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 skilfully composed and recited poems. There are thousands of benedictions on various subjects; for instance, there are benedictions recited while beating the sweatcloth 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 merit cultural worker, minstrel Tserendorj

Photo by A. B. M. M. M. 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 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 bürhée 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!