



## The Nine Levels of Shanar Initiation in Buryat Shamanism

Nichlas Breeze Wood

**Above:** a Buryat shaman with their drum, wearing a maihabshitai cap and an iron orgy antler crown

The Buryat people are one of the Mongol peoples, who live on the great grassy steppes of Northern Central Asia and Southern Siberia - before modern national borders divided up the land into Mongolia, Russia and China.

Most of them now live around Lake Baikal in Buryatia, which is part of the Russian Federation of States, lying just to the North of Mongolia, but some Buryats live in Mongolia itself, and others live in Northern

China, in the province of Nèi Ménggú; or 'Inner Mongolia' as it is more commonly known in the West.

The Buryats, like the rest of the Mongolian people have a very long history of shamanism, in fact many shamanologists think that the area is the actual birthplace of shamanism, with it arising there, out of pre-shamanic animistic traditions around 10-15,000 years ago, and spreading to other places by means

of migrations of peoples and cultural exchange along trade routes.

Buryat shamanism, in recent centuries, has suffered setbacks however. There were concerted efforts to eradicate it by both Christian and Tibetan Buddhist missionaries who started to move into the area from around the C16th onwards, and in the C20th Soviet communism came close to annihilating it. Tens of thousands of Buryats - many of them shamans or Buddhist lamas - were killed during the Stalinist repressions of the 1920s and 30s, and the practices of shamanism were forced to go underground for many decades, with shamans fearing for their lives if they were informed upon.

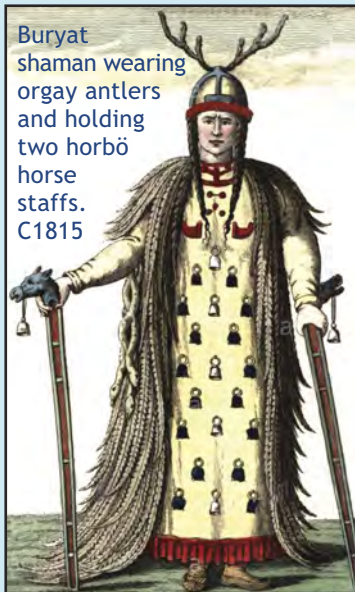
Because of this, when the Soviet Union collapsed, shamanism was in a poor state, and because of the turmoil of the previous decades - which had dismantled much of Buryat cultural identity, including the knowledge of family trees, which were important to Buryat family culture - people needed to find again their culture, and so shamanism took on even more importance than it had perhaps held in pre-Soviet times.

Talking to a Mongolian Darkhad shaman friend, whose people traditionally live in the North of Mongolia, quite close to the Russian border, and whose shamanistic traditions were historically close to those of their Buryat neighbours, I have been told that Buryat shamanism has undergone a great deal of change in the last 100 years. It has become much more influenced by Tibetan Buddhism, and after the Soviet collapse, also by New Age ideas which have drifted there from Russia itself.

However, despite these other cultural colourings, there is now a vibrant and thriving shamanic tradition developing in the area and many initiations - very much based on traditional, pre-Soviet initiations - are now taking place.

This article aims to give a brief overview of these initiations, because the path of a shaman in Buryatia is not binary - one is not a shaman, or not a shaman, because once initiated as a fledgling shaman, there is a long path of further initiations ahead of you.

Buryat shaman wearing orgay antlers and holding two horbö horse staffs. C1815



Throughout this article, I will use the general word 'shaman.' The Buryat word for a male shaman is *bö*, and their word for a female shaman is *udigan*. The word shaman [From the neighbouring Evenk people], is a male word, and they too use the word *udigan* for female shamans, but Buryat initiations for both sexes follow similar patterns.

There is a further differentiation in Buryat shamanism, between 'Black Shamans' and 'White Shamans.' Both types of shamans can be male or female and they often work together. The terms do not have anything to do with black and white magic in a Western sense, Black Shamans do not do harm, and White Shamans do not do good - as a matter of course, and actually both black and white shamans are capable of both, and some shamans do indeed seek to harm other people. The terms really refer to the way they work and the spirits who work with them.

The easiest way to tell these two types of shamans apart in Buryat traditions is Black Shamans use drums, and White Shamans use bells.

Some shamans are only either White or Black, but some shamans have both initiations and can take which ever role is required at any one time.

### SUFFERING SHAMAN SICKNESS

One of the key factors on following a shamanic path is the pressure from the spirits for someone to become a shaman. No one in traditional shamanistic cultures

decides to become a shaman from choice, and many people who feel the 'calling' do what they can to get out of it. In Buryat this shaman sickness is called *ongon daralga*.

The pressure to be a shaman comes from the spirits - called the *ongon* - of the family ancestral clan the person is a member of.

The concept of shamanic spirits we have in the west is largely based on the Core Shamanic model invented by Michael Harner, who taught about 'Power Animals': spirits in the form of animals who the shamanic practitioner makes contact with through journeying. However in most traditional forms of shamanism the spirits are ancestral spirits, the spirits of previous shamans and clan, family or lineage founders. It is these spirits who push the shaman-to-be in the direction of initiation, and this push generally comes in the form of 'shaman sickness', a psycho-physiological crisis which results in the shaman-to-be requiring help from a shaman who is able to see it for what it truly is.

Shaman sickness is always a very difficult and painful period in someone's life, during which the *ongons* make themselves known in some way to the sufferer, and put pressure' on them.

This can take several years, and during it the person's concepts and perceptions about themselves are all broken down and destroyed. The person, in effect undergoes a 'virtual death,' and is then 'reborn.' Every one who experiences this does so in their own way, and has their own story. For some it may come as a form of mental anguish, for others it is more in the form of a physical ailment. It often happens during the teenage years, or even occlusionally when the person is a small child, but it can occur later in life too.

The arrival of shaman sickness later in life seemed to be especially the case during Soviet times, where many people received their calling often just before retirement - some people say this was because the *ongods* had pity of the people, suffering under brutal Soviet repression, and so they didn't want to put people's lives in danger by calling them to be shamans at a young age.

Sometimes shaman sickness manifests in the form of visions

Buryat shaman with their drum, wearing a maihabshitai cap and an iron orgay antler crown holding horbö horse staffs. Photo Early C20th



Buryat shaman wearing a maihabshitai cap holding horbö dragon staffs and a bell. The blue colour of the cap dragon staff and bell show they are a white shaman





Shamans carrying birch trees, bringing them to the ceremonial grounds



Calling to the spirits, besides a replanted birch tree covered in offering cloths



Offerings and a replanted birch tree

and dreams, where the person's soul is taken up to meet the sky spirits - the Tengeri, but however it manifests it is always a fairly sudden, very painful process. The shaman-to-be world crumbles, they might hear physical voices giving them instructions, or have strong compulsions to do ritual activity. They may have great difficulty sleeping, they are likely to become nervous and withdrawn, often seeking solitude, and perhaps even run away to wander in remote places.

Epileptic type fits are not uncommon, as are semi-comatose states, like a type of paralysis. They might be struck down by a serious disease, which cannot be cured by ordinary means, but only responds to special rituals.

Trying to run from, or ease the 'pressure of the ongons' may lead some people to substance abuse or addiction. That is a very common fate for those who seek to avoid the call of the spirits.

Some, tormented by the calling, may become 'mad', becoming violent and out of touch with normal reality completely. They may spend their time shouting, rolling on the ground, or running wildly here and there.

Some visions and experiences may be extreme. One may feel physically tortured by spirits, one's body may be cut up into pieces or one may experience the feeling of being burned alive or struck by invisible lightning, or pulled or poked by invisible hands.

Traditionally, once ongon darlaga had been diagnosed, no-one was allowed to touch the shaman-to-be, and experienced shamans and elders of the clan or village would gather round and pray for their safety.

Although the symptoms of ongon darlaga may seem similar to those triggered by an ordinary physical or mental disease, their cause is considered to be completely different, and it is the job of an experienced shaman to determine if the person is simply ill, possessed by harmful spirits - rather than a shaman's ongon spirits - or if they are mentally unstable.

Once an experienced shaman has confirmed that the sick person has ongon darlaga, and really does have a calling, special rituals are performed to ease their suffering,



Left: carrying offerings besides a replanted birch tree

and the preparation path towards a formal initiation is begun.

The first of these special rituals is *ugaalga*, a sacred body washing ritual. During this ritual, specific on gods and other spirits are called to, and a number of stones of specific colours, taken from riverbeds, are heated red hot and put in water from a sacred spring. The hot rocks boil the water and empower it, and then bunches of reeds, or twigs, are dipped in the water and used to slap the shaman-to-be all over. The shaman-to-be is also smudged, normally in juniper smoke.

### BECOMING A SHAMAN

Once on gon daralga has been relieved, those with a true calling

begin an often long process of instruction into different aspects of shamanism. Before initiation a shaman-to-be is called *sagaasha* - this is someone who has 'the spark,' the potential, and who has gone through on gon daralga, but not taken any actual initiations. They are considered to be an apprentice, and their role, outside of learning is to make offerings of milk, black tea or vodka to the spirits, and generally are of assistance to initiated shamans. They can pray to the spirits for themselves and their relatives and may have some psychic powers. They can be much respected, but if they overstep the boundaries, they will be punished by the spirits. Sometimes, but not often, *sagaasha* apprentices never take

initiations, and remain at this stage for the rest of their lives.

A *sagaasha* should have been through a verified on gon daralga, they should study seriously, and learn from their 'shaman-father' for several years before their first actual initiation is entered into. They should have a good character, be kind and honest, and show some degree of magical or psychic abilities, which have been verified by their shaman-father. They should have a good capacity to learn, show a sense of devotion to the spirits, have a sharp memory, a clear mind, and be physically unimpaired and capable of carrying out the duties and role of a shaman.

When it seems as if it might be time for a formal initiation to be carried out, a shaman-to-be is discussed by elders of their clan, or lineage. These elders look closely at the shaman-to-be's qualities, and in the past this was a very rigorous process because shamans have a big role and can make a big impact on Buryat society. The number of shamans in the clans used to be quite tightly controlled, but now many more people are *sagaasha*.

This increase in numbers is due in part to the influence of New Age practices and an interest in them by the population of Siberia, and also by the social fragmentation caused by the collapse of Communism. There are now several shaman societies who offer initiations and, as well as native Buryats, Russians and other nationalities are taking the training and becoming initiated into Buryat shamanism.

### INITIATION - PAST AND PRESENT

Although Buddhism had taken a toll on Shamanism, and had influenced it greatly since the C16th, shamanism was still pretty well established up to the early parts of the C20th, when Communism made its concerted effort to destroy shamanism.

There were always a number of initiations, like levels of attainment, within their shamanic traditions, but these varied depending on the lineage. Twelve levels seems to be common, with an occasional thirteenth level for shamans who were truly outstanding. The number twelve is associated with the number of prongs on the antler of the sacred deer of Buryat traditions.

Left: a White Shaman carrying a bell, and a European Black Shaman carrying their drum



Right: a cleansing ceremony where shamans are sprayed with arshaan



In the nineteenth century these traditions began to weaken, and many shamans took a limited number of initiations over the course of their lives, but Communism made all of these initiations impossible to perform openly, and the number of shamans practising - either openly or clandestinely - dramatically reduced.

The post-Communist liberalisation of *perestroika* saw a revival of the ancient initiation systems, and gradually these have developed into a series of nine levels of initiation, the number nine referring to the number of branches of the World Tree of Buryat cosmology, and the nine spheres of their universe.

A Buryat shamanic initiation - of any level - is known as a *shantar*, although the word is used for shamanic initiations in many different Mongol groups, and often spelt *chanar*.

Through the first shantar, an uninitiated *sagaasha* is transformed into a 'shaman-in-the-law,' a

formal member of the lineage. Different modern-day Buryat shamanic schools see shantars from different points of view. For some the actual shantar ceremony is the most important thing, while for others the actual knowledge and power of a shaman is the important thing, rather than how many shantar levels they have reached.

#### NINE LEVELS OF SHANTAR

Although actual details will vary depending on the lineage, this is a guide to what each of the nine levels of Buryat shamanism involve.

**ONE:** This is the very beginning of a shaman's path. They step from being a *sagaasha* to being a 'shaman', either a *bö* (male) or an *udigan* (female)

A shaman who has received this initiation is accepted as a beginner, with the right to make offerings to the *ongon* spirits of their clan. They are called a *yabagan bö* [on foot shaman] because their magical travel is very limited. The

ritual objects they can use at this level are very limited. They are given a ritual hat with a front band made of the fur of their clan's totemic animal; a birch-wood *horbö* [ritual staff - a horse-headed staff for Black Shamans, and a dragon-naga headed staff for White Shamans]; a silk belt; a knife; and a flint-stone.

Between the first and the second shantar there must be a gap of no less than three years.

**TWO:** This shantar brings the shaman more power, and gives them wider rights.

After this initiation they are called a *noitolkhon bö* [a shaman who has been made wet], because the initiation includes a *ugaalga* body-washing ritual, with water from three sacred springs.

After this shantar a shaman can call to and pray to the local land spirits of their valley, the spirit of fire and the *ongons* of their clan. If they are a Black Shaman they receive a second birch *horbö* horse staff, making a pair. This one is a longer staff than the previous *horbö*. White shamans only generally have one dragon-headed staff.

After three years they can take the third initiation.

**THREE:** A shaman with the third initiation is called a *hayalgyn bö* [One who can offer upwards], because they can now make offerings to some of the sky spirits.

In the course of this shantar a billy goat has to be ritually sacrificed to a spirit called *Manzhilai Zayaan*, a special spirit helper of shamans who goes back and forth between the sky and the earth. It is through *Manzhilai Zayaan* that the *Tengeri* sky spirits are contacted. A third shantar shaman can now make offerings to the sky and can perform offering rituals where a white ram is sacrificed.

There should be a minimum of a one year gap before the shaman takes the next shantar.

**FOUR:** A shaman at this stage is called a *zhodo'otoi bö*, [shaman with silver fir tree bark], because they are given fir tree bark which is burned as smudge.

The shaman receives a bronze *toli* [shaman's mirror] and a *bardag*, a shaman's whip, dressed with coloured ribbons symbolising the

Below: shamans run around a grove of replanted birch trees



shaman's power over the people, because traditionally at this stage a shaman received the right to be a judge in legal disputes. They are also expected to ensure that taboos are not broken, and that people under their authority stick to the rules of moral conduct.

In this shanar, the shaman is purified with water from nine springs and takes a special oath at a sacred site, in the presence of their shaman-father and the elders of the clan or lineage. The oath promises to help all people, regardless of their social status or wealth; not to ask the rich, or the poor, for anything in return for their services, but only to take what they are given freely. They also swear to protect the old, poor and weak; not to frighten people, or speak badly about them; and not to make public the secret knowledge and techniques of shamans.

There must be a gap of a minimum of one year before the fifth shanar can be taken.

**FIVE:** It is only at this stage that a shaman receives their drum and beater. they are now called called a *hesete bö*, [a shaman with a deerskin drum]. Now the shaman can use the drum to undertake shamanic journeys, and they can perform various rituals such as soul retrievals and communicate directly with the spirits by going to talk to them.

At this stage a shaman meets their 'sky-consort,' a spiritual being from the sky who helps them in their work. They can now also call to certain *Tengeri*, but they can only reach the three lower levels of the sky.



Left: Buryat shamans at a ceremony on the edge of a town



Left: the author's own bardag blessing whip

A *hesete bö* has the ability to lick red-hot iron for the purposes of purification, healing and as proof of his power. For purifying work the red hot iron is licked and saliva, empowered by the red hot iron, is then spat onto the patient.

There should be a minimum of a one year gap before the sixth shanar is taken.

**SIX:** At this stage the shaman receives a new iron horse-headed *horbö*, with nine iron rings fixed to it and various metal objects. They are now called a *hor'botoi bö*, [shaman with an iron horse staff]. They can now empower ritual objects by inviting the ongon spirits to descend and live within them.

There should be a three year gap before the next shanar.

**SEVEN:** This is a large and important shanar, and before it the shaman has to undergo an extensive purification smudging ceremony with smoke from silver fir bark, and they have to come out of the smoke hole of their ger [yurt] by climbing a tree, cut and placed there, which represents the tree of *Udeshi Burkhan* the protector spirit of the gate to the sky.' With this tree sticking out of the ger's smoke hole



Left: the author's own wooden *horbö* horse staffs

Far left: a shaman holds a bardag while performing a blessing

it connects the hearth at the centre of the ger with the sky.

Then the shaman is placed on a white felt carpet outside of the ger and purified with water taken from sacred springs, that is mixed with a little blood taken from a ginger coloured horse - although sometimes they are washed in the blood alone.

Then nine bottles of mares milk vodka are poured over their head to anoint it, and they receive a *maihabshитай* and an *orgay*. The *maihabshитай* is an elaborate cap, generally made of brocade, with brocade tails hanging down the back and a fringe which falls over the face, covering the eyes. White Shamans wear a blue cap, and Black shamans wear a black cap.

An *orgay* is an antler crown, generally made of iron but sometimes of other materials such

as copper. The *orgay* is worn on top of the *maihabshитай*. A shaman at this level is called a *maihabshитай bö* [shaman with a *maihabshитай*].

Besides the *maihabshитай* and *orgay*, they also receive five sacred animal skins, a special cloak with metal objects sewn onto it, and three more deer skin drums with beaters. A shaman at this level can start to give shanars to *sagaasha* beginning shamans.

The next shanar can only be taken after a period of three years.

**EIGHT:** At this stage the shaman receives his second iron horse-headed *horbö* staff, making a pair of them, to which - among other metal objects - is attached a small metal ladder, as a symbol of their ability to travel to the sky. The *horbö* have an *ongon* spirit living with them, and become powerful steeds on which the shaman travels to the Upper World. The shamans also receive a sacred hat, made out of bear fur, with the symbol of the sun on the front.

The shaman now has horse staffs of both wood and iron,

several drums, and all the other necessary ritual objects of shamanism. They know all the teachings and rituals of shamanism very well, can invoke all the spirits of the three worlds and can control the weather.

Because the shaman has gathered so much to them, they are called *duuren bö* [complete bö]

After a year the shaman can take the final shanar.

**NINE:** Before the last shanar can be taken the shaman has to obtain permission to enter this shanar from all the spirit lords of the highest level of the Middle World, and from the *Tengeri* of the Upper World by performing an extensive prayer festival.

In the course of the initiation they receive a human-headed metal staff, which is empowered and alive, with a powerful *ongon* spirit inside it, and this staff is said to be able to perform magical actions by itself.

The shaman also receives three very large drums, made out of a deer, a goat and bull skin.

Right: an old iron *orgay* shaman's antler crown



Right: a pair of iron *horbö* horse-headed shaman's staffs



Far right: the author's own Buryat shaman's *maihabshитай* cap and brocade tails



Now the shaman is said to have extraordinary power and a very impressive array of ritual objects among which there are the nine drums, and nine toli mirrors.

They are now called a *zaarin bö*, [supreme shaman]. Shamans rarely reach this level, and are said to be able to do incredible things, such as fly in the air or cut their heads off, and then put their head back on again, without leaving a mark. They are also said to have extraordinary psychic powers and be formidably powerful.

The whole process of arriving at the level of the ninth shanar takes a minimum of fifteen years, but in reality far longer than this, as the shaman has to be ready before each new shanar can be taken. Women shamans - udigans - have their own stages of initiation, which are also nine in number, and they have similar titles and attributes.

As said above, only an experienced shaman, who has received seven shanar or more, has the ability to conduct shanars for new shamans, and traditionally a shaman cannot initiate more than nine other male shamans, and nine female udigans. These are their eighteen shaman sons and daughters. This is a very strict rule, and it is said that if it is broken it has grave consequences for the rule breaker, such as the loss of all their shamanic powers, the termination of their shamanic lineage, and quite possibly their own death.

## EXAMPLES OF SHANAR

Shanar are dramatic prolonged

rituals, which have a large cast of helpers. Here are two brief accounts of shanars, one for a bö, and one for an udigan.

For the bö's shanar, once the date for the ceremony had been established, a purification rite was performed. Traditionally this would be performed either three or nine times.

The shaman-father and his nine shaman-sons, went to three springs, where they sprinkled milk and vodka, and took water to bring to the site of the shanar. They boiled the water, and added juniper to it to make *arshaan*<sup>1</sup>. This was sprinkled on a billy goat, which was then sacrificed, and some drops of its blood were added to the *arshaan*.

Then divination was performed using a sheep's shoulder blade bone, which was put into a fire to make it crack, and then the cracks were read for the meaning from the spirits.

The shaman-father then dipped a bundle of birch twigs into the *arshaan*, and touched the back of the initiate, then one after another, the nine shaman sons did the same, while the shaman-father gave the initiate words of instruction about how to live as a shaman:

'When the poor need you, don't ask too much from them, but take what they give.

'Think of the poor and ask the Tengeri to protect them from bad spirits and evil forces.

'When the rich call you, don't ask too much for your services, either.

'If the rich and the poor seek your help at the same time, go first to the poor and then to the rich.'

And other lines of instruction.

The initiate swore to follow



these rules; and all those gathered prayed and made offerings to the protector spirits.

After this initial purification ritual had been completed, the shaman-father and his nine shaman-sons went into a ger for a nine-day fast, drinking only tea, and eating only boiled barley flour.

When the nine day fast was over, but before the main part of the shanar had started, the shaman-father and his nine shaman-sons went to the forest and, after making offerings, dug up several large birch trees, which they brought back to the site of the shanar.

On the morning of the actual shanar, the ceremony began by erecting the birches in a special pattern, digging holes in the ground and pushing the cut off ends - without roots - of the tree's trunks into the ground, to make a sort of grove of birch trees.

The first tree was stuck into ground in the centre of the initiate's own ger, just before the central hearth, and the top was pushed through the ger's smoke hole. This birch was the pathway to the sky.

The remaining trees were erected around this ger, and connected to the central tree inside by means of red and blue ribbons. These symbolised the 'rainbow' path by which shamans travel the universe.

The trees surrounding the ger were decorated with various ritual items, such as ribbons, bells and

Above: a Black Shaman wearing an iron orgy and a maihabshitai plays a drum



Left: shamans with offerings at a ceremony

animal skins, and these served different ritual functions, some of them being offerings.

Once all the trees had been erected, the initiate, together with the shaman-father's nine shaman-sons blessed and awakened all of the initiate's ritual implements given to them at this shanar level, and called down ongon spirits to live within them.

Then, with a long ritual offering, the Tengeri, ongons and other spirits were asked to bless and empower the initiate, and assist them in their work.

At this point the initiate had to climb the birch tree in their ger, while holding a sword, and they had to come out of the smoke hole at the top, and there had to call to the Tengeri and the other powerful spirits, asking for their help.

While they were doing this, those remaining inside the ger constantly purified themselves with smudge smoke from burning pine smoke.

Then the initiate descended back into the ger, and was put on a white felt mattress and carried out by four shaman-sons of the shaman-father, each holding a corner.

The initiate was taken to where a billy goat was sacrificed and the initiate's head, ears and eyes were smeared with the animal's blood, after which another body-washing ritual was then performed.

After that, the shaman-father climbed the birch tree and cut nine notches at its top, afterwards descending and sitting on the white felt carpet himself.

The initiate had to re-climb the tree next, and after him all other shaman-sons, all of whom entered a trance state.

At the end of a long period of many days of ceremonial working, the site was dismantled and the trees and all the offerings burned.

This is a very abridged description of just one shanar, each shaman lineage will do it slightly differently. For a much more complete description please see the further reading list at the end of the article.

Here is a very abridged account of an udigan's shanar.

The ritual took place in the mountains, and was organised by a male bö of her clan.

Before anything else was done, a white goat was sacrificed to the spirits, and everyone prayed around a sacred fire which had been built.

Then, the initiate entered a trance state, and to determine if the ongods had really accepted her as an udigan, and also as a way for the bö to check the depth of her trance, the bö put two pebbles - one white and one black - into the

fire, and left them in there until they were red-hot.

He then gave them to the udigan in trance to put into her mouth and suck until they had cooled down.

The udigan was able to do this without any problem, and when the bö examined her mouth later he found no sign of any burns. This was a sign that she had indeed been accepted by the ongods, and was now qualified to be an udigan.

It is said that a bö or an udigan only achieves their full power after going through what are known as the 'nine circles of suffering.'

These are in addition to a formal shanar, and are a kind of natural initiation of sufferings and difficulties, sometimes extraordinary, which the shaman has to encounter and overcome in the course of their life.

Only by going through these 'nine circles,' can a shaman purify themselves and develop real compassion towards people, because they have personally experienced great suffering 'on their own hide' as it is said, and can so understand the human condition, making them really ready for the work of helping fellow human beings.

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#### NOTES:

1: Arshaan is a sacred liquid used to empower and purify people or objects. For instructions about the making of arshaan, see an article in Sacred Hoop Issue 102.

#### Further Reading:

'Shanar: Dedication Ritual of a Buryat Shaman in Siberia.'  
By Virlens Tkacz, Wanda Phipps and Dashinima Dugarov.

'Tragic Spirits: Shamanism, Memory, and Gender in Contemporary Mongolia'  
By Manduhai Buyandelger.

'Bo and Bon: Ancient Shamanic Traditions of Siberia and Tibet'  
By Dimitry Ermakov

#### Further Watching:

'So, You Want to Be a Shaman: A Shamanic rite of passage for beginners in Siberia.'  
A 45 minute long well made documentary film made by RT (Russian Television) in English, with subtitles, about the shanar ceremony. See the review in this issue of Sacred Hoop.

Buryat Shamans' Consecration Ritual (Shanar-shandruu).

A 30 minute documentary film by the Hungarian anthropologist Mátyás Balogh  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=xERLI8RU48k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xERLI8RU48k)

Right: a shaman in full regalia, with toli mirrors around their neck, holding mala prayer beads

Below: burning the birch trees after a shanar ceremony



Far right: the shaman's own Buryat shaman's makhemntai cap and brocade tails