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EVERLASTING BODIES OF THE ANCESTRAL SPIRITS
IN MONGOLIAN SHAMANISM

According to a very ancient shamanist belief of Mongols 'all beings with an ardent life and a warm blood' — *qamuy qalaqun amitai, büliyen žisutu amitan* — receive from 'the white seed of the father' the bones and from 'the red seed of the mother' the flesh; these bones and flesh, which form the body of every living creature, have two souls. They named host-souls — *ežen sünesün* or shortly, *ežen* — the host. The host-soul of the bones looks after them and secures their normal development. The aperture of the pelvis is his permanent seat and he lives after the death of the creature as long as the pelvis is unbroken. The host-soul of the flesh cares for it and after the death of the creature guards its body and infects anyone who touches it. For three years he watches over the remains and dies after the rests of flesh and sinews on the bones have completely disappeared.

Before coming into the World the body formed by the host-souls of the bones and flesh receives the third and main soul, which is immortal and for which only the body was created and supplied with two mortal host-souls. This is intended to be his non-eternal body, his provisory dwelling. And when the everlasting body abandons for ever the non-eternal body, he wanders three years without dwelling and lives only on the smell of the morning offerings of the first drops of tea made by all the mistresses of the family in the neighbourhood of his natal place and on the offerings made at the funeral ceremonies (*qoyılγ-a*) in his honour. He also receives his portion of smell of food and drink at the sacrifices to the Ancestral Spirits of his clan.

The host-soul of the bones still guards the remains of the dead and in the night wanders and may assault anybody he meets in his way. But the ghost dies and disappears immediately after attacking someone, if he

accidentally hurts the pelvis of the dead. He takes it in his night wanderings, because it is his dwelling, his body, the damage of which causes its death. For example, a cracked cup is dead and its soul is no longer in it, hence to offer someone tea in the dead cup signifies wishing him to die.

After the ceremony of the second burial, which took place after the first, when the flesh on the bones had completely disappeared and the host-soul of flesh died, the everlasting soul was introduced by a special rite into the Communion of the Ancestral Spirits and if during his lifetime he was a chieftain of the clan, he became a Lord-Spirit of his clan; if he was a great shaman of the clan, he rose to the rank of Protector Spirit of the clan, and if he was a simple shaman, he was converted by this solemn rite into the Guardian Spirit of his clan and of the part of its territory which he inhabited during his lifetime.

If the dead person was only a commoner of the clan, after the rite of the second burial his everlasting soul received all the rights of the Everlasting Spirits of his clan, supported by the Ancestral Lord, Protector and Guardian Spirits of his clan in the World of Spirits.

The souls of the chieftains, great shamans and simple shamans introduced into the Communion of the Ancestral Spirits became the Benevolent Lord, Protector and Guardian Spirits of their clans and received, at the end of the solemn rite of the second burial, their *möngke bey-e* — the Everlasting Bodies, which the members of their clans kept in their dwellings. To these they made offerings and sacrifices, either inviting a shaman or in his absence.

The Everlasting Bodies *Möngke Bey-e*, named *ongyun*, were made by shamans and shamanesses or by smiths under the supervision of a shaman if the blacksmith was not himself a shaman.

The name *ongyun* (*ongon*) was used by Mongols not only for the symbolical Everlasting Bodies of the Ancestral Spirits but also for the deified Spirits of Ancestors, in contradistinction to *šidkür* — the ghosts and revenants such as the host-souls of bones etc.

The Everlasting Bodies of the Ancestral Spirits were made in a form of:

1. Image cut out of felt;
2. Image cut out of wood;

3. Image cut out of plates of brass or made of clay;
4. Images on white or blue cotton fabric or silk;
5. *Sülde* or *tuy* /pronounced touck/ – the standards made from the white or black fringes of stallions.

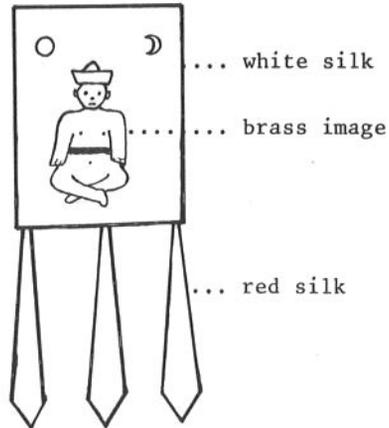
The white colour of the cotton fabric or silk, and of the stallion-fringe indicated the White or Benevolent Spirits, whereas the blue, which in Mongolian is a synonym of black, was used for the Black or Terrifying Spirits.

The images on white and blue cotton fabric or silk in terms of their style and manner of drawing, had much in common with the old shamanist drawings on the rocks and cliffs of Northern Mongolia. But there were also very beautiful shamanist icons painted on the cotton fabric or white silk with mineral colours.

The monk painters of the north part of Dzasaktu khan ayimak often painted shamanist icons for their clients, among whom were the members of families having shamans and shamanesses in their genealogy who had been raised to the rank of the local shamanist Protector or Guardian Spirit. I saw some of the old shamanist icons in the shamanist temples of ancestors in Northern Mongolia in 1928. As for the standards, they were the Everlasting Bodies of the Lord-Spirits of clans and after the elevation of Genghis Khan's clan over all the Mongol clans, the Lord-Spirits of the imperial clan of Borjiguins became the Lord-Spirits of the Nation and their Everlasting Bodies – the shamanist standards – also became the dwellings of the Lord-Spirits of all the Mongols.



The image of the Father
of the Blue Mount in
original form:



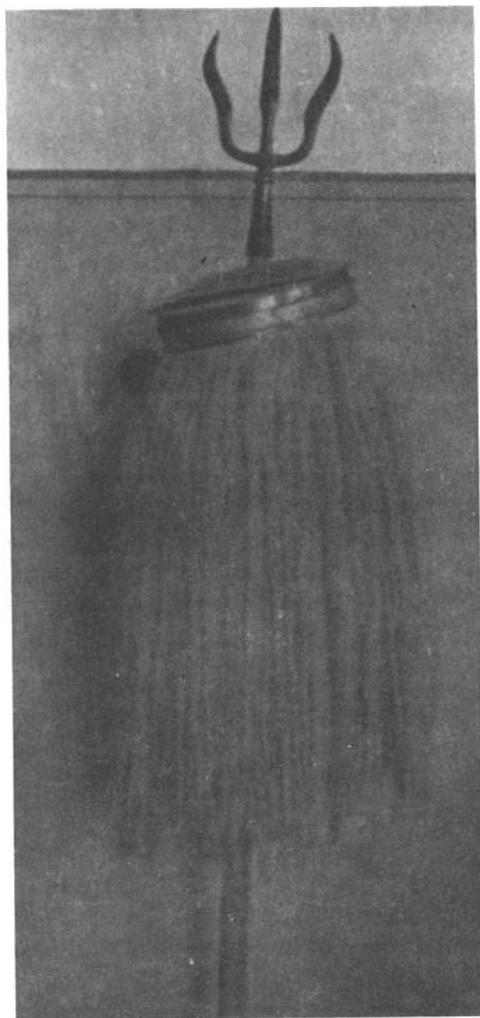
- A. The Father of the Blue Mount in Kossogol. Cut out of copper. Beginning of XIX century. Height 8 cm. The cap and the white silk to which the image was attached had been reduced to dust. (From the collection of the author).



- B. The Mother of the Blue Mount in Kossogol. Cut out of brass /copper/. Beginning of XIX century. Height 8,5 cm. The cap and silk had been reduced to dust, only the brass image rested in the wooden pavilion at the top of the mountain. (From the collection of the author).



C. The image of the Mother Alan you-a, the foremother of Genghis Khan, made in 1966 by a shamaness on the river Arik usun in the Kossogol ayimak. Height 11,5 cm. Silk and fur. Eyes made from beads.
(From the collection of the author).



D.



E.

D. The White Sülde of the Nation. The Everlasting Body of the Lord-Spirit of the Nation. From the banner of Khan Köküi in Western Mongolia. Originally one of the White Standards of Chaghatai.

E. The Black Sülde, *Qar-a sülde*, of Tüsiyetü Khan.