khotgoids and, of course, Khalkha Mongolians.

When talking about Mongolian shamanism, it should be remembered that all the reports and descriptions that we have of the phenomenon in this area in fact concern ethnic groups who are only related to actual Mongols or who neighbour them. They are the above-mentioned Darkhad, Tsaatan, Tuvans, Buryats and the Evenks, an ethnic group that lives mostly in the forests and mountains.⁷ For this reason, this analysis of the ritual equipment of the female shaman Bariada focuses mostly on the region of southern Siberia. Parallels will also be sought among the Turkic ethnic groups in the territory in question, in other words among the Altai and Tuvans, as well as among the Mongolian Buryats. The influence of Tungusic-Manchurian ethnic groups will also not be ruled out. With regard to the period of time involved, the analysis uses data from ethnographic research from the end of the 19th century until the present day.

The Function of the Shaman

Only someone who had been called to the role by spiritual forces could become a shaman. Among the Tuvans, new shamans were chosen by the spirits of dead shamans themselves. The sign that someone had been chosen came in the form of black clouds and a rainbow, the end of which touched the designated person. From that moment on the spirit of the dead shaman became the protector of his or her successor.⁸ Given that it was extremely common among Turko-Mongolian tribes to worship mountains, the spirits of Tuvan shamans were often also the “lords” of specific sacred mountains.⁹

One of the most important powers of a shaman is the ability to reach another level of consciousness, during which his or her spirit is capable of visiting parts of the universe inaccessible to ordinary people. The world is composed of several layers, through which the shaman passes to reach the heavens or the underworld with the help of the “axis” of the world, created by the cosmic tree, a pole or a mountain. Each such journey is full of dangers, however, and the shaman himself may fall prey to the power of the spirits. In order to prepare himself for all such difficulties, the future shaman underwent complicated initiations, during which he experienced ritual death and rebirth. In particular, the initiation consisted of cutting up his body and placing new organs in it, through which he gained new abilities. During the initiation he also acquired spirits that would help and protect him, learned how to call them with a drum, learned the names and functions of the spirits of all three spheres of the cosmos, and became educated in the secret language, mythology and genealogy of his clan. All these skills equipped the shaman to be able to

⁶ Grollová, Zikmundová (2001), p. 49.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 80.

⁸ Алексеев (1984), p. 91.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

travel to other worlds, to look for and find lost souls, to ascertain the causes of illnesses and evil, to accompany the souls of the dead to the underworld and so on. In order to fulfil these difficult tasks, he also needed special objects, without which he would be unable to carry out the shamanic ritual.

In the area on which we are focusing, foremost among these objects are the shaman's costume and drum. They are decorated with all kinds of textile and metal pendants, furs, beads, embroideries and drawings, with specific meanings. All the shaman's equipment represents the sacred present moment, and is imbued with the spirits. As a result, the objects were kept in a special place, and could only be touched by the shaman, who was the only person able to govern the spirits.

The Shaman's Costume

The shaman's costume was in many ways a material expression of the religious ideas of a specific society. The shaman's whole family, both men and women, would take part in its creation, and it was made with regard to the particular tradition of the clan or tribe. The shaman's protective spirit could then approve the finished clothing, but did not have to. If he did not express his approval, the costume had to be remade. Once satisfactory, the costume then had to be "brought to life" with the aid of a specific ritual, during which the shaman's costume became a sacred item.¹⁰ After the shaman's death, his costume was buried alongside him. All that was kept back were the especially significant iron pendants, which were kept for the future shaman.¹¹

The basic shaman's costume was originally made mostly of the skins of animals, both wild and domesticated. At the start of the 20th century the Buryatian shamans used cloaks made from silk or cotton fabrics.¹² Moreover, there were two kinds, which differed in the colour of their fabric. The white *orgoi*¹³ was worn by the "white" shaman, the dark blue by the "black" shaman. In addition to this textile shaman's clothing, there were apparently also special war orgois made of heavy animal skins, and also eagle orgois, made from eagles' skins, including wings.¹⁴ The division of shamans into black and white is a relatively common phenomenon among the Turko-Mongolian ethnic groups. Briefly put, the white shamans did not fall into trances, and they communicated exclusively with the upper world, thus being more akin to priests. The black shamans, on the other hand, were able to leave their bodies and visit the lower world. However, there were also shamans capable of travelling to both the heavens and the underworld, as shown for example by A.V. Anokhin.¹⁵

An aspect of shamanic equipment that is worth focusing on is the role played by the protector and assistant spirits, without whose aid the shaman cannot not change form and undertake his difficult journeys to other worlds. The shaman's assistant spirits are mostly animals, divided into "light" animals, symbolising the upper sphere of the universe, and

¹⁰ Анохин (1924), p. 37.

¹¹ Прокофьева (1971), p. 9.

¹² Михайлов (1987), p. 108.

¹³ A Buryatian expression for a shaman's cloak.

¹⁴ Михайлов (1987), p. 108–109.

¹⁵ Анохин (1924), p. 124.

“dark” animals,” relating to the lower world. Chief among the light creatures are birds, which in most cultures are considered to be intermediaries between the earthly world and the heavens. Other creatures belonging to this sphere are deer and moose.¹⁶ A special position is held by the eagle, which appears in Siberian myths concerning the origin of shamans. The dark creatures, which enable the underground world to be accessed, are represented in particular by night birds such as owls, as well as by the bear and the otter.¹⁷ The necessary animals were represented on the shaman’s costume by certain parts (feathers, fur, horns, claws and so on) which stood in for the whole.

In the literature we find shamanic clothing divided into three basic types, according to the animal symbolism. There are bear costumes (used by the Selkups, for example), reindeer and deer (e.g. the Evenks) and birds (e.g. the Altai). While representation of a single animal may dominate, however, it does not rule out the combination of all of them. A preference for one kind of animal over another may also change, for various reasons, as was the case with the Ugro-Finnic Selkups, who at the start of the 19th century made shaman’s costumes from bear hides as well as from deer hides, and also fixed deer horns on to their iron head coverings. By the start of the 20th century, bear hides were no longer used for the purpose.¹⁸

Among the peoples of southern Siberia, particularly the Altai and Tuvans, as well as some of the Buryats, shamanic clothes are dominated by bird symbols. This consists mostly of feather decoration of the top of the shaman’s head covering, and the use of wings on the back of the cloak. Bird elements are also found on the clothing of the Mongolian female shaman from the Náprstek Museum’s collection. Both the hats have a tuft of owl’s feathers on top¹⁹ (ill. no. 8, 9), while on the back of the cloak in the shoulder area there are two metal sheaths with the remains of bird feathers that originally formed imitation wings (ill. no. 3). Birds are very important in shamanism, since they act as intermediaries for the other world. Bird symbolism on the shaman’s coat allowed the shaman himself to turn into a bird. Birds also played a significant role as helper spirits. Among the Tuvans, for example, there were seven swans, or seven ravens. Only very powerful shamans had seven swans, which helped them to learn who would fall ill, who would recover and who would die.²⁰

An important part of the shaman’s wardrobe were fabric ribbons, some of which were formed into the shape of real snakes. G.N. Potanin says that the ribbons on the clothing of an Altai shaman also depicted snakes,²¹ which the shaman uses on journeys to other worlds. In the Siberian region, drawings of snakes are also frequently found on shamans’

¹⁶ Прокофьева (1971), p. 7.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 22.

¹⁹ In central Asia in particular, owl’s feathers are a common and extremely widespread amulet, which wards off evil forces.

²⁰ Алексеев (1984), p. 92.

²¹ Потанин, Г. Н. (1883): *Очерки Северо-Западной Монголии*, т. IV. СПб, pp. 49–54. Cit. from: Eliade (1997), p. 142.



Fig. 1. Cloak, back. Inv. no. 16 502. Length 115 cm, length of ribbons 80 cm.



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drums.²² The cloak belonging to the female shaman Bariada in the Náprstek Museum's collection is made of darkish blue, cotton fabric with a white border, of which the lower part is decorated with tassels (ill. no. 1, 2). The whole cloak is sewn with a large number of fabric ribbons of various kinds, as well as three-dimensional snakes (143 in total). Of particular note is an orange ribbon embroidered with gold thread. The embroidery mostly takes the form of plant patterns, together with Chinese symbols of long life.²³ Ribbons and snakes dominate on the back of the cloak, in particular, with the colours mostly blue, red, white and black. In the shoulder area, two markedly naturalistic snakes are also affixed (ill. no. 1, 3) sewn from two pieces of fabric and stuffed.²⁴

The coloured ribbons in themselves played an important role in shamanism. Among the Tuvans, they represented some sort of receptacle for spirits. The helper spirits of Tuvan shamans, which they usually called *eeren*, took various forms and functions.²⁵ Eeren were made after the costume had been sewn and the drum made. The first to be made was the *ozen eeren*, which took the form of a piece of white fabric with seven conical iron pendants (*chedi konguraaltyk*). The *ozen eeren* were then fastened to the shaman's costume and drum.²⁶ Eerens continue to be extremely widespread in Tuva, consisting in their simplest form of a plait of ribbons of five colours (red, green, blue, white and yellow). A Tuvan female shaman told me that these five colours represent the five elements from which the world is made: red symbolises fire, green wood, blue water, white iron or metal and yellow the earth.²⁷ The Buryats hung coloured ribbons on birch trees during the initiation ritual. For a "white" shaman, blue and white ribbons were used, while red and yellow ones were used for a "black" shaman. If a "black and white" shaman was being initiated, then ribbons of all four colours were hung from the tree.²⁸ Among the Buryats, colour symbolism also played a role with ongons.²⁹ The upper part of the object representing the ongon was white, denoting the heavens. The lower part was dark blue, and denoted the earth.³⁰

As well as having a large number of ribbons, the back of the Mongolian female shaman's cloak also features one red and one black animal (ill. no.), made using the same technique as the snakes in the shoulder area. The eyes and teeth are depicted using embroidery. Two stoat (*Mustela erminea*) skins are also fixed to the back of the cloak. Among the Altai,

²² The transcultural phenomenon of snake symbolism in connection with shamanism inspired anthropologist Jeremy Narby to hypothesise that snake symbols were connected to the coils of DNA. Going by the testimonies of shamans, who talked about their visions while in a state of ecstasy, Narby believes that these shamanic visions have certain similarities all over the world. Shamans often see two snakes, which represent the double helix of the DNA coil. This would mean that shamans in the spiritual world see into the very foundations of life. (Narby, J. *The Cosmic Serpent*, published in Czech as *Kosmický had*, Praha, 2006.)

²³ For the identification of the Chinese symbols I am grateful to Mgr. Helena Heroldová, Ph.D., curator of the Chinese and Lamaistic Collection of the Náprstek Museum.

²⁴ Similar snakes are found in the same places on the cloak of the Altai shaman described by E. D. Prokofyeva. In: Прокофьева (1971), p. 61.

²⁵ Алексеев (1984), p. 91.

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 92.

²⁷ Modern-day inhabitants hang these eeren in their houses and cars as protective amulets.

²⁸ Агапитов Н.Н., Хангалов, М.Н. (1883): *Материалы для изучения шаманства в Сибири: Шаманство у бурят Иркутской губернии*. Иркутск, s. 42–45. Cit. from: Eliade (1997), p. 115.

²⁹ The equivalent of the Tuvan eeren. Often takes the form of an anthropomorphic figure. The Buryats used the name ongon to refer both to the actual spirit and his depiction. It may also refer to the spirit of a dead ancestor.

³⁰ Иванов (1954), p. 703.



Fig. 3. Back of cloak. Leather square with metal pendants, with snakes on the upper part of the cloak. Length of bow 17 cm, length of metal pendants 10 cm.



Fig. 4. Back of the cloak, black animal. Length 71.5 cm.



Fig. 5. Back of cloak, red animal. Length 72 cm.

stoat fur symbolises the fur of the ancestor spirits, and serves to call them up during the shamanic ritual.³¹ We find mentions of the two textile animals in the descriptions of Altai shaman costumes in particular. A.V. Anokhin mentions that the animals, made of dark or brown fabric, are known by the Altai shamans as *jutpa* and that they represent the monsters of the underground god Erlik. Their task is to protect the shaman from evil spirits.³²

Metal pendants also played a fundamental role on shamanic costumes and drums. Among the most widespread are the long conical pendants (*kholbogo* in Buryatian), bells of various kinds, discs, chains and pendants in the shape of various weapons. In addition to this basic equipment, shamans' clothes might also have individual variations on iron pendants, which cannot, however, be reliably determined. Iron objects on a shaman's cloak are considered a gift from god³³ and represent the shaman's armour, which he uses to repel attacks by evil spirits. The jingling of the pendants also symbolises the shaman's voice, which, too, scares away evil forces.³⁴ Among the Tungusic-Manchurian peoples (such as the Nanai and the Udegei) we come across a legend concerning the origin of the first shamanic iron pendants, which once grew on the Cosmic Tree. The tree's leaves formed metal mirrors (*toli*), which represented bells, and on the top there grew a large number of metal horns.³⁵

The clothing of the Mongolian female shaman has iron pendants mostly in the upper back area. Here there is a leather square sewn on, and attached to it are conical pendants, pendants in the shape of weapons, such as a bow, arrows, knives, a smooth round disk, a round bell and a cast pendant³⁶ (ill. no. 3). To the bottom part of the leather square, several iron chains are attached, with conical pendants at the ends, as well as rings and a pendant in the shape of a hook. Among the ribbons in the lower part, there hangs a small iron bow and arrow, to which ribbons and a pouch full of seeds are affixed (ill. no. 6).³⁷ On the front part, in the hip area, an iron disc is sewn on either side, from which there hang several long strings. In the upper left hand part is a hollow pendant made of tin (ill. no. 7).³⁸

Metal pendants in the shape of bows and arrows, knives and hooks³⁹ are usually explained as the shaman's armour, used in the fight against evil spirits. Depictions of bows and arrows can also be found among the Siberian ethnic groups on items of daily use, above all on children's cradles, where they had a protective function against evil forces

³¹ Анохин (1924), p. 43.

³² Анохин (1924), p. 43–44.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

³⁴ Прокофьева (1971), p. 62 and 88.

³⁵ Шимкевич, П. П. (1896): *Материалы для изучения шаманства у голдов. Зап. Приамурск. отд. РГО. т. I, вып. II. Хабаровск*, pp. 10–11. Cit. from: Прокофьева (1971) p. 50.

³⁶ The shape of this pendant is reminiscent of depictions of stylised flying birds on shamans' clothing Q. v. e.g.: Анохин (1924), p. 50, ill. 42.

³⁷ It should be mentioned here that pouches, which were, however, filled with tobacco, were fixed to their clothing by, for example, Tuvan shamans. The tobacco was offered to the spirits. In: Прокофьева (1971), p. 75.

³⁸ The meaning of this pendant is hard to gauge. It was probably a personal symbol used by Bariada or it can be interpreted as a heart symbol due to its shape and location on the left side of the cloak.

³⁹ In the case of the hook, an analogy can be found in the bent scythe or the sickle of Tibetan Buddhism, where this instrument was used to cut off the limbs and heads of enemies. Still, in shamanism a hook shape may also represent a metal claw. Shamans also used real claws from birds of prey or wild beasts as accessories.



Fig. 6. Bow with arrow and pouch. Inv. no. 16 504.
Length of bow 8 cm, length of pouch 4 cm.



Fig. 7. Pendant on front of cloak.
Length 6 cm.



Fig. 8. Hat, front. Inv. no. A 12 911. Ø 23 cm,
height 12.5 cm, height with feathers 17 cm.



Fig. 9. Hat, front. Inv. no. A 12 910.
Ø 27 cm, height 18 cm, height with feathers
40 cm, length of ribbons 50 cm.

(among the Altai and Buryats, for example).⁴⁰ Among the Turkic peoples of Siberia, the depiction of the bow and arrow was connected to the cult of the female goddess Umai, the protector of children. It was widely considered that Umai shot arrows at evil spirits who wanted to come near children.⁴¹ In connection with shamanism, however, Mircea Eliade connects the original significance of the bow and arrow with the symbolism of the magic flight. He believes that the bow and arrow represent the shaman's means of rising to heaven.⁴²

Another common decoration on shaman costumes consisted of metal discs and crescents representing the Sun and the Moon, which symbolised the shaman's contact with the heavens and the underworld. Their glow was designed to light the shaman's path in the dark corners of the universe, particularly in the underworld.⁴³ The Mongolians and the Tungusic-Manchurian peoples commonly used the "shamanic mirrors"⁴⁴ (*toli*), which help the shamans to "see the world" or represent the "vessel of the world," in which the soul of the dead person can be seen.⁴⁵

Iron chains, which like the strings are fixed to metal rings, symbolise the shaman's journeys to other worlds, and their connection with the earth. The metal rings then represent the openings through which the shamans pass to enter this world, and through which they can also call the necessary spirits. The motif of a circular opening that leads either to heaven or the underworld is a common feature in shamanism. During the initiation rite a Buryatian shaman, for example, climbs up a birch tree placed in the yurt and penetrates through its smoky opening "into heaven"⁴⁶. On his journey to the underworld, an Altai shaman enters the bowels of the earth "through a smoky hole in the ground."⁴⁷

In connection with the motifs of weapons and metal in general, it is worth noting the course of the shaman's initiation, above all during the part where he undergoes ritual death by means of his body being cut up. Among the Evenks, for example, the spirits throw the shaman's head into a cauldron, where they forge it together with pieces of metal that will form part of the ceremonial dress. The spirits of the shamanic ancestors also spike the candidate shaman with a large number of arrows.⁴⁸ Among the Yakuts, the strongest shamans are cast, hardened and forged by the underworld blacksmith.⁴⁹ In another Yakut initiation ritual, the shaman is rocked in an iron cradle. When he grows out of it, the spirits cut up his body and pierce his head with a spear.⁵⁰ The metal pendants and weapons may thus also be a reminder of the shaman's death and rebirth, and a symbol of his power and endurance.

⁴⁰ There is a wealth of pictorial material in: Иванов (1954).

⁴¹ Дыренкова, Н. П. (1928): *Умай в культуре турецких племен*. In: *Культура и письменность Востока*, кн. III. Баку, p. 139. Cit. from: Иванов (1954), p. 732.

⁴² Eliade (1997), p. 159.

⁴³ Иванов (1954), p. 187.

⁴⁴ Shamans' metal mirrors most frequently take the form of a highly-polished convex disc.

⁴⁵ Eliade (1997), p. 143.

⁴⁶ Агапитов Н. Н., Хангалов, М. Н. (1883): *Материалы для изучения шаманства в Сибири: Шаманство у бурят Иркутской губернии*. Иркутск, s. 42–45. Cit. from: Eliade (1997), p. 115.

⁴⁷ Потанин, Г. Н. (1883): *Очерки Северо-Западной Монголии*, т. IV. СПб, pp. 64–68. Cit. from: Eliade (1997), p. 179.

⁴⁸ Xenofontov (2001), pp. 80–81.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 41.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 57.



Fig. 10. Hat, back. Inv. no. A 12 911.



Fig. 11. Hat, back. Inv. no. A 12 910.



Fig. 12. Tiger bells (back of cloak). Width 2.5 cm.

Metal pendants were found not only on the shaman's cloak, but also on his head coverings, which usually represented a specific animal, such as a deer, bear or bird. Shamans' hats also differed from each other depending on the category of shaman. White shamans did not usually have as richly-decorated ritual costumes as black shamans. Among the Altai, the hat of a white shaman was usually made from white lamb's fleece. A bunch of bird's feathers was fixed to the top, and three long white ribbons hung down the back of the neck.⁵¹ White symbolised the "pure spirits"; among the Altai these were above all *Ülgän* and the spirits of the mountains.⁵² Among the Buryats, too, the white shamans wore a white silk costume edged with fur, and rode on white horses.⁵³ The costumes of the black shamans were much more elaborate and complex. In the southern Siberian region, shamans' head coverings are decorated with metal pendants, bells of various kinds, furs, feathers and so on. The basic hat was originally made of leather; later, textiles and felt were more often used. Among the Altai, the cap of a black shaman was made of red fabric and decorated with, among other things, owl feathers, lynx fur and cowrie shells⁵⁴ (*Cypraea moneta*),⁵⁵ which have a long tradition in Siberia and are a very popular decoration for shamans' costumes. The shells have been found in graves as early as those of the Karasuk and Minusinsk cultures, while in present-day Tuva there is evidence of them from the Bronze Age.⁵⁶ The Altai called cowrie shells "snakes' heads" (*jylan bazhy*).⁵⁷ The decoration of new hats was usually created in accordance with the decoration of the hats of dead shamans, but it was still possible to innovate as necessary.⁵⁸ Considerable attention was paid to the hats, as with other parts of the shaman's ritual equipment. When being transported, the hat was turned inside out, and it was kept in the sleeve of the shaman's cloak. Inside the house it was kept, together with the cloak and drum, in a special place.⁵⁹

The Mongolian female shaman's equipment from the Náprstek Museum's collection contains two hats⁶⁰, which so far have been mentioned only in connection with birds' feathers. Their decoration is much richer than that, however. The first hat (ill. no. 8) is made of red cotton fabric. It has ribbons attached round the edge, mostly red with a white floral pattern, and also blue, white and black the face are is covered by a black fringe.⁶¹ Above them, on the edge of the hat, a piece of leather with animal hair is sewn on.⁶² On top of the hat, there are mussel shells sewn around a metal sheath with birds' feathers. In

⁵¹ Днохин (1924), p. 47.

⁵² Ibidem.

⁵³ Михайлов (1987), pp. 102–103.

⁵⁴ Днохин (1924), pp. 48–49.

⁵⁵ The term „cowrie“ is derived from a Greek word meaning „piglet“. Some cowries come from the Indian Ocean and others from the Pacific, especially from the Maldives, Philippines, Malaysia, Zanzibar etc. For centuries they served as currency, and also as protective amulets.

⁵⁶ Иванов (1978), pp. 153–154.

⁵⁷ Днохин (1924), p. 40.

⁵⁸ Ibidem, p. 47.

⁵⁹ Ibidem.

⁶⁰ From the documentation of the collection of shaman's equipment described, it cannot be ascertained whether both hats belonged to Bariada. Going by the execution of the cloak, I believe that only the hat with inventory no. A 12 911 was part of her equipment.

⁶¹ Covering the eyes during the shamanic ritual was common, since darkness is always a suitable means of communicating with spirits. Moreover, in the state of ecstasy the shaman's soul, of which the eyes are the mirrow, is not present in the body.

⁶² Going by the structure, this is the hair of a deer or ibex.



Fig. 13. Drum and beater, outside. Inv. no. 16 503 (drum), 16 506 (beater).
 Ø of the drum 54.2 cm, height 14.7 cm



Fig. 14. Drum and beater, inside.
 Length of beater 48 cm, length of ribbons 39 cm.

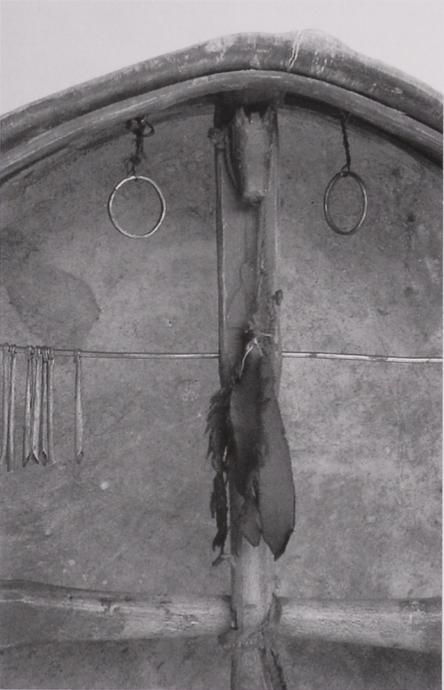


Fig. 15. Detail of horse's head, with metal rings and arrows on a metal rod.
 Length of horse's head 4 cm, Ø of rings 2 cm, length of arrows 5 cm.

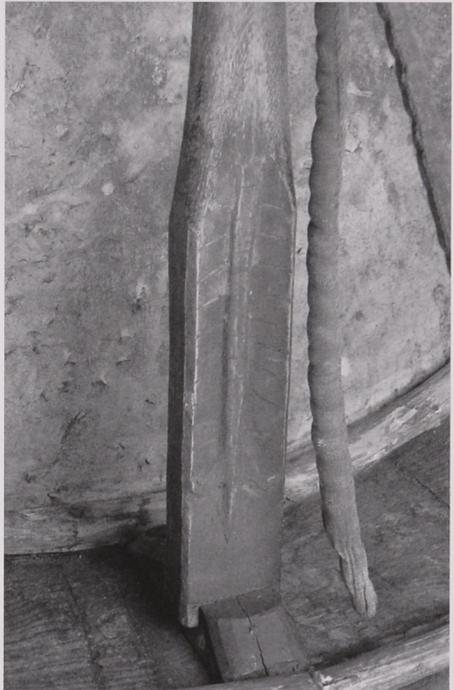


Fig. 16. Detail of the carving on the lower part of the handle.
 Length of carving 12 cm.

the middle is a convex disc of yellow metal and a crescent of silver metal, symbolising the sun and the crescent moon. Four iron rings are sewn around the edge of the hat; each has three long conical pendants with pointed ends hanging from it. At the back (ill. no. 10) a small bell (originally two) hangs between them. The upper part of the second hat (ill. no. 9) is made of cotton fabric, mostly covered in vivid coloured *mire bute* patterns. The underneath is lined with felt. On top of the hat there are three bunches of owl's feathers. The front of the cap is decorated with cowrie shells, Chinese coins⁶³ and a bell, with what is probably a stylised lotos flower (originally gold) attached in the middle.⁶⁴ On each side of it are two large beads of red coral. The fringes in the face area are dark blue and black. At the back of the hat (ill. no. 11) are five bells, four Chinese coins, four small jingle bells and a ring with an ornament made of yellow metal, to which a blue silk scarf is attached. At the sides are bunches of beads and turquoises threaded on strings. The bottom edge of the hat has a large number of coloured ribbons with a flower pattern, mostly white, blue and red. At the back are six three-dimensional textile snakes, three of which are black. The black snakes have eyes of red beads.

The symbolism of most of the objects that appear on the shaman's hats described above has already been mentioned with regard to Bariada's cloak. Nevertheless, it is worth looking in greater detail at several features of the hat decoration, in particular the closed round bells and the metal ring with the blue silk scarf.

All the round bells on the hats and cloak belonging to the Mongolian female shaman are of a single type, known as the "tiger bell" (ill. no. 12) They are bronze bells in the shape of a stylised tiger's head, with a Chinese *wang* symbol, meaning "king"⁶⁵, on its "forehead". Tiger bells are found almost throughout Asia. There are many variations and sizes, but what they all have in common is the stylised tiger's head. In Siberia and Mongolia they form part of the shaman's ritual equipment, while in other parts of Asia they are also used as a protective amulet for people and animals.⁶⁶

The metal ring, divided by a cross with a decorative centre, probably represents a stylised sun. The depiction of circles divided by a cross is a symbol of the Sun on, for example, Altai drums,⁶⁷ and on Buryatian ongons.⁶⁸ The silk scarf is known – not only in Mongolia – as a *khadak*, and usually has Buddhist symbols woven into it. It may be white, yellow, red, green and – especially – light blue. The *khadak* was given as a sign of honour, respect or congratulations. Among the Altai, at the start of the 20th century, people fixed coloured scarves to a shaman's clothing when they were asking for a shamanic ritual to be performed. If the shaman had too many scarves on his clothing, he would take the older ones off, but they continued to belong to him.⁶⁹

⁶³ Coins were a favourite protective amulet. In central Asia, for example, they were fastened to children's clothing.

⁶⁴ The lotos is above all a significant Buddhist symbol. Its placing on the shaman's hat is quite clearly influenced by Buddhism, which in the form of Lamaism is the chief religion in Mongolia.

⁶⁵ The tiger is a significant animal in Tibetan Buddhism, and the Chinese tiger has a *wang*. In Chinese and Tibetan medicine, notable healing effects are ascribed to the tiger.

⁶⁶ <http://www.kipas.nl/bells/mongolia.htm> (17. 10. 2009)

⁶⁷ Иванов (1954), p. 644, ill. no. 86.

⁶⁸ Ibidem, p. 725, ill. no. 22.

⁶⁹ Анохин (1924), p. 45.



Fig. 17. Mouth harp case. Inv. no. 16 507. Length of case 11 cm.



Fig. 18. Bear's paw with charms. Inv. no. 16 505 Length of paw 21 cm.

The Shaman's Drum

The drum is a very important tool for the shaman, since it allows him to communicate with the spirits and travel to other worlds.⁷⁰ The drum represents the shaman's means of transport, and it is thus most often perceived as some kind of fast animal, such as a deer or, in particular a horse. The idea of a drum as being like a horse is clear from the name given to the drum by the Tuvan shamans, who called it *kham at*,⁷¹ the "shaman's horse". The shaman's drum has complex symbolism, and many magical functions. The drum skin is often decorated with drawing, most often depicting the three-tier world, cosmic bodies, helper spirits and the shaman's ecstatic journeys. On the inside side of the drum is a wooden handle, on which the image of the "lord of the drum" may be carved. The handle also has various metal pendants such as closed bells, open bells, weapons and so on. Each of these items has a specific function during the shamanic ritual.

Drums for future shamans were made by specialist craftsmen. The wooden parts of the drum were most frequently made of birch or pine. The tree had to be situated a long way from human habitation, could not be anywhere where livestock grazed, and had to be undamaged.⁷² The skin for the drum usually came from the maral deer (*Cervus elaphus sibiricus*), ibex or horse. Some Siberian peoples used different skins for the drums of male and female shamans. For women, the skins of female animals were used, for men the skins of male ones.⁷³ The Tuvans took three days to make the wooden part of the drum, and on the fourth day they would stretch the skin over it.⁷⁴ The wooden part of the drum was never changed – only a new skin was fitted if need be. The old skin was then taken into the forest, where it was hung on the branch of a tree.⁷⁵

When the drum was ready, it was brought to life by means of a special ritual. Among the western Tuvans, the drum was brought to life by a shaman, with the whole community participating. During the ritual a sheep was sacrificed, and before it died it beat with its right hoof on the drum, with the aid of a person. The drum was then given some of the sheep's meat and its first neck vertebra. After that, the shaman sat down on the drum and simulated travel. As he did so, he told the story of the animal whose skin was used to cover the drum (where it was born, where it lived, what it lived on etc.). Throughout, the shaman imitated a ride on a wild animal that had to be tamed so that it would obey its owner and serve him well.⁷⁶

After the shaman's death, the wooden hoop was broken and the skin torn. The drum, thus destroyed, was hung on the branch of a tree at the shaman's burial place.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ Rhythmic drumming affects the central nervous system of the shaman and thus affects his consciousness. These changes can be picked up nowadays on EEG, but they are also displayed in a slowing of the pulse and a fall in blood pressure. A frequency of around four seconds is the most effective, because it brings about and increases the rhythm of *theta* waves, small brain waves connected with creativity, dream states and vivid imagination.

⁷¹ *Kham* – Tuvan expression for shaman (Altai *kam*, Mongolian *böo* (shaman), *udgan* (female shaman).

⁷² Анохин (1924), p. 51.

⁷³ Прокофьева (1961), p. 436.

⁷⁴ Потапов (1969), p. 352.

⁷⁵ Анохин (1924), p. 51.

⁷⁶ Потапов (1969), pp. 352–353.

⁷⁷ Анохин (1924), p. 52.

The drum (ill. no. 13) of the Mongolian shaman Bariada is circular in form, covered in a skin with no drawings on it.⁷⁸ The wooden hoop is made of a single piece of curved wood, painted blue on the inside. The inside side of the drum (ill. no. 14) has a wooden, cross-shaped handle fixed to it, the ends of which are painted red. A round textile bundle is tied to the centre of the handle. The main shaft of the handle ends in its upper part in a carved horse's head, to which a red string with coloured ribbons is attached (ill. no. 15) It has already been mentioned that horse symbolism has a very important place in shamanic ritual. The horse is connected with funeral rites in particular,⁷⁹ and as a psychopomp it is used by the shaman to achieve ecstasy, allowing him to undertake journeys both to the underworld and to heaven. It is worth noting that the epics of the Turko-Mongolian ethnic groups often feature heavenly, winged horses. If the hero wants to acquire such a horse he has to ask for it on the sacred mountain where Tengri himself has sent him. The winged horse is capable of changing shape, and often protects his owner from the jaws of death.⁸⁰ We also find depictions of horses on shaman's drums belonging to the Tuvans,⁸¹ Altai⁸² and other Siberian peoples. The Buryatian shamans, meanwhile, use a stick ending in a horse's head on their ecstatic journeys.⁸³

In the lower part of the Mongolian female shaman's drum is a relief carving that looks like the feathered end of an arrow (ill. no. 16). In the upper part, an iron band runs round the main part of the frame, with eight iron pendants in the shape of arrows (ill. no. 15) The significance of the arrows has already been mentioned in the section on the shaman's cloak. A.V. Anokhin also adds that the number of arrows on an Altai drum depends on the number of helping spirits, from whom the arrows are also gained. The iron rod from which the arrows are hung is called the "bowstring" (*kirish*).⁸⁴ Anokhin also mentions two metal rings hung to the inside part of the drum's perimeter in the upper area of the wooden handle. During rituals, shamans would listen to their jingling and in this way would learn the will of the spirits.⁸⁵ Similar circles (ill. no. 15) can be found on the drum belonging to the Mongolian female shaman from the Náprstek Museum's collection.

The drum also has a wooden beater, long in shape (ill. no. 13, 14). On one side it is covered in deer or ibex hair. On the other side a metal strip runs its whole length. The end of the handle has a bunch of mostly white ribbons. The beater belonging to the Mongolian female shaman is similar in shape to the type of beater found among Siberian shamans. In the southern Siberian region, beaters were most often made of the wood of young birch trees. The hair used to cover them mostly came from male deer and ibex, especially from the animals' legs.⁸⁶

During the shamanic ritual the beater became a whip,⁸⁷ driving on the drum that represented the shaman's animal mount. The different sides of the beater, with their

⁷⁸ S. V. Ivanov states that among the Tuvans at the beginning of the 20th century, drawings only appeared on male shamans' drums. Female shamans had drums without drawings. In: Иванов (1954), p. 687.

⁷⁹ According to the Evenks, the spirit of a dead person was borne away by a winged reindeer. In: Dugarov (1991), p. 72.

⁸⁰ Hejzlarová (2007), p. 91

⁸¹ Иванов (1954), p. 687, ill. 135.

⁸² Ibidem, p. 645, ill. 88.

⁸³ Михайлов ((1987), pp. 107–108.

⁸⁴ Анохин (1924), p. 54.

⁸⁵ Ibidem.

⁸⁶ Анохин (1924), p. 62.

⁸⁷ Прокофьева (1961), p. 445.

differing appearances, were used by the Evenks, for example, for different purposes. The hairy side was used to drum to the spirits of the upper world, while the wooden side was used to address the lower-world spirits.⁸⁸ The beater was also used during prediction of the future and in healing.⁸⁹

As well as the drum, the ritual equipment of the Mongolian female shaman should include a mouth harp which is kept in a hinged wooden case, painted red and blue inside (ill. no. 17). However, only the wooden case is kept in the museum collection. Several things are attached to the case - a number of ribbons with cowrie shells, a blue silk scarf (now fairly ragged), an iron chain with a small dark blue pouch and a red ribbon with a cowrie on the end. The mouth harp is widespread as a shamanic instrument, especially in Siberia and Mongolia, as can be seen from the symbolism of the pendants on the case. The ribbon with the cowrie shell on the end represented a tail to the Altai,⁹⁰ which meant that the mouth harp became an animal for the shaman, like the drum.

The mouth harp (Mon. *aman khuur, tömör khuur*) was used to induce trances and to heal the sick. Among the Darkhad, shamans recognise three different ways of playing the instrument. The first is the *shuud tsokhilt* ("direct stroke"). This consists of a regular, rhythmic stroke without a change in the note, symbolising the shaman's journey. The second, *khelnii tsokhilt* ("tongue stroke"), is created by moving the tongue, which allows various different notes to be played. It is used to imitate animal sounds and to communicate with animal spirits. The last is called *ongodiin tsokhilt* ("spirit stroke"). This method of playing imitates the running of an animal, and is used when a spirit is leaving to go back from whence he came.⁹¹

The last ritual object belonging to the shaman Bariada is a bear's paw,⁹² on which several other items are hung (ill. no. 18). These are ribbons, mostly of dark blue material, a symbol of the infinite knot (Mon. *uldzeitu utus*)⁹³ made of metal inlaid with coral and turquoise, two small wooden figures of big cat beasts (probably a lion and a tiger),⁹⁴ two pieces of lynx fur⁹⁵ and an amulet consisting of several stuffed triangles made of red fabric.⁹⁶

The shaman's power was judged by the number and quality of helper spirits that he had. Bears and big cats were considered to be among the strongest. Among the Siberian peoples, the bear in particular was widely worshipped, and in shamanism represented an extremely strong helper spirit, which represented the underground empire. In a Tuvan shaman's ritual, the spirit of the bear (Tuv. *adyg eeren*) took part in the search for the spirit of an illness.⁹⁷ Among the Tuvans, the skin of a bear's paw was also hung in yurts in order

⁸⁸ Иванов (1954), p. 183.

⁸⁹ Прокофьева (1961), p. 437.

⁹⁰ Прокофьева (1971), p. 90.

⁹¹ Fox (1988), p. 28.

⁹² Given the geographical location, this is one of the subtypes of the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*).

⁹³ The thread of happiness and long life.

⁹⁴ Depictions of big cats, as powerful helper spirits, can be found on shamans' costumes above all among the Tungusic-Manchurian groups, especially the Nanai. In the case of the lion, there may also be an influence from Tibetan Buddhism, in which the mythical snow lion figures.

⁹⁵ The Altai, for example, frequently decorated their shamanic costumes with lynx fur.

⁹⁶ This type of amulet is found in Korea, in particular. A similar amulet is also hung in yurts by Turkmens, to ward off evil forces.

⁹⁷ Алексеев (1984), p. 93.

to protect their inhabitants from sickness. If they did become ill, it served as a healing device.⁹⁸

Regarding the above-mentioned analysis of the particular items in the shaman's equipment owned by the Náprstek Museum Bariada may be considered a very powerful shaman. This hypothesis is documented mainly by her helper spirits which were extremely significant and strong (bear, big cat). It is as well obvious that Bariada belonged to the category of so called "black" shamans. Nevertheless, regarding the testimony of the existence of "black and white" shamans her ability to communicate also with the upper world can not be excepted.

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⁹⁸ Алексеев (1978), p. 203.

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