

## 2. ORAL LITERATURE THAT USES MELODIES

### ❖ BENEDICTION

Mongolian benediction is the powerful expression of the miraculous capacity of words. It is one of the genres of Mongolian oral poetry that uses melodies. Briefly, benedictions propitiate people's future happiness and well-being through skillfully composed and recited poems. There are thousands of benedictions on various subjects, for instance there are benedictions recited while beating the sweat-cloth of the saddle, while distilling milk-vodka, while celebrating a birth, and while cutting an infant's hair for the first time. We have benedictions to request the consent of a bride's future parents-in-law and to offer them gifts after the wedding. In addition, we have benedictions to mark the start of a wedding or feast, to toast, to serve a bowl of fermented mare's milk, and to bring a feast to a close. Only people or minstrels with a good voice can recite benedictions. They may be sung completely from memory, and some sections could be improvised to fit particular situations.

Minstrel can perform benedictions at the request of the head of a family or the host at a feast. He begins by placing a bowl of fermented mare's milk on a long *khadag* (sacred scarf). There is a specific way of uttering a benediction. He starts by reciting the benediction in a constant, flowing way, and finishes by wishing all the best. At the end of benediction there is an established refrain that states that the well-wishing has unified all of those present at the wedding or feast and calls upon everyone to feel happiness, enthusiasm, and elation. For example, it is very common to end benedictions with everyone stating, "May this benediction come to pass!"

• The following is an example of a wedding benediction:

*Well, you both are born on this planet  
 You both became precious human beings  
 By virtue of the auspicious omens.  
 Your kind parents  
 Who venerate the earth  
 Wrapped your fragile bodies  
 With soft cloths  
 Swaddled you in your cradle  
 With long narrow strips of cloth  
 And raised both of you  
 Without coldness  
 And warmed both of you  
 From the cockles of their hearts  
 They taught both of you  
 With correct instructions.  
 You both became adults  
 The hands of yours  
 Reach the saddle thongs  
 The legs of yours*



Mongolian state merited cultural worker, minstrel Tserendorj

Photo by "GAMMA" agency



Reach the stirrups.  
 Our earth is spacious  
 But linked with rivers and oceans  
 Human beings are many  
 But they can be related by their mind and hearts.  
 A institution of marriage  
 Which is very old  
 Increases our communities.  
 You two were neighbours  
 And well-acquainted  
 And fell in love with each other  
 And determined to marry and to become engaged;  
 You two are now bride and groom.  
 We wish both of you that  
 Your fates will be sealed  
 Your luck will be favourable  
 Your parents will be happy  
 Your relatives will be enjoyable.  
 By opening the door of your home  
 You two have invited your parents  
 And your friends here.  
 You two requested me to utter a benediction;  
 By raising a toast  
 My benediction is that  
 You two be a large family  
 Forever happy.  
 By enjoying it  
 And respecting it,  
 Be happy in this  
 Auspicious house.  
 May you raise many children,  
 And raise much livestock  
 May your children be well educated.  
 When we visit again  
 Your family must be like an ocean;  
 When we visit again  
 Your family must be like a spring.  
 May your deeds be like a stormy rain;  
 May your every wish come true;  
 May your benevolence be increased;  
 May your happiness be constant!  
 Please live long.  
 I wish you both all the best.  
 May this benediction be promoted forever!

- The benediction is linked to other important customs. Let us introduce the benediction to brand a foal or colt:

The propitious omens are formed,  
 The beneficent bounties are distributed.

The auspicious destiny  
 Of the past year is deserved  
 The best day is appointed  
 Among the important days.  
 This beneficent brand was initiated  
 By Chinggis Qahan,  
 And has continued up to now.  
 This brand was invented by the ancestors.  
 This is the mark of the owner  
 And is worthy of treasure.  
 The fame of this brand is known  
 Throughout the banners and provinces.  
 This brand has a good reputation.  
 Its lustre dazzles in ten directions  
 This brand was invented in the period of heroes.  
 Today branded animals are abundant  
 On the plain steppe;  
 Branded animals are abundant  
 The world over.  
 May this family and  
 Power of administration  
 Be firm and develop  
 In such a way!

- The following is a benediction recited when distilling milk vodka:

The stove of ancient provenance is  
 Placed in the exact centre of the ger;  
 The cauldron is balanced on the stove  
 The fermented mare's milk is poured  
 Into the cauldron;  
 The bürkheer (a cone-shaped wooden vessel) is then set  
 On the top of the cauldron,  
 The funnel is hung upon the  
 Inside hooks of the bürkheer;  
 One end of funnel is open to receive,  
 The other end pierces  
 The wall of bürhèer and  
 Projects its lip to  
 Discharge the milk vodka into the tub.  
 The wok is placed on the top of the bürkheer.  
 The space between the base of the cauldron  
 And the brim of bürkheer is wrapped closely.  
 When the cauldron is hot we pour cool  
 Water into it.  
 This condenses as liquid;  
 The milk-vodka that is captured  
 Into a porcelain-like bottle.  
 Its smell is lovely.  
 Let's have a lively time!

