

## 2. REAL-LIFE LEGENDS

The legends are a popular genre of prose oral literature. The real-life legends are always complementary expressions of historical events within folk literature. Even though the historical facts are usually adorned with fanciful magic and metaphoric devices, these often later became historical legends. In other words, old sayings are enriched. The old legends can be reminiscences of past feats, legendary deeds, or the origins of the names of mountains, rivers, cities and towns. The themes of real-life legends can be categorized as:

- Ethnographic legends
- Legends of historical places
- Legends of past events
- Narratives of famous people, e.g. wise judges, good men, beautiful women, good horses, and champion wrestlers
- Cultural legends
- Legends of religious events

### • ETHNOGRAPHIC LEGENDS

The most ancient legends are the ethnographic legends. These are often about the lineages of clans or tribes, or explorations of their progenitors. The origin-legends of the Mongolian people are linked to Heaven, nature, and soul totems. For instance, there is a legend about a wolf and a fallow-doe, a legend about *Khori-tümed*, and a legend about *Khori-dai mergen*. The legend of the wolf and a fallow-doe is one that is shared by all the Mongolian tribes. The legends of *Dobu mergen* and *Alungua* are the legends of specific Mongolian tribes.

### THE LEGEND OF ALUNGUA

The sons of Torgoljin were *Duva-sokhor* and *Dobu mergen*. *Duva-sokhor* has a single eye in the middle of his forehead and he could judge the distance three day's journey. One day, *Duva-sokhor* with his younger brother, *Dobu mergen*, ascended *Mount Burkhan-khaldun*. When they were on the top of the mountain, *Duva-sokhor* looked round and saw a band of nomadic people who were approaching the *Tunggelig* stream. *Duva-sokhor* said, "There is a beautiful maiden sitting in the seat of the covered carriage drawn by an ox. If she is not betrothed to any man, let us beg for her hand for you, my brother *Dobu mergen*." He sent his brother *Dobu mergen* for a closer look. *Dobu mergen* reached those people and found a really charming maiden who had won renown and was not yet betrothed to any man. Her name is *Alungua*. She was born from *Bargujin gua*, wife of *Khorilardai mergen* in the *Arig-usun* of the *Hori-tümed* country (the country of *Hori-Buriad*). *Bargujin gua* was the daughter of *Bargudai-mergen*, of the *Bargujin* family, and from a far-away land. This band of people had had a row with their own tribal fellows and separated themselves from them. They then moved to *Burkhan-khaldun* after hearing that the place teemed with game, including sables and squirrels. They wanted to meet *Shanch Bayan-Uriankhai*, who alone established an altar on the top of a mountain. *Alun-*





gua born of Arig-usun, daughters of Khorilardai mergen of the Khoritümed, was beseeched. This was the initial rite of Dobu mergen's marriage. Alungua was married to Dobu mergen and bore him two sons, Bügünüdei and Belgünüdei.

Duva-sokhor, the elder brother, had four sons. Before long Duva-sokhor died. After his death Duva-sokhor's four sons did not claim kinship with their uncle. They instead held him in contempt and moved away. They became the Dürved clan. After this, one day, Dobu mergen climbed up Togotsog Heights to hunt. In a forest he chanced to meet a hunter of the Uriankhai tribe who had killed a sorrel and was roasting its short ribs. Dobu mergen said "Dear fellow, let us share a slice of good luck." The hunter agreed and cut into its head with the pluck and skin of the quarry. Then he took the head with the pluck and skin, and gave Dobu mergen the whole venison. Dobu mergen took the whole venison on the cart and plodded along. He chanced to meet a poor man and his son, who were walking hand-in-hand. He asked, "Who are you?" The old man replied, "I belong to Malig bayagudai. Now I am wretchedly poor. He begged for a piece of venison from the quarry and offered to give his son in reward.

Dobu mergen accepted the offer and cut one piece from the hind leg of the quarry and gave it to the poor man and took his son, Dobu mergen, and made him a servant.

Before long, Dobu mergen died. After his death Alungua was a widow, but she bore three sons. They were named Buha khatagi, Buhatu-salji and Bodonchar-munhag.

Belgünüdei and Bügünüdei, the two sons begotten of Dobu mergen, talked with each other secretly about their mother, Alungua, saying that even though she had no husband she bore

three sons. In this house there was only man, Malig-bayagudai. They must be his sons, they decided. The mother Alungua learned of her sons' surreptitious talk about her.

One spring day, mother Alungua boiled some meat that she had long kept in store. She then made her sons Belgünüdei, Bügünüdei, Bukha khatagi, Buhatu-salji and Bodonchar-munhag sit down in a semi-circle, gave each an arrow, and told them to break it. They broke their single arrows easily. She then bound five arrows together in a bundle and gave it to them to break. The five sons took the five bound arrows and despite the best efforts of each of them, no one could break them.

Then mother Alungua said, "My Belgünüdei and Bügünüdei, you two talked to each other about your mother who has borne these three sons. You questioned the truth about whose sons they are. This doubt is reasonable. Every night a man who looked ghostly in the darkness, sneaked through the tiny crack in the crown of the ger. He caressed my abdomen and his light sank into my womb. Then he slipped out before day light came. He scampered away the same way that guilty dogs do, wagging their tails as they go. Why do you speak with such insolence? It must be evident to all of you that my new sons are the sons of heaven. Why do you compare them to persons of low pedigree? When they become lords of all, then the ordinary people will recognize them." Alungua addressed these words of admonition to her five sons. "You, five sons were born of one womb. If each of you keeps to himself, like those single arrows, anybody shall easily defeat you. If you remain together and unified, then, like the bound arrows, none can vanquish you".

## • LEGENDARY NAMES OF PLACES OR RIVERS

The legendary names of places are linked to historical events. For example, there are many names or places in central Mongolia which are mentioned in the Secret History of Mongols. The name of *Mt. Burkhan Khaldun* started including *Tsenkheriin gol*, *khar Zürhenii Khökh nuur*, *Büriig erig*, *Khorhanag Jubur* ancient *Kharkhorum* city, *Khödöö aral*, *Avarga balgas*, *Tuuliin khar shugui*, *Mt. Lakh* (battle place where the battle between *Tayan Khan* from *Naiman* and *Chinggis Qahan* was fought). These names written in the chronicles are still in active usage. These legendary names of places and rivers are connected with local scenery, resources, and places of worship.

Some of them are described as having picturesque shape. The Legend of *Noyon Bogd* and *Khatan Sevrei* of *Umnugobi aimag* (province) and the Legend of *Eej Khairkhan* of *Bayan Tooroi* sum (country) of *Gobi-Altai aimag* have examples of fanciful and picturesque imagination.

## THE LEGEND OF MT. EEJ KHAIRKHAN

Once upon a time there was a beautiful girl whose name was *Eej Khairkhan*, which means mother mount. Her beauty illuminated nearby places. But one day *Burkhan buudai khan* from a far country abducted her and took her to his birth place. *Burkhan buudai khan* was fierce and mean, and his subjects were scared of him greatly. After her abduction,

*Eej Khairkhan* lost her appetite and became sleepless and was gloomy day and night as she yearned for her parents and birth place. So her beauty disappeared and she pined for this distant place.

The *Burkhan buudai khan* organized feasts which he wanted to revive her mood. Because of this feast, people got



Ejii khairkhan Mountain. Gobi-Altai aimag. Tsogt sum. Photo by Enkhbileg

drunk. On this occasion, Eej Khairkhan with her servant escaped. Both travelled a great distance. They arrived to the periphery of their birth places which was a vast Gobi. They saw the birth land and breathed in happily. When Burkhan buudai found out that his wife with her servant had escaped, he was enraged and sent out many soldiers to chase them. They overtook the two fugitives. Eej Khairkhan was squatting on the op-

posite side. Those soldiers took a handful of sand and sprang it. Eej Khairkhan did not stand up, but became stuck in the sand where she remained in the Gobi desert alone. Since then, many years passed by, the Eej Khairkhan in the Great Gobi remained a beautiful and odd mountain. Burkhan buudai Mountain exists to the North-east of the Eej Khairkhan Mountain and the servant Sutai Mountain is standing to the south-east.

## • LEGENDS OF HISTORICAL EVENTS

The legends of the past events in Mongolian history and of renowned people in history belong to the legends of historical events. Those legends were transmitted through the oral and written forms to us. There are many legends of Chinggis Qahan, of his generals, of Mandukhai the wise queen, of Chingünjav and Amarsanaa. The written legends are the Secret History of Mongols, the Altan товч, Sudryn чуулган and others. One of the most ancient legends is the legend of Ambagai Qahan.

## THE LEGEND OF AMBAGAI QAHAN

Ambagai Qahan was the son of Sorgogdühi chono and grandson of Charhai Lyankhua. When he was a lord of the Taichuud aimag, he wanted to find a girl who might suit his inclinations and become his wife. So he went to the Tatar aimag. The Taichuud people questioned why he needed to find a girl from their aimag. They deemed it as humiliation and arrested him with military force. They sent him out to the Altan khan of the Zürchid people. The reason is that those people were under the rule of the Altan uls.

According to the law of the Altan uls, they bound the Ambagai Qahan to the wooden donkey and killed him. Ambagai Qahan contrived a means of shrewdness and sent his servant who was called Bulgachin. He conveyed the message of Ambagai Qahan to the Altan khan. It says, "You did not catch me by the valour of the doughty warrior but another person arrested me and took me to you. You decided to kill me with a great torture. Your action can stir up revenge among my kindredheaded by Khadaan taish, Hotol han, Tuda and Esükhei baatar's sons and the Mongolian people. It is inevitable that they will avenge my capture and death. So your killing of me

is dangerous." Altan han ignored it. He said derisively that the messenger Bulgachin should go and give this to your people. Altan khan killed Ambagai Qahan and gave Bulgachin the message to spread out the information about the death of Ambagai Qahan. Bulgachin, the messenger, reached four ajmags and spread out the information. The messenger asked for the replacement of a horse. They didn't supply him with a replacement horse. He, therefore, said, "If our side can not bring our troops as strong as the mountains and as abundant as a flood here tomorrow, I will not be a man. In that case you will regret this."

They did not care for his words. Bulgachin's horse was exhausted. Then Bulgachin had to go on foot. He went and came to Hadaan taish, his son Tuda, former lord of this ajmag Hotol khan and Ambagai Qahan's cousin Esükhei baatar. Bulgachin told them of Ambagai Qahan's death and other information. Since then the Mongolians have believed that the fierce spirit of Ambagai Qahan sank into the black banner of the Mongolian wars. This is why the black banner became an object of Mongolian worship.



## • LEGENDS OF LIVELIHOOD

There are legends and stories concerning the way of life of the Mongols, depicting nomadic pastoralism, culture, daily life with the livelihood, struggle, wish and aspiration of ordinary people, which usually found with the reflection of individual thoughts. The protagonist of such types of legends can be anyone, such as wise judge, famous wrestler, beautiful woman, swift horse, dexterous artisan, and ordinary herder.



## • LEGEND OF CULTURE AND CUSTOM

### The legend of HORSE HEADED FIDDLE

**N**amjil, a horse breeder of the eastern periphery, was conscripted into the army and served at the western periphery. When he sang a song in the tuneful voice, local mounted men dismounted and listened to his singing. People stopped walking and listened to his singing.

They extolled and called him Cuckoo Namjil after the singing ability of the cuckoo bird. Cuckoo Namjil served there for a long time and fell in love with a daughter of the local nobleman. But when his term of military service ended, he had to go back to his birthplace. The daughter of the nobleman gave him a horse with concealed wings and asked him to fly with this horse to meet her. Namjil did this, coming back to his birthplace during the day, where he tended horses and looked after his parents, but then flying back to see the daughter of the nobleman each night.

A slave girl noticed that he was away at night and suspected him. She checked Namjil's horse. That night, Namjil had forgotten to conceal his horse's wings. The slave girl examined the horse standing at its hitching-pole, and saw the two wings of the horse fluttering. She cut off those wings. As soon as the

wings of the horse were cut off, the horse died. Namjil grieved greatly at the loss of horse and clipped his horse's mane and tail and twisted the hairs. And then he played the thin skin of his dead horse and stretched it.

He cut off wood from a tree and sawed and lumbered it. Then he put all of the pieces together in a good arrangement and found a way to make a melodious sound from the instrument. He fixed the horse's shaped head on the top of his fiddle and two pegs on the neck of his fiddle. He attached two lines of hair-strings on the front of his fiddle to the bottom of box of his fiddle.

He made a bow by tying two ends of his narrow willow. The bow was covered with the tar of pine. By this he produced melodious and various sounds. In recognition of his good horse he invented the horse-headed fiddle, which can produce the sounds of neighing and whinnying; it can produce the sounds of trotting and clopping. From that time on, Cuckoo Namjil was happy to play this fiddle and was in ecstasy hearing these tuneful sounds. This is how the horse headed fiddle originated.



## 3. GROTESQUE EXAGGERATIONS

• The ridiculous behaviours, oddities and absurdities in society, and ill-dispositions of individual people are described humorously in terse and sarcastic manners. But their critical meanings are mostly hidden. These are called as amusing stories.