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The undead genealogy: omnipresence, spirit perspectives, and a case of Mongolian vampirism

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This article gives the sequel to a case study on magical innovation introduced earlier in the *JRAI*, and shows that Buryat Mongol shamans regularly deflect hostile forces by adopting spirit perspectives. Presenting new ethnography on Buryat vampiric imps and an episode of intra-familial vampirism, the article argues that, in Buryat sociality, anyone – including omnipresent spirits – may cross the virtuous-unvirtuous divide. In northeast Mongolia, Buryats consider that close ancestral spirits watch after their descendants, whereas distant ancestral spirits manage a spirit bureaucracy. Building on Viveiros de Castro's work on perspectivism, the article thus proposes that close spirit perspectives entail an 'intimacy affect' while distant spirit perspectives entail a 'virtuosity affect'. Buryat shamans sometimes oscillate between these perspectives to access both spirit intimacy and virtuosity. The article culminates by demonstrating how a Buryat shaman used intimacy and virtuosity to expunge her mother's ex-husband and his undead relatives from the patriline.

Morality is always a tricky subject, and especially among Mongols who tread a fine line between virtuous (*buyantai*) and unvirtuous (*buyan bish*) behaviour. Mongols hold that shamanic ancestral spirits (*ongon*) or Buddhist gods (*burkhan*) who observe people behaving virtuously often intervene favourably on their behalf, bestowing them with blessings and increasing their store of fortune (*khiimor*), which enhances a person's life prospects and chances of obtaining a good rebirth or a place in the shamanic afterlife (Swancutt 2007: 244). But for Buryat Mongols, being a virtuous person does not necessarily guarantee a good life. The entire household must be virtuous to ensure that its prospects are good. Otherwise, unvirtuous family members may eventually become ghostly imps, pursuing their kin in a kind of intra-familial vampirism.

This article presents the continuation of a case study from northeast Mongolia that I introduced earlier in the *JRAI*, where Buryat Mongols used divination to uncover innovative magic that blocked their rivals' curses (*kharaal*) and gossip with curse-like effects (*khel am*; Swancutt 2006). The ethnography for that article was collected during 1999–2000, when I carried out my first fieldwork in Bayandun, a rural Buryat district in Dornod province, northeast Mongolia. During this time, residents of Bayandun

referred to themselves as 'Aga Buryat', stating that they, or a previous generation in their family, had migrated to northeast Mongolia from the Aga Buryat Autonomous District in southern Russia.¹ Throughout my first trip to Bayandun, I lived with the shaman Yaruu, whose household – along with those of her shamanic pupils – spent months deflecting local curse rivalries.

On my return trip to Bayandun in 2004, I was entirely taken aback to learn that Yaruu's household no longer took notice of the cursing rivalry which, four years earlier, had absorbed all their attention. I had left Bayandun in June 2000 picturing in my mind a territorial divide, from the curse victims' point of view, whereby all the shamanic households located in the northeast of the district were classed as good, and all those positioned in the southwest were considered bad (Swancutt in press). But the configuration changed in 2001 when Yaruu's mother, Ölzii, divorced her husband Dorj and forced him to move out of her home (see Fig. 1). At the same time, Ölzii made her daughter Buyna return to her husband's household, located half a day's drive northeast of Bayandun. Although Buyna was in her early twenties and had been married for several years, she was living at Ölzii's to avoid her violent in-laws. Buyna left her two daughters behind for Ölzii to raise. The subsequent difficulties which Ölzii's household faced were attributed to hauntings by Dorj's ghostly, vampiric imps (*chötgör*).

Vampirism, as a Buryat notion, became apparent to me when, in 2004, Ölzii's household finally expunged Dorj and his undead relatives from the patriline. Although genealogical change has been historically common among shamanic groups of Buryats (see below), it was managed here in an unusual way. Two exceptionally strong women, Ölzii and her daughter Yaruu, took the leading roles in renaming the patriline after Ölzii's father. They held a shamanic ceremony where Yaruu took on the perspectives of eight different spirits, and thereby uncovered two magical innovations for deflecting Dorj's imps. My aim in this article, then, is threefold. First, by using the continuation of a case study, I show that for Aga Buryats in northeast Mongolia, the *modus operandi* for resolving problems is obtaining magical innovations which block hostile forces from the home. Second, I argue that the Buryat uncertainty of whether anyone – including a person's intermediate family members – has crossed the virtuous-unvirtuous divide is reflected in the ambivalent relations which Buryats have with 'omnipresent' spirit forces. Ölzii's household, for instance, tolerated haunting from Dorj's imps for four years before expunging them from the home. By contrast, the shamanic spirit Avgaldai, whom I describe as an icon of omnipresence, has the biography of an 'anti-hero', from whom women shamans can none the less harness the best qualities of intimate relations. Finally, building on my recent work on virtuosity as a 'bodily affect' in Mongolian forms of perspectivism (Swancutt 2007), I propose that a distinction between close and distant spirit perspectives arises from the different powers and degrees of intimacy that Buryats ascribe to their shamanic spirits (Viveiros de Castro 1998a: 482; 1998b: 4; 2004: 474–5). As I will show, close and distant spirit perspectives entail different degrees of intimacy and virtuosity, which influence the kinds of innovations that these spirits can produce.

Skeletons in the closet

The Aga Buryat notion that *chötgör* are vampiric imps is more specific than wider Mongol notions of *chötgör*. My choice of the term 'vampiric' is meant to emphasize that

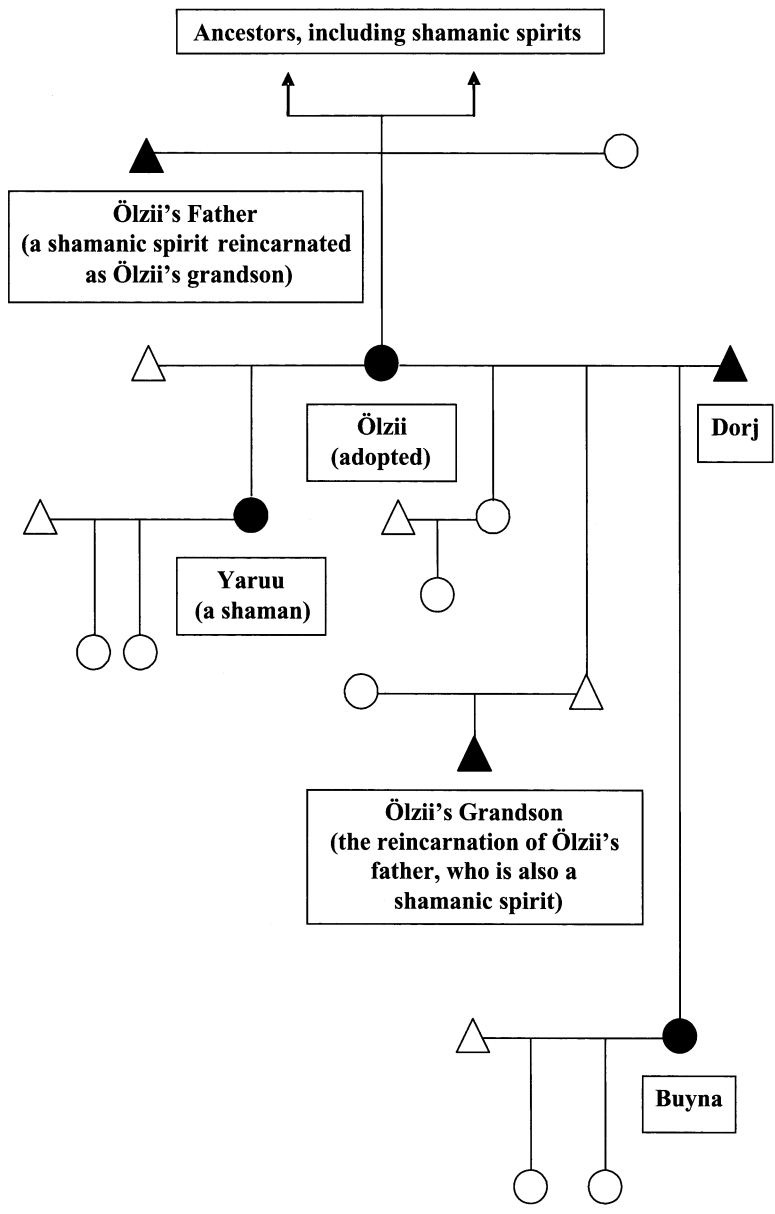


Figure 1. The author's rendition of Ölzii's family genealogy. Key informants are named and highlighted in black.

Buryat *chötgör* drain resources and life energy (sapping human labour, feeding on livestock, and eventually consuming human flesh). Indeed, this draining of resources is reflected in the skeletal, wasted, and decayed physical form that Buryat *chötgör* take (see below).

In the more widespread Mongol view, *chötgör* do not have this vampiric quality, but are simply demons, ghosts, evil spirits, or goblins, which take the appearance and proportions of living people, until vanishing into air or showing their true form as

bones (Hattori 1972: 103-14). Mongols usually refer to vampires by using the terms '*bug*' ('evil spirit' or 'vampire') or '*tsus sorogch*' ('blood-sucker'). None the less, I argue that the Aga Buryat notion of vampiric imps is actually a permutation on general Mongol views about *chötgör*, since both Buryats and other Mongols consider that *chötgör* are 'spectral', that is, at times corporeal and at other times simply made of air. This spectral quality of *chötgör* reflects a broader regional pattern in which 'the peoples of Inner Asia conceive spiritual beings in an essentially non-realist and sometimes monstrous fashion' (Holbraad & Willerslev 2007: 336). Kristensen, for instance, has shown that Dukha reindeer herders in northern Mongolia regard *chötgör* as 'the souls of animals, human or nonhuman spirits, who have turned into bodiless creatures because of human misdeeds' (2007: 286).

The spectral, corporeal form of Buryat *chötgör* is evidenced by the notion that they are vampiric (feeding on their consanguineal kin), impishly small, and even physically containable. With the help of the shamanic spirits, Buryat shamans undertake ghost-trapping rites called *ükheer khaakh* ('to enclose the dead'), whereby they capture the imps in a black goatskin bag, tie that bag shut, and inter it at a crossroads. Intriguingly, Buryat *chötgör* also resemble the vampires of Tibetan folktales, who 'had solid corporeal form and could be caught and bagged', leading scholars to suggest that, for these Tibetan vampires, 'perhaps "imp" would be a better translation' (Waddell & Macdonald 1931: 180, see also 184). Tibetan tales that were legendarily introduced into Mongolia during 'the reign of the first Khutukhtu (1635-1723)' also present three motifs that tally with Buryat notions of vampirism: (1) confusion over whether a person is true consanguineal kin or a demon; (2) demons who eat human flesh; and (3) the capture of demons in a container (Bawden 1960: 1). In one of these tales, a vampiric demon who adopted the appearance of the king's son was captured after he 'transformed himself into a phantom body' and went into a vase (Bawden 1960: 80). Another tale recounts how an illegitimate child of the court, who had a demonically voracious appetite and so was left to be raised by wolves, helped the prince destroy an army of demons who regularly demanded human flesh as tribute (Bawden 1960: 83-91).

Buryats in Bayandun say that *chötgör* are hideous in appearance, resembling people who have been interred in the grave (see Fig. 2). Like dead bodies, the vampiric imps are skeletal (*arag yas shig*), with long nails and dishevelled hair that stands straight up on end. Their eyes are either missing, as with the skulls of decayed bodies, or glow like red lights. Yaruu, who as a shaman can see vampiric imps, told me that they are about 20 cm high and between 4 and 15 cm wide, so that they can hide in all sorts of places. Typically, vampiric imps hide in household sheds, closets, cupboards, milking pails, and hats. At night, they run along the roads at the outskirts of a district and congregate at crossroads. They also traverse the less frequented parts of paths in Bayandun. Since the imps need to feed themselves, they find their way to the homes of their consanguineal kin and plunder their food sources. Vampiric imps can be heard raiding the pantries at night, accidentally bumping into the furniture, opening cupboards, and chewing food. The imps also consume the herd animals of their kinsmen. Animals that have been taken by vampiric imps are identified as those which mysteriously died before a household could slaughter and consume them on their own time. Once a household's livestock runs out, the imps go after human meat. Trying to attract their consanguineal relatives to them, the imps tell people what a wonderful life an imp has, confusing and frightening these people so that they might commit suicide or fall prey to accidental death. Those who die from the influence of vampiric imps become imps themselves.

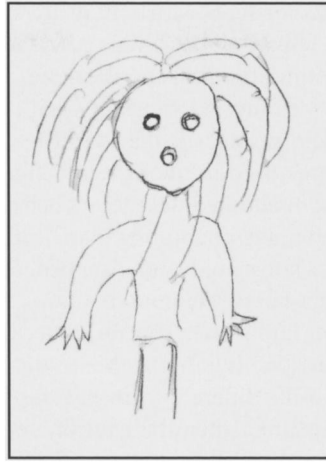


Figure 2. A Buryat vampiric imp (*chötgör*), drawn by the shaman Yaruu.

Numbers of imps thus increase while the numbers of living people needed to sustain them – via their productive work, their herd animals, or their own bodies – decrease. Ölzii once said that anyone who becomes an imp does so because he or she had been unvirtuous in life. And Yaruu told me that, at death, unvirtuous laypersons refuse to travel to the heavens and be reincarnated, preferring instead to devastate their families on earth with vampiric attacks. Since people in Bayandun hold that unvirtuous people come from unvirtuous families, they consider that entire lines of consanguineal kin are comprised of vampiric imps. Whole families of vampires may thus spring from one specific person, so that Buryat vampirism operates as a kind of ‘distributed personhood’ (Strathern 1988: 13–15; see also Gell 1998: 103–4, 106; Wagner 1991: 161–3). Still, the numbers of Buryat vampires are limited, since the imps only cull from and propagate within their own consanguineal kin lines.

Within days of my return to Bayandun, Ölzii brought me up to date with how the haunting had transpired during my absence. She reminded me that, actually, Dorj’s vampiric imps had begun haunting her home during my initial trip to Bayandun. Together, Ölzii and I recalled several occasions where Yaruu was so troubled by seeing the imps in her home that she slept outdoors in the car. Indeed, Yaruu distanced herself from Dorj when admitting to me, on several occasions in 2000, that Dorj is not her real father, although he is the father of Ölzii’s other children. Recalling the events of 2000, Ölzii told me that the vampiric imps had sporadically targeted Dorj and Buyna, making them work as a father-daughter team that inhibited household productivity. While the imps caused Dorj to drain the family resources with his alcoholism, they made Buyna lie about the financial transactions she undertook for the household, drink, and take up casual love affairs. Still, although the imps had caused problems four years earlier, Ölzii agreed that their occasional hauntings were overshadowed then by local rivals’ curses, which were considered to be the primary source of trouble in Yaruu’s group.

Continuing with her view on the haunting, Ölzii told me that, leading up to the year 2000, her household became particularly vulnerable to the attacks of the vampiric imps because of the declining numbers of their livestock. From an original total of 350 sheep and 40 cows in 1997, her herd animals dwindled to just the 40 cows in 1998. Then, in the

devastating winter storms (*zud*) of 2000, which the Mongolian government declared to be a national disaster, Ölzii's household lost all its cows. With no herd animals to feed upon, Dorj's vampiric imps came after him and the three children that Ölzii had borne him. They penetrated the two connected wings of Ölzii's larger household structure, haunting both her family, who resided in the western wing of the compound, and Yaruu's family, who at that time lived in the eastern wing. In particular, they targeted Dorj and Buyna, both of whom adopted degenerate behaviour when the imps began frequenting their household at night, attempting to make them become imps too. With both her herd animals and her household labour sapped, on at least one occasion Ölzii tried to throw Dorj and Buyna out of the house.

The difficulties carried over into 2001, when Yaruu decided to sell her haunted wing of the home and set up a yurt one hundred yards to the south of Ölzii's place. This move enabled Yaruu to establish a different locus of household relations, escaping the vampiric attacks. Shortly thereafter, when the haunting became unbearable for Ölzii, and when Dorj suggested that he wanted to take up another wife in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar, Ölzii agreed that he should leave. At that time she also sent Buyna to her husband's home. Initially, Dorj's departure confused the imps, who for some time kept visiting Ölzii's place with the intention of eating Dorj. Then the imps realized that Dorj had left Ölzii's home, and went in search of him, and, to a lesser degree, Buyna. For three years, the imps pursued Dorj in vain, giving Ölzii a period of respite. Dorj had moved to Ulaanbaatar, about 750 km southwest of Bayandun, and the imps, always slow at realizing what is afoot among the living, could not find him there. It was not until May 2004 that the band of imps redirected their search to northeast Mongolia, in the sole pursuit of Buyna. Contrite about having sent Buyna away, Ölzii occasionally tried to convince her through letters, telegrams, and rotary telephone calls to return home, help raise her daughters, and contribute to Ölzii's new bread-making enterprise. But Buyna, who remained out of touch to Ölzii, also proved difficult for the imps to locate. So the frustrated imps periodically returned to Ölzii's home, where they raided the pantry, fought with Ölzii, her children, and her grandchildren in their dreams, and made noises that awoke them in the night, before setting out again in search of Buyna. These disturbances prevented Ölzii's household from being productive during the day.

To make matters worse, from May 2004 onwards, Ölzii's household not only had Dorj's vampiric imps to contend with, but they were also plagued by the neighbours' imps from the eastern wing of the compound. According to Ölzii, the head of the new neighbouring household had once gone to gaol for murdering a man, and his murderous deed attracted the imps from his family line. For some time the neighbours' imps were confused with the two-wing layout of the overall household structure, and so entered the western wing, disturbing Ölzii's family and conflating their problems. The neighbours had many livestock which kept their imps satisfied, although their imps still came to the house at night. Twice the neighbours had called in Buddhist lamas to trap the imps by chanting sutra (*nom unshaakh*). However, both of these chanting sessions had failed and Yaruu verified that she had seen, literally, the skeletons in that family's closet.

Unsettled by the coming-and-going of the imps, Ölzii finally had Yaruu undertake shamanic ceremonies to inquire about how to stop them. At one ceremony held during my absence from Bayandun, Yaruu adopted the perspective of the omnipresent spirit Avgaldai and predicted that the imps would entice Buyna to hang herself at her husband's home if Ölzii's household did not undertake the shamanic ghost-trapping

rite (this prediction was repeated regularly by other spirits at subsequent ceremonies). The rite would have to be held at Ölzii's home, since it still operated as the 'home base' of Dorj's vampiric imps, his children, and his patriline. And the rite would require the presence of Buyna, since the main victim of the imps needs to be present in order to trap them. Avgaldai instructed Yaruu and a neighbouring shaman² to hold the ghost-trapping ceremony jointly, which would prevent the imps from harming anyone in Ölzii's household for ten consecutive years. Having been contained underground for that much time, the imps would emerge in a weakened state, requiring the ceremony to be repeated once or twice more. After that, the imps would be powerless to harm them.

I gathered that after Ölzii's divorce in 2001, obstacles to her success coincided with the hauntings and the fact that Dorj was still the nominal head of her household, to whom her son and grandson could be traced. Ölzii proudly told me that when Dorj left, she single-handedly boosted the productivity of her household, selling home-made bread to local shops in Bayandun. Indeed, Ölzii's story reflects the improvement in Bayandun's economic standard of living during my four-year absence, when the district's total of four general shops swelled to thirteen. But Ölzii especially associated her prosperity with her 2-year-old grandson, hoping that he would one day become the head of her household, made rich by her bread sales, vegetable gardens, and her pension from previous years of employment as a district accountant in Bayandun.

Some relief from the haunting came when Ölzii's household learned, from another ceremony held during my absence, that succession through Dorj's patriline could be circumvented. The spirit of Ölzii's adoptive father – whom she considered to be her 'real' father – possessed Yaruu and declared himself not only to be a shamanic spirit residing in the shamanic heavens, but also to be simultaneously reincarnated as Ölzii's grandson. Ölzii told me that her father had been an especially productive and highly educated official in Russia, whose work involved a good deal of bookkeeping. During his lifetime, Ölzii's father was called upon by the spirits to accept the roots (*ug*) to his shamanic vocation. Being a staunch communist, her father refused, causing the spirits to make him blind in later life, when he regretted his decision and began worshipping the spirits. Still, since Ölzii's father was an extremely virtuous layperson who should have been a shaman, at death he gained entrance to the afterlife world of deceased shamans, where the other spirits taught him the shamanic vocation. Moreover, having been exceptionally virtuous in life, Ölzii's father was able to become simultaneously reincarnated as her grandson. The dual personhood ascribed to Ölzii's father is highly unusual for Buryat cosmology, even in Bayandun. At death, virtuous Buryat laypersons are ordinarily reincarnated while virtuous shamans go to the shamanic afterlife. Unvirtuous people, whether laypersons or shamans, are sent to hell (*tam*) or become vampiric imps. This exceptional link between Ölzii's grandfather and her grandson challenged the authority of Dorj's patriline, but was not pursued any further while Ölzii's problems remained manageable.

However, when Ölzii's vegetable gardens yielded a poor harvest in 2004, the struggle between the two competing patrilineages came to a head. Increasing efforts were made to ensure that Buyna would hasten home for the ghost-trapping ceremony and prevent her predicted suicide. The imps, though, set many obstacles in Ölzii's way. For the first two weeks of September 2004, they prevented three of her written letters from reaching Buyna. So a telegram was sent to Buyna at her husband's home (Ölzii mentioned in that telegram that I had returned to Bayandun and would like to see her). This telegram was received, and Ölzii managed to have a follow-up telephone conversation with Buyna,

who promised to return home in three days' time. Buyna did not, however, arrive by that time, or by 20 September, when I left Bayandun. But on 13 September, Ölzii's household, together with the household of her younger brother, held a shamanic ceremony dedicated to the guardian spirits (*khoimoriin khögshin*) of their homes.³ The ceremony was held in the yurt of Ölzii's brother, located to the immediate north of Ölzii's residence, and Yaruu officiated at the ceremony. Packed into the yurt were three families: those of Ölzii, Yaruu, and Ölzii's brother. Magical innovations from this ceremony expunged Dorj from the patriline, removing the threat to Buyna's safety, and allowing Ölzii's household to reckon its descent from Ölzii's own father.

Virtuous and unvirtuous intimacy

The conflicts that I describe are not specific to the district of Bayandun. Accounts of Buryats in northeast Mongolia have shown that conflict, and efforts to contain it through shamanic practices, are endemic at two levels. Shamans have regularly detected that spirit ancestors generate problems within the home (e.g. by harming their own descendants) when angry, whereas the spirits resolve those problems if appeased (Buyandelgeriyn 2007: 134-42; Shimamura 2002: 96-106; Swancutt 2006: 332). Similarly, vampiric imps instigate household problems in Bayandun. In contrast, shamans often manage interpersonal conflict by removing or returning curses or gossip with curse-like effects, which are propagated by other, local households (Buyandelgeriyn 1999: 232-3; 2007: 137; Swancutt 2006: 347-50). More generally, Buryats hold that any person, including a close kinsman, can be a potential suspect for one's own problems, by propagating cursing, gossip with curse-like effects, or unvirtuous deeds that lead to vampirism. Thus, Buryat sociality in northern Mongolia has been described as 'an almost *magical danger* rather than a productive possibility' where '[t]he only thing known for sure was that someone was not to be trusted' (Højer 2004: 44, original emphasis, see also 49). Moreover, a constant suspicion of unvirtuous behaviour underpins the 'paranoid narratives' that Buryats have produced, in response to unnerving Soviet and Mongolian surveillance, which elicited both 'the context of the heavy omnipresence of communist dogmatic history' and 'the *actual* random quality of the [religious] purges' (Humphrey 2002: 28-9, original emphasis). Certainly the paranoid trope that Humphrey (2002) ascribes to the Buryats appears, in northeast Mongolia, to have influenced recent efforts at reconstructing once carefully kept genealogies, through shamanic 'root-seeking movements' (Shimamura 2002: 94-106; see also Buyandelgeriyn 1999: 230; 2007: 138-9). Pedersen has compared the Darkhad and Buryat cases, arguing that Mongols of different ethnic groups manage conflict through different 'tropes' (2006: 165). Although Darkhads in northern Mongolia have shown a similar penchant for cursing and gossip (Lacaze 1996), Pedersen argues that rather than 'paranoia', Darkhads diffuse hostility through jokes and ironic stories about the Mongolian socialist persecutions and contemporary values (2006: 170-8). Distrust of one's neighbours and hostility is also common among Buryats in Inner Mongolia, China (Swancutt in press). And Dulam (2006) proposes that the Deed Mongols in Qinghai, China, manage relations through either an understated, persuasive form of power or explicit forms of interpersonal rivalry. Both intra-familial and interpersonal conflict thus appears widespread among Mongols.

A comparison can be drawn between Buryat vampiric imps and modern conceptions of Western vampires, who, according to 'authors like Anne Rice ... are creatures that feed on the human imagination, sucking the individualism of one's existence'

(Atwater 2000: 76). Although the divide between the individual and the household is not so easily maintained among Buryats, their vampiric imps do split families apart, isolating and individuating them into virtuous and unvirtuous camps. Like Western vampires, Buryat imps propagate themselves by feeding on and creating more revenants. But Buryat endogamous vampirism does more than creating revenants; it selectively decimates consanguineal kin lines. Note that Buryat endogamous vampirism is a counterpoint to Buryat marital exogamy, which 'prohibit[s] the marriage between common patrilineal ancestor[s] within 7-9 generations' (Shimamura 2002: 95).

As Empson suggests, echoing a point that I made earlier, in a seminar version of this article,⁴ Buryats link their notions of impish creatures to consanguineal kin and the shamanic spirit Avgaldai (Delaplace & Empson 2007: 198). However, Empson uses a different Mongolian terminology and describes a different phenomenon to Buryat *chötgör*. Empson's informants, who describe themselves as Khori Buryat Mongols and who are 'predominantly Buddhist', used the term *jijig khün* or even *abagaldai* (the same name for the shamanic spirit Avgaldai) to refer to 'little humans' whose 'faces take the form of grotesque, old and wrinkly men with long beards and bushy eyebrows', so that like trolls, the little people resemble a grotesque form of the living (Delaplace & Empson 2007: 201, see also 208). In the same article, Delaplace shows that Dörvöd Mongols from northwest Mongolia, who are also mainly Buddhist, referred to their imps using the term *jijig khün khevtee*, 'like a little person', or alternatively *ongon*, which usually means 'shamanic ancestral spirits' but which also 'designates particular objects (traditionally, felt or wooden figures) that are considered to house the spirit of the deceased, providing it with a vessel in this world (Hamayon 1990; Humphrey with Onon 1996; Pedersen 2001)' (Delaplace & Empson 2007: 201). By contrast, Aga Buryats in Bayandun are primarily shamanic, and consider that *chötgör* take a skeletal, vampirically impish form which bears features of deathly decay.

In dividing families into virtuous and unvirtuous camps, along affinal-consanguineal lines, Aga Buryats make vampiric imps alternatively into the objects of mockery or fear. On the one hand, Aga Buryats hold that they cannot be hurt by another family's imps (thus, although the neighbours' imps disturbed the productivity of Ölzi's home, they did not pose a threat to Buyna's safety). Vampiric imps from other homes may even be ridiculed because they indicate that someone else's family is not as virtuous as one's own. But on the other hand, a fear of imps is propagated by the idea that anyone, including one's own consanguineal kin, may suddenly cross the virtuous-unvirtuous divide, putting oneself at risk of becoming a vampiric imp. Thus, in Aga Buryat society, one important possibility is that a person may weigh every relation against the standard of virtue, which is upheld by shamanic and Buddhist spirits. Indeed, among Aga Buryats, spirit-human politics often shed light on human-human relations.

Avgaldai: an icon of omnipresence

Shamanic Buryats make a basic distinction between 'black' shamans (*böö*), who invoke the spirits of deceased black shamans or the sky (*tenger*), and 'white' shamans (*bariach*), who invoke the Buddhist deities or the spirits of deceased white shamans (Galdanova 1987: 65-87; Mikhailov 1980: 143-52; 1987: 9-12). One part of the Buryat white shaman's vocation is the ability to practise as a *bariach* healer, who treats injuries by massage, manipulation of a joint or body part, or setting broken bones. Usually, the Mongolian

term '*bariach*', from '*barikh*', meaning 'to grasp', refers simply to bone-setting practitioners (who are frequently not shamans), but Buryats consider that the *bariach* skill is just one part of the white shaman's practice. Indeed, the Buryat preference for incorporating many skills into a given practitioner's repertoire is shown by the fact that most Buryat shamans undergo initiation ceremonies (*chanar*) for both the black and white modes of practice.

Buryats and other Mongols recognize shamans as the 'drivers' (*jolooch*) of their family lines when the shamanic spirits afflict them with a classic long-term illness episode that causes them to accept their vocational 'roots' (*ug*; Eliade 1964: 29-31; Lewis 1971: 54, see also 64-5 and 70-1). In accepting the roots, shamans agree to invoke the spirits of deceased shamans in their own family lines. Additionally, Buryat shamans call upon the common, ancestral spirits, whom people in Bayandun refer to as 'spirits of the entire Buryat ethnic group' (*buriadin ündesnii ongon*) and identify as being more than five or six generations distant from themselves. Buryat shamanic spirits reside either in the heavens (*tenger*) – including at the right and left sides of the Polar Star (*Altan Gadas*) and on the seven stars of the Ursa Major constellation (*Doloo Burkhan*) – or on the large black island-rock in Lake Baikal, from where they bureaucratically administer all earthly and heavenly affairs.

Typically during séances, the spirits descend to earth to possess living shamans (Mongols use the phrase the 'spirit is made to enter', *ongon oruulakh*, or the 'spirit is made to descend', *ongon buulgakh*) and hold face-to-face dialogues with the shaman's inquirers. Buryat shamans start their ceremonies by inviting the spirits to travel from the heavens and seat themselves – in miniature form – at the offering table. Like vampiric imps, the shamanic spirits are also small. Once the spirits have all arrived, the shaman invokes them one at a time to enter him or her. Invocations involve chanting, accompanied by drumming (when calling black spirits) or bell-ringing (when calling white spirits). A shaman uses invocations to cause his or her own human perspective to reverberate with the spirit's perspective – as the spirit approaches the shaman from the offering table – until the shaman adopts that spirit's perspective (Swancutt 2007: 238-9). Similarly, shamans drum or ring bells to send spirits back to the heavens and regain their own human perspectives (note that the act of sending the spirit back is undertaken from the spirit's point of view). Shamans tend to divine or administer healing treatments on a daily basis in Bayandun, and commonly conduct shamanic ceremonies at least once or twice within a fortnight.

People in Bayandun hold that the spirits of close family relations (*oirkhon khamaatni ongon*), who are separated by no more than five or six generations' distance from their descendents, are most likely to offer them desired magical treatments (Swancutt 2006: 346-7). The archetypal example of a close relative spirit is the guardian spirit (*khoimoriin khögshin*, literally 'honorary old woman') of the household, who watches over her descendants from the most honorary part of the home, where her spirit effigy is kept. Some Buryats may have living memories of close spirits, which arise from having resided together in a single (usually one-room wooden) household and establishing family intimacies with an ancestor during his or her lifetime. Close spirits regularly watch over (*dagaj khardag*) their descendants from the heavens so that they can intervene on their behalf, without first requiring their descendants to tell them about recent events in their lives. However, close spirits are less powerful than distant spirits. For, as generational distance grows, spirits are increasingly drawn into the administrative bureaucracy of the shamanic afterlife world, where they obtain a wider

birth of knowledge and virtuosic power. Because administrative affairs divert the spirits' attention from their living descendants, an increase in spirit virtuosity usually entails a decrease in spirit-human intimacy.

This contrast between intimate, close relative spirits and virtuosic, distant relative spirits actually arises from Buryat ideas about spirit hierarchies in the shamanic after-life world. Buryats gather information about the shamanic afterlife from a variety of sources, including knowledge passed from shamanic teachers to their pupils, exchanges between shamans and their spirit-helpers, and even shamanic séances where the spirits describe the afterlife to a roomful of inquirers (which may include laypersons and shamans). Based on these exchanges of information, people in Bayandun consider that the most senior shamanic spirits work within the spirit bureaucracy located on the black island-rock in Lake Baikal. Senior spirits have access to the full range of knowledge in the shamanic afterlife, including the spirit bureaucracy files, which is the basis for their virtuosity in giving people the most powerful innovations. Since the spirit bureaucrats are positioned at the apex of the shamanic afterlife, they not only know everything that can be known, but also use their existing knowledge to produce additional, new knowledge. Thus, senior spirit bureaucrats impart innovations that help people to use the full range of the world's knowledge, including hidden elements of bureaucratic policy, to their advantage. Indeed, Buryats consider that senior spirit bureaucrats can perceive phenomena 'from all possible perspectives', such that these spirits have even obtained what Holbraad and Willerslev call 'the transcendental "view from everywhere"' – a view which no *person*, including a shaman, could occupy (2007: 333, see also 335 and 339–40).

Close relative spirits are not members of the spirit bureaucracy, and so do not have access to the senior spirits' transcendental, all-knowing perspective. However, close spirits do gain access to some esoteric knowledge which is unknown to Buryat people, simply by virtue of having entered the shamanic afterlife, where they can meet regularly with the senior spirits and gather knowledge from them. Combining knowledge from the shamanic afterlife with their intimate knowledge of human affairs, close spirits introduce innovations that help Buryats make advantageous use of renewable resources in the home.

Only the shamanic spirit called Avgaldai elides this opposition between virtuosic power and intimate relations, since Avgaldai is omnipresent (having an all-seeing, all-knowing, and all-pervasive capacity) while his lifetime also predates that of any living person by more than five generations. Humphrey has discussed the ritual use and mythic narratives for this spirit in Manchuria and northeast Mongolia, where '“Abagaldai” is a name meaning “with [the power of] *abaga*” (senior uncles in the patrilineage)' (Humphrey with Onon 1996: 242). People in Bayandun pronounce the spirit's name as 'Avgaldai', which in Mongolian can mean a pupa, larva, or caterpillar, creatures associated with metamorphosis, the process of maturing, and establishing family intimacy. Being omnipresent while absent from living memory, Avgaldai presents a paradox which, however, makes sense when considering how easily Buryats may cross the virtuous-unvirtuous divide. Indeed, Humphrey points out that '[f]rom legends of the Buryats, we learn that Abagaldai was nothing other than the downside of the clan male' (Humphrey with Onon 1996: 243). There is also a suggestive parallel between Avgaldai's omnipresence in Bayandun, and the notion among Khori Buryats located to the west, that '*abagaldai*' 'refer[s] to another household's "little humans"', especially '[a]mong families that do not have initiated shamans ... as a general term for little humans that

reside in families with shamanic origins (*ug*) (be these realised shamanic origins or not)' (Delaplace & Empson 2007: 201-2). Permutations on the Buryat view of Avgaldai indicate that he is a common, clan spirit who may promote family intimacy or wreak havoc on it, by deploying his distributed spirithood just as vampiric imps do.

Humphrey gives two Buryat legends of Abagaldai which illustrate the quality of an 'anti-hero' (Humphrey with Onon 1996: 243). In the first, Abagaldai goes off for a smoke while his wife is away holding a shamanic séance, during which time his abandoned son drowns in a river. In the second, Abagaldai has an affair with his wife's sister, prompting his grief-struck wife to cut off Abagaldai's head, which was made a shamanic spirit. These legends reflect notions held about Avgaldai in Bayandun, and Ölzii's household in particular, in which an anti-hero's taste for revelry (shared by vampiric imps who gorge themselves on consanguineal kinsmen and their food supplies) is ever-presently destructive to, and yet manageable by, the women in his family line. Consider the legend of Avgaldai that Ölzii recounted to me during summer 2004, in which Avgaldai's anti-heroic behaviour reflects Dorj's alcoholism (which 'vampirically' drained Ölzii's household resources) and which also gives rise to the Buryat 'paranoia' described by Humphrey (2002) and Pedersen (2006):

Avgaldai and his son had a great fondness for drinking, smoking and revelry. His wife and daughter, however, did not like that he drank, did no work, and became violent from this. So one day when Avgaldai and his son – who also liked to drink – were away from home, his wife and daughter poured out all their vodka into the river. When Avgaldai returned home and discovered the loss of his alcohol, he queried his wife and daughter, who told him they had disposed of it. In a sudden fit of rage, Avgaldai cut off the heads of his wife and daughter. Then he became very frightened by what he had done and left his home, with his son, to live elsewhere. Avgaldai practised as a great shaman, and continued drinking with his son, but was always terrified that the spirits of his wife and daughter would, out of vengeance, find him and take his own head. Therefore, whenever Avgaldai now arrives at someone's home for a shamanic ceremony [i.e. whenever a shaman adopts the perspective of Avgaldai], he first looks around warily. Afraid that he may have entered his old home, Avgaldai asks 'Are my wife and daughter here?' If Avgaldai is told 'yes', he will immediately exit the shaman's body. But if he is told 'no', then he will stay and talk to people. Avgaldai must, over time, become comfortable with a given shaman before he will stay for long conversations and help people. He has become very comfortable with my daughter, Yaruu, and so descends upon her often. Avgaldai is a great, strong spirit. Not many shamans can handle him, but my daughter Yaruu can.

According to Ölzii, there were several shamanic ceremonies in which Yaruu adopted Avgaldai's perspective and gave this version of his legend. Numerous times Ölzii told me, with a piteous laugh, about Avgaldai's fear when possessing a shaman and Yaruu's exceptional skill at handling him. Buryats can make use of Avgaldai's omnipresent capacity, on the condition that they first put to rest his paranoia at having destroyed his household. More specifically, Ölzii's version of the Avgaldai legend suggests that women shamans and their inquirers, such as Yaruu and Ölzii, can harness the good side of Avgaldai's omnipresence. Indeed, the strongly gendered emphasis of Ölzii's legend – in which a mother-daughter team fight against their male relatives' alcoholism – reflects Ölzii and Yaruu's own biographies from 2001 onwards. Whereas Ölzii forced Dorj and Buyna to leave her home for draining the household resources with alcoholism, Yaruu had her husband undertake a year-long alcoholic's rehabilitation course in the province capital of Choibalsan (this treatment was successful, and when Yaruu's husband returned to Bayandun, he became highly industrious). Thus, Ölzii's legend highlights the capacity of Mongolian women – at

least in shamanic families – to remove purely negative people from the home (such as Dorj) or, alternatively, to harness the positive qualities of men who evidence only some anti-social behaviour (Yaruu's husband turned to alcoholism mainly out of despair with the lack of available jobs, he was willing to undergo rehabilitation and then start work). Moreover, Ölzii's legend tallies with records from the Daur Mongol past, where '[t]he impression that Abagaldai represented the bad, antisocial, blackbear-like aspect of the clan elder is strengthened by the fact that it was mostly female shamans who maintained this spirit' (Humphrey with Onon 1996: 243, drawing on Dioszegi 1967: 190). I should say that Yaruu and Ölzii are unusually strong women who have been able to contravene the convention of patrilocal residence, when they had their husbands move into their homes. These women have also assumed the duties of a household head and obtained the majority of their household incomes, in Yaruu's case through shamanic practice and in Ölzii's case through bread-making, vegetable sales, and previous work as a district accountant. Yaruu's and Ölzii's roles corroborate the idea that Mongolian women, such as daughters-in-law, may be nominally less powerful than other family members, while simultaneously skilled in mediating relations between their affinal kin and the 'little humans' or *abagaldai* who inhabit their homes (Delaplace & Empson 2007: 200-3, see also 205-8). The strength of these women further reflects Humphrey's finding that Mongols use exceptional roles such as 'mediating, birth-giving, persons-in-transit ... whether [they are] men or women' to handle hostile elements, including latent conflicts with the patrilineal hierarchy (1995: 158-9). Given the endemic contests between virtuous and unvirtuous elements in Buryat family lines – of which Avgaldai is iconic⁵ – it makes sense that Ölzii's family would expunge their undead patriline with the help of shamanic ancestors, through ceremonies intended to introduce genealogical changes.

Close and distant spirit perspectives

The more shamanic groups of Russian Buryats have historically adapted their genealogies to suit personal needs, such that 'day to day decisions at the most basic level, families and groups of families, force[d] people in varying real conditions to create genealogies in different ways, despite the ideological weight of a general idea or cultural model of society defined in any particular genealogical idiom' (Humphrey 1979: 236). Since genealogical innovations afforded 'protection from shamanic spirits on the land on which one was settled', Buryat claims to spirit ancestors were also claims to land (Humphrey 1979: 251, see also 249-52). But whereas shamanic spirits help Buryats stake claims to land, vampiric imps undercut those claims by consuming the products of people's land and labour (their food, livestock, and eventually people). Humphrey's findings, then, shed significant light on why Buryats oppose vampiric claims on their resources by seeking out ancestors, such as Ölzii's father, to reorientate a patriline and expunge unwanted kinsmen from the home. Indeed, a double counter-claim has even been staked in the case of Ölzii's father, who is both a shamanic spirit and the reincarnated person of her grandson.

Since at least the mid-1990s, Buryats in northeast Mongolia, and Dornod province in particular, have introduced new shamanic ancestors into their spirit lineages to address economic and other problems (Buyandelgeriyn 2007: 134-9; see also 1999: 230 and 236; Shimamura 2002: 95-6; see also 2004: 4-5). Newfound shamanic ancestors are

often the spirits of people who were killed or prevented from practising as shamans during the religious repressions in Russia and Mongolia. When these spirits appear, they present their stories – as Avgaldai presented his to Ölzii and Yaruu’s families – and request offerings. Buyandelgeriyn has shown that occasionally a hostile ‘pretender-spirit’ presents itself as a genuine ancestor at a shamanic ceremony, in which case Buryats are wary about mistakenly incorporating that spirit into their genealogies and obliging themselves to make it regular offerings (2007: 137). In my view, pretender-spirits have a predatory quality similar to that of vampiric imps, since they try to attract people to them and plunder their resources. Still, the Buryat practice of expanding genealogies in a ‘grassroots’ way, at the behest of spirits, is popular among Buryats because it allows them self-sufficiently to address misfortunes (i.e. by using their shamans rather than relying on an unstable, fairly ‘stateless’ society and economy; Buyandelgeriyn 2007: 132). Especially relevant to my argument about expunging vampiric elements from the family tree, however, is Sneath’s idea that the official Mongolian promotion of state-recognized surnames in 2004 influenced recent genealogical changes (2007: 93–103). As I describe below, Yaruu introduced a passport name-changing innovation during Ölzii’s guardian spirit ceremony, which deflected Dorj’s imps from the home. This innovation was, in part, a product of the state initiative

[i]n 2004, [when] thousands of Mongolian citizens rushed to choose a new sort of name for themselves, a surname, or *obog ovog ner*. The hurry was caused by government deadlines: new state regulations stipulated that all citizens must have a registered surname so that they could be issued with new identity cards (Sneath 2007: 93).

The question, then, arises: how do Buryat shamans introduce innovations by adopting close or distant spirit perspectives?

Buryat shamans develop their own styles of practice and acquire their own specific helper-spirits over time. Buyandelgeriyn has pointed out that the variation between any given shaman’s practice is reflected in the Mongolian saying ‘*böö böögiin böölöh ondoo ...*’, literally meaning that every shaman shamanises differently from every other’ (1999: 227). This saying is commonly used throughout northeast Mongolia, and people in Bayandun mentioned it to me on numerous occasions. While there are variations between the practices of different shamans – perhaps most notably the spirits whom they invoke – all Buryat shamans aim to adopt the ‘perspectives’ of shamanic spirits (Humphrey 2007: 173, see also 179–80; Swancutt 2007: 238–9, see also 243). According to the Buryat epistemology, as a spirit enters a shaman, that spirit causes the shaman’s mind to vacate his or her body (*ukhaa n’ baikhgiüi*), thereby rendering the shaman a spirit-medium in the classic sense of the term, as a ‘vessel’ for the spirits (while the term ‘*ongon*’ commonly refers to a ‘shamanic spirit’, the cognate term ‘*ongots*’ usually denotes a ‘vessel’, ‘ship’, or ‘airplane’).

There is a notable resemblance between the Buryat view of spirit possession and the perspectival capacity which Viveiros de Castro has ascribed to Amazonia, where a person adopts the perspective of another subject – such as a spirit – by donning that subject’s bodily affectual capacities (i.e. a given spirit’s comportment, reflexes, biography, manners, etc.; 1998a: 482; 1998b: 4; 2004: 474–5). Recently, I have argued that when Buryat spirits enter shamans, both the spirit’s and the shaman’s viewpoints

“reverberate” off of each other, [until] the spirit’s bodily affects overwhelm the shaman’s affects and both parties come to hold the same viewpoint’ (Swancutt 2007: 239). The bodily affectual capacities which shamans adopt include forces, energies, and talents, such that shamans even don the spirit’s ‘virtuosity affect’, that is, the spirit’s level of knowledge and power.

Taking that argument a step further here, I propose that Buryat shamanic spirits have a ‘virtuosity affect’, which entails spirit power, and an ‘intimacy affect’, which entails intimacy with living descendants. However, not all spirits hold these affects to the same degree. Generally speaking, close spirits have a greater intimacy affect whereas distant spirits have a greater virtuosity affect. Thus, shamans who adopt a close spirit’s perspective do not need inquirers to tell them much about their circumstances (since close spirits watch after their descendants regularly and are familiar with their life situations). In contrast, distant spirits – with the exception of the omnipresent Avgaldai – neither regularly watch after their descendants nor are on intimate terms with shamans and their inquirers. Since no Buryat has living memory of distant spirits, the shaman who adopts the distant spirit’s perspective is inhibited, by that spirit’s lack of intimacy with his or her inquirers, from readily responding to the inquirers’ questions. Distant spirits thus often require substantial background information about their inquirers. I observed numerous occasions where shamans who adopted the perspectives of distant spirits either took long pauses to formulate replies or asked clarificatory questions before providing their answers. Still, a shaman who adopts the perspective of a distant spirit can provide the most powerful treatments, once familiarized with the inquirers’ problems, because distant spirits have greater access to the knowledge of the spirit bureaucracy.

This trade-off between intimacy and virtuosity is demonstrated most clearly in cases where a Buryat shaman adopts the perspective of a close spirit but cannot answer an inquirer’s question. At that point, the shaman uses what I call ‘drum divination’ to invoke yet another, distant spirit, for a spirit-spirit consultation (see Fig. 3). In drum divination, a Buryat shaman makes his or her already adopted, close spirit perspective reverberate with a distant spirit perspective. Withdrawing from the inquirers, a shaman steadily beats the drum, summoning a more senior spirit to his or her side and communicating the difficult question to that spirit through the sound of the drum. The senior spirit whispers its reply, via the sound of the drum, into the ears of the shaman, who often inclines his or her head close to the drum to hear these whispered replies. Then the shaman finishes drumming and relays the senior spirit’s information to his or her inquirers.

I suggest that this spirit-spirit questioning, via the drum, actually requires the shaman to ‘oscillate’ between two perspectives: the close spirit’s intimate perspective and a more senior spirit’s virtuosic perspective (Willerslev 2004: 630, see also 639–47). Drum divinations thereby induce a ‘double perspectivism’, where shamans ‘act as a “double agent”’, manoeuvring, on behalf of their inquirers, between different degrees of intimacy and virtuosity (Willerslev 2004: 639). Indeed, drum divination appears to be an extension of the Buryat black shaman’s *modus operandi* for manoeuvring between different perspectives (i.e. drumming to adopt a given spirit perspective, or to induce double perspectivism, or to regain the human perspective). During the guardian spirit ceremony of 13 September 2004, spirit-human ‘dialogues’ that elicited a drum divination were instrumental to reorientating the patriline in Ölzi’s home (Vitebsky 1993: 5; 2008: 245–8).



Figure 3. The author's drawing of 'double perspectivism' in drum divination. A Buryat shaman who has adopted the perspective of a close relative spirit drums to invoke a senior spirit. Allowing the two spirit perspectives to 'reverberate' off of each other, the shaman hears the senior spirit's whispered advice, via the drum. Drum divination allows shamans to retain the intimacy of close relative spirits while accessing the virtuosic power of distant relative spirits.

Expunging the vampiric patriline

Yaruu followed the protocol for a guardian spirit ceremony when she invoked only close relative spirits to her offering table. During the invocations, she used the intimate family nickname of Ölzii's grandson, showing that he and Ölzii's father are the same person. As the ceremony unfolded, Yaruu also consulted Ölzii about which spirit perspective to adopt from those spirits called to the offering table. And on one occasion, Yaruu used drum divination to consult a distant spirit about the haunting.

First, Yaruu adopted the perspective of a close spirit who knew about the vampire problem. Speaking from this spirit's perspective, Yaruu said that the neighbours in the eastern wing of Ölzii's complex were housing a man who murdered someone and was taken to gaol. That man's imps were all trying to claim the murderer next door. To prevent the neighbours' imps from bumbling into Ölzii's home again, Yaruu advised that Ölzii bury soot from her hearth beneath the top layers of dirt along her household gates (*khashaa*). In Mongolia, hearth soot is attributed protective qualities, since it is the residue of offerings burned to spirits and is also the product of activities central to daily life (e.g. cooking and cleaning). However, using hearth soot to block vampiric imps from the home was a magical innovation in Bayandun (below I discuss parallels to similar innovations that Yaruu introduced four years earlier). Yaruu produced this innovation by coupling the close spirit's intimate knowledge of the neighbours' vampire problem (regularly discussed in Ölzii's household) and the notion that hearth soot (a renewable household resource) has protective qualities.

Once the first spirit exited, Yaruu adopted another close spirit's perspective, and rapidly told the inquirers what to prepare for the ceremony's final purificatory washing. Ölzii tried asking what she should do to help her children be successful in life. But Yaruu refused to answer this question, stopping Ölzii in mid-sentence by blessing her atop the head with the shaman's staff.

Next, Yaruu adopted the perspective of the guardian spirit for Ölzii's household. Ölzii, who was seeking yet another magical innovation, gave a lengthy description of the vampire problem, mentioning obstacles that prevented Buyna from returning for the ghost-trapping ceremony and asking her guardian spirit whether the hearth soot innovation would merely deflect the imps. Here, Ölzii sought to expunge Dorj from the patriline, and not just to block his imps from the home. So, shortly into Ölzii's exposition, Yaruu withdrew from communication, drumming lightly to invoke a virtuosic senior spirit. While drumming, Yaruu allowed the perspective of Ölzii's guardian spirit (a close spirit familiar with the vampire problem and the hearth soot innovation) to reverberate with the perspective of a senior spirit (who had a virtuosic means for expunging Dorj from the patriline). Finishing the drum divination, Yaruu explained that Dorj's imps were now pursuing (*dagaj baina*) each of the three children whom Dorj had fathered by Ölzii, including Buyna. Therefore, Yaruu advised that Ölzii officially change the children's surnames, having their passports reissued so that they would bear Ölzii's father's name in place of Dorj's. Expunging Dorj's name from the children's official records would sever him from their consanguineal line, making the children unpalatable to Dorj's imps. Moreover, Yaruu said that if Ölzii undertook the ghost-trapping ceremony and the hearth soot and passport name-changing innovations, Dorj's imps would not pursue her children for the next ten years. For the imps would then be interred at a crossroads, blocked from entering Ölzii's household gates and expunged from the patriline. Still, Ölzii was concerned that she could not convince Buyna to return for the ghost-trapping ceremony, and explained that they had difficulty reaching Buyna by letter. So Yaruu requested that milk offerings be made to Ölzii's guardian spirit, for three days in a row (a conventional form of oblation), saying that this would make Buyna return soon for the ghost-trapping ceremony.

Immediately after, Yaruu adopted the perspective of the guardian spirit for Ölzii's brother's household and requested that a girl born in the year of the dog be brought before her. Yaruu's second daughter was rapidly ushered in and seated next to her. Drawing on the close spirit's intimacy, Yaruu confirmed what was commonly known to the families present: that the spirit of Ölzii's adoptive mother had been reincarnated in this girl. Declaring that her daughter had now become a well-behaved child (also common knowledge), Yaruu blessed her, followed by the members of Ölzii's brother's family, with the shaman's protective staff.

Then Yaruu adopted the perspective of her most powerful spirit, whom I call Mortoi, and who is removed from Yaruu by five generations. Ölzii repeated the question that she had put to her own guardian spirit: 'Would Buyna return home in time for the ghost-trapping ceremony?', explaining that she had sent letters to Buyna's relatives. But Yaruu ignored Ölzii's questions about Buyna – which might have required another drum divination session – and simply repeated Avgaldai's prediction that Buyna would hang herself if the ghost-trapping ceremony were not undertaken.

From there, Yaruu adopted the perspective of Mortoi's wife, another close spirit who was familiar with the vampire problem. Ölzii gave an account of the previous night, when she heard someone knocking on her entranceway door and went outside

to see what was happening. There had been an imp that Ölzii could not see, but which the neighbour's dog, staying in her yard, had detected. The dog trailed the imp into the vegetable garden and Ölzii followed the dog. When the imp reached Ölzii's shed, it entered this and the dog clawed the shed door in vain to get in after it. On the following day, Ölzii noticed the dog's claw marks and also found physical evidence of the imp's entry, where it had torn away the top layers of wood on the shed door. Citing this as proof of the vampire problem, Ölzii said that she had difficulties sending letters to Buyna, identifying her as a daughter from Dorj's side (*tal*) of the family. She mentioned that Avgaldai had predicted that Buyna would hang herself, and asked Yaruu – from the viewpoint of Mortoi's wife – to look into (*üzekh*) this difficulty (*khatuu yüm*) and make a divinatory pronouncement about whether or not Buyna would return home. Carrying on, Ölzii said that the neighbours in the eastern wing worship the Buddhist deities to deflect their own vampires. So Yaruu strolled outside to see whether the imp that had entered Ölzii's shed was still there. When she returned, Ölzii hastily asked whether the neighbours' new plan of holding a shamanic ghost-trapping ceremony would be successful. Irritated, Yaruu retorted, 'who knows?' (*büü med*). This reply made sense. Since Yaruu had adopted the perspective of Mortoi's wife, she would neither have been familiar with the neighbours' family nor have been virtuosic enough to predict the success of their ceremony. Persisting, Ölzii asked if there were a bad thing (*muu yüm*) in her shed, referring euphemistically to the neighbours' vampires. But Ölzii's sister-in-law confirmed that Mortoi's wife had just told them outdoors that the neighbours' vampires were in the neighbours' home. Finally, Ölzii asked whether the difficulty from Dorj's family, referring indirectly to Buyna's suicide, would happen. However, Yaruu casually repeated common household knowledge: that if the ghost-trapping ceremony were held at Ölzii's home, they would deflect the imps for the next ten years.

Yaruu then adopted the perspective of Ölzii's father and asked after Ölzii's grandson, who are considered to be one and the same person. Because the grandson was asleep, Yaruu handed the child's father biscuits and sweets to give him, ensuring that the child carrying the reincarnated spirit of Ölzii's father would receive the largest portion of available sweets. Questions were put to Yaruu about the upcoming year. Ölzii asked whether she could become rich and help her children if she expanded her garden and dairy sales. Yaruu replied that Ölzii would become rich, whereupon she should buy a small car and give this to her son (i.e. the father of the favoured grandson). One of Ölzii's nieces then asked whether a man whom she had in mind would make for a good husband. However, Yaruu sharply replied that he would not because he drank vodka and would beat her. Pausing for a few moments, Yaruu then quietly reproached Ölzii, saying that when she had been younger and had wanted to marry Dorj, her father had thought that she should not marry him, but that he could not bring himself to tell her so at the time. Shaken by her father's reprimand and implicit apology, Ölzii sheepishly asked once more about Dorj's imps. But Yaruu refused to discuss the vampire problem further and simply said, 'Oh what a difficulty', told everyone to go well in life, and readopted her own perspective.

Finally, Yaruu invoked a close relative of Ölzii's brother, who had been a blacksmith shaman (*dorlig ongon*). Adopting that spirit's perspective, Yaruu told Ölzii's brother that he would become rich if he built a large blacksmith's workshop. Then, as Yaruu prepared the materials for the purificatory washing, she told everyone that there was a difficult thing (*khünd yüm*) which their families would need to overcome. Blessing

Ölzii's brother with the shaman's staff, Yaruu readopted her own perspective. Everyone at the ceremony then washed their faces and upper bodies with the blessed water.

Conclusion: the bodily affects for innovation

Ölzii's guardian spirit ceremony shows how Buryat shamans take on a given spirit's perspective to introduce specific kinds of innovations. Since close spirits regularly watch after their descendants in the home, they introduce innovations that make use of renewable household resources. Yaruu's hearth soot innovation, for instance, deployed the quintessentially intimate and regularly renewable resource of soot, which Mongols associate with the upkeep and sanctity of the home. Indeed, Yaruu introduced similar innovations four years earlier, when taking on two other intimate spirit perspectives. Having adopted the omnipresent perspective of Avgaldai, Yaruu introduced a curse-blocking innovation which required placing menstrual or birth blood – renewable resources associated with pollution, but also the production and regeneration of people in the home – at the household threshold to deflect curses (Swancutt 2006: 347-9). In the same ceremony, Yaruu adopted the perspective of her shamanic pupil's father, and introduced an innovative toothache remedy that required sniffing baking soda, which is also a regularly renewable resource in Buryat homes (Swancutt 2006: 349-50). Additionally, Yaruu advised that the soda innovation could be used to treat childhood fevers, from which the spirit's grandchildren occasionally suffered (Swancutt 2006: 349).

In contrast, distant spirits, who regularly administer earthly and heavenly affairs, introduce innovations that draw upon their virtuosity at handling bureaucratic work. Thus, when Yaruu adopted the perspective of Ölzii's guardian spirit in the ceremony described above, and was pressed to provide a means of expunging Dorj from the patriline, she used drum divination to consult a distant spirit. Accessing this distant spirit's point of view helped Yaruu to suggest the passport name-changing innovation, which was a bureaucratic means of expunging Dorj's imps. Some days after the guardian spirit ceremony, Ölzii told me that although her household had missed the Mongolian identity card deadline of 27 June 2004 by three months, they would be able to overcome that complication by sending her children's passports to the Mongolian officials in Ulaanbaatar. These officials could change the surnames of Ölzii's children to match the surname of Ölzii's father (allowing two to three months for this change to be made). Seen in this light, Yaruu's proposed genealogical change, which was undertaken at the behest of her rural family and from the viewpoint of a senior shamanic spirit, actually set in motion the state's recognition of their preferred line of descent. Note that the human-spirit relation between Ölzii's family and this distant spirit (who represents the spirit bureaucracy in Lake Baikal and the heavens) mirrored the human-human relation between rural Buryats in northeast Mongolia and the state government located in the capital of Ulaanbaatar.

By following the case study on how Yaruu and Ölzii expunged hostile forces from the home, which in 1999-2000 required deflecting rivals' curses and from 2001 onwards involved battling vampires in the home, I have shown that Buryats commonly produce magical innovations to address their problems. These innovations highlight the important possibility in Aga Buryat society that any person can readily cross the boundary between virtuous and unvirtuous behaviour. Indeed, Buryat intimacy spawns ambivalence about other people (as possible aggressors), about shamanic spirits (as potential pretender-spirits), and about vampiric imps (as gradual life-draining forces). This

ambivalence is iconicized by the shamanic spirit Avgaldai, that omnipresent anti-hero who capitulates to women shamans and gave Yaruu's shamanic group a curse-blocking innovation in 2000. Buryat shamans, however, control this ambivalent sociality by adopting the spirits' intimacy or virtuosity affects. It only takes Buryat shamans a moment to drum up distant spirits who are masters of bureaucracy. Speaking on behalf of those spirit elites, Buryat shamans can overturn even the most fundamental aspect of their sociality: the patriline and the ever-present threat of succumbing to an undead genealogy.

NOTES

I am grateful to the Committee for Central and Inner Asia for funding my field trip to Mongolia in 2004, on which this article is based. This article has benefited from insightful comments made on an earlier draft at seminar presentations in the University of Cambridge, the University of Oxford, and the University of St Andrews. Pseudonyms have been used throughout the article, due to the sensitivity of its information, and are consistent with the names that appear in my earlier work.

¹ In 1937, the Aga Buryat Autonomous District (or 'Agin Buryat Autonomous Okrug') was administratively set apart from other Buryat areas in Russia. However, on 1 March 2008, the Aga Buryat Autonomous District merged with Chita Oblast in Russia, to form the District of Zabaikalsk, Russia.

² Yaruu considered this shaman to be a curse-casting rival between December 1999 and June 2000.

³ Buryats hold a guardian spirit ceremony every three to five years, to ensure that household affairs go well. Since the ceremony places a strong emphasis on the home, the officiating shaman always adopts the perspective of the guardian spirit and usually only adopts the perspectives of other close spirits.

⁴ I presented an earlier version of this article in November 2004, at a departmental senior seminar in Cambridge, where I linked Buryat vampiric imps to consanguineal kin and the shamanic spirit Avgaldai. I am happy to see that, since then, Empson has discussed the connection between different kin relations and Buryat imps, which she terms 'little humans' (Delaplace & Empson 2007: 198).

⁵ Humphrey (Humphrey with Onon 1996: 242-3, see also 246) has described how masks in the shape of Abagaldai's face have been used as receptacles for shamanic spirits among Mongol and Evenk groups. Empson also discusses the use of masks among Buryats in Mongolia (Delaplace & Empson 2007: 202).

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La généalogie des non-morts : omniprésence, perspective des esprits, et un cas de vampirisme en Mongolie

Résumé

Cet article s'inscrit dans le prolongement d'une étude de cas sur l'innovation magique présentée précédemment dans le *JRAI*. Il montre que les chamanes des Bouriates de Mongolie repoussent régulièrement les forces hostiles en adoptant le point de vue des esprits. L'article présente une nouvelle ethnographie des farfadets vampires des Bouriates et un épisode de vampirisme intra-familial, et avance que dans la vie sociale des Bouriates, n'importe qui (y compris les esprits omniprésents) peut franchir la frontière entre vertu et absence de vertu. Les Bouriates du Nord-est de la Mongolie croient que les esprits ancestraux qui leur sont proches veillent sur leurs descendants, tandis que les esprits ancestraux distants gèrent la bureaucratie des esprits. À partir des travaux de Viveiros de Castro sur le perspectivisme, l'auteure propose que les perspectives des esprits créent un « affect d'intimité », tandis que les esprits distants suscitent un « affect de virtuosité ». Les chamanes bouriates oscillent parfois entre ces deux perspectives pour accéder à la fois à l'intimité et à la virtuosité. Ceci est mis en évidence à travers un exemple qui constitue le clou de l'article : la manière dont une chamane bouriate a chassé de la patrilignée l'ex-mari de sa mère et les parents « non morts » de celui-ci.

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