

Buryat Traditional Wrestling With Past And Present Codes: Buhe-Barildaan

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ABSTRACT

Background: Buryats, the ancient homeland of all Turkic peoples before Central Asia and living in Southern Siberia, are the first peoples with whom they interact in Turkish-Mongolian culture and genetic codes. Buryats have a traditional wrestling called "Buhe-Barildaan", which they attach great importance to since ancient times.

Aim: For a foreigner, understanding Buryat traditional wrestling will undoubtedly shed light on other aspects of the social life of Buryats and even Turkish-Mongolian peoples. Therefore, the study aims to explain 'Buhe-Barildaan' with its formation, transformation and rituals.

Methods: In addition to the literature review, descriptive research and comparison method, one of the models in the qualitative approach, was used. The research is limited to the folkloric wrestling of Buryats, who live in Southern Siberia and consist of Turkish-Mongolian genetics.

Results: Two types of Buryat 'Buhe-Barildaan' wrestling, namely '*Forest*' and '*Steppe*' style, were determined. First of all, '*forest-type*' wrestling has become widespread among Turkish origin Oyrat, Bulaga and Ehiri Buryats and Mongolian origin Onon Buryats. Now practiced almost everywhere, the steppe-type was seen only in people dealing with animal husbandry. In steppe-type wrestling matches, one of the three organs that touches the floor of one of the opponents ends in defeat.

Conclusion: It was seen that non-Russian native authors used various suggestion methods to explain the importance of Buryat wrestling, to suggest its continuity among social indicators, to create social meaning and national identity. Buryat wrestling culture, it is based on the economic life unique to the development and continuity of the people and the traditional sources of the geographical environment that feed this life. Buhe-barildaan wrestling is one of the most important elements of the sports culture that helps to preserve the national identity and connection between generations. The functional and ideological origins of the Buryat Buhe-barildaan wrestling, historically, it is associated, first of all, with the choice of a mass who, besides having to face external power, is the leader of the military forces. In addition, Buhe-barildaan wrestling, which has two types, namely *steppe* and *forest* types, was seen to coincide with the wrestling of the peoples living in those geographies, especially Turks, in the context of typology and homogeneity.

Keywords: Buryat identity, Wrestling culture, Buhe-Barildaan.

INTRODUCTION

Buryats, who are from the Altai branch of the Turanian peoples, are today known as a Mongolian people, but they are a mixed people born from the union of two Turks and two Mongol tribes. The Huri and Hondogar tribes living in Southern and Eastern Buryatya have Mongolian character and are Buddhist. Bulaga and Ehiris living in the West are Turks and believe in Tengri. The total population of Buryats is around 670 thousand. 310 thousand of these live in the Buryat Autonomous Republic. There are more than 150 thousand Buryats in the neighboring Irkutsk and Zabalskaya Oblastar. The Buryats, like some other peoples of Siberia, perform special ritual offerings called 'tailagans' in worship of patron spirits of the clan, followed by mass sports games. Among the Mongols and Buryats, competitions in archery, wrestling and horse racing, known as 'Three Games of Men', have been usually timed to prayers at the ancestral cult places 'obo'. A Buryat ethnographer M.N. Khangalov described in detail the 'shooting festival' hur kharbaan (sur kharbaan), which was widely celebrated by the Cis-Baikal Buryats in the Kuda valley in the late 19th - early 20th centuries (1,2).

Bukhe barildaan – '*wrestling of the strongmen*' - is the most popular kind of sports among the Mongols and Buryats. M.N. Khangalov (3), describing a '*shooting holiday*' among the Kuda and Kapsal Buryats, notes that

wrestling was the most interesting competition for the audience. Tsevel writes that wrestling was an indispensable element of naadam among the Mongols, while archery and horse racing could be omitted. In Mongolia today, wrestling is often organized when a young man joins the adult community, during haymaking, sheep shearing, picking mushrooms, etc. Such competitions are considered '*small bouts / zizhig barildaan*' (4).

Wrestling is a favorite sport for many nations. A.P. Okladnikov, director of the Sumo Museum of the Japan Sumo Association, set out on a journey throughout the Old World with the goal of finding the roots of sumo (he calls sumo any national wrestling). He watched wrestling competitions in Korea, Mongolia, Turkey, and Senegal. The oldest anthology of wrestling techniques in the world can be found in Egypt in Beni Hasan, where tombs of nomarchs of the Middle Kingdom are located. In Tomb No. 16, he counted 220 fighting techniques depicted on one of the walls. (5). According to Kenshiro Matsunami, sumo (national wrestling) spread throughout the world along the Silk Road, linking Tibet, Mongolia, China, Korea, Japan, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. On one of the stone reliefs, Shakyamuni is depicted as a wrestler. According to legend, Prince Siddhartha practiced wrestling, archery and other sports. (6).

Central Asia has ancient wrestling traditions. When describing the Xiongnu, Chinese sources note that the

latter were good at wrestling techniques. Thus, a Xiongnu prince Jin Ridi, appointed by emperor Wu a commandant of imperial horses, was able to thwart an assassination attempt at the emperor using a wrestling technique. Some features of the Xiongnu wrestling style can be seen in images on bronze belts. For instance, a bronze clasp of the Xiongnu belt from a burial ground in Shanxi province, depicts two men naked to the waist and wearing trousers, holding each other tightly around the waist (7).

MATERIAL & METHODS

Along with the literature review, descriptive research and comparison method, among the models included in the qualitative approach, was used. The research is limited to the folkloric wrestling of Buryats, who are Turkish-Mongolian people's living in Southern Siberia.

At the court of the Emperor of Toba-Wei, there was a special 'troupe' of professional wrestlers who performed at wrestling matches and served as the emperor's body guards. A wrestling scene in a fresco from the Liao Dynasty burial ground in Inner Mongolia shows two Khitan youths, shaved headed and naked to the waist, taking a fighting stance. A little further off, a young man is shown watching the bout (8). The Mongol princes also had their teams of wrestlers. Competitions during the Kuda surkharbans were held between clans, and each clan presented its own wrestler. According to the custom, wealthy people of each clan among the Kuda Buryats had to feed their fighter in turn. The preparation of the wrestlers for the competition consisted mainly in the fact that the wrestlers tried to work little and eat nutritious food, accumulating strength for the upcoming fights. (3). According to Rashid-al-Din, among the Mongols of Kublai's time, sexual abstinence was considered one of the ways to preserve and accumulate wrestling strength (9).

According to M.N. Khangalov, the elders were masters of ceremonies for wrestling bouts and races during tailagans. The old people played a key role in the ancestral offerings *tailagans* of the CisBaikal Buryats, and, according to the old custom, lead a circular dance of *khaatarha*. Moreover, it was considered a sin to start a dance without old men and women. According to a custom of the Kuda Buryats, before the beginning of *bukhe barildaan*, two old men from two opposing camps left the middle of the semicircle and performed a ceremonial dance imitating a fight. It is interesting that the Kalmyk wrestlers before the bout, imitated the behavior of bulls by throwing handfuls of earth at each other and 'fighting like two bulls digging the ground' (3).

In Mongolia, wrestling bouts begin with the performance of the warrior dance *deveh* (spreading the wings / soaring upward) or the eagle dance. In the past, every wrestler performed *deveh*, imitating the bird from which his title originated. The *deveh* of the 'hawk' was more complex than the *deveh* of the 'eagle' and included high jumps. This tradition is seen as related to jumping competitions, known among many peoples of Siberia, including the Buryats. In particular, Gmelin mentions jumping competitions along with wrestling when describing the Kuda *tailagan* (10).

At the All-Mongolian Naadam today, the victorious wrestlers are awarded four titles: *Nachin* (Falcon), *Zaan*

(Elephant), *Arslan* (Lion) and *Avraga* (Giant). Titles equivalent to today's juniors, such as *Harzga* (Hawk), *Shonhor* (Merlin) and *Burged* (Eagle) are rarely assigned today. According to Tsybikdorzhiev (2000: 64), with the strengthened positions of Buddhism the titles Arsalan and Zaan replaced most of the old titles associated with zoolatric, totemic and shamanic cults. Garuda, the king of birds from ancient Indian mythology, became the symbol and patron of wrestling, replacing the eagle (11).

M.N. Khangalov, describing *tailagan*, cites a custom of honoring the winner with a cup of wine and praise: 'The winner is greeted with a joyful greeting, a cup of tarasun (milk vodka) is poured and served; Having taken the tarasun, he drips to the ground and brings it to his mouth, having tasted a little, serves to one of the sitting old men, who, having taken the tarasun, greets the victorious wrestler with the words: Barildani barun / Zakhan bari. / Urildani urda / Zakhan bari. In English: In wrestling, keep the right / Side (be the winner). / In the race, hold the front / Side (run the race). After that, the old man drinks tarasun; then the cup is again filled with tarasun and served to the wrestler, who this time drinks himself or also serves someone' (3).

Bukhyn (barildaanai) solo is a song in honor of a victorious wrestler at Three Games of Men, along with praises in honor of a victorious horse and a well-aimed archer. It is a special genre of Buryat odic poetry. *Solo* translated from Buryat means 'glory, fame'. *Solo duudaha* means 'to chant someone's glory, to glorify'. In terms of volume, solos range from a few lines of poetry (8-10) to huge poems. The roots of the genre of glorification songs go back to ancient times. An echo of a song of praise is heard in the Orkhon inscription in honor of Prince Kyultegin (8th century). They echo the words of Geser from the Buryat epic: *I fought many battles, I shall say, Darkhan glory, I exalted, I shall say.* (12).

Bukheli hara beyeten	Having a strong black body
Buduun hara shandahatan	Big black muscles
Huzhe hara beyeten	Massive black body
Huzhuun hara shandahatan	Tough black muscles
Under yehe beyeten	Tall big body
Urgen hara seezheten	Wide black chest
Derbeger yehe beyeten	Broad-shouldered large body
Deluu yehe seezheten	Wide large chest
Adhaldama yehe adhaaltan	Tough big legs
Tulama bukhe hulten	Firm strong legs
Buduun yehe adhaaltan	Thick big legs
Buulga yehe huzuuten	Big bull's neck
Barildaan deere	During wrestling
Baruun zakha haraashan	Looking to the right (west) side,
Baatar solo abaashan	Glorified heroes
Urildaan deere	During races
Urda zakha baryaashan	Taking the front side
Uram solo abaashan	Glorified masters
Bayaa baira deeree asargagtun	Bring Wealth Here
Uramaa utug deeree todorgogtuun	Bring glory to utug (native land)
Under tengeri urshöög	May the High Sky help
Urgen delhei todog	May the wide earth support
Barildaanai baruun zakha	Right side in wrestling
Urildaanai urda zaha	Cutting edge at races.

During the formation of the heroic epic, songs of glory, apparently, were introduced into it as one of the components. The genre of glorification songs is closely related to feasts at which they were performed, as they could have been performed on campaigns before the start of a battle. As for sub-genres of posthumous glories, they were performed at commemorations. **(13)**. According to M.N. Khangalov, the Buryats in the old days sang songs at the funeral of a leader or a person distinguished by physical strength and accuracy in archery, in which they praised his deeds and exploits. Moreover, *'The Kuda Buryats still have a custom to sing songs during a shaman's funeral, which describe the events of his life'* **(3)**.

According to E.K. Sharakhshinova, a ritual of performing a solo in honor of winners has been preserved in some Buryat regions. The researcher gives an example of such a solo performed during a ceremonial dance of the winner-wrestler. Barildaanai solo recorded by S.P. Baldaev in 1912 in Bokhan, is distinguished by a wide variety of epithets **(14)**:

DISCUSSION

Erkhim bukhenud (the main wrestlers) were the first to start bouts during both the Kuda surkharban of Cis-Baikal Buryats, described by M.N. Khangalov, and games held after prayers at obo of the Trans-Baikal Buryats. **(3)**. During competitions described by Shagdaron and Ochirov, five to ten pairs of wrestlers representing the eastern and western sides of the obo were competing. *Erkhim bukhenud*, having received the blessing of the lama, converged in the middle of *'duherig'* (the ring). After the *'main wrestlers'*, the rest of the couples competed, and at the end of the competition there was a final bout between the winning wrestler and someone from the side **(15,16)**.

In Mongolia, on the contrary, the weakest pairs are the first to enter the field, they are then replaced by more professional ones, and the most famous wrestlers compete in the final. During the state Naadam, the number of wrestlers should not exceed 1024. If the number of wrestlers turned out to be odd, the most famous wrestler would be left without a pair. He would also enter the field and fight with an invisible opponent, until the final, when he would have a real opponent, the winner of the previous rounds. **(17)**.

According to Khangalov's description, wrestlers at Kuda surkharbans and tailagans wore pants. Old men with several tarasun cauldrons go to an open place to the side and sit in a semicircle; young guys enter the circle and begin to wrestle with each other; for the fight, the outerwear is taken off, even the shirts are removed; wrestlers remain only in pants; it's freer to fight without clothes. Wrestlers stand against each other and make a circle in the sun, then grab each other and fight **(3,16)**.

"They say, that in the past, the rich with more zeal than now, fattened their wrestler, they even sewed him leather trousers so that they would not burst out in the heat of the fight... the wrestlers appear in a very light suit ... that is, they take off everything except the bottom wear. First, one of them comes out and sits in the middle of the semicircle, waiting for the opponent; when he shows up, they slowly approach each other, spin in one place, touching the ground with one or the other hand, then pull

each other's hands, as if trying their hand. After this little preparation, the wrestling itself begins. Each of them tries to knock down his opponent, often grabbing his legs with a trick; by dumping him to the ground, the victor makes him feel the strength of his fist, but the defeated does not remain in debt either" **(3)**.

Judging by M.P. Khamaganov's description, the Kuda Buryats used fist punches, and did not consider it a defeat for the body to touch the ground. V.I. Andreyev, who observed wrestling and archery competitions at the headquarters of Ja Lama, wrote that *"the Khalkha and Oirats had various techniques in wrestling. It was enough for the Khalkha wrestler to kneel down to be considered defeated. The Oirats fought until one of the wrestlers was put on their back"* **(18)**. In the description of the duel between Buri-bukhe and Belgutai, given in Altan Tobchi, it is said that Buri-bukhe *"knocked down and crushed (the opponent) not allowing him to move"*, by grabbing him with one hand and kicking him in the kneecap **(19)**.

Thus, according to the rules of the barildaan in the 12th century, touching the ground with a knee was not considered a defeat. Obviously, for victory it was required to put the opponent on his shoulder blades. In a Bokhan Buryat *uliger* (epic poem) *"Shodoi Mergen"*, a protagonist *"grabbed a strong man Manu Yehe by the red armpits, and threw him towards the western taiga."* In the end, he fought with Toli sagan bator, the son of Today bayan khan. The latter wanted to take advantage of the trick against Shodoi mergen by *"prying him with his hands,"* however, Shodoi mergen *"after gaining full force got ready to enclasp the opponent, and suddenly grabbing him by his red armpits, threw him to the ground, crushing him"* **(20)**.

As you know, in the fight between Buri-bukhe and Belgutai, the latter won, and he broke the opponent's spine, resting his knee on his back and pulling his head and legs. In a Karakalpak epic, Surtaisha, girded with a seven-row chain, breaks Allayar's spine with a similar technique, bending him *'like a bow'* **(13)**. The hero of the Buryat *uliger* *'Geser'*, entering into a duel with a *mangadhai* monster, fights for life or death, for the opponents: *"They pull the meat from each other's backs with ten strong fingers; they gnaw the meat from the chests with their front teeth, and throw it away"* **(12)**.

In a Mongolian version of *'Khan-Kharangui'* epic, recorded by S.D. Shagdaron and B.D. Ochirov, Naran Saran Tulay takes a break in the fight to put on a wrestling suit: *"He put on a camel skin jacket and red deer skin trousers... Naran Saran put his 'iron fingers' in several quarters and his 'bone claws' in several quarters and thrust them into the back of the eldest bald one... to the very cores, he wounded the bald one scapula, spread the low ribs and, dragging him along the hard rock and the thorns of the bush, threw..."* **(15)**.

As indicated by T.N. Mikhaylov, the epic describes an ancient Mongolian set of techniques based on imitating the habits of a fighting eagle. Putting aside hyperbolizing characteristic of the epic, we can admit that the techniques allowing to literally snatch a piece of meat out of the enemy were a terrible reality of not-so-distant times. As it is clear from the text of *'Khan-Kharangui'*, wrestlers put on their leather outfit in order to protect themselves precisely against pulling out techniques. Such a technique can be

effectively carried out in a close combat, like a clinch in boxing. The chest is not the best spot for this for the danger of a counterattack on the hand is too great, while the back, liver and kidneys, conversely, become easy prey for fingers trained to steel strength. It is these spots that are covered by a leather-metal *dzodok* (21), preserved in southern Mongolia. The liver, kidneys and stomach are covered with leather pants of Buryat wrestlers' (22). N.O. Sharakhshinova left a colorful description of the wrestling and horse races held as part of the Maidari Khural celebration in the Tamchinsky Datsan (Buddhist monastery), the then residence of the Khambo Lama. According to his description, the Selenga bukhe wrestled in sashes:

"Two assistants strip the prepared wrestlers naked, leaving only the underwear, which is rolled up completely under the groin, then tied with a strong woolen sash, first around the waist, then crosswise downwards, also under the groin, and tie the ends threaded under the first turn with a good knot. Next, a long braid is collected in a bun and tied tight so that it does not interfere in the fight. Having prepared a wrestler in this way, the assistants put an overcoat in the form of a veil over his head, so that his face cannot be seen and bring him with a bowed head and folded hands, the same way Catholics usually fold them, to get a blessing from the senior lama present. The other is also brought down and, then leading both of them together, they open their eyes and leave them facing each other" (23).

According to B.D. Sandanov, the Aga Buryats also wrestled in sashes made of dalemba 2.5-3 m long (21). The wrestling begins with the opponents walking around each other for a long time, looking out and waiting for a convenient moment for a fight. They grab hold and disperse again, if they did not manage to seize the opponent as they would like. Just like the Homeric heroes, they grab sand from the ground and rub their hands with it in order to hold the opponent more tightly. If such a wait continues for a long time and the opponents do not dare to converge, then the assistants give them determination with whips. Finally, they managed to grab each other by the belted sashes. Here the struggle begins; muscles in tension, eyes rolled out, here physical strength alone decides victory; it is necessary to raise the opponent and knock him down: not only the one who was thrown to the ground is defeated, but also the one who only touched the ground with his knee no longer has the right to continue the fight (24).

The only wrestler who won not due to physical strength, but due to dexterity was a young lama of twenty-two or three years old, an extremely slender and handsome man who "came out against a wrestler of enormous height and, apparently, a very strong man. For a long time, he did not allow himself to be grabbed. Then he suddenly stopped, pretending to await the opponent, who, angry with the lama's evasion, bent his head like a bull and rushed headlong at him. The lama just waiting for this, jumped aside and so deftly pulled the opponent towards him, by the bowed neck, that he had to fall on his knees in front of him. The same lama met once again with another stalwart rival, and when he rushed at him, he caught one of his outstretched arms and turned him around with such force

that his own effort, increased by this action, forced the large-bodied wrestler to make several opposing jumps and fall at full length with his nose to the ground.

Thus, the Selenga wrestlers, like the Khalkha Mongols, followed the rule of 'three zones', according to which a wrestler who touched the ground with his hand, knee or body was considered defeated. The martial art of the Oirats, part of the Buryats and Onon Mongols, characterized by the presence in the arsenal of techniques of wrestling and hand-to-hand fighting and the rule of victory; wrestling without any admixtures of hand-to-hand combat, widespread among the Khalkha, southern Mongols and part of the Buryats (25). The basic rule of the second type of wrestling is the principle of defeat in case of touching the ground by one of the three zones. Two types are conventionally designated by the researcher as 'forest' and 'steppe', since the first one was popular among the forest Mongols, who included the ancestors of the Oirats, Buryats, and Onon Mongols. The steppe styles, now widely cultivated, used to be the heritage of 'pure' pastoralists (26, 24, 5).

The main characteristic of the steppe styles is the rule that a wrestler is judged a loser if he is forced to touch the ground in one of the three zones. The historical explanation may be that a wrestler who falls on an elbow or knee is considered to have fallen off a horse. There are several types of wrestling in the world with a similar rule. Many researchers, noting the typological closeness of the Mongolian wrestling *Büx-barildaah*, conclude that the Mongolian land is the ancestral home of the Korean *Ssireum* and Japanese *Sumo* wrestling. In addition, the rule of three zones is present in almost all types of Turkic wrestling *kuresh*, Yakut *habsagai*, and ancient German *glima*. A characteristic feature of *kuresh* and *glima* is a fixed grip on the belt. The appearance of this technique is, apparently, associated with the military-applied aspect of the era before the appearance of long-bladed weapons, when the cavalryman, left unarmed, was forced to defend himself, throwing the enemy off his horse by grabbing the warrior's belt. The variety of techniques of the Mongolian Bukhe-barildaan is also explained by the influence of the Tungus, North and East Mongolian cultures. Scientists, as well as wrestlers in Mongolia, claim that more than five hundred techniques are known in the Barildaan (27,29).

At the scientific and practical seminar "Current Issues of the Development of National Sports, and Ways to Solve Them", held in Ulan-Ude on September 17, 2004, a day before Eryn Gurban Naadan for the prizes of the Khambo Lama, the draft "Rules of National Wrestling" prepared by the State Committee of the Republic of Buryatia for Youth Affairs, Physical Culture and Sports was presented. According to the rules: Wrestlers come out on the carpet with their sashes tied. Wearing Buryat robes and hats, accompanied by a coach or a team representative singing solo. The coach and representative are also dressed in Buryat outfit. Wrestlers are allowed to compete in sports leotards to the knee length, with tied sashes, with a naked torso, in sports shoes (in the future, ethnic footwear - gutuls will be introduced). Competitions are held in weight categories of 60 kg, 70 kg, 80 kg, 90 kg and over 90 kg (21).

Main bout time -5 min; - if the winner is not identified

in regular time, the continuation is carried out in a mutual capture on sashes, without time limitation until touching the ground with one of three points; - in the event of breaking a grab by one wrestler, even with one hand, he will be considered defeated. At the end of the bout, the loser athlete walks in respect of the champion under his arm. And the winner bypasses the wrestling ground in the 'dance of the eagle' clockwise. Competitions of various levels in bukhe-barildaan are held in Buryatia almost every month - from junior competitions in rural and urban sport schools to international tournaments. During the national holidays Sagalga and Surkharban, competitions are held in all regions of the republic. Since 2010, the All-Russian tournament 'Bukhe-barildaan on Red Square' in Moscow and the 'Cup of the Datsan' in St. Petersburg have been held annually, bringing together athletes from the republics of the Caucasus, the Volga region, Yakutia and Tuva (28).

CONCLUSION

Non-Russian native authors, to explain the importance of Buryat wrestling, to suggest continuity between social signs, they have been seen using various propositional myths to construct social meaning and national identity. Buryat wrestling culture, it is based on the economic life unique to the development and continuity of the people and the traditional sources of the geographical environment that feed this life. Buhe-barildaan wrestling is one of the most important elements of the sports culture that helps to preserve the national identity and connection between generations. The functional and ideological origins of the Buryat Buhe-barildaan wrestling, historically, it is associated, first of all, with the choice of a mass who, besides having to face external power, is the leader of the military forces. In addition, Buhe-barildaan wrestling, which has two types, namely steppe and forest types, was seen to coincide with the wrestling of the peoples living in those geographies, especially Turks, in the context of typology and homogeneity.

At the same time, all this shows that the Buryat Bukhe barildaan is a living phenomenon that is in constant development, and, despite all the modifications it undergoes at this stage in history, it does not cease to be the Buryat Bukhe barildaan. On the contrary, flexibility and adaptability speak of the resilience of a cultural phenomenon. Thus, unified rules of the Buryat national wrestling are being developed today on the basis of the Selenga and Aga wrestling on sashes, and the rules of the Mongolian barildaan. The original wrapping of the sash around wrestlers' hips is very similar to the wrapping method in the uniform of the Korean ssireum wrestlers, with the only difference that the Koreans clasp only one leg with a sash. Such wrapping was adopted only in Buryat and Korean wrestling uniforms.

The desire to *revive lost traditions* in every detail, expressed, for example, in the return of some rituals, such as solo performed by coach, sometimes turns into a very arbitrary reconstruction and conjecture. This also applies to the rules governing the appearance of wrestlers, referees and coaches. Some traditions, such as the wearing of *gutul* boots, *dzhangin* hats and the Eagle dance performed by the winner of the bout, were transferred from the Mongolian naadam. At the same time, it all shows that the Buryat

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