
A MONGGHUL EVIL EXPELLING WHIP

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ABSTRACT

A whip used in exorcisms that was kept in a Mongghul (Tu) home in Huzhu Mongghul (Tu) Autonomous County, Qinghai Province, PR China in 2016 is described, including how it was made, the whip's creation during the time of a lunar eclipse, and the role of the whip in exorcisms. Four types of whip are described.

KEYWORDS

exorcism, Huzhu, Mongghul, Mongol, Monguor, Qinghai, Tu, whips

Once the sun or moon is caught by a *zan*,¹ people immediately ring bells, beat iron shovels, gongs, and cooking pots; whisper; shout; scream; and blow conch shell horns to threaten the *zan* so it will set the sun or moon free as soon as possible. Once set free, the sun or moon slowly comes out from their trap.

On the eighth lunar month of 1940, when my mother - who was pregnant with me - and other family members were about to eat lunch after harvesting crops, the bright light of day suddenly turned to darkness. Sheep baaed and oxen bellowed in the fields. The hot noon weather abruptly became cooler. Soon, stars appeared in the sky. Mother and the others realized it was a solar eclipse,² and immediately beat their sickles together. A bit later, the sun slowly came out again.

Mongghul believe solar and lunar eclipses are bad omens. After this eclipse, some people visited Losiza Lamadii, a religious practitioner in Zhuashidi Village, Danma Town. At that time, the only well-known *szii pugha* 'diviner' in the Mongghul area was Losiza Lamadii. He made a divination and said, "After this solar eclipse, the scriptures indicate disaster will soon befall rich people."

True to this prediction, the implementation of Tudigaige 'the Land Reform Movement' in 1952 meant that rich families were placed in the *funong* 'rich man' and *dizhu* 'landlord' categories and consequently suffered during this movement.

*Jiraqog*³

¹ There are twelve types of *zan* (Tibetan, *btsan*) 'spirits' that can send disease. *Zan* travel on paths in straight lines. If a person's path intersects that of a *zan*, thus blocking their way, an illness such as paralysis or an epileptic fit results. *Zan* can also knock down such obstructions as trees. *Zan* are only encountered on the first, eighth, and fifteenth days of each lunar month (Limusishiden 2015:39).

² *Narani wari* 'sun in caught'.

³ Jiraqog (b. 1940) is my father's (Limuzhunmaa, b. 1942) elder sister. She married and moved into her husband's home in Zhuashidi Village, Danma Town. Limusishiden visited her there on 28 June 2016, where she provided this account.

A WHIP IN XANBU'S HOME

In 2016, a *luusiza* 'whip' was kept in Xanbu's (b. 1937) home in Wayog (Wayao) Mongghul (Tu) Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu Mongghul Autonomous County, Haidong City, Qinghai Province. It was used to exorcise evil.

Xanbu's husband, Darijii (1936-2016), was a farmer who died from a bowel obstruction in 2016 just before I had planned to visit his home to collect information about the whip.

The whip was made from two ox hide strands and featured a brass handle that was screw-threaded and about twenty cm in length. The long, twisted section of the whip (thong) was eighty-four cm long. The popper (cracker) was made of three thin hide strands with attached red cloth pieces. A red cloth was also attached to the midsection of the whip.

In 2016, Xanbu had two married daughters who lived in their husbands' homes, and two sons (Danjariduriji, b. 1976 and Zhumanbin, b. 1978). Danjariduriji lived with his wife and children in a newly-constructed home near his mother's home. Xanbu lived with Zhumanbin, who was a farmer, his wife (Caicangshiji, b. 1982), and their two daughters and a son.

Xanbu told me that in around 1957, there was one night at bed time when she suddenly heard pots being banged and blaring conch shell horns. When her family members hurriedly went outside, they saw that the moon had vanished. They realized it had been caught by a *zan*. Darijii told Xanbu to bring the cooking pot from the kitchen and beat it with an iron hammer to help frighten the *zan* away from the moon. Meanwhile, Darijii went to the roof of the house, lit incense, and made prostrations in all four directions to Tingere 'Heaven' and all the deities.

Afterwards, he went to a room where he took a piece of ox skin that was tanning in a vat. He cut a piece, twisted it into a whip, and cracked it in the air until the moon eventually reappeared. Afterwards, he thought it would be good to keep it in his home for exorcisms. He had heard that a whip made during a solar or lunar eclipse was more

powerful in expelling ghosts and ensuring security for family members against illness.

Ever since the night of the lunar eclipse on which it was made, the whip was hung on a nail driven into a wall inside the room where Darijii and Xanbu slept. This room was at the west side of their courtyard.

If someone felt discomfort, for example, dizziness and headaches, or if a child suffered from insomnia, unexplained crying, and feeling frail and in low spirits, Darijii might have concluded that ghosts or evils were responsible. He then performed a Yiyuanda 'whip_by'/'use whip to drive away' Ritual. First the courtyard gate was opened wide, Darijii took the whip down from the wall, and went to the sleeping room where, if a child was ill, they were first put on a bed. Holding the whip, he patted the ailing child's head and upper body while cursing the evil spirits:

Tui! Ndani kudu rdesa rdeguni gua, yanglajin szari mengu gua, musisa musiguni gua. Nige rogshdi xi! Qi ndirii yan shanglala rwa?! Nige rogshdi! Qi anji xgu duralasa anji xi!"

*Tui!*¹ There is no food to eat, no gold and silver to use, and no clothes to wear in my home. Get away! Why do you come here?! Get way! Go wherever you want to go!"

Darijii then cracked the whip in the air of the room where the ailing child was lying. Then he walked out from the room, still cracking the whip, and rushed to the gate until all the evils were driven out through the gate. He then slammed the gate shut, and bolted it. This gate was not to be opened again until the next morning.

¹ Sounds of spitting.

THE *SUTANG PUGHA* RITUAL

Mongghul families held *sutang pugha* 'ritual with red hot stones'¹ twice a year in their homes. The ritual was held, according to the lunar calendar, on New Year's Eve and the fifteenth day of the first month. At night, Darijii first went to a riverbank where he gathered three round, bluish white stones. He then brought them home, and at around eight or nine PM before the families began their festival feast, Darijii heated the three stones inside the kitchen fire until they glowed red. Darijii next put them in a bucket of boiled water that also contained juniper twigs. As steam rose from the bucket, Darijii asked all his family members to purify their bodies and faces with the steam and thus expel evil. Some adults also rubbed the water from the bucket over their eyes and faces.

Next, Darijii's son took the bucket and walked bent over while Darijii followed behind, cracking the whip to threaten any evils and drive them away. After going into each room in the home compound (including the sheep pen) with the *sutang* and the whip, the courtyard gate was opened. Darijii's son went out through the gate and poured the stones and steaming water in front of the front gate as Darijii cracked the whip toward the courtyard gate. Once his son ran back inside and immediately barred the gate, Darijii stopped cracking the whip. This signified that all the evils had been driven away from their home.

Families in both Darijii's village and neighboring villages borrowed the whip to perform exorcisms.

It was taboo to use this whip to threaten and beat livestock in Darijii's home.

After Darijii's death, Xanbu put the whip under her pillow because she felt safer while in bed at night.

¹ See Limusishiden and Stuart (1994:415-416) for more.

WHIPS IN THE MONGGHUL AREA

General terms for whips include *luusiza* and *waila* (certain villages in Wushi Town, for example, Wayog and Yomajaa villages); *xjiu* (Jangja Village, Hongyazigou Township and Zhaxilunwa Village in Sunduo Township), and *yiuyan* (Tughuan and Shdangja villages, Danma Town).

The *yiuyan* in Tughuan Village, Danma Town was used to encourage fine horses. In the past, some well-to-do families had such whips. Having a fine, well-equipped horse was considered glorious and was the desire of many Mongghul men (Limusishiden et al. 2014:186-187). The *yiuyan* handle was generally made from birch and was about thirty cm in length. The thong was about sixty cm long and braided from four strands of ox hide. Its proximal section was laced with ox hide strands. An iron ring was fixed at the end of the handle, making it convenient to hang on a house pillar when not in use.

Yiuyan in Tughuan Village, Danma Town were also used to encourage horses, mules, donkeys, or oxen while they plowed fields. The wooden handle was about seventy cm in length and the thong was made with ox hide about sixty cm in length. This type of whip was used to encourage the livestock to walk quickly. The handle was also used to scrape soil or mud from the plow's surface, which explains the handle's length.

The *yiuyan* used on the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month in Tughuan Village, Danma Town was made of twisted strands of hemp stems. It was about 250 cm in length with a cracker made of a thin strand of hemp about thirty cm in length. This whip was only used on the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month (Mid-Autumn Festival).¹

Before the moon had risen, a square table was placed in the courtyard center. A moon-cake² about sixty cm in diameter was

¹ In 2016, a few elders used the term "Niiman sarani haran-tawun" for this festival, however, most used the Chinese term "Bayue shiwu." Both translate as 'the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month'.

² After the superior wheat powder was fermented, women kneaded and rolled out the dough on a kneading board and spread bitter bean powder, red rice, curcuma, brown sugar, and rape oil on the dough. They applied it

prepared and placed on the square table. A couple of small apples were then pushed into the cake. A watermelon was also placed by the mooncake.

Next, an incense offering was made in the courtyard. The father of the home then cracked the hemp-stem whip in the air, sending forth a loud, clear sound. After cracking the whip about ten times, family members faced the rising moon and prostrated three times. Finally, the family members sat on the ground facing the moon and ate the apples, watermelon, and the big, steamed mooncake. Cracking this whip on this festival night was meant to scare the *zan* away and protect the moon so that it would rise smoothly into the sky.

Another *yiuyan* used in Tughuan Village, Danma Town often featured a wooden handle and was made of ox hide. With no cracker at the end of the whip, the handle and thong were about a meter in length. The thong usually consisted of ox hide without braiding or twists. The whip was often used to herd livestock, drive poultry into their coops, and drive pigs into their pens. It was also used to lash persons, for example, a husband used it to beat his wife if they quarreled and a father beat his son when he made mistakes or was disobedient.

AN EXORCISING WHIP IN DANGYAN VILLAGE, WEIYUAN TOWN

I interviewed Warimacairang (b. 1968) in my office in Xining on 30 June 2016. Warimacairang is a Mongghul from Dangyan (Dongyuan), Weiyuan Town and is fluent in the Mongghul language. He told me:

evenly with their hands, rolled it, kneaded it into round pieces of dough, and again flattened it with the rolling pin. They also again spread bitter bean powder, red rice, curcuma, brown sugar, and rape oil over the dough. In this way, two or three layers of color were added to the dough. Two chopsticks were used to make pieces of dough resembling flower petals, which were put on the top of the big moon-cake. A half-moon and a full-moon shape were made with the rim of a cup on the dough, which was then steamed.

Warimaxja (b. 1963) is a *shdenzin*¹ in my village. He has a whip with a thirty-cm long handle and a thong that is about two meters in length. The whip is made of twisted hemp stems. From the handle to the cracker, the thong becomes increasingly thin. An ill person commonly sends a representative to invite the *shdenzin*. Warimaxja and the representative then go to the village temple to consult Danjan, the village *purghan*.² If the *purghan* suggests that the *shdenzin* should go to the ailing person's home to conduct a rite to expel evil with the whip, Warimaxja visits the ailing person's home, and then whips the evil from the patient's body and drives the evil outside their home.

CONCLUSION

In the early twenty-first century, the various locally-produced whips in Mongghul areas have vanished with very little documentation. Fine Mongghul riding horses have also disappeared. Mechanized agricultural production has replaced horses, mules, oxen, and donkeys or, with the exit of younger villagers pursuing employment in towns and cities, many fields were left uncultivated. Only in certain remote, steep mountain areas were livestock kept in 2016, and thus a few whips, other than those used in ritual exorcisms, were still in use.

In the Tibetan cultural sphere, the use of whips in exorcism may have been widespread, e.g., Geare (1907:132) notes "...for similar purposes of exorcism the Tibetan lama wields a whip with a handle of human bone and lashes, of human skin..." Similarly, in a study of the

¹Spirit-spear/spirit-pole soothsayer, a *shdenzin* holds a pole *purghan* (explained in the next note) vertically in front of him with both hands. The spirit descends, the spear begins trembling, and a supplicant presents his case and receives instructions from the spirit in the spear as to what to do.

²"The *purghan* is a deity represented in the form of a sedan image or a cloth-covered pole held by four men or a single man, respectively. The *purghan* permeates Mongghul village life. It is available for consultation and represents the possibility that supplicants' distresses may be alleviated. It is consulted to identify a suitable spouse, treat disease, exorcise evil, ensure well-being and good harvests, and alleviate droughts" (Limusishden and Jugui 2010:23).

origins of Korean dance, Hahn (1985:29) mentions "a golden mask dance in which evil spirits are exorcised with a whip ... all of them [dances] of Central Asian origin."

Given the realities of rapid cultural loss at a time of great social and cultural transition in China, this description of whips and their use among the Mongghul of Huzhu contributes to a better understanding of the worldview of local people, particularly as it relates to their perception of evil and exorcism.

IMAGES

The whip hung on a wall in Xanbu's (b. 1937) home in Wayog Village (June 2016, Limusishiden).



Xanbu holds the whip kept in her home in Wayog Village (June 2016, Limusishiden).



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NON-ENGLISH TERMS

- Bayue shiwu 八月十五
Dangyan, Dongyuan 东元
Danma 丹麻
Dizhu 地主
Dongjia 东家
Funong 富农
Haidong 海东
Huzhu 互助
Jangia, Zhangjia 张家
Li Dechun 李得春
Qinghai 青海
Sunduo, Songduo 松多
Tu 土
Tudigaige 土地改革
Tughuan, Tuguan 土官
Wayog, Wayao 瓦窑
Weiyuan 威远
Wushi 五十
Xining 西宁
Yomajaa, Yaomajia 姚麻家
Zhuashidi, Baizhuazi 白瓜子