

EX ORIENTE LUMINA
HISTORIAE VARIAE MULTIETHNICAE

**Festskrift tillägnad Juha Janhunen
på hans 61. födelsedag 12.2.2013**

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**Tiina Hyytiäinen, Lotta Jalava,
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Helsinki 2013

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NIIDOSANG: A HUZHU MONGGHUL (TU) DEITY

Limusishiden, Ha Mingzong & C.K. Stuart

INTRODUCTION

Mongghul kungi hula moori ghariwa lurijogdi nanqudi ruasa turangni ne kudugu purghanna yangjila dii zamani Rgulang Rgunbaani ne niidosang purghanni yangilada dii jiu kuriji kuji gharighan.

Mongghul should first ask their family *purghan* for help and secondly ask Niidosang Purghan in Rgulang Monastery,¹ then they will come help you when facing sudden trouble far from home.²

The Tu or Monguor are one of China's fifty-six official ethnic groups.³ The Tu, numbering 241,198 in 2000 (Meng 2005: 22),⁴ are concentrated in Qinghai and Gansu provinces. Beginning in the 1990s (e.g. Hu & Stuart 1992), new information has emerged about the Tu, increasingly revealing their diversity, adding to earlier work that Janhunen (2006) summarizes. These more recent studies include the Tu of:

- Wutun (Janhunen et al. 2008) and Niandouhu (Fried 2009; Fried 2010), both located in Tongren County, Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province
- Hawan Village, Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County (Tu population = 12,633), Wuwei Region, Gansu Province (Ha & Stuart 2006; Ha 2007; Ha & Stuart 2008; Ha 2010)

1 Dgon lun, Erh-ku-lung, Yu-ningsi, Youning si.

2 Limuzhunmaa (b. 1942, Limusishiden's father).

3 We use "Monguor" interchangeably with "Tu"; "Mongghul" to refer to those classified as Tu in Huzhu, Datong, Tianzhu, and Ledu counties (as well as the Tu residents of Fulaan Nara, who speak Mongghul and refer to themselves as "Karilang" rather than "Mongghul"); and "Mangghuer" to refer to Tu in Minhe Hui and Tu Autonomous County, Haidong Region, Qinghai Province.

We thank Gerald Roche and Timothy Thurston for helpful comments on this paper.

4 All population figures in this paper are from Meng (2005), who uses 2000 census data.

- Shaowa Tu Autonomous County, Zhuoni County (Tu population = 615), Gannan Prefecture, Gansu Province (Janhunen, Ha & Tshe dpag rnam rgyal 2007)
- Minhe County (Tu population = 39,616) (Slater 2003; Zhu & Stuart 1996a; 1996b; 1997; 1999a; 1999b; Zhu, Üjyediin Chuluu & Stuart 1995; Zhu et al. 1997; Zhu, Üjyediin Chuluu & Stuart 1999)
- Huzhu (Limusishiden & Stuart 1994; 1995; 1998; 2001; Faehndrich 2007).⁵

Collectively, these studies emphasize the importance of studying local communities before generalizing about the Tu.

Our paper focuses on one deity that is part of the complex religious life of the Huzhu Mongghul. Earlier work on Monguor religion may be found in Schram (2006 [1954, 1957, 1961]) and Schröder (1952 & 1953). This paper complements and revises Limusishiden and Stuart (1994) that discussed the Mongghul *pram*, a term we now feel is better rendered *purghan* (see below). We focus on Niidosang, a *purghan* that is a costumed clay statue in Rgulang and Mantuu (Mantou)⁶ monasteries in Huzhu County, a clan deity, generally regarded as a protector in the Seven Valleys,⁷ and, according to some Mongghul, is a former Mongol general. Niidosang is the only *purghan* devoutly believed in by nearly all Mongghul in the Seven Valleys, as the admonition at the start of this article suggests.

Clans venerating Niidosang include the Pudang Clan, Pudonggou Village, Danma Town; Bujia (Bujia) Clan, Wenjia Village, Danma Town (only villagers surnamed Bu are Niidosang devotees); Janba Clan, Wangjia Village, Danma Town; Foorijang Clan, Huoerjun Village, Wushi Town; and the Xuangwa Clan, Beizhuang Village, Wushi Town. In 2011, locals born before 1960 were familiar with the word *warishidang* for ‘clan’. Those born later generally used the Chinese terms *dangjazi* and *jaxa*. Clan members may or may not share the same surname, depending on each village’s circumstances and the number of different surnames in the village. Clan members help each other hold such rituals as funerals and weddings.

⁵ Huzhu Tu Autonomous County (Tu population = 62,780) is located in Haidong Region, Qinghai Province. Qinghai is also home to Datong Hui and Tu Autonomous County (Tu population = 42,347, of whom less than ten spoke Mongghul in 2011) located administratively in Xining City.

⁶ Located in Danma Town.

⁷ Duluun Lunkuang ‘Seven Valleys/Jurisdictions’ refers to the territory administered by Rgulang Monastery before 1949. Residents within this area are considered Mongghul. The seven valleys refers to Danma, Wushi, Donggou, Dongshan, and Nanmenxia (Huzhu County); Dala (Ledu County); and Dongxia townships (Datong County).

Ha & Stuart (2008: 128) define *purghan* as

deities with whom [...] villagers communicate with [...] *pirgha* ([bərɿʂa] < Mo. *burqan*) [...] celestial and divine beings. It has an etymological connection to the Khalkha Mongolian expression *burqan* and is used as an equivalent of the Tibetan expression *lha*.

Purghan are all considered to have been humans previously⁸ and include deities in a *thang ka* (but not the *thang ka* itself),⁹ a spear, a sedaned statue, a pole with the same shape and size as a deity-sedan pole, a *merilang* ‘sacred mirror’,¹⁰ and the table on which a *purghan* in a sedan is placed.

Other objects may also be considered *purghan*: in 1958, under the Destroy Superstition Movement, certain Mongghul secretly removed such items from their *purghan* as *shden* ‘brightly colored silk and pieces of red and yellow cloth given to the *purghan* as clothing’, mirrors, and *hunghuari* ‘small bells’. Later, when public religious activity resumed, the hidden objects were again used. For example, Haijun’s home in Qanzua (Qianzuo) Village, Wushi Town has a mirror originally from Loya Purghan,¹¹ Langja (Langjia) Village, Wushi Town, that his family venerates as a *purghan*; Liminhua’s home in Zhanka Village, Songduo Township has a mirror originally from Danjansang Purghan that the family venerates as a *purghan*, and Sishiden’s home in Shgeayili (Dazhuang) Village, Donggou Township has a mirror originally from Loya Purghan from the Shgeayili Village temple that the family venerates as a *purghan*. Other examples include Warima’s family of Gurija Village, Danma Town, Huzhu County who venerate a *hunghuari* in the home as a *purghan*.

Purghan are distinct from Tingere ‘Heaven’, *funiizi* ‘souls’, *yiile* ‘ghosts’, *pudog mudog* ‘evils’, *lasizi* and *obo* ‘mountain deities’, and Zooya Aanee ‘Kitchen Goddess’.

8 As is the case for *pughang* among the Mangghuer of Minhe County.

9 *Thang ka/ga* refers to a form of primarily Tibetan sacred representation consisting of an image panel that is painted, embroidered, or appliquéd, which is often placed in a textile frame. The image panel frequently depicts such imagery as mandalas, deities, famous scenes, or prominent local religious personalities. They are hung up high in monastic halls, village temples, and family homes as objects of veneration. A piece of silk often hangs over the image to prevent defilement by secular life, and protects the image from light and dust. In the context of village ritual, setting up images creates interior and exterior worlds mediated through the representation of the images.

10 Common mirrors are referred to as *xal*.

11 This glass mirror is about ten centimeters in diameter; edged with yellow, green, and red cloth decorated to resemble lotus flower leaves; and is further decorated with two tassels.

Purghan are kept in village shrines and in homes, as well as the monasteries mentioned above. Examples of *purghan* in selected locations in Huzhu County include:

- Yomajaa (Yaomajia) Village, Wushi Town: Danjan (male, an iron spear) in Zhunmaasishiden's home, and Loya (male, a sedan pole) in Rnqan's home
- Liuja (Liuja) Village, Danma Town: Hunhua Purghan (male, an iron spear) in Warimahua's home
- Slidii (Songde) Village, Danma Town: Slidii Nengneng (female, sedaned image) in the Slidii Village shrine, Danjan (male, iron spear) kept in Warimaduriji's home, Chileb (male, iron spear) in Duriji's home, and Jiujuansanba (male, an iron spear) in Aniruu's home
- Rangdin Village shrine, Donggou Township: Yomajaa Loya (male, sedaned image), Chileb (male, an iron spear), and Baghari (male, iron spear)
- Tughuan Village shrine, Wushi Town: Tughuan Nengneng (female, sedaned image)
- Slidii Village shrine, Danma Town: Slidii Nengneng (female, sedaned image)
- Shdangja (Dongjia) Village, Danma Town: Shdangja Nengneng (female, sedaned image).

We wrote in 1994 (Limusishiden & Stuart, 409), in describing the religious activity of Huzhu Mongghul:

The *pram* [*purghan*] is a deity image engaged in *sinquan tinjan towu dang* (Monguor: caring for all [sentient beings in] the world). It is a conduit for a single god or goddess. The *pram* permeates the life of Monguor villages. It is always available for consultation and represents the possibility that the supplicant's distress may be alleviated.

In 2011, this requires revision as the result of unprecedented access to commercial buses and vans that ply new highways and roads, and the many employment opportunities outside Mongghul villages that left intensely impoverished rural communities¹² in Huzhu home to only children and elders for much of the year.

12 The Mongghul wedding video at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7Kv-GTg6wI>, filmed in 1999 by Zhu Yongzhong and Gonchok Galaik, testifies to the poverty of Huzhu in the late twentieth century. In 2011, housing, clothing, and roads were improved, and the number of very thin people was fewer.

Purghan are less venerated in communities where many residents moved to live in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Haixi Mongol and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province, and where villagers moved to cities to earn income by, for example, cleaning streets, and employed as building watchmen. Such villages include Jija Nuri Village, Dongshan Township and Raxi (Xiaozhuang) Village, Weiyuan Town. Linshinbog (b. 1923) of Jija Nuri (Jijialin), Dongshan Township, eloquently expressed this lack of interest during an interview in 2007 (Limusishiden & Stuart 2010: 100–101):

Only old people and some women stay in the village in summer, working the fields, and guarding the village. Only several old men still burn incense and prostrate to our village deity [...] and guard its temple. Young people increasingly pay less respect to the deity. We worry who will continue to be responsible for the temple and deity after we die.

Contributing to declining interest in *purghan* is the death and departure of old *shdezin* ‘spirit mediums’ who hold the *purghan*. For example, Shuudii, the only *shdenzin* in Yomajaa Village, Wushi Town, moved to Haixi in early 2011. Subsequently, the village *purghan* – Danjan (male, an iron spear) – kept in Zhunmaasishiden’s home is no longer consulted.

Purghan are more important in such remote Mongghul villages as Tughuan, Shdangja, and Huarin (Hualin) in Danma Town.

NIIDOSANG ACCOUNTS

Account one

Sishiden (b. 1931), a Tibetan from Gantan Tibetan Village, Wushi Town, speaks Tibetan, Mongghul, and the local Chinese dialect. A monk at Mantuu Monastery in Danma Town, he gave the following account when interviewed by Limusishiden at Mantuu Monastery on 4 April 2011:

There are three Mongghul – Qighaan “White” Mongghul, Yiiguri Mongghul,¹³ and Hara “Black” Mongghul. The Yiiguri is today’s Yugu nationality in Gansu Province. White, Yiiguri, and Black Mongghul have the same ancestors but there are differences.

My grandfather was also a monk in this monastery. He was part of the previous Tughuan reincarnation’s¹⁴ entourage that made two or three trips

13 Local people do not know what “Yiiguri” means.

14 The seventh incarnation.

to Beijing by camel and also went to many Mongol areas. Offerings were brought back and stored in Jingang Dasi Monastery.¹⁵ He died when he was nearly eighty years old. These long journeys with Tughuan reincarnation caused him joint pain when he was old. He told many stories about Mongols and believed Mongghul and Mongols were closely related.

Jiase¹⁶ designated Niidosang as the protective *purghan* of Rgulang Monastery. Niidosang is the master of our Seven Valleys. While not a high-ranking *purghan*, the area he manages is large. Jiase was sent from Lhasa to found Rgulang Monastery. Niidosang was a Mongol general and was not reincarnated after death, nor could he become a *purghan*. Jiase found the spirit of the Mongol general clad in Mongol clothes and living in a cave in the Rgulang mountainside. Jiase appointed the Mongol general the monastery's protective *purghan* to ensure its future development.

The Mongol general's soldiers stayed in this area after the general's death and people said Mongghul are those soldiers' descendants.

Niidosang has his own temple in Rgulang and Mantuu monasteries, but not in Labrang¹⁷ and Hgunbin because his jurisdiction is limited to the Seven Valleys, which is administered by Rgulang Monastery and is where Mongghul live. Niidosang is responsible for all *purghan* in Rgulang and Mantuu as well as other monasteries Rgulang administered. He is responsible for *purghan*, property, the common people, and everything in the Seven Valleys. Whenever chanting scriptures in the Seven Valleys, people first report to Niidosang:

*Niidosangma qi Rgulang Rgunbaa darang ne Duluun Lunkuangni rdahuwa.
Niudurima ne qinsangdi/ rgunbaara yan yan muxigunii qimu nige mudeghaya
gini.*

Niidosang, you are an earth protecting *purghan*¹⁸ in Rgulang Monastery and the Seven Valleys. Today we will chant certain Buddhist scripture in a household/monastery and we want you to know this.

15 Located in today's Danma Town.

16 Jiase (Jiaseduanyuequjiejiacuo, Rgyal sras don chos kyi rgya mtsho), the founder of the monastery; the first abbot of the monastery.

17 Bla brang was founded in 1709 in the current Xiahe County, Gansu Province by the first 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa.

18 "Earth" in this context refers to Duluun Lunkuang.

Account two

Luosang Sandan (Blo bzang seng ldan, b. 1987) is a Mongghul monk in Rgulang Monastery who was once invited to Inner Mongolia by some Mongols to chant scripture for a year. He gave this account when interviewed by Limusishiden on 4 April 2011:

Jasiriisang gave Niidosang his Tibetan name – Walidan Jancuu [Dpal ldan rgya mtsho]. Local people call him Niidosang. He is angered if anyone takes anything from the mountain behind Rgulang Monastery. If someone wants to take something from the monastery, they should first light incense and lamps for him. A man from Xining came here several years ago to return a twig he had taken from the Rgulang mountainside, because Niidosang had been angered by this and made the man sick.

Several Mongols once came to the monastery from Inner Mongolia. When I told them about Niidosang Purghan, they were surprised and delighted to see Niidosang dressed in Mongol clothes. They mentioned Niidosang's Mongol name and wrote his name in Mongol on a piece of paper.

The Mongghul people's paternal ancestors were Mongol and our maternal ancestors were Tibetan. Our language is a mix of Mongol and Tibetan, and, more recently, Chinese.

Stuart & Limusishiden (1994: 32), Anonymous (1990: 25), and Yan & Wang (1994: 881) give similar accounts of Niidosang's background. Anonymous (1990: 25) writes that a minister, Gerilete¹⁹ of the Dzungar, led his subordinates to the current Huzhu County, settled, and most Hu'er²⁰ people are his descendants. Gerilete was reincarnated after his death as a devil, living on the rocks of the Guolong Mountains, where Rgulang Monastery is located. Jiase reincarnation then subdued Gerilete and ordered him to protect the local area. Yan & Wang (1994: 881) comment that Niidosang's appointment as a local protector deity occurred in 1604.

Li & Li (2005: 164) suggest:

19 Mongol: Gereltu 'light'.

20 Goldstein (1978: 1219) defines Hor as "Mongolians, Turks, Uighurs, and northern nomads". Yan & Wang (1994: 822) write: "Huo'er is a Tibetan word. It is a nationality's name. During the Han Dynasty [206 BC – AD 220], Chinese called the nomads in western China Hu'er and Hu. In the Tang Dynasty, Tibetans borrowed Hu'er as a term to refer to western nomads, which they rendered Huo'er. Since the Yuan Dynasty, Huo'er has referred specifically to the Monguor."

Guo'erduo is actually Gelete [Niidosang]; the [Tibetan] name “Aodan” was given to him [Gelete] by Jiase Living Buddha, and is the abbreviation for Aolute Danbajiacuo; Aolute is also rendered Aoluchi. The worshiped image of Guo'erduo in Ya'er Monastery in Sanchuan, Minhe County²¹ and the image of Gelete [Niidosang] kept in Tudi Temple built on the cliff behind Youning [Rgulang] Monastery are all actually images of Aoluchi, Xiping Wang or the Prince of Xiping. Aoluchi refers to Kublai Khan's son [...] and the grandfather of the Tu West Qi Tusi, Gongge.

NIIDOSANG IN RGULANG AND MANTUU MONASTERIES

Rgulang and Mantuu monasteries are the only monasteries in Huzhu for which we can confirm a Niidosang image is enshrined,²² each in its own room, dressed in clothing and a hat that the monks describe as being Mongol in style. Pilgrims and visitors are not allowed to enter; they light incense at the entrance and place it in an incense burner, and prostrate at the entrance. Niidosang is thought to be fond of liquor, thus many bottles of liquor offered by visitors are on the floor of his temple. A monk fills his liquor utensil (a skullcap) three times daily and places it on a wooden table before the deity image. Niidosang is also offered food thrice daily – *shdirima* ‘flour made from roasted barley mixed with white or brown sugar and milk’, bread, and fruit. Niidosang's need for liquor is related to the belief that he often drank on the battlefield. After becoming a *purghan*, he was regarded as a living being still in need of daily meals and liquor, which other *purghan* images do not receive on a meal-like schedule.

The Niidosang image in Rgulang Monastery was destroyed in 1958. The image in Figure 1 was made, painted, and clothed by Dunye Jancuu (1925–2001) in about 1983. Dunye Jancuu was born in Wasigu Village, Wushi Town. He became a monk at the age of seven in Rgulang Monastery, and studied scripture and painting. His keen interest in *thangka* and clay sculpture led him to Wutun and Niandouhu in Tongren County to advance his artistic skills before returning to Rgulang Monastery. Forced to leave the monastery in 1958, he returned to his village, married a local Mongghul woman in 1960 who died from illness soon thereafter, and then lived in his village until resuming a monk's life in 1978 at Labrang Monastery, which he left in 1981 for Rgulang Monastery. Distressed

21 Materials collected by Gerald Roche and Wen Xiangcheng (pers. comm.) among the Minhe Mangghuer do not suggest a connection to Guo'erduo, nor does the folk narrative presented by Stuart & Limusishiden (1994: 146–147).

22 Cairang (b. 1974), a Mongghul monk from Rgulang Monastery, told Limusishiden in early 2011 that he had never seen a Niidosang image in the monasteries of Ledu County, which adjoins Huzhu County, where he is regularly invited to chant scriptures.



Figure 1 Niidosang inside Niidosang Temple, Rgulang Monastery (photo: Jugui, 3 April 2011).

by damage to the temple, he persuaded local Mongghul women to embroider *thang ka*. He bought and gave the women embroidery thread, drew the images of *purghan* on paper, asked the women to work from his sketches, and hung the completed *thang ka* in the monastery. Meanwhile, he taught several Mongghul men to make clay *purghan* images that he decorated and placed in their original monastery seats. His renovation efforts lasted two decades.²³

The Niidosang image in Figure 2 was made, painted, and clothed in 1993 by Zhushiba (b. 1975), a Mongghul monk from Hxin Village, Songduo Township in 1993, using the Rgulang Monastery Niidosang image as a model. Differences

²³ Danzhu (b. 1963), a Rgulang Monastery monk from Wayan Village, Wushi Town, provided this information when interviewed by Limusishiden on 3 April 2011 at Rgulang Monastery.



Figure 2 Niidosang image, Niidosang Temple, Mantuu Monastery (photo: Jugui, 3 April 2011).

in the images are noteworthy: The face of the Mantuu Monastery Niidosang is paler and features facial hair while the Rgulang Monastery image is darker and has no facial hair. In addition, the backgrounds differ with the Mantuu version, for example, lacking a nearby picture of the tenth Panchen Lama (1938–1989), while the Mantuu version lacks a large *merilang* that adorns the Rgulang image, suggesting flexibility in how *purghan* images are imagined and constructed locally.

In addition to worshipping the Niidosang images in the monasteries, Niidosang (and other) *purghan* are consulted in villages to treat illness, ensure well-being, guarantee good harvests, alleviate droughts, and prevent hailstorms. *Purghan* communicate through a *xilajin*, who is generally an aged man who asks the *purghan* questions, and the *shdenzin*. *Purghan* move to communicate. For example, a spear *purghan* moves up and down in the hands of the *shdenzin* to signify a positive answer while a still spear is a negative answer.

Limusishiden participated in a *lazii*²⁴ in a household where a Niidosang *purghan* is kept in Pudang Village, which neighbors Limusishiden's natal Tughuan Village, on the second day of the second lunar month in 2011, and provides this account:

People honor Niidosang on the same *lazii* day – the second day of the first lunar month. It was about 8 a.m. when I reached the home where Niidosang is kept. About forty participants from Tughuan, Pudang, and Nangou villages were already there.

Niidosang is the three villages' chief *purghan*; Tughuan Village has two separate Tughuan Nengneng *purghan* and Pudang Village has a single Baghari *purghan*. In the past, a shared belief in Niidosang meant residents of the three villages helped each other generously without complaint to build adobe home walls and hold weddings and funerals. But, in about 1985, relations between the villages became more distant and mutual assistance was much less common, except for the annual *lazii* ritual.

People arrived with steamed buns, bottles of liquor, and incense; lit incense in the courtyard; made three prostrates in the direction of the deity; walked up to the second floor of the two-storied wooden building; entered the room where Niidosang was placed; presented their offerings; prostrated again to the spear *purghan*; and then returned to the courtyard.

At around 9 a.m. about fifty people had gathered in the courtyard waiting for the *lazii* ritual to begin. The *shdenzin* and *xilajin* decided it was time to start.²⁵ The *shdenzin* rinsed his hands with liquor, prostrated to the *purghan*, took hold of it, and went out to the first floor roof, where the *xilajin* made three prostrations before the *purghan* and began asking questions. Participants, noticing the ritual had begun, lit firecrackers and prostrated to the *purghan*.

24 This ritual is held in a home with a *purghan*. Clan members gather during the second to eighth days of the first lunar month (particularly on the third and eighth days). Participants bring twelve small steamed buns and new colorful cloths (mostly red and yellow), which are offered to the *purghan* early in the morning. Firecrackers and incense are lit, prostrations are made to the *purghan*, and participants ask the *purghan* about the coming year – the welfare of the village and its households, livestock, and crops; and individual affairs. The *purghan* generally communicates the need to visit certain *lasizi* peaks (e.g. Chileb, Durizang, Lawa, and Sughua (Suobutan) in the Huzhu area) on propitious days (the eighth and fifteenth days) during the first and second lunar months. At the *lasizi*, participants offer incense and prostrate to all directions. The *purghan* might also ask each family to chant scriptures in the village on a certain day during the New Year.

25 The *shdenzin* is Rashidan (b. 1968) of Tughuan Village. In 2011, he was the only *shdenzin* for Niidosang *purghan* in the three villages (after Shoya's death in 2009). The *xilajin* is Niido (named after Niidosang, b. 1969) of Pudang Village.



Figure 3 Niidosang (iron spear held by the man facing the camera), Pudang Village, Danma Town (photo: Limusishiden, 6 March 2011).

The spear moved rapidly up and down in the *shdenzin's* hands as the *xilajin* asked questions. Participants stood in the courtyard watching the *purghan's* movement on the roof. After about ten minutes, the *xilajin* announced, "All of you please listen: this year's green crop officers are Uncle Gindinsirang of Tughuan Village and Uncle Fuchai of Nangou Village."²⁶ This is all."

Niidosang was returned to his room as people left immediately for their homes to prepare for the annual New Year visiting of relatives.

²⁶ *Tiruuqi* or *guwa* are middle-aged and older men chosen by the *purghan* to be responsible for crops between planting and harvest. *Tiruuqi* may leave the village for only a short time, must regularly ask the *purghan* how to protect crops from hailstorms, how to make it rain when there is drought, invite monks to chant for the benefit of the crops, and light incense and prostrate to Heaven and all *purghan* on a daily basis, beseeching them to protect the crops. They also regularly collect a small amount of money, flour, and rapeseed oil from villagers for crop protection rituals.

CONCLUSION

In 2011, many illiterate Mongghul and Mongghul with some education referred to Mongols as Hara Mongghul and to themselves as Qighaan Mongghul. Older Mongghul use “Mongghul” to refer to both themselves and Mongols. In our studies of Mongghul oral literature we have found only “Manzihun” (Limusishiden & Stuart 1998: 172–181), an account of the arrival of Mongols and their conflict and intermarriage with locals. Additionally, many Mongghul who were born before 1941 gave examples in 2011 of certain Mongghul who, they believe, have Mongol ancestors because they fling ash at the moon during Mid-Autumn Festival,²⁷ that is, Mongghul in Maja (Majia) Valley Village, Donggou Township do this on the fifteenth night of the eighth lunar month. This, they explained, was because of a memory of Mongols having been defeated and killed on this date.²⁸ Such historical memories and interpretations resonate with certain Mongols, for example, Billé (2009: 218) writes that many Mongols do not eat moon cakes:

the mid-autumn festival, during which moon cakes (*yuebing*) are consumed by the Han. Mongolian friends and informants have related that, at the end of the Yuan dynasty, the Han plotted against the Mongol rulers by hiding a secret message in the moon cakes. Breaking the cakes open, the Han saw the message instructing them to kill their Mongol rulers, and carnage ensued.

Lattimore (1962: 200) gives more detail:

The legend of the Fifteenth of the Eighth Moon [...] reflects the tradition of the spirit of the people. The story, [...] is that the Mongols dispersed themselves over the country and appointed ten Chinese families to the maintenance of every Mongol. They disported themselves like true Imperialists, even making them go down on all fours for them to ride. No modern Chinese propagandist could imagine a better cartoon. When the rising against the Mongols was plotted, little figures of pastry representing men were sent to every family. In each of these figures was a paper on which were written the words: “On the Fifteenth of the Eighth Moon kill the Mongols.” Accordingly on the festival each Mongol was killed by the ten families appointed for his

²⁷ The Mid-Autumn Festival parallels the autumn equinox of the solar calendar, when the moon is at its fullest, and is a legal holiday in China. Family and friends gather to admire the moon and eat moon cakes.

²⁸ Popular accounts suggest that during the late Yuan Dynasty, plans were devised to overthrow the Mongols by putting papers inside moon cakes that read in Chinese “Kill the Mongols on the fifteenth of the eighth lunar month.” Mongols supposedly did not like moon cakes, were unable to read Chinese (so the story goes), and thus were unaware of attacks that resulted in the defeat of the Yuan and the establishment of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644).

maintenance. The success of the rebellion culminated in the establishment of a native dynasty, the glorious Ming line.

A belief that Niidosang was once a Mongol general is not definitive about past links to the presence of Mongol soldiers in contemporary Huzhu, but it is an important folk belief, suggesting historically important relations.

It is simplistic to conclude that interest in Niidosang and other *purghan* is on the decline and that some years from now, interest would be much less to nonexistent. In examining revival of religious practice related to the clan goddess, Niangniang, of the Mongghul of Hawan Village, Ha & Stuart (2008) concluded that building a small shrine in the village to Niangniang could be attributed to the importance of farming and the belief that Niangniang influences rain; the belief that Niangniang can help cure illness; and as the primordial ancestor, veneration of Niangniang strengthens a sense of community and helps people re-identify with their roots; as evidenced in the trips to the ancestral Huzhu homeland to empower Niangniang. Given the example of Hawan Village and Niangniang, it remains to be seen if Huzhu Mongghul will continue to call upon Niidosang Purghan and, if they do, with what degree of reverence and need.

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CHINESE TERMS

Beizhuang 北庄	Han 汉
Bujia 补家	Hawan 哈湾
Dala 达拉	Hualin 桦林
Danma 丹麻	Huangnan 黄南
Datong 大通	Hu'er 霍尔
Dazhuang 大庄	Hui 回
Donggou 东沟	Huzhu 互助
Dongjia 东家	Jiase 嘉色
Dongshan 东山	Jiaseduanyuequjiejiacuo 嘉色端悦却吉嘉措
Dongxia 东峡	Jijialin 吉家岭
Gannan 甘南	Jingang Dasi 金刚大寺
Gansu 甘肃	Langjia 浪加
Gantan 甘滩	Lawa 拉哇
Guolong 郭隆	Ledu 乐都
Ha Mingzong 哈明宗	Li Dechun 李得春
Haidong 海东	Liujia 柳家
Haixi 海西	

Majia 马家
Ming 明
Mantou 馒头
Minhe 民和
Nangou 南沟
Nanmenxia 南门峡
Nianduhu 年都乎
Niangniang 娘娘
Pudonggou 普洞沟
Qianzuo 前座
Qinghai 青海
Shaanxi 陕西
Shaowa 勺哇
Songde 松德
Songduo 松多
Suobutan 索卜滩
Tang 唐
Tianzhu 天祝
Tongren 同仁
Tu 土

Tusi 土司
Wangjia 汪家
Weiyuan 威远
Wenjia 温家
Wen Xiangcheng 文祥呈
Wushi 五十
Wutun 吾屯
Wuwei 武威
Xiahe 夏河
Xiaozhuang 小庄
Xining 西宁
Xinjiang 新疆
Yaomajia 姚麻家
Youning si 佑宁寺
Yuan 元
yuebing 月饼
Yugu 裕固
Zhanka 占卡
Zhu Yongzhong 朱永忠
Zhuoni 卓尼