

## Article

# Deities System and Ritual Practice: A Case Study of the Daur Shamanic *Oboo* Ritual

Minna Sa 

School of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Minzu University of China, 27 Zhongguancun South Avenue, Haidian District, Beijing 100081, China; minna.sa@muc.edu.cn

**Abstract:** The restoration and reconstruction of Daur shamanism is classical and representative of the revival of shamanism in contemporary China. The case study of the Daur shamanic *oboo* ritual in this paper discusses the connotation and classification of *oboo*. Through a brief description of the main process of the ceremony, the shaman spirits, and the main contents of the divine songs, this paper analyzes the characteristics and functions of the contemporary Daur shaman sacrificing *oboo* ceremony. The contemporary Daur shamanic *oboo* ritual also puts forward the concept of “*mokun kura*” (*mokun* circle), which restores the function of the traditional clan organization of *mokun*, enhances the cohesion of the *mokun* family, and inspires a sense of responsibility and motivation in the *mokun* members.

**Keywords:** Daur shamanism; *oboo* (ritual); meanings and classifications of *oboo*; *adgin* (*oboo* spirit); *xal* (clan)-*mokun* (branches of clan); *mokun kura* (*mokun* circle 莫昆圈)

## 1. Introduction

Many ethnic groups in China believe in shamanism, which has a long tradition and covers a wide range of geographical areas and presents in multiple formats. The Daur are one of them. Most of the Daur people live in the Hulun Buir of Inner Mongolia, Qiqihar of Heilongjiang Province, and Tacheng of Xinjiang. The basic unit of Daur society is the equal clan, *xal*—*mokun* (哈勒—莫昆)<sup>1</sup> (Manduertu 1999, p. 298), and there were about 20 unique Daur clan surnames<sup>2</sup> (Neimenggu Zizhiqu Bianjizu 1985, p. 188), each of which indicated a specific *xal*—*mokun*.

The Daur people traditionally practice shamanism. Its original form is mainly reflected in the presence of shaman spirits and the dependence of shaman inheritance on blood clans. However, in the late 1940s, traditional folk religions, including shamanism, were regarded as “feudalistic superstitions”. Since the 1940s, the inheritance of the Daur shaman had been interrupted for about 50 years, and it did not recover until the beginning of the 1990s. In the late 1990s, the shamanistic tradition began to recover (Sa 2019a, p. 2 of 19).

Daur shamanism, comparatively well-preserved throughout centuries, has always been a hot topic for scholars in China and abroad. There were Japanese scholars such as Ikejiri Noboru and Ōmachi Tokuzō as early as in the 1930s and 1940s, and British anthropologist Ethel John Lindgren, who investigated and recorded the Daur people and their shamanism. Ikejiri wrote a special account of *oboo*<sup>3</sup> in the appendix of *Dawoerzu* (*The Daur*) (Ikejiri 1982, pp. 58–59). Ōmachi studied *oboo* sacrifice of the Daur from the perspective of common spirits and common sacrifices of “clan” (Ōmachi 1995, pp. 60–63). Lindgren studied the Daur and its neighboring ethnic groups from the perspective of Shaman regalia (Lindgren 1935, vol. 17, pp. 365–78).

Caroline Humphrey and Urgunge Onon’s book *Shamans and Elders: Experience, Knowledge and Power among the Daur Mongols* has attracted more academic attention since it was published in 1996 (Humphrey and Onon 1996). Since 1998, when shaman Siqingua held



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an initiation ritual, Daur shamanism began to revive and became a research hotspot again. Peter Knecht, who had conducted a long-term survey on the rituals of the shaman Siqingua and her disciples for nearly 20 years, wrote “Dawoer Saman Zhi Guanjian” (*Glimpses at a Daur Shaman*) (Knecht 2013, pp. 237–47). “A Revitalized Daur Shamanic Ritual from Northeast China” by Kara, Dávid Somfai, Mihály Hoppál was composed after the authors’ study on Siqingua’s ceremony (Kara and Hoppál 2009, pp. 141–69).

Meanwhile, a group of scholars in China have paid close attention to and studied the revival and ritual reconstruction of contemporary Daur Shamanism. Scholars such as Meng Huiying, Guo Shuyun, and Seyin have investigated contemporary Daur shamanism. Relevant research results include Sa Minna, Wu Fengling, and Meng Huiying et al. *Observations and Reflections on the Orminan Culture—A Case Study of the Wo Jufen’s Ritual* (Sa et al. 2011), Ding Shiqing and Saiyintana’s *Dawoerzu Saman Wenhua Yicun Diaocha* (*Survey of the Shamanic Culture of the Daur*) (Ding 2011), Meng Shengbin’s *Dawoerzu Samanjiao Yanjiu* (*Studies on Daur Shamanism*) (Meng 2019), etc.

In recent years, the ritual and practice of Daur shamanism have continued to draw academic attention. Qu Feng studied the spirit belief and landscape construction of Daur shamanism from the perspective of Ontology (Qu 2021). Aurore Dumont studied ecological environments and ethnic habitats from the perspective of ecological anthropology (Dumont 2021). However, only several scholars made in-depth studies on the details of the ritual itself and the connotation of the spirit system.

My father is Solon Ewenki and my mother is Daur. I was born in Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner and speak both the Chinese and the Dauric languages, which is a distinct advantage in field research. With a good knowledge of Daur language, I was able to have a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the specific connotation of each ritual when I participated in the observation of various rituals of the Shaman and her disciples and carried out detailed descriptions of shaman rituals and translation and annotation of the content of divine songs. I have been observing and interviewing the Daur shamans and their rituals from 2009 and studying the rituals of Daur shamanism, the lyric texts of the shamanic invocation songs, polytheism, animism and their beliefs. By 2022, I had participated in more than 50 rituals of shaman Siqingua and shaman Wo Jufen and her other disciples, including offering sacrifices to ancestors, initiation rituals, *oboo* rituals, *lus* rituals, and *omina:n* (ominaan) rituals.

Among the different categories of Daur shamanic ceremonies, the *oboo* worship ceremony has a large number of participants and a wide range of influences which can best reflect the belief concept and worship activities of natural spirits in Daur shamanism. Moreover, the revival of shamanism in the contemporary Daur society is largely related to the restoration and reconstruction of *xal-mokun*, the traditional clan organization of Daur. Among the functions of *mokun*, whether in the past or nowadays, the *oboo* worship is as important as the ancestor sacrifice ritual, which is the public sacrifice activity of *mokun*.

The tradition of offering sacrifices to *oboo* comes from ancient shamanistic beliefs. According to the Daur Social History Survey, which began in the 1950s, and the data compilation published in the 1980s, Daur *oboo* worship is very common and has a long history. Originally, when people lived in a community with *mokun* as the basic unit, they set up *oboo* to offer sacrifices annually and killed bulls, sheep, or pigs for sacrifice. Later, when people from different *mokuns* lived together within the same region, villages became the units of *oboo* worship, and members of *mokuns* jointly held sacrifice rituals (Neimenggu Zizhiqu Bianjizu 1985, p. 256). In addition to Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, Daur people in Qiqihar and Ewenki autonomous Banner also had the habit of offering sacrifices to *oboo*. It is said that a shaman is not the main conductor of the ritual; they only sing and dance to pray for good luck when offering sacrifices to *oboo* in Qiqihar (Wu 1999, p. 296). Lamas were invited to chant sutras. There were no such traditional activities as horse races or wrestling in an *oboo* worship ceremony, and all men except woman are expected to participate the rituals. The *oboo* is built in *mokun* cemetery in Ewenki autonomous Banner (Manduertu 1999, p. 296). Although the specific sacrificial customs are varied, the pur-

pose of sacrifice is generally the same, that is, to pray for good weather, good crops, and prosperous livestock (Neimenggu Zizhiqu Bianjizu 1985, p. 256).

## 2. The Image, Meaning, and Classifications of *Oboo*

### 2.1. Image of *Oboo*

Japanese scholar Ikejiri Noboru said in the appendix of *The Daur* that people get the impression of *oboo* when they set foot in Mongolia. On the top of mountains, on high slopes, on small mounds, on the banks of rivers, on the banks of lakes, as long as there are targets, there are cairns piled up by stones, which are called *oboo*. *Oboo*'s form is not fixed or exactly the same. It is usually about 5 to 6 feet tall and about 1.5 feet in diameter. They are usually made of stones<sup>4</sup> (Ikejiri 1982, pp. 58–59). This is the general image of *oboo*.

### 2.2. Meaning of *Oboo*

Why did the Daur people sacrifice to *oboo*? One of the most renowned reasons recorded in the literature is to ask for rain (Ikejiri 1982, pp. 58–59). The second is to pray for good weather, harvests, and prosperous livestock (Neimenggu Zizhiqu Bianjizu 1985, p. 256). However, why do people think that worshipping *oboo* will result in being blessed and fulfilled? It comes from their traditional shamanistic beliefs.

Since ancient times, the Daur people have believed in shamanism and animism. In addition to the God of Heaven (*təŋgər*, 天神), the spirits of ancestors (*xuɖʒur barkən*, 祖先神) and the Niangniang goddess (*njaŋnjan barkən*, 娘娘神), the mountain spirits (*aulai barkən*, 敖雷巴日肯), and the waters (rivers) spirits (*lus*, 罗斯, Morin-Dawaa *lusun* 罗松) (Sa 2014, pp. 64–68). The natural spirits they worshipped could be roughly divided into two categories: the spirits of mountains and the spirits of water (namely the spirits of rivers). The spirits of mountains are called *aulai barkən*, including the animal spirits living in the forests, mountains, cliffs, hills, etc.<sup>5</sup> The spirits of waters (rivers) are collectively known as the *lus*, the animal spirits around the river, lake, sea, and spring, and so on<sup>6</sup> (Sa 2021, pp. 3–4). The spirits living inside the house are symbolized by portraits and idols, while *oboos* are built for the spirits in the wild. These animal spirits could all be the master of *oboo*, which are called *ɔɔɔ: ɔɖʒin* (master of *oboo*, 敖包额金). There are many different kinds of animals, and these animal spirits could all become *ɔɔɔ: ɔɖʒin*. Therefore, Shaman Siqingua said that *oboo* came from different sources (Ding 2011, p. 240).

### 2.3. Classifications of *Oboo*

According to the different sacrificial subjects and organizers, the *oboo* sacrificial ceremonies mainly include folk sacrificial ceremonies and official sacrificial ceremonies. The *oboo* subject to folk sacrifice can be divided into two categories: *xal—mokun ɔɔɔ:* (哈勒莫昆敖包, namely clan *oboo*) and local *oboo* (地方敖包). Among them, *xal—mokun ɔɔɔ:* includes clan *oboo* and *mokun oboo*, with *mokun oboo* being the majority. Local *oboo* evolved from *xal—mokun ɔɔɔ:* (Sa 2021, p. 182).

According to the corresponding natural deities worshipped by the Daur people, *oboo* can be divided into two categories: mountain spirit series *oboo* (山系神灵敖包) and water spirit series *oboo* (水系神灵敖包, dragon spirit *oboo*, river spirit *oboo*). In the general sense, the daily *oboo* refers to the mountain spirit *oboo*, and the water spirit *oboo* or river spirit *oboo* are called *lusun ɔɔɔ:* (罗松敖包) (Sa 2019a, pp. 3–4 of 19).

Both the mountain spirit *oboo* and the water (river) spirit *oboo* are originally *xal—mokun ɔɔɔ:*. After the continuous differentiation of the traditional clan organization *xal—mokun*, the single clan *oboo* gradually evolved into the local *oboo* (regional *oboo*) owned by different clans. The above two categories of *oboo* are folk sacrifice *oboo*.

#### 2.3.1. Mountain Spirit *Oboo*

The mountain-system spirit *oboo* is divided into *xal—mokun ɔɔɔ:* and local (regional) *oboo*. The most common example of the former is the mountain spirit *oboo*. In the past, each

clan built their own *oboo* and offered sacrifices periodically. The local *oboo* evolved from clan *oboo*. The local *oboo* is usually named after the place name.

### 2.3.2. Water Spirit *oboo*:

The water-system spirit *oboo*, collectively known as dragon spirit *oboo* (*lusun oboo*), can be divided into local (region) *oboo* and *xal—mokun oboo*. According to the difference of water sources, the water-system spirit *oboo* is divided into *lusun oboo* (dragon spirit *oboo*) and spring water *oboo*.

*Lusun* (罗松, Morin-Dawaa) is the *lus* (罗斯, Hailar and Nantun), which is the general name of the dragon spirit and the spirit of water (river). In the past, *xal—mokun* of the Daur ethnic group had a tradition of building *lusun oboo* by the riverside.

*Bular* (布拉日) means spring water, and *bular oboo* (布拉日敖包) means spring water *oboo*, which is built at the foot of the mountains or hills where the spring comes out. The spring *oboo* is mainly based on local *oboo*. (Please see some photos in Appendix A.)

### 2.3.3. Shaman's Tomb *Oboo—fandəŋ oboo*:

*fandəŋ oboo* (山登敖包) is a special type of *oboo*. The *fandəŋ* (山登) is the deceased shaman's tomb. A *fandəŋ oboo* is an *oboo* built on the hill around ten to dozens of meters north of the *fandəŋ*. Shaman Siqingua said that "Each *fandəŋ* must have an *oboo*". This is a request to the earth god (土地神) for a precious land to open a path to the future for the next generation of shaman, which has profound meaning (Sa 2021, pp. 3–4). While the Daur people in Hailar call the tomb of a shaman *fandəŋ*, Daurs in Morin-Dawaa call the shaman's tomb *jad'an oboo* (雅德恩敖包). The difference is that the *jad'an oboo* is a two-in-one form of the *fandəŋ* and the *fandəŋ oboo*, which are not built separately.

It needs to be explained that since a *fandəŋ oboo* is the deceased shaman's tomb, its sacrifice rituals are usually conducted by shamans from his/her family and the descendants of the family. Other types of *oboo*, whether mountain system spirits *oboo* or water(river) system spirits *oboo*, *xal—mokun oboo*, or local (region) *oboo*, are worshiped by *xal—mokun* members or village groups.

## 2.4. The Tradition of Official *Oboo* Sacrifice

Since the Qing Dynasty, in addition to the *oboo* sacrifice rituals held in the folk society, there are also official *oboo* sacrifice ceremonies. According to the resources collected by the above-mentioned investigation group, a map, drawn before the Aigun Treaty (璦琿条約) was signed, which showed the *Buteha* Eight Banner soldiers' patrolling route to the Outer Khingan Mountain area (外兴安岭地区). It was marked with many *oboos*. These *oboos* were mainly subject to official sacrifices (Neimenggu Zizhiqu Bianjizhu 1985, p. 256). In the system of public sacrifices, the official sacrifices shall be shared by the chief officials and the deputy. The chief official's *oboo* is called *Yamen Oboo* (衙门敖包), which is on the top of the hill about five miles north of Yiwoqi Houtun. The deputy's *oboo* is called *Qi Oboo* (旗敖包), which is on the east hill of Nierji Tun (尼尔基屯, namely *Nierji* town 尼尔基镇). Its sacrificial system still uses cattle, pigs, sheep, and other livestock, and sacrifices are offered in spring and autumn twice every year. The official in charge led all the officers and soldiers to burn incense and read the prayer. The content refers to heaven and earth, mountains and rivers, and gods and goddesses, and the words of prayers are the same as the folk sacrifice. The *bagtfi* (巴格其, healer and priest) usually did not join the ceremony. The autumn sacrifices were to thank the blessing of deities' good weather, good crops, safety of people and animals, and still to pray for mercy, exempt from all disasters as the main sacrificial words. Following that, the meat for sacrifice was distributed within the department. The sacrificial method of *Qi Oboo* was the same as that of *Yamen Oboo*. There were games for the festival, such as shooting, horse racing, wrestling, or dancing (Dawoer Ziliaoji 1998, p. 222).

There are no records to tell when the Official sacrifices of *Yamen Oboo* ceased, but the *Qi Oboo*'s official sacrificial activities have continued. This *Qi Oboo* is just the *nir'i oboo*:



built by *mərdəŋ xal nir'itfen* (莫日登哈勒尼日耶浅). Although it was built by *nir'itfen*, the other six *mokun* people of the “*dulu mərdəŋ*”<sup>7</sup> also come to worship. After the Qing government set up the Eight Banners Yamen of Buteha, the deputy steward led officers and soldiers to worship *nir'i oboo*: every year and formed the tradition of the official offerings to *Qi Oboo*. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, on 15 August 1958, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner was established. Since then, every year on 15 August, all departments and units of the Autonomous Banner government and local people gathered to celebrate the founding Day and held commemorative activities on the east hill of *Nierji Town*, beginning with the worship of the *nir'i oboo*.

In 2001, to build the *Nierji Reservoir* (尼尔基水库), it was necessary to level the east hill of *Nierji Town*.<sup>8</sup> *Nir'i oboo*: must be removed. The Autonomous Banner government decided to consolidate primary *Qi Oboo* and *Yamen Oboo* to build the *Buteha Eight Banners and Yamen Oboo* (布特哈八旗衙门斡包). *Mərdəŋ xal* needs to build a new *nir'i oboo*:. From then on, the original two-in-one function of the *nir'i oboo*: was separated, and the function belonging to *Qi Oboo* was incorporated into *Yamen Oboo*, continuing the tradition of official offering *oboo*. It is scheduled to offer sacrifices to *Buteha Eight Banners and Yamen Oboo* in the morning of *Wobao Festival* (斡包节, mainly *oboo* festival) on June 28 every year. The functions belonging to *xal—mokun oboo*: were returned to *mərdəŋ xal*. The new *nir'i oboo*: located in the mountainous region southwest of the *Daur Minzu Garden* (达斡尔民族园) led by those of other Daur people with different surnames, in total input and effort, including such as *uərə xal*, *gu:bəl xal*, and *aula xal*. Therefore, this new *nir'i oboo*: is no longer the original *oboo* of single *mərdəŋ xal*. However, it is still believed to be controlled and periodically sacrificed to by the members of the *mərdəŋ xal*.

### 3. The Overview of the Main Performances of the Ceremony of the *Nir'i oboo*:

#### 3.1. The Cause of a *nir'i oboo*: Ceremony

In 2014, in order to win the contest for the title of “the Hometown of Shaman Culture in China” (中国萨满文化之乡), the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner decided to invite shaman *Siqingua* (斯琴挂) and shaman *Wo Jufen* (沃菊芬) to hold a Daur shaman ritual for the judging experts. Because of the dual attributes and special status of the *nir'i oboo*: in Morin-Dawaa, the two shamans decided to perform the *nir'i oboo*: ritual. Although the ceremony was officially initiated, it was not an official ceremony or a common folk ceremony, but a traditional ritual of offering sacrifice to *oboo* performed by Daur shaman. Its most prominent feature and most important ritual is that the chief shamans invoke their deities and proclaim the oracles.

On 29th June, the ceremony started. Those who participated in the *nir'i oboo*: ritual were the staff of the tourism department of the government, the family members and disciples of the chief shamans, the seven *mokun* members of *mərdəŋ xal*. As for the people involved in the restoration and reconstruction of the new *nir'i oboo*:, there are as many as the *mokun* family members as described in the *uərə xal*, *gu:bəl xal*, and *aula xal*, as well as other people, as described in the *xal-mokun* and other local peoples. The offerings and sacrifices were jointly funded by the government department, *mərdəŋ xal*, the chief shamans, and their disciples.

#### 3.2. Preparation of the *nir'i oboo*: Ritual

A few days before the *oboo* ritual, preparations had begun. The shaman *Siqingua* led her family members and disciples from Nantun to Morin-Dawaa. The shamans' assistants, family members, and helpers bought ritual supplies, including assorted *Hada* (哈达), seven colors of silk fabric cut into about two-fingers-wide color strips, colorful square flags, thread incense, special incense “*sang*” (桑), one red bull, two black pigs, three white sheep and other sacrifices, assorted pastries, a variety of fruits, milk, liquor, red wine, and other offerings.

### 3.2.1. Pre-Prayer Ceremony

On June 28, the night before the ceremony of *oboo*, the pre-prayer ceremony *da:rkabe* (达日卡贝) was held at Wo Jufen's home. The seven *mokun* members of *mərdəŋ xal* knelt down, worshipping the ancient spirits of the shaman Siqingua and shaman Wo Jufen. Wearing Daur costumes and shaman headdresses, the two shamans beat drums and sang prayers, alerting the *xal-mokun* and animal signs (属相) of the worshipers to the ancient spirits and *oboo* spirits, so that when the worshipers performed the ritual the next day, the shaman *uŋgur* (*ongons*) could talk to them.

### 3.2.2. Offering and Sacrificing

On the morning of 29 June, shaman Siqingua and shaman Wo Jufen led the group to the *nir'i ɔɔɔ*: located northwest of Nierji Town and began a busy schedule of preparations. On the altar in front of the *nir'i ɔɔɔ*:, shamans and helpers put the offerings such as fruit, cakes, cooked eggs, and milk, and lit the incense and butter lamp. From the top of the center post of the *nir'i ɔɔɔ*:, a string of colored square flags was drawn in all directions. The men of the shaman's household represent the shaman. The men of *mərdəŋ xal* ascended to the *nir'i ɔɔɔ*: and bound the various colors of *Hada* across the central pillar of the *nir'i ɔɔɔ*:. On the west side of the *nir'i ɔɔɔ*:, about 70 cm high, thick plum-wood shelves which were lined with willow branches were used to display the head, limbs, arterial blood, and major internal organs of the sacrificed red bull. Shamans and the *xal-mokun* families' members attending the ceremony tied ribbons of colorful silk to new willow branches, while men replaced them with bundles of old willow branches in the *nir'i ɔɔɔ*:'s central column. A special blend of spices "*Sang*" incense was lit in the four corners of the *ɔɔɔ*: to clean the ceremonial site. Shaman Siqingua and Wo Jufen and other disciples spread milk around the *oboo*, worshipping the gods of heaven and local gods, simultaneously calling their own spirits. A few dozen meters west of *oboo*, the helpers set up four big iron pots to slaughter pigs, bull, and sheep, then they cooked the meat, which were taken out when the appearance of the flesh had been slightly cooked and discolored.

At the same time, some disciples and aides put fruits, cakes and pastries, liquor, red wine, eggs, and other offerings, and lit the incense and butter lamps for the local god (*gaɖʒir aɖʒilɿ*)<sup>9</sup> and *mərdəŋ xal lusɿŋ ɔɔɔ*:<sup>10</sup>. The offerings of the local gods were placed in the forest not far from the southeast of the *nir'i ɔɔɔ*:. The offerings for the *lusɿŋ ɔɔɔ*: (dragon spirit *oboo*) were taken by the shaman's family members by car to be placed in front of *lusɿŋ ɔɔɔ*: sitting on the cliff of Nenjiang River in the Daur Minzu Garden.

## 3.3. The Main Rites and the Spirits Be Invoked

### 3.3.1. Offering Sacrifices and Praying, the Chief Shamans Invoked Their Spirits

When the offerings were all laid out, the steaming pigs, beef, and mutton were sent to the altar, shaman Siqingua began to wear the shaman costume *sama:fək* (萨玛仕克), and the copper mask *abagaladaj* (阿巴嘎拉岱) sang the divine song "Inviting the Spirits of Shaman Costume to Help" (请神衣佑助歌). Shaman Wo Jufen wore the shaman costume *sama:fək* and shaman hat. After dressed, standing side by side facing the *nir'i ɔɔɔ*:, the two shamans started to sing and beat the drum together. The general meaning of the prayer song was to tell out who had come with the spirits of various *xal-mokun* peoples, and what offerings and sacrifices had been made to the *oboo* spirits, etc.

### 3.3.2. Shaman Siqingua Possessed by the Shaman Spirit

Shaman Siqingua's *uŋgur nir'itfen da:tʃi ɔɔɔ: sairdia aɖʒin* (尼日耶浅·达其敖包·赛日跌额金) came and summoned ten groups of people to talk to them. The *xal-mokun* and their animal signs of the summoned people are as follows:<sup>11</sup>

(1) The *aula xal la:liften* (敖拉哈勒拉里浅) child, born in the Year of Chicken, wanted to offer the wine (white wine).

Around the time, that shaman *uṅgur* expressed his joy because of having houses and seats, told the people to pay attention to their body, and then recounted his soil and water damage and the *lusuŋ ɔbo:* polluted.

(2) The *aula xal du:əntfen æli* (敖拉哈勒多恩浅爱里) boy born in the Year of Tiger.

(3) The *mərdəŋ xal* (莫日登哈勒) some boy.

The shaman *uṅgur* introduced himself as *nir'itfen da:tfi ɔbo: sairdiə ədʒin*,<sup>12</sup> and talked about where he came from and what he experienced.

(4) The *mərdəŋ xal* (莫日登哈勒) boy born in the Year of Tiger, to sacrifice tea.

(5) The *mərdəŋ xal fibotfi æli* (莫日登哈勒西博奇爱里) boy, born in the Year of Dog, wanted him to offer tea, blessed him, and gave him *kutur bujin* (阔托日·博音).<sup>13</sup>

(6) The *mərdəŋ xal fəurutursutfen* (莫日登哈勒寿儒托日苏浅) children from the Year of Chicken and Dog.

(7) The *mərdəŋ xal fibotfiŋfen* (莫日登哈勒西博奇浅) boy born in the Year of Monkey, the *mərdəŋ xal* (莫日登哈勒) man born in the Year of Dragon, to offer the flagon of wine (wine).

(8) The (*mərdəŋ xal*) *fibotfi æli* (西博奇爱里) boy, born in the Year of Monkey, and the girl born in the Year of Horse.

(9) The *du:lar xal* (杜拉日哈勒) girl born in the Year of Dog.<sup>14</sup>

(10) The leader born in the Year of Monkey to offer tea.<sup>15</sup>

Shaman Siqingua's *uṅgur* left the scene.

### 3.3.3. Shaman Wo Jufen Possessed by the Shaman Spirit

Shaman Wo Jufen's *uṅgur lusuŋ ɔbo: ədʒin mərdəŋ tajti* (罗松敖包额金·莫日登太提) came, introduced herself, said that the members of "*dulu mərdəŋ*" (多罗·莫日登)<sup>16</sup> (Sa 2019a, p. 11 of 19) all came, she expressed the joy of seeing their descendants, and talked to 19 groups of people. The *xal-mokun* and their animal signs of the summoned people are as follows:<sup>17</sup>

(11) The *fəurutursutfen* (寿儒托日苏浅) great-grandson, born in the Year of Pig, wanted him to offer white wine (wine).

(12) The *nir'itfen* (尼日耶浅) great-grandson born in the Year of Sheep.

(13) The *fibotfiŋfen* (西博奇浅) great-grandson, born in the Year of Dog, to the colored wine (wine). *mərdəŋ xal fibotfiŋfen* (莫日登哈勒·西博奇浅) great-grandsons, born in the Year of Dog, Dragon, Tiger, Pig, Monkey, to offer the colored wine, blessed them with white water *tərmit* (泰日米特).<sup>18</sup>

(14) The *fi'a mərdəŋtfen* (西额莫日登浅) great-grandson born in the Year of Tiger to offer white milk; the grandson born in the Year of Horse to offer white milk, and blessed them with spring water *tərmit* for *fi'a mərdəŋtfen* (西额莫日登浅), and the children of *mərdəŋ xal* (莫日登哈勒).

(15) The *urkun mərdəŋtfen* (乌其肯莫日登浅) great-grandsons born in the Year of Tiger, Pig, and Cow.

(16) The *xuitur mərdəŋtfen* (会托日莫日登浅) great-grandson, born in the Year of Monkey to offer white milk, and blessed him with white milk *tərmit*.

(17) The *urkun mərdəŋtfen* (乌日昆莫日登浅) great-grandson born in the Year of Pig, asked him to offer white milk.

(18) The *fəurutursutfen* (寿儒托日苏浅) great-grandsons born in the Year of Chicken, Pig, Monkey, Dragon, Pig, Rabbit, Snake, Sheep, grandson and great-grandchildren to offer colored wine, then blessed them with white milk *tərmit*.

(19) The *mərdəŋ xal* (莫日登哈勒) great-grandson born in the Year of Dog.

(20) The *mərdəŋ xal* (莫日登哈勒) great-granddaughter born in the Year of Chicken, *nir'itfen* (尼日耶浅) great-granddaughter born in the Year of Monkey to offer the white milk, *fibotfiŋfen* (西博奇浅) great-grandson born in the Year of Dog. The shaman's *uṅgur* admonished and taught them.<sup>19</sup>

(21) The *bo:ronʃfen* (博荣浅)<sup>20</sup> great-grandson, who was born in the Year of Pig, to offer white wine, and blessed them with white milk *tərmit* for him and his children.

(22) The *aula xal la:litfen* (敖拉哈勒拉里浅) children, to offer colored wine, and blessed them with spring water *tærmit*.

(23) The *gu:bal xal mannatfen* (郭博勒哈勒满那浅) great-grandson born in the Year of Dog, asked him to offer white milk, and blessed him and his children with white milk *tærmit*.

(24) The official who initiated the ceremony.

(25) I asked for white milk from *ənən xal* (鄂嫩哈勒), and those who came with her, I called them and blessed them with white milk *tærmit*.

(26) The scholars, experts, journalists, the granddaughter born in the Year of Monkey, was asked to offer colored wine, and blessed them with white wine *tærmit*.

(27) The *likən xal* (李肯哈勒)<sup>21</sup> daughters and sons, born in the Year of Rabbit and Tiger to offer white milk.

(28) The Ewenki *barf* from afar, the great-granddaughters come from *denteketfen* (登特科浅) born in the Year of Monkey and Tiger, and blessed them with white milk *tærmit*.<sup>22</sup>

(29) Some Daur people from afar pray for peace (*amul tajbən*, 阿姆勒·泰本).

Shaman Wo Jufen's *uṅgur* left the scene.

### 3.3.4. Circling the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* and Praying for Good Luck

Shaman Siqingua, wearing the shaman costume *sama:fək* and shaman hat, beat the drum and sang blessing songs to the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*. Her assistants and disciples stood behind her. She sang a few prayers and then called out three times *xure-xure* (霍日耶! 霍日耶!)<sup>23</sup>. Those people standing behind her called *xure-xure* three times. While shouting, people held food such as snacks, milk, and fruit in their hands and drew with their hands in clockwise circles. Meanwhile, shaman Wo Jufen, dressed in a shaman costume *sama:fək* and shaman hat, led the people attending the ceremony to go around the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* three times in a clockwise direction to pray for good luck. Accompanied by her son, shaman Wo Jufen beat the drum as she walked, hit the drum a few times, and shouted *xure-xure* (霍日耶! 霍日耶!) three times. Those people following her also called out *xure-xure* three times, and occasionally sprinkled milk, liquor, and red wine on *oboo*.

### 3.3.5. Shamans Sending Back the Spirits

Shaman Siqingua and shaman Wo Jufen stood side by side facing the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*. They leaned forward and half squatted to face the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* and shook the drums three times to show their respect. Following that, they stood up straight and gently beat drums, silently reciting prayers to send back their *uṅgur*. When the two shamans took off their *sama:fək* (shaman costumes) and hats, putting on their traditional daily dresses, it marked the end of the ceremony of offering sacrifices to the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*.

### 3.3.6. Bowing Down and Biding Farewell to the *nir'i ɔbɔ:*

The two shamans, their disciples, the *mərdəŋ xal-mokun* members, and other people of different clans who attended the ceremony all kowtowed three times at the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* before leaving. The others circled the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* three times and then left.

## 4. A Brief Analysis of the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* Ritual

The contemporary Daur *oboo* worship ceremony restores an important procedure in the traditional *oboo* sacrifice ritual, in which the shaman invokes the spirits to announce the oracle to the people, which reveals the true meaning of *oboo* spirit as the spirits of mountains and waters(rivers) and shows the original characteristics of traditional shamanism. It continues the traditional functions of praying for rain and fertility and adapts to the development of the times to expand and extend the function of offering sacrifices to *oboo*.

Compared with the ordinary folk sacrificial *oboo* and the official sacrificial *oboo* ceremony, the biggest difference and characteristic of the *oboo* ritual presided over by Daur shaman (*jad'an*) is that the shaman's *uṅgur*, the *oboo* spirits (*ɔbɔ: ədʒin*), invoked and looked for people to speak, as proclaimed by the oracles. During the *nir'i ɔbɔ:* ritual in 2014, the two



main chief shamans evoked their spirits one after another and summoned seven *mokuns* of *mərdəŋ xal* and other *xal-mokun* members to talk. They called on 29 groups of people with different clan to admonish, counsel, and instruct. These contents are very rich, involving all aspects of people's production and life<sup>24</sup>. Limited by the length of this paper, I will only select several representative shaman divine songs to briefly analyze the characteristics and functions of the contemporary Daur shaman's *oboo* ritual.

#### 4.1. The Characteristics of the Ceremony of the *nir' i ɔɔɔ*:

##### 4.1.1. The Meaning of *Oboo* Indicates That *Oboo* Is the Residence and Symbol of Natural Spirits

In Daur shamanism, *oboo* has the same symbolic significance as the “*barkən*” (God or spirit) portraits and idols in the home, which are the spirits in the home, and *ɔɔɔ*: is the dwelling place built by the *xal-mokun* family (which later developed into a village, a local place) for a specific wild animal spirit, the spirit of mountain or water (river). The *oboo* represents various mountain or water(river) spirits “*ɔɔɔ: ədʒin*”, namely *oboo* spirits, becoming the common patron saint of *xal-mokun* family. As the shaman Siqingua's *uŋgur* “*da:ʈi ɔɔɔ: sairdiə ədʒin*” said during the *nir' i ɔɔɔ*: ritual in 2014, “children of *mərdəŋ xal*, I had stood in the middle of the seven brothers' *mokun*, you gave me a house to live in”. This “livable house” refers to the restoration of the new *nir' i ɔɔɔ*:

The natural spirits worshipped by Daur people can be divided into at-home and in-the-wild worship. The natural spirits worshipped at home generally are big mountain spirit and small mountain spirit.<sup>25</sup> In addition to mountain spirit (*aulai barkən*), shaman (*jad'an*) and bone-setter (*barf*) also worship the snake spirit (*nuɖʒir barkən*). The natural spirits at home are usually enshrined in the family units. The natural spirits worshipped in the wild mainly fall into two categories: mountain spirits and water (rivers) spirits. Generally, animal spirits outnumbered the others, and among them large animal spirits are the majority. To the natural spirits in the wild, for whom *xal-mokun* built *oboo* and made regular sacrifices and offerings, they had a nature and significance of public sacrifice comparable to the *mokun* family.

##### 4.1.2. The *nir' i ɔɔɔ*: Has Its Particularity and Typicality That the *nir' i ɔɔɔ*: Ritual Is a Comprehensive Platform for Offering Sacrifices to Natural Spirits and Ancestral Spirits

The *nir' i ɔɔɔ*: ritual in 2014 is a comprehensive platform for the sacrifice of the ancient mountain spirit *oboo*, the water spirit *oboo*, the ancestral spirit of *mokun* of *mərdəŋ xal*, and the gods of the place where the new *nir' i ɔɔɔ*: is located. It is a specific and typical representative among the ethnic minorities in northern China. This is decided by the particularity of the “*nir' i ɔɔɔ*:” and “*lusuŋ ɔɔɔ*:” of *mərdəŋ xal*.

First, the *nir' i ɔɔɔ*: ritual is the sacrifice of *mərdəŋ xal nir' iŋfen*'s original ancient mountain *oboo* spirit. Although it was moved from the original site and reconstructed, its *oboo* spirit is still the original “*ɔɔɔ: ədʒin*” (*oboo* spirit). Therefore, shaman Siqingua's *uŋgur* showed up (came in) and introduced himself as “*nir' iŋfen da:ʈi ɔɔɔ: sairdiə ədʒin*, namely “The old master of the original *oboo*”. Moreover, although it was first built by *nir' iŋfen*, the other six branches of *dulu mərdəŋ* also worship and offer there. As such, it is the mountain god *oboo* of the whole *mərdəŋ xal*.

Secondly, before the ceremony of the *nir' i ɔɔɔ*:, there was also an offering for the *lusuŋ ɔɔɔ*: (dragon spirit *oboo*) of *mərdəŋ xal*. Because of the distance between the two *oboo*, the chief shamans and the clan members attending the ceremony could not appear in front of the two *oboo* at the same time. However, when setting up the site for the *nir' i ɔɔɔ*: ceremony, the members of the chief shaman's family and *mərdəŋ xal-mokun*'s drove to *lusuŋ ɔɔɔ*: to place various offerings of fruits, pastries, and red wine before lighting incense and butter lamps. Therefore, in the process of the *nir' i ɔɔɔ*: ritual, the spirit of water *oboo* “*lusuŋ ɔɔɔ: ədʒin*” came in front of the mountain spirit *oboo*, the *nir' i ɔɔɔ*:, and proclaimed the oracles.

Thirdly, the sample for the sacrifice of the *nir' i ɔɔɔ*: is also a tribute to the ancestral spirit of *mərdəŋ xal*. The master of the *lusuŋ ɔɔɔ: ədʒin* is precisely *Mərdəŋ tajti* (莫日登太提).

*Mərdəŋ tajti*, meaning the grandmother of *mərdəŋ xal*, is also known as *mərdəŋ atəu* (莫日登额头乌), respectfully called Old Lady of *mərdəŋ xal* (Neimenggu Zizhiqu Bianjizu 1985, p. 256). Her legendary stories are well-known among the Daur people. From what she said to seven *mokun* members of “*dulu mərdəŋ*” in the *nir’i ɔbo:* ritual, it could be seen that she, as the ancestral spirit, came to educate, instruct, and advise her descendants.

After the arrival of the shaman Wo Jufen’s *uŋgur*, she beat a drum and introduced herself:

*Generation after generation, I came down from the Amur. I came along the Naven River and the Normin River. I rolled seven springs along the river. Today, on a good day like this, I have come, I have seen my children and grandchildren, I am happy! I am “lusuŋ ɔbo: ədʒin mərdəŋ tajti”. I’m glad to see all my grandchildren and great-grandchildren here (3.3.3-11). (Sa 2021, pp. 202–4)*

The shaman Wo Jufen’s *uŋgur* first spoke to an old man born in the Year of Pig. She spoke many words. She explained why she, as an ancestral spirit, had become “*lusuŋ ɔbo: ədʒin*” (master of dragon spirit *oboo*):

*When I walked around the “dulu mərdəŋ”, people called me the crazy old lady. I always ran to the “nir’i xad”(nir’i cliff) and cried,” lusuŋ ədʒin “(Nenjiang River spirit) said to me to give me power. When I tell people, they said I was a fool, and I was crazy. I was running in the wild of the “dulu mərdəŋ”. I was running around inside “dʒa:məj ilə’a” (Zhamei flower). Then, people said I was a fool and threw me into the water. So, I sat my body on the top of lusuŋ (dragon spirit, river spirit). I have “xar tʃiaŋ ədʒin” (black and white snake spirit), I have “xar nudʒir ədʒin” (black snake spirit). I let the spring water roll. My power is good! (3.3.3-11). (Sa 2021, pp. 202–4)*

After her arrival, she described her experiences and talked to *mokun* members. Although she was the master of “*lusuŋ ɔbo:*”, she taught and advised the descendants mostly as the ancestral spirit.

Ōmachi said “Today, there are very few examples of such sacrifices to ancestral spirits in lineage (血统) or UMNO (巫统) in this (*oboo*) ritual of sacrifices” (Ōmachi 1995, pp. 62–63). He had not yet seen such vivid examples. At the *nir’i ɔbo:* ritual, *mərdəŋ tajti* explained her experience after her arrival, showing that she had the dual identity of the spirit of water (*lusuŋ ɔbo: ədʒin*) and the predecessor of *mokun*. She was the grandmother of *mərdəŋ xal*, the ancestor in the sense of blood, she was a wise woman and a prophet, and she was also a shaman, the witch master. Therefore, the *nir’i ɔbo:* ritual means both blood and Umno’s tribute to the ancestral spirit. Of course, this situation is very special; even in the Daur, other northern minority shamanism god (spirit) belief systems and worship activities are extremely rare. However, it is also very representative, indicating that the Daur take the ancestor spirits as the core belief object and the blood relationship as the bond to inherit the typical characteristics of shamanism.

Fourthly, according to traditional Daur shamanistic beliefs and customs, offering sacrifices to *oboo* requires offering sacrifices to the local gods at the same time. Therefore, the ceremony of offering sacrifices to the *nir’i ɔbo:* was also held to worship the local god “*gadʒir ədʒin*” of the place where the *nir’i ɔbo:* was located at the same time. Worshippers must display offerings for the local god in the woods a few meters southeast of the *nir’i ɔbo:*. Additionally, when the *nir’i ɔbo:* was relocated and rebuilt, in addition to *mərdəŋ xal*, several other *xal-mokun* families who lived there, such as *uərə xal*, *aula xal*, and *gubəl xal*, also made contributions. This shows that the Daur people who live here also worship the *nir’i ɔbo:*.

#### 4.2. The Functions of the Ceremony of the *nir’i ɔbo:*

The function of traditional sacrifices *oboo* is very clear, which is to pray for rain. “In the past, Daur people used to pray to *oboo* for rain. When praying for rain, sacrificial cattle and sheep are brought to *oboo* and slaughtered as offerings. The chief priest reads the offerings, and then everyone kowtows together. After the prayers, a meal is served with

the offerings" (Noboru Ikejiri 1982, pp. 58–59). It was further explained that the purpose of the offering *oboo* was to pray for good weather, a good harvest of grain and prosperous livestock (Neimenggu Zizhiqu Bianjizu 1985, p. 256). *Oboo* worship increases the fertility function. However, this still falls under the category of rain-seeking function.

According to field investigations in recent years, both the official offering *oboo* and the folk offering *oboo* are becoming more prosperous. Good weather, peace and prosperity of the country, grain harvest, livestock prosperity, and so on, are the likely purposes of praying. Judging from the content of shaman divine songs in the *nir'i obo*: ritual in 2014, the function of offering sacrifices to *oboo* by Daur shamans has been expanded and extended. After the sacrificial ceremony, the chief shaman Wo Jufen said that anything can pray for *oboo*. Therefore, the functions of contemporary Daur shaman sacrifices *oboo* are diversified. Among them, it is very important to firstly increase the blessing and praying for the health and safety of the *mokun* family members, and secondly to promote the recovery and reconstruction of the traditional blood clan organization. In addition, there is lively all-around education, guidance, and exhortation from the clan members.

#### 4.2.1. Bless and Pray for the *xal-mokun* Members in Peculiar Ways

An important function of the contemporary Daur shaman sacrificial *oboo* ceremony is to bless and pray for the *xal-mokun* family members in some special ways.

In the *nir'i obo*: ritual 2014, there are three symbolic blessings and praying ceremonies, namely gathering good fortune (*kutur bujin* 阔托日·博音), a special form of blessing (*tærmit* 泰日米特), and converging prosperity (*xure xure* 霍日耶-霍日耶). These are all Daur shaman's peculiar methods of blessing people. These methods were shown in this sacrificial *nir'i obo*: ceremony.

Shaman Siqingua's *ungur* told a disciple born in the Year of Dog of *mardəŋ xal fi-boŋtŋfen's* that she wanted to gather good fortune for him. She held three cups of milk in her mouth one by one, with the help of an assistant, and flung them one by one into the front of the disciple's Daur traditional costume. The shaman talked and sang with her eyes closed in the spirit possession state. The assistant helped to put the milk cups in the shaman's mouth for her to grip by her teeth. The blessed one took the front of his robe with his two hands and drew the three cups one by one into his arms, close to the front of his robe, which symbolized receiving fortune and wealth. This is Shaman Siqingua's usual way of blessing people in the presence of spirits (3.3.2.-5) (Sa 2021, p. 200).

Shaman Wo Jufen's *ungur* blesses in a different way from Siqingua's. She blesses people with spring water, milk, or liquor *tærmit* when *ungur* comes. In the state of divine possession in the *nir'i obo*: ritual in 2014, she blessed the grandsons and great-grandchildren born in the Year of Dog, Dragon, Tiger, Pig, Monkey of *mardəŋ xal fi-boŋtŋfen*, and blessed the children of *fi'a mardəŋtŋfen* and other members of *mardəŋ xal*, and the children of *aula xal la:lŋtŋfen* with white spring water *tærmit* (3.3.3.-13\14\22). She blessed the great-grandson born in the Year of Monkey of *xuitur mardəŋtŋfen*, the great-grandsons born in the Year of Chicken, Pig, Monkey, Dragon, Pig, Rabbit, Snake, Sheep of *faurutursutŋfen*, and blessed the great-grandson born in the Year of Pig of *bo:ronŋtŋfen* and his children, and also for the great-grandson born in the Year of Dog of *gu:bəl xal mannatŋfen* and his children, for the *ənən xal* people, for the Ewenki *barf* from afar, for the great-granddaughters born in the Year of Monkey, Tiger coming from *deŋteketŋfen* with white milk *tærmit* (3.3.3.-16, 18, 21, 23, 25, 28). She blessed the experts, scholars, and journalists from the outside, as well as the grandchild born in the Year of Monkey with white liquor *tærmit* (3.3.3-26) (Sa 2021, pp. 201–18).

Shamans also use "*tærmit*" (泰日米特) in their daily blessing and healing for people. The *tærmit* can not only pray and bless in this way, but also drink *tærmit* milk, *tærmit* tea, and so on. Shaman Siqingua's *ungur* told the boy of *mardəŋ xal* born in the Year of Tiger to ask for some "*tærmit* tea" (*tærmit tŋe*) from the *xudŋur jad'an* (mokun shaman) of *uərə xal* to drink (3.3.2.-4).

The *tærmit* liquor can also be used to "repair roads" (修路). Shaman Wo Jufen's *ungur* said to the great-grandson born in the Year of Tiger of *fi'a mardəŋtŋfen*, in order to "repair

roads", she will make *tærmit* with wine for him. She said "Aren't you being crushed by someone else's mouth and tongue (means wagging of tongues)? So, you should often sprinkle milk, drink. Then, your road will be better and better" (3.3.3.-14).

The ceremony of "*xure -xure*" (Converge, converge means converging prosperity) prays for good fortune and blessing. After the spiritual possession was over, beating drums and singing prayers, shaman Siqingua led the clans people to call *xure -xure* and circle to draw circles three times, as they held up products, pastries, milk, and other foods. At the same time, shaman Wo Jufen led the people to go around the *nir'i ɔbɔː*. She beat the drum as she walked. As she walked a few steps, she called out three times *xure-xure*, and the people following her shouted three times *xure-xure*. Going around *oboo* is the inevitable ceremony of offering sacrifices to *oboo*. Whether it is an official offering to *oboo* or a folk offering to *oboo*, people will go around *oboo* three circles to pray for good luck after the chief priest sings the prayer. However, a shaman presides over the sacrifice to *oboo* and leads people to turn around *oboo*, which is unique, special, and important in the folk offering to *oboo*.

#### 4.2.2. Restore and Re-Establish the Traditional Clan Organization "*xal-mokun*"

Another major function of the contemporary Daur shaman sacrificial *oboo* ceremony is the restoration and reconstruction of the *xal-mokun*, the traditional social clan organization, which is mainly embodied in the introduction and emphasis of the concept of "*mokun kurə*" (Mokun Circle)<sup>26</sup> (Sa 2019b, pp. 385–89).

In 2014, during the *nir'i ɔbɔː* ritual, a shaman *uŋgur* repeatedly referred to the concept of "*mokun kurə*", advocating that *mokun* elders and shamans and other leaders should restrain *mokun*, help the Daur group, and contribute to the nation. The development and emphasis of the concept of "*mokun kurə*" serves as a rallying call for unity and progress among the *mokun* members to strengthen family cohesion. It is also related to the genealogical activities of *xal-mokun*. In recent years, the *xal-mokun* generally built and offered sacrifices to *oboo*, and then held genealogical conferences to continue the genealogy. For example, the *ənən xal ɔbɔː* was restored and rebuilt in 2015, offered sacrifices to *oboo* for three consecutive years in 2016 and 2017, and held a genealogical conference in 2016 to repair the family tree (修缮家谱). The *uəɾə xal* was sacrificed to the clan *lusuŋ ɔbɔː* in 2017 and then continued genealogy. The *aula xal duəjin mokun* also sacrificed to *oboo* in 2018 and continued to repair the genealogy. Most of these activities of the *xal-mokun* to offer sacrifices to *oboo* and to continue the genealogy were conducted after the *nir'i ɔbɔː* ritual in 2014, which can be seen as being influenced by the gradual expansion of water-wave-like circles (the expanding influence of the water ripple theory of the circle) (Fei 1999, pp. 24–36). All these increase *mokun* members' sense of identity and belonging to *mokun*.

The sacrificial *oboo* ceremony is often synchronized with the *xal-mokun*, repairing the family tree. Different from the purpose and appeal of sacrificial *oboo* in the past, the function expands and extends. The function of Daur shaman's *oboo* ritual has changed from single to multiple, which reflects the characteristics of contemporary Daur shamanism. These activities of offering sacrifices to the clan family and continuing the genealogy play a role in gathering the hearts of *mokun* members and stimulate their sense of responsibility and ambition.

#### 4.2.3. Comprehensively Educate *mokun* Members

In the *nir'i ɔbɔː* ritual in 2014, the two shaman's *uŋgur* were invoked. They placed high hopes on the elders, dignities, and those bearing the mission of the ancestral spirit of *xal-mokun*, and gave advice and instruction to the members of *xal-mokun* family and other clans' people, mainly concerning the following aspects:

1. The elders should educate the descendants to inherit the Daur culture. It is necessary to educate young people to study hard and develop their skills to promote the prosperity and national progress of *xal-mokun*.
2. The shamans and other priests and healers do not forget the sacred mission, that is, to control their spirits, not for money, but to restrain *mokun*, to help the ethnic group.
3. Worship ancestral spirits, and worship *oboo*.
- 4.



Don't eat wild animals and cherish everything in nature. 5. Pay attention to health, pay attention to travel safety, go out to choose the direction of the day. 6. Pay attention to the tongue, avoid disputes. 7. Young people should learn more from their elders, and don't take the wrong roads. 8. Call on the people to "Restrain Mokun, Help the Ethnic Group and Contribute to the Country". Help should be given equally to different *mokun* and different ethnic groups.

## 5. Conclusions

Contemporary Daur shaman sacrificial *oboo* ceremonies continue the traditional shamanism polytheistic worship concept and the original characteristics of shaman deities. In 2014, during the ceremony of offering sacrifices to the *nir'i obo*, the chief shamans came successively to talk to the members of *xal-mokun*. The identity of the shaman spirits and the content of the divine songs reveal the true meaning of *oboo*, that is, *oboo* is the residence and symbol of the natural spirits. Due to the particularity and representativeness of the shaman's *uŋgur* "*nir'itfen da:tfi obo: sairdia adgin*" and "*lusuŋ obo: adgin mardəŋ tajti*", the *nir'i obo* ritual is not only to worship natural spirits, but also a comprehensive platform to offer sacrifices to ancestral spirits and local gods.

The contemporary Daur shaman sacrificial *oboo* ceremonies not only continue the traditional functions of praying for rain and fertility, but also expand and extend the functions of *oboo* ritual, making it diversified. Shaman deities prayed for and blessed the family members of *xal-mokun* (clan) in Daur shaman's unique ways during the *nir'i obo* ritual in 2014. The concept of "*mokun kura*" (mokun circle) is also proposed to restore and re-establish the functions of the *xal-mokun*, the traditional consanguinity clan organization. In addition, all *mokun* members, mainly *mardəŋ xal*, are educated in an all-round way, and the slogan "Restrain Mokun, Help the Ethnic Group and Contribute to the Country" is put forward. The *mokun* elders, shaman groups, and *mokun* members are called on to inherit traditional shaman culture, strengthen self-discipline, study cultural knowledge, be proactive and treat each other as equals, etc. These practices and words, to a certain extent, play the role of uniting the family members of the clan.

Over the past decade, shaman Siqingua and shaman Wo Jufen have presided over the restoration and reconstruction of many of the *xal-mokun oboo* and local *oboo* of the Daur ethnic group. These restorations and reconstructions (constructions) and *oboo* ceremonies have exerted an extensive and far-reaching influence on the Daur people in Hulunbuir area of Inner Mongolia, especially in Morin-Dawaa Daur autonomous Banner and Ewenki Autonomous Banner. After the ceremony of the *nir'i obo* in 2014, the construction (reconstruction) of the clan *oboo* and the genealogy of the family began in *xal-mokun*. Local people believe that the construction of *xal-mokun oboo* and the restoration of local *oboo* will bless the *xal-mokun* members and the local people. The construction and sacrifice of *oboo* is even associated with the progress of their children in school and work by some *mokun* families. They believe that building and sacrificing their own *xal-mokun oboo* can also bring prosperity and progress to *mokun* members (Sa 2019b, pp. 388–89). Therefore, the ritual of offering sacrifice to *oboo* restores and strengthens the clan's consciousness of the Daur people to a certain extent, arouses the sense of honor and belonging to the *mokun* family, stimulates the sense of responsibility and ambition of the clan, and can have a positively significant impact on enabling the unity and progress of the *mokun* family.

In short, in the process of inheriting and innovating shamanism in contemporary China, Daur shamanism is classical, symbolic, and representative. The Daur shaman sacrificial *oboo* ceremony has special significance and value in the reconstruction and innovation development of contemporary shamanism in China.

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## Appendix A. Field Research Picture



**Figure A1.** *Nir'i jbo*: and the sacrifices (On 29 June 2014, *Nir'i jbo*: ritual, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, Nierji Town 尼尔基镇). Photo: Minna Sa 2014.



**Figure A2.** Shaman Siqingua (right) and Shaman Wo Jufen (left), facing the *Nir'i jbo*: beat drums together, sang prayers, and invoked their spirits (On 29 June 2014, *Nir'i jbo*: ritual, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, Nierji Town). Photo: Minna Sa 2014.





**Figure A3.** Shaman Siqingua's *uṅḡur*, *nir'ifēn da:tfi ɔbo: sairdia ɔḡin* was coming (On 29 June 2014, *Nir'i ɔbo:* ritual, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, Nierji Town). Photo: Minna Sa 2014.



**Figure A4.** Shaman Wo Jufen's *uṅḡur lusṅ ɔbo: ɔḡin mǝrdəṅ tajti* was coming (On 29 June 2014, *Nir'i ɔbo:* ritual, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, Nierji Town). Photo: Minna Sa 2014.



**Figure A5.** Shaman Wo Jufen's *ungur* blessed people with milk *tərmit* (On 29 June 2014, *Nir'i ɔbo:* ritual, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, *Nierji Town*). Photo: Minna Sa 2014.



**Figure A6.** Shaman Siqingua, Shaman Wo Jufen, and other disciple beat drums together, sang prayers, and worshiped the heaven gods and deities in all directions (On 3 June 2017, *Mərdəŋ ɔbo:* ritual, the Ewenki Autonomous Banner, *Nantun 南屯*). Photo: Minna Sa, 2017.





**Figure A7.** Shaman Wo Jufen's *ungur* was invoked (On 3 June 2017, *Mərdəŋ ɔbɔ*: ritual, the Ewenki Autonomous Banner, *Nantun*). Photo: Minna Sa, 2017.



**Figure A8.** People circled the *mərdəŋ ɔbɔ*: (莫日登敖包) to pray for good fortune (On 3 June 2017, *Mərdəŋ ɔbɔ*: ritual, the Ewenki Autonomous Banner, *Nantun*). Photo: Minna Sa, 2017.



**Figure A9.** *Uərə xal lusuy ɔɔ:* (沃热哈勒·罗松敖包, On 16 June 2018, *uərə xal lusuy ɔɔ:* ritual, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, Nierji Town). Photo: Minna Sa, 2018.



**Figure A10.** *Da:’rl ɔɔ:*<sup>27</sup> (达日勒敖包, On 10 August 2019, *da: ’rl ɔɔ:* ritual, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, Dengteke Town). Photo: Minna Sa, 2019.





**Figure A11.** *Aerla bular ɔɔ:* (阿尔拉·布拉日敖包, On 12 August 2019, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, Aerla Town 阿拉镇). Photo: Minna Sa, 2019.



**Figure A12.** *Mərdəŋ tajti lusun ɔɔ:* (莫日登太提·罗松敖包, On 8 August 2022, the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner, Nierji Town). Photo: Minna Sa, 2022.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> *xal—mokun* (哈勒—莫昆) is the equal clan of basic unit of Daur society. A *xal* (哈勒) is a clan, and *mokun* (莫昆) means branches of *xal*. The *xal—mokun system* is based on blood ties, and members share a common patriarchal ancestor, common living areas, common economic life, and social and cultural activities.
- <sup>2</sup> In the 1950s, the Daur Social and Historical Investigation Group (*Dawoerzu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* 达斡尔族社会历史调查) conducted investigations in the Morin-Dawaa Daur Autonomous Banner and Qiqihar. There were about 20 unique surnames in these two areas' Daur people—*aula* (敖拉), *ənən* (鄂嫩), *mərdəŋ* (莫日登), *gɜːbəl* (郭博勒), *uərə* (沃热), etc.

- In order to offer a better reading experience, the Dauric terms are rendered according to the pronunciation of the original words and expressed mostly in international phonetic alphabets in this article. However, *oboo* and *ɔbo:* are used here to indicate the holy cairns that are worshipped by the locals. Both terms share the same meaning; *oboo* is used in the general narrative of the text while *ɔbo:* is applied when following other Dauric words to form a semantic combination.
- Ikejiri Noboru, *The Daur*, translated Aodenggua (奥登挂), 1982. *ɔbo:* (*oboo*) was translated into *ebo* (“鄂博”).
- The spirits of mountains are called *avlai barkan* (敖雷巴日肯), including the animal spirits living in the forests, mountains, cliffs, hills, like fox spirit (*fi'a avlai*, 西额敖雷), weasel spirit (*utfikan avlai*, 乌其肯敖雷), black bear spirit (*atarkan ungur*, 额特日肯翁果日), wolf spirit (*guskā ungur*, 古斯克翁果日), etc.
- The spirits of waters(rivers) are collectively known as the *lus*, the animal spirits around the river, lake, sea and spring- such as the dragon spirit in the sky, as well as the snake spirit, fish spirit, turtle spirit and mink spirit in the water and so on. Shaman Siqingua said, *lus* (罗斯) is a Mongolian word, *ludgir barkan* (鲁吉日·巴日肯, Morin-Dawaa *nuḍgir barkan* 奴吉日·巴日肯) is an Arabic form of the Daur. To facilitate the narration and understanding of the text, “*lus*” is usually translated directly into Chinese as *longshen* (龙神), the dragon spirit.
- dulu mardəŋ* (多罗·莫日登), means “seven *mardəŋ*”, namely seven *mokuns* of *mardəŋ xal* (莫日登哈勒).
- The east hill of Nierji Town (尼尔基镇) was called *laoshantou* (老山头) in Chinese, and *nir'i xad* (*nir'i* hill, 尼尔基山崖) in Daur language.
- gaḍgir əḍgilŋ* (嘎吉日·额吉楞), In Daur, *gaḍgir əḍgilŋ* is an alteration of *gaḍgir əḍgin* (嘎吉日·额金), which express the same meaning, that is, the local god.
- mardəŋ xal lusun ɔbo:* (莫日登哈勒罗松敖包), namely “*mardəŋ tajti lusun ɔbo:*” (莫日登太提·罗松敖包), was restored and rebuilt by *mardəŋ xal* in 2007.
- For the complete text content of divine songs, please see Minna Sa 2021, pp. 197–201. When shaman Siqingua's *ungur* wants to talk to someone after coming, she usually calls them girl or boy from some animal sign and certain *xal-mokun*.
- nir'ifən da:tfi ɔbo:* *sairdiə əḍgin* (尼日耶浅·达其敖包·赛日跌额金), namely the *nir'ifən's* original *oboo's* old master, means the *nir'ifən's* original *oboo* mountain spirit.
- kutur bujin* (阔托日·博音), means source of wealth and happiness.
- du:lar xal* (杜拉日哈勒), one of the surnames of the Ewenki.
- A government official who initiated the *oboo* ceremony.
- dulu mardəŋ* (多罗·莫日登), means “seven *mardəŋ*”, namely seven parts of *mardəŋ xal tɕuŋulo mokun* (莫日登哈勒崇翰罗莫昆), including *fəvurutsuften* (寿儒托日苏浅), *fibotɕiften* (西博奇浅), *fi'a mardəŋtɕen* (西额·莫日登浅), *utfikan mardəŋtɕen* (乌其肯·莫日登浅), *xuitur mardəŋtɕen* (会托日·莫日登浅), *urkun mardəŋtɕen* (乌日昆·莫日登浅), *nir'ifən* (尼日耶浅). Seven parts belongs to *mardəŋ xal tɕuŋulo mokun*, express different branches in the “*tɕen*” (浅), later known as the seven *mokun*, step by step “*tɕen*” (浅) indicates that the *mokun*.
- For the complete text content of divine songs, please see Minna Sa 2021, pp. 201–18. When shaman Wo Jufen's *ungur* wants to talk to someone after coming, she usually calls them grandson, great-grandson or granddaughter, great-granddaughter from some animal sign and certain *xal-mokun*.
- tərmit* (泰日米特), is originally a kind of grass seed, which is called Qianli Xiang (千里香) by local people. This grass has a special fragrance, which shaman use for healing, “repair road” and blessing. Shaman drink milk, water or wine to spray on the face of the person they are called upon to pray and bless while in the presence of shaman spirit. In daily life and the shaman treatment, in addition to milk, water and wine, shaman also made *tərmit* tea (*tərmit tɕe*, 泰日米特茶), its method is the shaman put the tea mouth to pray, it is said that the *tərmit* tea can protect people's health and safety. *Tərmit* wine (泰日米特酒), which gives divine power, is only used for sprinkling but not for drinking while *tərmit* milk and tea are usually used for drinking.
- These three people are in the different branches of *mardəŋ xal*, who act separately as bone-setter (*barf*, 巴日西), healer and priest (*bagtɕi*, 巴格其), bone-setter, and healer and priest (*barf & bagtɕi*, 巴日西兼巴格其). Later, the great-granddaughter born in the Year of Chicken performed the initiation ritual to become shaman, *jad'an* (雅德恩).
- bo:ronɕŋ* (博荣浅), namely *uəɾə xal bo:ronɕŋ* (沃热哈勒博荣浅).
- likən xal* (李肯哈勒), the Mongolian surname of the shaman Siqingua's husband.
- dənteketɕen* (登特科浅), namely *avla xal dənteketɕen* (敖拉哈勒登特科浅). These three people are all bone-setter (*barf*, 巴日西) at that time, and later performed initiation rituals to become shaman, *jad'an* (雅德恩).
- xure-xure* (霍日耶! 霍日耶!), the meaning of convergence. Convergence is a way of blessing, as described in the text.
- For the complete text content of divine songs, please see Minna Sa 2021, pp. 197–218.
- The big mountain spirit is *fi'a avlai* (西额敖雷), namely fox spirit; the small mountain spirit is *utfikan avlai* (乌其肯敖雷), namely, weasel spirit.
- mokun kurə* (莫昆·库热), *xal-mokun* is the clan organization in the traditional society of Daur. “*mokun*” is the branches of *xal*, “*kurə*” means circle. “*mokun kurə*”, translated literally as the “*mokun* circle”, is often used in rituals to indicate the extent and boundaries of the *mokun* family, or to refer to all *mokun* members.



<sup>27</sup> Da:rl ɔbo:, 达日勒敖包, namely Lightning Strike Stone Oboo (雷击石敖包), belongs to *aula xal duajin mokun* (敖拉哈勒多音莫昆).

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