

## ❖ CAIRN-WORSHIPPING CEREMONIES



The rituals of mountain and cairn worship were originally shamanistic, but they were enriched and developed with the notions and teachings of Buddhism and concepts of nature and the universe. This ceremony involves inviting the spirits of the mountains and water to please and express our requests to them.

According to shamanism there are spirits in the trees, mountains, and water. There are two spirits, *savdag* and *lus*. These are words borrowed from Tibetan. *Savdag* means master of the earth or mountain nymphs. *Lus* means master of water and humidity or water nymphs. In the sutra *Buman tsagaan lus* there is a definition: “The water spirit exists in water, the earth spirit exists in the ground. The wrathful deity lives in space.”

The water spirits are defined as blue, yellow, and black, according to their colours. The white king deity is the king of the all the masters of water. The good and bad omens of human beings depend upon the will of the white deity. We beseech the white deity to cause us to be in his good graces and make offerings of a boiled saddle of mutton, sacred cakes, rendered cream, ghee lamps, grain and milk vodka, and other things to him.

There are provisions for rituals at a cairn or sacred site. There are thirteen cairns in an array which are to be sancti-

fied. The middle cairn is the biggest and tallest and is a symbol of *Sumber agula* (Lofty mountain). There are two cairns from the middle cairn on the western and eastern sides. They are symbols of the four great continents. They are smaller than the middle cairn. There are another small eight cairns. They are known as the eight little continents.

The day to observe the cairn-worshipping ceremony is selected by astrologist in advance. Then it is announced to the locality. Early in the morning before the sun rises, local people start moving to a place where the cairn worshipping ceremony is to be performed. People attend a cairn-worshipping ceremony preparing offerings in advance and wear their holiday clothes. We esteem this event greatly. A person, who receives the stomach of a sacrificed sheep in the previous cairn-ceremony can prepare an offering of meat for this ceremony.

On the appointed day monks gather. The bottom ends of four poles are driven into the ground in four directions and the upper ends of four poles are connected and festooned with decoration of various colours. The four square cloth tents are erected before the cairn. The first tent is dedicated to monks who are going to congregate. Other two tents are for use by dignitaries near and in front of the cairn. A white sheet of linen is unfolded on which the statues of Buddha



and of other Buddha are placed. It is compulsory to place the statue of Thunder Bolt (Vajrapani). Sacred cakes and other offerings for mountain and water nymphs are placed before the statues of the Buddha.

These offerings consist of dairy products, boiled mutton, skim of milk and rendered cream. The cairn worshiping ceremony starts by offering sacred cake to the Thunder Bolt. The benediction prayer seeks to supplicate the Thunder Bolt, which is the esoteric master. It is believed to be the destroyer of all the evils and saviour to assist in the burden of suffering beings. It also aids in getting rid of evils and driving out evils that live in the upper and lower realms with the bright flames. After this offering, sacred cakes are proffered to the Thunder Bolt. The monks burn dry juniper needles and incense and other aromas. They chant sutras dedicated to the mountains and cairns. When they chant they enumerate the names of mountain and water spirits, and extol and invite them to patronize the local people. Attendants get an endowment of the offerings. After this, the leading monk of the cairn worshiping ceremony makes a libation of grains and milk vodka. At this time the monks chant sutras, such as the White Umbrella, which implies the illumination of the darkness in ten directions, the Eight Saints, the Aggregate of providence, the Eight Saints of space, the Tree sutra, the Provider for water spirits' grace and other auspicious poems.

After it, *Nanti*, *Ubanantu*, and other spirits of water and supporters of holiness are invited to deliver bounties for the sake of all beings. At the end of the event, the monks, who



were congregating, go out of the tent and each monk takes a pebble from the ground and put it on the stone cairn, places sacred cake at the middle of the stone cairn, four long ribs of the shoulder at the back side of the stone cairn, and fat tail at the east side and silver-coin at the south side and *khadag* (sacred scarf). At the north side of the cairn-stone, the monks consecrate the pebbles which they took with milk vodka and holy water and place them at the back of the stone-cairn. Thus, the cairn worshiping ceremony is over.

After the ceremony is finished attendants come down to the foot of the mountain and attend a small *Naadam* event, including horse racing, wrestling and archery, with the accompaniment of singing and reciting of benedictions and odes. In such a manner the mountain and water spirits are pleased with Mongolia.

