



ORAL POETRY

1. ORAL POETRY WITHOUT MELODIES

SPELLS AND INCANTATIONS

Spells and incantations are the forms of ancient folklore. They endeavour to achieve their ends through the supernatural powers of words, sounds, and gestures. Mongolian spells and incantations can be divided into ordinary and special forms. Ordinary spells and incantations are those that can be enchanted by anyone; special spells and incantations, in contrast, can only be enchanted by the few people who specialize in these matters. These spells and incantations can influence those who wish to receive such a blessing.

Let's take a common example of these spells and incantations:

- When a fire doesn't light and instead only smoke arises, we say the following incantation as we pour grease on it:

*"Grow! Grow!
I'll give you some grilled goat's meat.
Glow! Glow!
I'll give you some grilled goat's meat.
Flame! Flame!
I'll offer you a bit of oil."*

- As the camels and other animals graze in the pastures, a pair of scissors is bound and placed between the roof covers on the *ger's* western side, and then the following incantation is made:

*The benevolent beast,
With golden molars closes its mouth.*

- When an animal's udder is swelled we shake a (brass) ladle and say:

*The head of the animal is up,
The head of the swelling is down.
Em dom em dom (It is soon be cured).*

- When we castrate animals, we burn juniper needles and say:

*Be as light as a feather,
Cure quicker than a speeding arrow.
Hurray, hurray dur, dur suuhaa.*

- When a raven or crow caws, we say:

*Glad tidings is welcome,
Bad news stay away,
Please have three white eggs and live three hundred years.*

- When an owl hoots, we say:

*Bring water in the stomach pouch of a young goat;
Let's boil the head of an owl*

- When we see the meteor fall, we say:

*The meteor falls from the sky,
But my star is still up. Pooh, pooh.*

- We can give examples of the mysticism expressed in these spells and incantations:

- There is the spell and incantation associated with the orphan, for example the Khalkha Mongolians call such a person a "*nüdnii tsagaa üleekh*"; Western Mongolians call this person a "*nüdnii bog ürekh*."

This means that glaucoma in the eyes can be removed. A person who has never seen his own father is one who has become fatherless and can recite this incantation and spell. A person who has seen his own father is not able to do it. He can whisper this incantation and spell into the ears of a person who is also orphaned and who has not seen his or her own father. The meaning of this incantation and spell is not clear to everybody.

*Do not think that I am blowing
Think that a deity is blowing.
From where did you come,
Bother of my son's eyes?
I did not see my father
I did not see your glaucoma, either.
I throw you over the seven mountains and
Place you under the hummock.
I saw neither my own father nor you.*

This is a genuine example of the incantation and spell. There are incantations and spells for people whose teeth and organs of locomotion are full. For instance, a person, whose



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teeth are full can enchant this particular spell. If that person's teeth fall out, he or she passes the duty to another person whose teeth are strong.

- There is a spell for a person with extra fingers. When a boy or girl's fingertips are swollen, a person with six fingers pretends to cut the air with a pair of scissors and recites the spell, "I cut you off, I cut you off!" saying it seven times.
- There is a spell to put an emphasis on one's kin. This is recited only by the maternal or paternal uncle. When a child suffers from thrush, Mongolians place a bridle with the straps sticking through the space between the base of the roof felt and the frame of the *ger* door. The strap is then placed in the mouth of the suffering child and an incantation made.
- "The child got a thrush in order to test the wealth of the paternal uncle, and the ear of the child became ill in order to test the wealth of the paternal uncle." Generally, when children suffer from ear infections, the paternal uncle must make an incantation. When a child suffers from thrush, the maternal uncle makes an incantation.
- According to the *Bayad* tribe, there is a spell which em-

phasizes a progenitor. For example, there is a spell used while the thunder sounds. There are many variations of this spell among each Mongolian clans and tribes. For instance, when thunder sounds, the *Khariad sharnuud* tribe says:

*I am descended from the great haan.
I am Hariad, of the Buriad line.
Phew, phew, phew, phew.*

But the *Borjigin sharnuud* tribe makes incantations like:

*I am descended from the great haan.
I am of the jasper button rank.
I am descended from Blue Heaven.*

But the *Uriankhai chonod (chonnut)* tribe incants the following when people are frightened by thunder:

*Strike a mountain with lightning if you need the tallest,
Strike the steppe with lightning if you need widest,
Strike me with lightning if you need one who is alone.
Strike me to pieces with lightning if I eat spleen.
Strike me to pieces with lightning if I eat omasum.*

There were many secret spells which were very difficult to learn because of the tests that took place while they were learned.