

ВИТАЛЬНОСТЬ. ВЗАИМОСВЯЗИ В ПРИРОДЕ

Душа в западной философской традиции рассматривается в других параметрах выражения сути по сравнению с природоцентрической культурой. Не осмысливается ее связь с природой ввиду социального детерминизма, не позволяющего рассматривать человека в космическом (природном) единстве сопряжения. Данная статья — попытка прояснить проблематику интерпретации системы «природа — человек» на фоне понимания души в бурятской культуре.

Ключевые слова: душа, природа, мифология, философия, тибетская медицина, буддизм.

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THE CONCEPT OF VITALITY AND ITS INTERRELATIONS WITH NATURE IN BURYAT TRADITIONAL CULTURE

In the western philosophical tradition, the soul is regarded in other parameters of expression than in nature-centric cultures. Its connection to the nature is not comprehended due to social determinism which does not allow to regard the human in the cosmic (natural) unity of relation. This article is an attempt to clarify the issues of interpretation of the system «nature — the human» in the context of understanding of the soul in the Buryat culture.

Keywords: soul, nature, mythology, philosophy, Tibetan medicine, Buddhism.

This paper deals with manifold manifestations of vitality / tanatality in human being, which is inevitably connected with the idea of identity of Cosmic and Mundane. According to traditional Buryat concepts the soul (Buryat: *hYHЭhЭH/cYHЭcYH*) is a very subtle fragile timid creature, which can leave one. In such case after a time one becomes ill and dies, unless a shaman or lama takes measures in proper time to return the soul 'home'. This paper attempts to elucidate ethnographic data on this subject. The problem is very complicated and obscure, which is to our opinion due to anthropological determination of the principles of human being. Traditional culture claims, that problems of life and soul cannot be interpreted sufficiently, unless their intimate connection with nature is taken into consideration. Otherwise traditional ideas are declared to be the result of mythological thinking peculiar to primitives, which is to our opinion an absolutely inadequate way of interpretation.

The soul, being the main subject of care in traditional culture, is so to say its alfa and omega. It is the soul, that is dealt with in the so-called life-cycle rituals, i. e. manifold and multi-layer wedding ceremonies, funeral rites, based on the idea of right send-off of the soul as well as of its wandering in the middle (human) world and last but not least the rites, accompanying conception and birth, dealing with the life-force, which helps an embryo to arise.

According to ethnographic data the soul, before taking refuge in mother's womb, resides in different places. E. g. it resides in trees, which explains, why trees are highly esteemed in traditional culture, in animals, therefore becoming totems, in stars, the Sun and the Moon, respected as life-givers and leaders. 'A tree can keep the soul of a living human or be the totem tribal tree,

which keeps the soul of the dead as well as of unborn tribe-members, waiting to get incarnated in the tribe' [16: 39, 15]. Gerasimova claims the trees to be 'the obligatory element in material setting of the concepts, belonging to natural and life cycles (homeland, wedding, funeral)'. The idea of souls-depositary is met with by the natives of Siberia and the Far East. According to Gerasimova, Nani people and Ulchs believed such hidden depositaries to exist «under the earth», «under the stone», «under the rock», «in the cave», «in underwater see-caves». These depositaries were obtained by asking the nature. Thus ethnographic data demonstrate the primary bond of traditional cultures with nature considered as Cosmos.

Evolutionism as theoretical basis of anthropocentrism leads to the concept of archaic or primitive thinking. But according to traditional cultures human's fate is in intimate connection with the 'life-force', the presence of which accounts for life. In this context we understand life as the life of our Universe, though according to the Buddhist teaching there are many other Universes apart from ours.

The famous researcher of Mongolian culture T. D. Skrynnikova claims, 'quantitative characteristics of the Universe are expressed by sacral numbers, which symbolize the most important parts of the Universe, though they do not necessarily have specific expression'. E. g. number 9 is just a mark of the celestial sphere, which can have 9 or 99 layers, as by Eastern Mongolian or Buryat. [24: 147]

Modern humanities usually consider the 'culture of sacral gnosis' as example of mythological thinking, implying the mythos to be a distinctly unscientific way of knowledge. 'A human of mythological consciousness doesn't strive for objective

knowledge, his main tendency is subjectivism, which gives rise to anthropomorphism, according to which everything in the world is assimilated to human, is considered in his own image and likeness. Therefore 'natural forces were compared with psychophysical forces and natural processes to human actions'. [2: 35] Apinyan also refers to the paper on primitive syncretism by V. V. Fetiskin, published in the journal 'Philosophy and Society' (2002, № 2).

Syncretism and primitive state have been discussed for a long time, but still ontology of the problem remains unclear. Dealing with this question the mayor part of the scholars deal with their own fictions, as the evolutionary ideology make them prove the superiority of modern times as well as universal character of scientific principles. We want to underline, that scientific means of researching the nature are based on its partition, which inevitably leads to the loss of intrinsic connections between the parts. It was probably Levy-Bruhl, who managed to understand, 'law of participation', inherent to nature, though, like other scholars of traditional culture, he failed to explain the very natural basis of this phenomenon. This happened probably because of European system of anthropocentrism, which can not describe nature other than as social phenomenon. (Cf. Morrelly 'The Code of Nature', Helvetius 'The true sence of natural system'). These works are mentioned here as examples of the fact, that 'philosophy of science, which replaced the natural philosophy, was not able to fill the void that emerged after the disappearance of the latter' (Contemporary philosophy of nature 2009).*

The birth of new life has its origin in the nature and first of all in 'the sacral substance of solar nature' [23: 105]. This is

similar to the concept of soul in traditional culture. Scrynnikova claims, alluding to the expert on Tibetan texts Dandar Dashiev, that 'according to the «Atlas of Indo-Tibetan Medicine» the 'vital vessel' (Tibetan: srog-rtsa) is the first organ to emerge in the embryo. By adults this 'vital vessel' connects the 'Brahma's opening' at the vertex with urethral opening and therefore is the principle one [23: 105]. This explains the interconnection of the nature with human's vital energy, received from the nature. Therefore traditional culture hold ritual, considered by modern humanities as 'animism', 'fetishism' or 'totemism', for 'the sacral substance of solar nature' or 'vital force' (sulde). The word 'sülde' has different meanings, i. e. 'spiritual strength', 'vital force', 'vitality', 'spirit', 'intellect', 'soul', 'spirit-benefactor', 'happiness', 'blessing', 'virtue', 'banner', 'sign', 'symbol', 'emblem'. In old Mongolian astrological books the term 'sülde' sometimes is used to translate Tibetan *rlung-rta*, usually interpreted as *kei morin* 'wind-horse'. The special flags *kei morin*, symbolysing the wind-horse of good-luck were hanged every New Year, according to lunar calendar [18: 50].

Skrynnikova in her thorough work 'On sacral and vital by Mongolian people' summed up all available data on sulde. Referring to Formozov's book 'A study of petroglyphs', she claims, that 'the corn of the absolute life potency is the subtle spiritual substance of soul', possessed by every living being. On the petroglyphs it is marked by an 'antenna' on the vertex, which is a pictogram, denoting human's connection with Heaven and Sun.

Traditional culture stressed the role of the vital substance of solar nature, invoked by different rites. E. g. all over Buryatia there is a rite of summoning the soul, when

for some reasons it leaves the body and starts wandering. The absence of the soul leads to illness and death. In order to avoid this, a shaman or lama have to accomplish the rite of summoning the soul.¹ In Buryatian these rites are designated by following terms: 'hYнэһэ дуудах' — 'summing of soul', 'амин золиг' — 'redemption of soul', 'наһа гуйха' — 'prolongation of life'.

In Tibet similar annual rite is called 'Lu-gon-jya-po'. This ritual is described by a famous lama A. Dorzhiev, whose paper, written in Mongolian, was translated in Russian by professor B. B. Baradiyn and commented by S. F. Oldenburg. [7: 289] One of the reason to mention this work here are the names of its translator and commentator. S. F. Oldenburg was one of thy founders of Russian Indology B. B. Baradiyn, the famous orientalist, professor of St. Petersburg University and expert in traditional Buddhist culture, in 1905–1907 visited Tibet by order of 'The Russian Committee of Academy of Sciences for the scientific study of Middle and Eastern Asia'. For this expedition he was honoured by Russian Geographical Society by the Przhevalsky award [3: 117]

During the 'Lu-gon-jya-po' ritual a redemptive offering is chosen in order to protect the Dalai-lama and Tibet regents from miseries. Usually two candidates are chosen, one is a lama, another a layman. 'In

front of the door of the main temple they cast lots in order to determine who will be the offering. But their dice are different, therefore it is always a layman who becomes 'Lu-gon-jya-po', not a lama... This layman is believed to be a miserable man, whose lifetime will be short'. As S. F. Oldenburg notes, this person becomes outcast, living by robbery or even murder [3: 92]

A famous scholar of Mongolian culture A. M. Pozdneev also reports on the ritual of redemption, practiced in Mongolia. When the first Mongolian Khublai Khan Chzhebzun-dampa-khutukhta (the reincarnation of the Mongolian highest holy orders) fell ill and couldn't eat, he was preparing to death. The doctors of traditional Tibetan medicine refused to treat him medically and believed 'redemption', i. e. symbolical substitution of his personality by other people, to be the only means to help him. Then from every hoshun of Tusheet Khan Aimag not less than ten families were gathered. According to the dzolik² rules these people were ordered to wear the clothes of Undur Gegen. After that the ritual of gurim³ (Tibetan sku rim) was performed and all these people were chased away in the woods and swamps, being told that they could never appear in the nomads' camps of Undur Gegen. As Pozdneev notes, 'The ritual of 'dzolik gargahu' can be accomplished only if there is someone who takes all sins and illnesses of the suffering person'. [21: 454–456]

¹ These rites were described in the following works: [11], [14], [16], [9], [10].

² Dzolik is a small figure, made of pastry. The figure is dressed in the clothes of the person, for whose sake the ritual is performed. The ritual of 'Amin dzolig' (or Tibetan lud) is a redemption of life from ghosts or deities that make one suffer owing to the reasons, which can be defined by astrologists. The figures, made of pastry or sometimes of straw, serve as symbolic substitutes of the person. Similar rituals are performed by illness. Evil ghosts, i. e. the dead people whom one somehow knew when they were alive, are recognized and neutralized by a shaman and as a result one usually recovers. These days in Buryatia this problem is solved by appealing at first to a shaman and then to a lama.

³ 'Gurum', or according to Pozdneev 'guryum', derives from Tibetan: sku rim. This magic ritual is performed even these days in ethic Buryatia, in order to become defended from diseases, early death and personal troubles.

‘The Secrete History of Mongolian people’, a text of 13th century, describes an episode of Ugedey-khan’s illness. His younger brother Tuluy offered to become a substitute offering. He drank a special beverage, prepared with the use of spells and died, thus saving the khan. Tibetans also practice the ritual of lud, which is a redemption of life from evil ghosts or deities by human’s symbolic substitutes.

Now let’s return to our muttons in the proper sense of the word, as in Buryat culture such states of the soul as birth, life and death have connection with sheep’s bone. As the baby for the first time was put in the cradle, all the children of the Buryat family were gathered around it and asked, ‘Who must lie here: the baby or the bone?’ It was a cannon-bone of a sheep’s haunch (Buryat: шаата сэмгэ), that was used in many rituals as the repository of сҮлдэ. After the ritual of putting the baby in the cradle this bone was bent to the right side of the cradle as a talisman. The same bone plays an important role in the funeral ritual, granting the future reaturn of the soul. As Skrynnikova notes, ‘putting the bone in the burial place is connected with worshipping of the sacral substance’ [23: 109]. She also sites a paper by Galdanova, ‘Sheep’s cannon-bone is the most popular attribute by the rituals of the life-cycle, namely putting a baby in the cradle and wedding. A long time ago this bone was used for honorable putting to death of a very old man and after tepe it was put in his grave’ [10]. The point is that if someone lives too long, obtaining great-great-grandchildren, that means he takes away the destiny of other people, living or yet unborn. That explains the custom of organizing honorable funeral in one’s lifetime, in which the mentioned bone plays an important role.**

In Buryat culture ‘sheep or lam were used in rituals because of the intimate relation between sheep and human’s soul. One ritual text... specifies the marrow from the sheep’s right leg. The marrow of thigh- and cannon-bones were believed to contain vital force (Buryat: сулдэ). Bull’s cannon-bone were used before campaign during the ritual of activating the force of the fore-fathers, embodied in the banner’. [23: 108] The sheep’s bone, being a repository of the soul (сҮлдэ), acts as phallic symbol and expresses the relation with solar light, taking part in the triad ‘bone — womb-child’.

The pair of ‘soul — light’ leads to a very complicated question which is hard to solve. Let’s imagine someone, looking in the mirror and seeing nothing. It really happens, which means that life’s thread / light / soul is broken. Then one is gradually rotting away. The very fact of existence of the soul as a thin transparent thread, reflected in the mirror, is proved by the fact, that we see the own reflection. A ray that falls on the mirror at right angle becomes reflected. If there is no reflection, there is no light. If there is no reflected light, there is no soul. Skrynnikova claims, that on petroglyphs a thread of light like an antenna goes from vertex to the sun. That means the soul radiates light or in other words consists of natural energy. And if the thread of light gets broken, the life disappears.

Buryat people believe that human is connected with nature by his navel («ХҮН байгаалитайгаа хҮйхэрэй холбоотой»), which implies human’s affiliation with wide and borderless natural world.*** A detailed description of the life-cycle, in which birth, life and death are presented as a single ‘knot of vitality’, shows, that soul / consciousness appear in an embryo because

of the karmic accumulation of an individual, considered to be a natural phenomenon. According to Buddhist concepts the soul is a 'discrete changeable flow of the elements, the grouping of which is stipulated by karmic correlation of father's sperm, mother's blood and of the soul of the dead person from bardo' [16: 138]. 'At the moment of death the 'subtle body' separates from the 'big body', being 'subtler than wind' and in shape resembling a human figure as big as a thumb' [13:50]. This 'subtle body' in contrast to the 'big body' is indestructible. In Garuda-purana it is called jiva. The jiva joins with five 'subtle elements', which are transformations of 'gross elements', i. e. air, fire, earth, water and akasha.**** The complex of these five subtle elements constitutes the subtle body (sūksma śarīra) of the jiva with all its formations.

This complex constitutes the core of potential regeneration of new life. 'At the moment of death he concentrates in the heart and after that through veins and arteries leaves the dead person through some hole in the body' [13: 51]. In «Atlas of Tibetan medicine» the incarnated soul, i. e. the soul from bardo, which is an intermediate state of being, is depicted as a small colorless man figure, which appears from man's mouth at the moment of conception. [14: 50] And if at the moment of death a lama is near the dying person, he helps the soul to find its way for reincarnation in six worlds of samsara or even to attain the cessation of reincarnations.

And now let us turn to the elementary basis of the body. Buddhist theory of the great elements (the five mahabhutas) is of great importance for the description of the interrelations of the inner and the outer. The mahabhutas are listed in following way. Earth (Tibetan: sa) is responsible for

retention, strength, solidity, resistance to destruction. Water (Tibetan: chu) is responsible for affiliations of all kinds. Fire (Tibetan: me) is responsible for ripening and destruction, wind (Tibetan: rlung) for motion, whereas space (Tibetan: nam mkha) for extension and lack of obstacles. N. Ts. Zhambaldagbaev cites some explanations from a Tibetan medicine treatise, 'without earth nothing would exist, without water nothing would be related' 'without fire nothing would ripen, without wind nothing would evolve', 'without space there would be no holes', 'earth increases bones and muscles (ability to sense smells)', 'water increases blood, ability of tongue to taste', 'fire increases heat, color and ability of eyes to comprehend forms', 'air increases motion and ability of skin to touch', 'space increases words and ability of ears to hear sounds'. Zhambaldagbaev also comments a passage from the second chapter of medical treatise 'Gyud-shi', «Here a process of development of embryo in mother's womb is described. It is evident, that this passage deals with the functions of each mahabhuta in the process of embryonic development» [25: 111] The mahabhutas (primordial elements) become manifested on physiological level, but they are controlled by mind (or by suffer-bearing emotional poisons). The three poisons, e. i. delusion, hatred and greed (Tibetan: dug gsum) correlate with five kleshas, manifested in the illusion of individual ego. This means, that cravings of five organs of senses can be controlled in order to clarify the flow of consciousness and attain transpersonal state by means of mind practice. This enables to brake the chain of reincarnation, which brings suffering to souls in human embodiment.

And now we are going to describe a little bag, that is beautifully embroidered and

ornamented with such many-colored precious and semiprecious stones as lapis lazuli, malachite, turquoise, red corals and one big patterned coral of skin color in the form of the heart. This bag is fastened at the handle of the ritual bucket for summoning the dallag, which is happiness, longevity, offspring, wealth and already mentioned *сҮнэсҮн* / soul. We have such a bag, which is a quadrangle, sewed by hidden stitch of double tussock and ornamented by thin ledges of green and red colors. To the both sides of the bag the coins are sewed of different value minted from 1721 to 1843 as well as stones, shells and miniature multicolored Chinese glass jars. At the bottom of the bag there is beads fringe mingled with red corals and kopecks of 18th century. Coral beads and shells probably symbolize children's souls [16: 19].

The ritual of summoning of the soul (*сҮнэсҮн*), Skrynnikova claims, begins with appeal to the sun and the moon. According to a famous scholar of Buryat life and beliefs P. P. Batorov, by summoning of the soul 'хүнэхэ хуруйлах', 'a silver coin of one ruble was put at the bottom of the bucket' [5: 25]. In our family, according to my mother's children recollection, in the ritual wooden bucket 'далангын хуулга' the ritual food was kept, milky or meaty, depending on the ritual. The rituals were mainly were summoning of wealth, good luck, fertility of the cattle, good harvest etc.

Our bag contains grains that was used by rituals of summoning the soul as well as by funeral. Archeologist V. P. Dyakonova describes 'the custom to sprinkle a dead body with corn, usually millet. Historically this custom goes back to Huns' [8: 13]. She often found 'in coffins and logs scattered

millet grains. It seemed strange, that the grains were not in pots or on fixed places for funeral food, but were scattered around the bones'. This implies the custom to be very old, dating back to at least two thousand years ago. Probably this fact also means that ideas of the soul are very old too, though Dyakonova doesn't mention it in connection with scattered grains. Grains were also used in the ritual of burying the afterbirth, which also has to do with the soul (*сҮлдэ*).

Concluding our paper on the soul, the absence of which leads to death, we'd like to mention new works on the phenomenon of death. As Gogoleva claims, 'the study of this topic has begun recently. This topic is discussed in philosophical conferences and workshops, but still it remains more a subject of description, than of investigation' [17: 4]. The author of a cross-cultural comparison of this phenomenon in different cultures, R. A. Gayasov solves this problem using the interpretation scheme of 'socialisation'. He claims, 'the history of understanding of the human soul demonstrates that attitude towards soul as philosophical concept changes according to the evolution of the human as a social being'. The correspondence between the soul and the nature is considered as 'an independent element of human's inner world' [12: 5]. The problems of soul, death and vitality / tanatality have become increasingly actual these days. However anthropological approach to these problems doesn't lead to understanding of the ontological basis of the subject. This problem is considered thoroughly in the paper by P. O. Rykin 'Soul, disease and death according to traditional beliefs of Mongolian, Buryat and Yakut people' [22].

NOTES

*‘Many European scholars interpret texts of other cultures in the terms European culture, which is the simplest way to make a text understandable for European readers. O. O. Rosenberg, a disciple of Sherbatsky, was one of the first European scholars, who strived to rely upon the studied tradition, applying its own concepts and means of self-description’. [1: 61]. We can’t but agree with these words, because our study of the basis of traditional culture is based on the nature, considered to be the matrix of conceptualization.

** ‘After the birth of a great-great-grandson (дүүшэ) the old man was ritually killed by his relatives, because after this event he was believed to transfer to the realm of the forefathers. [19:17].

*** Rituals of the life cycle are designed to maintain and strengthen human’s vital forces B. B. Baradiyn describes a ritual of uniting childless women with child’s vital force ‘сҮлдэ’. [4: 87–92]. See also M. M. Nikolaeva, [20: 46–49]. The problem is also dealt with by K. D. Basayeva, T. T. Badashkeeva, D. B. Batoeva.

**** This subtle substance is similar to ether in European culture.

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