



## THE DRUM IS MY RIDE: SHAMANS' DRUMS IN SIBERIA AND MONGOLIA

**In Siberia**, a shaman told me, “The drum is my ride.” In Mongolia, too, the rhythm of the drum echoes the sound of horses’ hooves galloping across the grasslands. Centuries ago, Genghis Khan (on horseback) unified disparate tribal peoples into the largest contiguous empire the world has ever known. Some people claim that Genghis Khan relied on the advice of a shaman for his success and perhaps was even a shaman himself. Today, the horse is sacred in Siberia and Mongolia and so is the shaman’s drum.

The increasing rhythm of the drum carries the shaman deeper and deeper into trance whereby he or she travels to the unseen world of Spirit to seek help about problems in this physical world. Scientific research has measured the drum tempo required to alter consciousness. A steady beat of 4.5 Hertz or cycles per second for at least 15 minutes facilitates an altered state of

consciousness into Theta brain wave activity.

While most of us are used to viewing the front or face of a drum as the predominant side (this is the side we would see as the audience or client in a shamanic ritual), the back of the drum is of great interest too because this is the side that faces the shaman. Each shaman’s drum is distinctive and identifies the individual shaman to those who know. It is said that the making of a drum is guided by the spirits who are also highly individualistic and have their own characteristics. The back of the drum is thus a narrative that tells a fascinating story about how the drum and the drummer are united in their efforts to contact, please or appease, and entreat the spirits. ✿

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