

PRELIMINARY NOTES ON TIBETAN AFTER-DEATH RITES AND THEIR TEXTS IN MONGOLIAN BUDDHIST PRACTICE

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This article is one of my first publications in the topic of Tibetan after-death rituals as practiced in Mongolia, for the study of which I gained a three-years postdoctoral fellowship (1st of October 2015 – 30th September 2018) and research fund from NKFIH (National Research, Development and Innovation Office) under the title “*Tibetan After-Death Rites in Mongolian Buddhist Practice: Ceremonial System, Text Typology and Analysis*”.¹ This article is the written form of my presentation made under the title “*Preliminary Notes on Tibetan After-Death Rites in Mongolian Buddhist Practice*” in the workshop „Mongolian Buddhism – Past, Present and Future” held on April 16–17, 2015 in Budapest organized by Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Mongol and Inner Asian Studies – Research Centre for Mongol Studies – Budapest Centre for Buddhist Studies; Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Ethnology and Embassy of Mongolia in Hungary. This preliminary article giving an overview of the connected text types will be followed by others on the topic, while at the end of the research a monograph is planned.

This, all required measures taken and ceremonies performed upon someone’s death – with the aim of ensuring the best possible rebirth for the deceased, including rites performed for guiding the ‘consciousness’ of the deceased after death, rites needed preparing for funeral, funeral rites, rites after the burial and commemoration of the dead – is called *buyanī aḡil* in Mongolian (‘work of making merit’). Actually all Mongolian lamas meet and fulfil this duty necessary after-death rites can be performed by any lama or group of lamas – but there are still specialized lamas, mainly specialized astrologer lamas trained in the science of *Altan saw*, ‘The Golden Vessel’ (Tib. *gser gyi sgrom bu*), the special burial manual, though only for, based upon calculations (*Altan saw nēx*, Tib. *gser gyi sgrom bu ‘bye*, ‘Opening the golden vessel’ or *Šinjē nēx*, ‘Opening / Analyzing the signs’) from birth and death dates, settling all details of the measures that have to be taken, texts to be recited and all details of the burial (mode, time, direction, etc.).

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Buddhist lamas have a twofold role in relation to any death event. First, they are to help deceased by helping his consciousness through the difficulties they face after death giving guidance in the intermediate state by reciting texts and performing rituals and by cleansing off his negative karma by purification rituals, recitations and merit making – thus promoting better rebirth and better future life to them (*xoidin buyan*, ‘virtue of the future’, that is, ensuring a virtuous future life). All of this is in fact, from the point of view of the Buddhist Bardo teachings, a work with the consciousness of the deceased, who is believed to be able to hear and follow the teachings by a kind of clairvoyance, whose karma is still possible to clean and whose rebirth is still possible to have an impact on by the above means. In addition, they are to protect the bereaved as well – this means again different types of rites and texts, though the two areas are closely interconnected. In this article I summarize the outcomes of my preliminary study of these after-death practices, rituals and their Tibetan language texts as used in present-day Mongolian Buddhism (a special form of Tibetan Buddhism), to summarize what I myself use as a starting point for my next 3 years’ research on the topic.²

Research History and Background

Regarding research history, several connected areas have been studied by different Tibetologists and Mongolists. As for the scholarly literature in the field of Tibetology, there are a great number of useful descriptions of Tibetan after-death and funeral rites, and text translations of which I would emphasize the numerous translations of Bardo tödol, *bar do thos grol*, known as the ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’, the most well-known related text of the nyingmapa tradition. For the study of the topic – after-death rites of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions – the Bardo teachings of Tibetan Buddhism and their basic texts and their commentaries must be studied, too, as these make the aims of the rituals clear. On these, there are numerous books being even translations of the different root texts, or commentaries to these. Modern commentaries and books with practical instructions and advice for practitioners and general readers interested in preparing for death or helping the dying written by rinpoches teaching mainly in the west are also important sources, as some not only give advices and explanations but also contain connected mantras, short ritual texts and their translations as well as information on traditional Tibetan burial costumes and rituals, similarly to the information available

² This article was written in 2015. After that, before the current volume was printed, I already had executed two relatively longer fieldworks in Mongolia on the topic (2016 summer, 2017 summer, 2-2 months), but the results of these could not be incorporated into this current article, which therefore remained only a preliminary study. Details of my new fieldworks and research on the topic are and will be available in my other articles published with the help of the project supported by the Hungarian National Research, Development and Innovation Office (Nemzeti Kutatási, Fejlesztési és Innovációs Hivatal).

on the websites of different Tibetan Buddhist organizations which often have books or fliers published or made available online with advices on death and dying.

If we turn our attention to descriptions of Tibetan death rituals in travellers' books and early scholarly literature, we have many useful sources. In Waddell's book there is a chapter on astrology, divination, sorcery and necromancy including death ceremonies.³ Evans-Wentz devotes a section to the death ceremonies, funeral and burial traditions in his book.⁴ Nebesky-Wojkowitz has descriptions of several connected rituals in different chapters of his book⁵, such as the ceremonies ransoming from death (Tib. *'chi bslu*) or using a substitute (Tib. *glud, ling ka, glud gtor*)⁶, *glud*, *'chi glud* or *'chi bslu* ceremonies, and *mdos* ceremonies⁷, and the ceremony where the dead and the living are symbolically separated⁸. Snellgrove in his book devotes a chapter to the description of Tibetan death rituals⁹ in which he describes in detail the ceremony with the name-card as substitute for the person, through which the deceased is released from each of the six spheres in turn, and is shown the way to the pure buddha-field of Avalokiteśvara. Beyer¹⁰ does not deal with death ceremonies separately, but mentions of the signs of death, dying and connected rites, long life initiations, the rituals of ransoming death, and of course the Bardo tödol text. Kvaerne in his two works gives descriptions of Tibetan Bon death rituals¹¹, including the transference of consciousness (Tib. *'pho ba*) performed immediately after death, the recitation of the Tib. *bar do thos grol* guidance for the deceased, another ritual in which the consciousness of the deceased is led along the path to liberation by displaying various cards (Tib. *tsag li*) to a picture (Tib. *byang bu*) of the deceased into which his consciousness is summoned. This includes also making an effigy of the deceased out of dough and offering it as a ransom (Tib. *glud*) to malevolent spirits. At the end the picture of the deceased is burned. He also mentions the cremation of the corpse. Germano¹² gives descriptions of three Tibetan

³ Waddell, Laurence Austine: *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism*. 2nd ed. London 1934, pp. 450–500.

⁴ Evans-Wentz, W. Y.: *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. 2nd ed. London 1949, pp. 18–28.

⁵ Nebesky-Wojkowitz, R. de: *Oracles and Demons of Tibet. The Cult and Iconography of Tibetan Protective Deities*. S-Gravenhage 1956. Chapter XVIII. Sacrificial objects and offerings, pp. 343–368; Chapter XIX. Thread-crosses and thread-cross ceremonies, pp. 369–397; Chapter XXVI. Protection against evil, pp. 503–537.

⁶ Nebesky-Wojkowitz, R. de: *Oracles and Demons*, pp. 359–362.

⁷ Nebesky-Wojkowitz, R. de: *Oracles and Demons*, pp. 503–537.

⁸ Nebesky-Wojkowitz, R. de: *Oracles and Demons*, p. 511.

⁹ Snellgrove, David: *Buddhist Himalāya*. Oxford–Glasgow–London 1957. Chapter 'Guiding the Consciousness after Death', pp. 262–274.

¹⁰ Beyer, Stephan: *The Cult of Tārā: Magic and Ritual in Tibet*. University of California Press, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1978.

¹¹ Kvaerne, Per: *Tibet Bon Religion: A Death Ritual of the Tibetan Bonpos*. Iconography of Religions Section 12 – East and Central Asia (Book 13). E. J. Brill, Leiden 1985; Kvaerne, Per: *Cards for the Dead*. In: *Religions of Tibet in Practice*. Abridged Edition. Ed. Donald S. – Lopez, Jr. Princeton University Press, Princeton – Oxford 2007, pp. 372–376.

¹² Germano, David: *Dying, Death, and Other Opportunities*. In: *Religions of Tibet in Practice*. Princeton University Press, Princeton – New Jersey 1997, pp. 351–357.

death rites and texts: a version of the transference of consciousness guiding people to the higher states of rebirth, a corpse purification using ablution of the corpse to lead his consciousness out of rebirth in the six spheres, and the seven-day juncture ritual involving an effigy- or name-card into which the deceased's consciousness is channeled. Skorupski¹³ gives a description of a Tibetan nyingma cremation ceremony (Tib. *ro sreg*). He gives, out of the different traditions (the others being according to the Tantra Elimination of all Evil Rebirths, and the *bde chen zhing* tradition), the funeral rites based on *byang gter* tradition, the mandala of which has Avalokiteśvara as the chief deity (while that of the Tantra Elimination of all Evil Rebirths has Sarvavid Vairocana as the chief deity, and that of the *bde chen zhing* tradition Amitābha). After putting the cremation ceremony in context of the many different rituals for the dead and describing shortly the ritual with an effigy card he gives the description of the different stages of the cremation ritual and translates the most important passages. In his other work¹⁴ he gives the translation of the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra* (the above Tantra Elimination of all Evil Rebirths), including the different rites for the dead. Lately Mullin and Orofino published their books in related topics, the tradition of death and dying¹⁵, and teachings on death and liberation¹⁶. A well-built up and detailed study of Tibetan death traditions and funerary practices was published by Gouin¹⁷ based on a thorough study of the related scholarly literature and other sources.

In Hungary, Kara¹⁸ published first the translation of the Tibetan Book of the Dead, and later, recently Agócs¹⁹ published its new translation in which essays of Kelényi are also published. In another article Kelényi²⁰ gives an analysis of cards (Tib. *tsag li*) of an after-death rite, the cards being from Mongolia.

In the field of Mongolian studies, we have historical sources as well and several connected areas have been widely studied by different Mongolists, i.e. the study of these rites in folk religion or anthropological issues. There are several accounts of Mongolian burial customs in historical sources and in the works of travellers, among them

¹³ Skorupski, Tadeusz: The cremation ceremony according to the byang-gter tradition. *Kailash*, 09 04 04, pp. 361–376.

¹⁴ Skorupski, Tadeusz: *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra*. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1983.

¹⁵ Mullin, Glenn: *Death and Dying: The Tibetan Tradition*. New York, Arkana, 1986.

¹⁶ Orofino, Giacomella: *Sacred Tibetan Teachings on Death and Liberation*. Dorset, Prism Press 1990.

¹⁷ Gouin, Margaret: *Tibetan Rituals of Death: Buddhist funerary practices*. Routledge, London 2010.

¹⁸ Kara, György (transl.): *A köztes lét könyvei. Tibeti tanácsok halandóknak és születendőknak*. Európa Könyvkiadó, Budapest 1986 [The Books of the Intermediate State. Tibetan Advices to those to die and those to be born].

¹⁹ Agócs, Tamás: *Tibeti halottaskönyv. A bardo útmutatás nagykönyve*. Cartaphilus Könyvkiadó, Budapest 2009 [The Tibetan Book of the Dead. The Great Book of Guidance in the Bardo].

²⁰ Kelényi, Béla: „A jóbarátok nevében”. Egy halotti szertartás fogadalmi képei. In: *Tanulmányok a tibeti és mongol buddhizmus köréből. Szerb János emlékkötet*. [Essays on Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism. In Commemoration of János Szerb]. Ed. Szilágyi, Zs. L'Harmattan, Budapest 2011, pp. 39–78 [“On behalf of the good friends.” Cards of an After-Death Ritual].

early ones (Pallas, etc., detailed and referred below), works on Mongolian customs related to burial and death (by Sárközi, Bawden, etc. detailed below), publications on Mongolian folk religion texts with their translations and analyzes (works of Bawden, Sárközi, Krueger detailed below), studies of ethnographical and anthropological issues (works of Humphrey, Delaplace detailed below), and works on the burial, mourning and funeral customs of different Mongolian ethnic groups (these are well summarized by Simonkay²¹. Connected topics also gained attention in articles on different exorcising and healing ceremonies, several of which are also used for the deceased (works of Lessing, Bawden, Sárközi, and Sazykin detailed below). Among the early descriptions, Pallas accounted the burial customs of the Mongols²², giving the translations of two texts, one of them being the *Altan saw*. Hungarian researchers, starting as early as in the 19th century with the linguist Szentkatolnai Bálint Gábor whose works are being published in several publications by Ágnes Birtalan have conducted research with lamas and collected data on after-death rites²³. Pozdneyev in one of his books accounted the Mongolian burial customs²⁴, and in his other book described several after-death rites such as the *jolig yarγaqu* rite (*jolig gargax*, destroying the substitute for the sick or dead person), death-rites (including the recitation of Tib. *bar do thos grol*, *ḡayuradu-yin sudur*), the burial of Mongols and decrees concerning this, rites after the burial (including the *lüd*, Tib. *glud* ritual and another ritual to ward off misfortunes from living persons whose birth year is identical with that of the deceased) and commemoration of the dead (including the reading of *Manalín čoga*, *manla-yin čöγa*, Tib. *smān bla*, the ceremony of the Medicine Buddha)²⁵. Later Mongolists published works on Mongolian customs related to burial and death (Sárközi, Bawden, etc., detailed and referred below), articles on different exorcist and healing ceremonies also used for the deceased (by Lessing, Bawden, Sárközi, Sazykin, detailed below), as well as translations / analyzes of Mongolian folk religion texts (works of Bawden, Sárközi, Krueger detailed below). To mention the most important ones of these, we can start with Bawden, who published numerous works on the study of various Mongolian manuscripts on supernatural mat-

²¹ Simonkay, Zsuzsanna: *Halálal, temetéssel kapcsolatos szokások és hiedelmek a mongoloknál*. MA thesis, Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Arts, Budapest 2010 [Mongolian Traditions Concerning Death and Burial].

²² Pallas, P. S.: *Sammlungen historischer Nachrichten über die mongolischen Völkerschaften*, St. Petersburg 1801, vol. II., pp. 249–306.

²³ On his Kalmyk data on after-death rites see Birtalan, Ágnes: Religion and Identity in the 19th Century Urgha (on the Basis of a Mongolian Monk's Oral Narratives Recorded by Gábor Bálint of Szentkatolna). In: "The History of the Mongols during the Qing-Period in the Light of Manju-Mongol Archives" International Symposium. Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn Deutschland 04. 09. 2011- 08. 09. 2011, (Abstracts) pp. 57–64.

²⁴ Pozdneyev, A. M.: *Očerki byta buddjkih monastyrej*. St. Petersburg 1887, pp. 453–474.

²⁵ Pozdneyev, A. M.: *Religion and Ritual in Society: Lamaist Buddhism in late 19th-century Mongolia*. Ed. Krueger, J. R. The Mongolia Society, Bloomington 1978. Chapter 5, pp. 591–617.

ters, disease and healing,²⁶ including a note on a Mongolian burial ritual, two articles on the ritual of calling the soul, supernatural element in sickness and death, and the detailed account of the causes of death and their investigation in his book²⁷. Even more important from the point of view of my research topic is an article by Krueger, being a description and translation of a Mongolian version²⁸ of the *Altan saw* (*Altan saba* in Written Mongolian) burial manual, based on which (considering birth date and death date) all calculations are made regarding the measures to be taken, mode, time and direction of the disposal of the corpse, texts to be recited, remedies to be performed, etc. Other closely related topics are dealt with by Sárközi in her articles and her book published together with Sazykin.²⁹ Her works mainly give translations and analysis of Mongolian language folk religion texts of exorcism and healing, including several texts such as the ritual of calling back the soul of the dead or the sick person or ransoming the soul (*Sünesün dalalyaqui* / *Sünesün dayudaqu*, Tib. 'chi bslu, sometimes combined

²⁶ Bawden, C. R.: A Note on a Mongolian Burial Ritual. *Studia Orientalia* 74, Helsinki (1977), pp. 25–35; Bawden, C. R.: A Mongolian Ritual for Calling the Soul. *Asia Major* Vol. 15. (1970), Part 2, pp. 145–158; Bawden, C. R.: Calling the Soul: a Mongolian Litany. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* [BSOAS] Vol. 25, part 1. 1962, pp. 80–103; Bawden, C. R.: The Supernatural Element in Sickness and Death According to Mongol Tradition. Part 1. *Asia Major* New Series 8. (1961), pp. 215–257; Bawden, C. R.: The Supernatural Element in Sickness and Death According to Mongol Tradition. Part 2. *Asia Major* New Series 9. (1962), pp. 153–178; Bawden, C. R.: Vitality and Death in the Mongolian Epic. In: *Fragen der mongolischen Heldendichtung III*. Ed. W. Heissig. Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1985, pp. 9–24.

²⁷ Bawden, C. R.: *Confronting the Supernatural: Mongolian Traditional Ways and Means*. Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 1994.

²⁸ Krueger, John R.: The Altan Saba (The Golden Vessel). A Mongolian Lamaist Burial Manual. *Monumenta Serica* 25 (1965), pp. 207–272.

²⁹ Sárközi, Alice: A Bon Funeral Rite in Lamaist Mongolia. In: *Synkretizmus in den Religionen Zentralasiens*, Ed. Heissig, W. – Klimkeit, H. J. Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1987, pp. 119–135; Sárközi, Alice: A Mongolian Text of Exorcism. In: *Shamanism in Eurasia*. Part 2. IV. Myth and Language in Culture. Ed. Hoppál Mihály. Herodot, Göttingen 1984, pp. 325–343; Sárközi, Alice: Halottkultusz, östisztelet. In: *Őseink Nyomában Belső-Ázsiában. Tanulmányok a mongol népi hiedelemvilágról I*. [On Our Ancestors' Trail in Inner-Asia. Essays on Mongolian Folk Religion I.]. Ed. Birtalan Ágnes. Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, Budapest 1996, pp. 91–118 [Cult of the Dead and the Ancestors]; Sárközi, Alice: Symbolism in Exorcizing the Evil Spirits. In: *Religious and Lay Symbolism in the Altaic World and Other Papers*. Proceedings of the 27th Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference, Walberberg, Federal Republic of Germany June 12th to 17th, 1984. Ed. Klaus Sagaster – Helmut Eimer. Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1989, pp. 313–323; Sárközi, Alice: The Rope: Symbolical Bondage in Mongolian Shamanism. In: *Proceedings of the 38th Permanent International Altaistic Conference* (PIAC), Kawasaki, Japan: August 7–12, 1995. Ed. Giovanni Stary. Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 1996, pp. 311–317; Sárközi, Alice – Sazykin, Alexey G.: Calling the Soul of the Dead. In: *Silk Road Studies IX*. Brepols Publishers n.v., Turnhout, Belgium 2004; Sárközi, Alice: Abode of the soul of humans, animals and objects in Mongolian folk belief. *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hung.* Volume 61 (4), 2008, pp. 467–475; Sárközi, Alice: Cutting off the black noose of a fiend: A Healing Method of Mongolian Shamanism, In: *Opuscula Altaica. Essays presented in Honor of Henry Schwarz*. Ed. Kaplan E. H. Western Washington University, 1994, pp. 532–544; Sárközi, Alice: A Text of Popular Religious Belief “Cutting off the Lasso.” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hung.* XXXIX (1), 1985, pp. 39–44.

with the ceremony of destroying a replacement or substitute for the dead or sick person, *jöliy*, Tib. *glud*) and several rituals in which the connection (symbolically a rope, these rituals usually also include a ransom figure) between the patient and the malevolent spirits that caused the illness, or, in case of a dead person, connection or attachment between the dead and the living are detached or cut off (texts of ‘Tearing off the clasping hands of the living and the dead’, ‘Cutting off the black noose of a fiend’, and ‘Cutting off the Lasso’), as well as the text aimed at averting the occurrence of further death entitled ‘Stopping up the Hole’ (*Nüke böglekü*, the hole being the symbolical hole or mouth of death). To mention studies on ethnographical and anthropological issues published lately, Humphrey analyzed the connection between death and personal property in Mongolian death rituals in the socialist 1980s³⁰, including rites concerned with the deceased’s relations with personal objects aiming at separation from this life and material belongings (for example the dealing with *xorgodoson yum*, the particular object the spirit or soul of the deceased remains emotionally attached, and which should be destroyed or given away after death). Delaplace published two articles and a book in French³¹ on modern Mongolian burials and related topics, among them the article³² published on the allocation of land for the installation of a dead person among Dörwöd herders (depending on the results of consultation with the help of the *Altan saw*, the choice of the exact place made during another ritual ‘requesting the land’, *gajar guix*, and also taking into consideration the ‘permanently taken’ places, *salantai gajar*, having already been requested with the proper rituals). At the Department of Inner-Asian Studies, ELTE, Zsuzsanna Simonkay wrote her MA thesis on the Mongolian Traditions Concerning Death and Burial³³, which summarizes well the connected Mongolian customs. As for the works in Mongolian, these include publications on broader topics but also containing information on burial practices, such as the encyclopaedias on

³⁰ Humphrey, Caroline: Rituals of Death as a Context for Understanding Personal Property in Socialist Mongolia. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* Vol. 8, No. 1 (Mar., 2002), pp. 65–87 (accessed on 12 January, 2014). <http://innerasiaresearch.org/CHsite/pdfs/Humphrey-JRAI2002.pdf>.

³¹ Delaplace, Grégory: The Place of the Dead: Power, Subjectivity and Funerary Topography in North-Western Mongolia. In: *States of Mind: Power, Places and the Subject in Inner Asia*. Ed. David Sneath. Western Washington University Press, Bellingham 2006, pp. 47–62 (accessed on 12 January 2014). https://www.academia.edu/648505/The_place_of_the_dead_Power_subjectivity_and_funerary_topography_in_North-Western_Mongolia; Delaplace, Grégory: *L'invention des morts. Sépultures, fantômes et photographie en Mongolie contemporaine*. Sems EPHE, Paris 2009.

³² Delaplace, Grégory: The Place of the Dead: Power, Subjectivity and Funerary Topography in North-Western Mongolia. In: *States of Mind: Power, Places and the Subject in Inner Asia*. Ed. David Sneath. Western Washington University Press, Bellingham, 2006, pp. 47–62 (accessed on 12 January 2014). https://www.academia.edu/648505/The_place_of_the_dead_Power_subjectivity_and_funerary_topography_in_North-Western_Mongolia.

³³ Simonkay, Zsuzsanna: *Halállal, temetéssel kapcsolatos szokások*.

Mongolian culture³⁴ or Mongolian Buddhism³⁵, as well as works on Mongolian burial traditions or connected Mongolian Buddhist practices, such as a small booklet for informing believers on after-death Buddhist rites³⁶, and the comparative and very detailed work of the Inner-Mongolian Qurčabilig on the burial practices of the Mongols³⁷. I also used, for given after-death reading titles, several publications issued for believers informing them on readings in the monasteries and their purposes.³⁸

Connected Preliminary Researches

The planned research follows from my research activity ongoing for years now with the aim of studying the ceremonial system of the revived Mongolian Buddhism and the operation of its monasteries and temples. As a Tibetologist and Mongolist, apart from studying related written sources, I executed fieldworks in Mongolia 6 times until now working in monasteries, libraries and archives researching the present-day religious life and ceremonies of the revived Mongolian Buddhism, the history of the old Mongolian monasteries ruined in the 1937 purges and their monastic life, ceremonial and ritual practice – partly through fieldwork in present-day monasteries and on old monastic sites and partly through interviews executed with old surviving monks and done between 2006–2009 together with Krisztina Teleki. As for the study of the Mongolian Buddhist ceremonial system, the topic of the planned research also belongs to, I summarized the results of my several years' fieldwork in all active temples of Ulānbātar and several countryside temples in my PhD dissertation written on the ritual and ceremonial practice in present-day Mongolian monasteries (*A Comparative Study of the Ceremonial Practice in Present-day Mongolian Monasteries*). This research mainly focused on the regular ceremonies of Mongolian temples (annual, seasonal, monthly, weekly, and daily chantings) and also on the readings that take place in them on the request of

³⁴ For example Bat-Irėdūi, ǰ. – Ariyasüren Č.: *Mongol yos janšilın ix tailbar tol'*. Ulsin Ix Surgūlın Xewlel, Ulānbātar 1999 [The Great Explanatory Dictionary of Mongolian Customes].

³⁵ [Without author] *Buddin šašin, soyolın tailbar tol'*. (Buddin sudlal cuwral 2.). Mongol Ulsin Ix Surgūl', Ulānbātar 2000 [Encyclopaedia of Buddhist Religion and Culture (Collection of Buddhist Religious Studies 2.)].

³⁶ Enxnasan, D.: *Xoidin buyan*. Ulānbātar 2010 [Merits in Future Lives].

³⁷ Qurčabilig, G. N.: *Mongolčud-un orošiyulya-yin soyol*. Öber mongyol-un soyol-un keblel-ün qoriy-a, Köke-Qota 2003 [Mongolian Funeral Customs]; in Cyrillic translation: Xurcbileg, N.: *Mongolčudın oršūlax jan üilın soyol*. Ulānbātar 2010 [The culture of the Burial Customs of the Mongols].

³⁸ Dašjegwe, X.: *Xägdsan šütleg nügdсан süsegin san xömrögös / Šašin ulamjlalt yos, jan üilın tol'*. Mongolın Süsegtni Xolbō, Ulānbātar 1997 [From the Treasury of the Secret Religion and Hidden Belief / Dictionary of Traditional Buddhist Customes and Rituals]; Arwis, A. (ed.): *Mongolın xid dacangūdad xurax xuralın üne, nersin jagsält, towč agūlga*. Ulānbātar 2001 [Prices, List of Titles, and Short Contents of Ceremonies Held in Mongolian Monasteries]; [Without author] *Jaslin nomō xāna unšūlax we? Ulānbātar xot dax' buddin šašin süm xidūdın towč lawlax*. Ulānbātar 2000 [Where to Request Readings? A Short Description of the Buddhist Temples of Ulānbātar].

individuals daily. Details of these including the ceremonial system (annual, seasonal, monthly, weekly, and daily chantings) of all Ulānbātar temples and the text titles that can be requested in them (texts that are chanted on request of individuals in Mongolian temples) with explanations of the common circumstances or life situations for which reciting of certain texts is recommended and Tibetan parallels for around one thousand such titles are all published in my PhD dissertation. I also published several articles on the topic, including analysis of several individual Mongolian Buddhist ceremonies.³⁹

For my new research, a special part of the ceremonial system, the after-death rites, I began studying first the connected titles from the above list of one thousand titles of ritual texts to be met in Mongolian monasteries, and made a preliminary list of them containing 40–50 titles with their Tibetan equivalents and short explanations. The current article tries to give a typology according to the special aims of these texts I am going to study in detail later.

Aims of the After-Death Rites in Line with the Tibetan Buddhist Bardo Teachings

The Tibetan bardo teachings are very detailed, and all processes related to dying, the signs of death, the process of dying with the dissolution of the elements into each other, the 6 bardos and especially the detailed description of the 2 bardos connected to death are included in them. From the point of view of this article dealing with different types of after-death texts the concept of the consciousness as the basis of dealing with death is important, as it explains the aim of Tibetan Buddhist after-death rites: to help the detachment from the living ones, material objects and this life, to help the consciousness of the deceased through the possible problems in bardo, and to help it to find the best possible way out of it (and out of *samsara*).

In short, the period of bardo is said to last for 49 days (though this not necessarily equals to days of human life), starting by a 3 days coma, which is followed by periods each ending with a „small death” occurring in every 7 days – this is when greater rituals are traditionally held if possible. The consciousness in the intermediate state is said to be very sensible, has a kind of clairvoyance (hears our thoughts, etc.), travels very quickly by thought, gradually leaves behind this life, relatives, beloved ones, body, objects and belongings. In Tibetan Buddhism the emphasis is on death as a possibility, saying that though our karma effects our new rebirth, in bardo we can still influence it, therefore for practitioners and those helped by a lama/practitioner there is a great possibility to influence it positively, even to reach enlightenment. As the bardo-being

³⁹ Majer, Zsuzsa: *A Comparative Study of the Ceremonial Practice in Present-day Mongolian Monasteries*. PhD dissertation. Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, Bölcsészettudományi Kar, Nyelvtudományi Doktori Iskola, Mongol Nyelvészet Doktori Program [Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Arts, Doctoral School of Linguistics, Program on Mongolian Linguistics]. Budapest 2008, 285 pages.

(as the consciousness is called in this period) hears our thoughts, rituals and texts can help him understand he had died, and can be guided, reminded etc. Even relatives can help with their positive thoughts and peaceful attitude, as well as in the many ways collecting merit in his name. For the same reason relatives should try not to cry, not to hold on to the deceased but let him go – otherwise we obstruct his leaving and finding a new rebirth. According to the teachings, the cause of mourning or the suffering of the bereaved is attachment (as laid also down in The Four Noble Truths).

After the death of a relative the followings are advised for a Buddhist believer to help their deceased: many repetitions of dedication and aspiration prayers (such as the *Sanjid molom* or *Yerōlīn xan*, Tib. (*'phags pa*) *bzang spyod smon lam*(*gyi rgyal po*), Bhadracharyāpranidhā / Bhadracharyā-pranidhānārāja sūtra, 'The (noble) (king of prayers), prayer of good actions / excellent deeds', a Mahayana text, which is part of the Avataṃsaka / Buddhāvataṃsaka sūtra, 'The sūtra of the Flower Garland / Adornment (of Buddhas)'), making offerings (lamps, incense etc.), giving donations to monasteries, to monks, to the poor, accumulating merits and cultivating positive qualities (any positive deeds or service, serving the poor, making donations for religious purposes, saving and ransoming lives (buying and freeing animals), building and repairing temples and religious monuments, sponsoring or performing prayers and meditations), practicing rites such as purification (especially the *Dünšig*, Tib. *ltung bshags*, 'Confession of downfalls', the confession before the Thirty-five Buddhas of Purification, the text of prostrating chanted to clear away sins and stains by confessing them; and the prayers and meditations of Vajrasattva buddha (Bajarsad / Dorjsembe, Tib. *rdo rje sems dpa'*), empowerments, and dedication; doing meditations; and practicing the rituals, prayers and meditations on a buddha and pure land. These can include a ritual of Amitābha, the Buddha of Infinite Light; Avalokiteśvara, the Buddha of Compassion; Vajrasattva, the Buddha of Purification; the Hundred Peaceful and Wrathful Deities, Tib. *zhi khro*; Sarvavid Vairocana, the Buddha of Purgation of the Inferior Realms; and Vajrabhairava (or Yamāntaka, Tib. *gshin rje shed* / 'jigs byed, Khal. *Ĵigjid* or *Yamandag*), the Eliminator of the Lord of Death, chosen according to the school of Buddhism practiced.

These are the possibilities for the relatives themselves to contribute to the well-being of the deceased. In addition, the necessary ceremonies and readings, as well as the proper burial is performed by lamas, also in various ways depending on the school they belong to, which are, in fact, from the point of view of the Buddhist Bardo teachings, is a work with the consciousness of the deceased in Tantric Buddhism, and is based on the point that the opportunity dying and death offers can be used consciously.

The main aims of the recitations and rituals are guiding the consciousness of the deceased in the intermediate state, help him to attain a new rebirth soon and to suffer less in the intermediate state, to help him to find a better rebirth or even attain liberation from the cycle of existence (samsara), to urge him to be reborn in a special buddha-field, to help his detachment from the living ones and from material objects

and this life (which could result in him or her not being able to find the next rebirth), averting the occurrence of further death by preventing the evil spirits from causing further sickness and death to the relatives or loved ones of the deceased, preventing the soul of the deceased from becoming ghosts (*čötgör*) or souls (*süns*) not being able to find a rebirth and coming back to haunt, texts recited to comfort the evil spirits, etc. Several from among the texts aimed at restoring health and averting death are used also as after-death rituals (for example texts calling back the soul; the *Manal*, Tib. *sman bla* ceremony of the Medicine Buddha; and the Tantric *Lüijin*, Tib. *lus sbyin* body-offering ritual in Red Sect temples). Also the different burial types (*oršülga*) have their own texts: burial into soil (*oršülax*, *bulšlan oršülax*), cremation (*xailj čandarlax*), feeding to the vultures (*tasīn dūdlaga*) or simply ‘leaving or losing the body’ or abandonment of the body (*xün gēx*, *xēr gēgdūlen oršülax*, *xödōlūlex*), disposal in water (river or lake, very rare), etc. [also mummification (*xatān čandarlax*, *xatāx*) was practiced for high lamas]. Various short prayers are recited, too, for the deceased, several of them being special ones aimed at helping to find a better rebirth. Further text types were already mentioned when summarizing the research history, and others can be found in the typology below. There are also texts recited in case of the death of a relative, however, not for the deceased but with the aim of defending his or her relatives and friends from risk caused by his or her death (for example the text to be recited if any was born in the same year of the 12 year cycle or with same constellations, or texts averting the evil spirits and preventing them from causing further misfortunes).

Text Types according to their Aims or Special Purposes

Below I give a preliminary typology based on a list of the related texts compiled from material collected on my previous fieldworks. This was based on the lists of requestable sūtras displayed in the individual temples collected during my previous fieldworks in Ulānbātar temples (these lists differ from one temple to another and usually cover the common circumstances or life situations for which reciting of certain texts is recommended), completed by other titles that are usually also recited for the deceased as accounted by my dataproviders and also by related titles known to me from scholarly literature. This preliminary list will be extended with titles after my coming fieldworks in Mongolian monasteries, and a more complete and exact typology will be made afterwards.

Texts for the Deceased

- The different types of **transference of consciousness** (*Powa*, Tib. *‘pho ba*, also called in Mongolia as *Potid*, Tib. *‘pho khrid*) can be performed by a lama (or

- a practitioner trained in it and owning the initiation for it) during dying, immediately after death, or during 49 days following death at given days.
- There are various texts or rituals aimed at **guiding the consciousness** of the deceased **in the intermediate state** to find a better rebirth or even attain liberation from the cycle of existence. Examples are:
 - The text of *Toidol / Bardo toidol (sonsgöd) / Sonsgöd toidol*, Tib. (*bar do*) *thos sgröl*, ‘Liberation through hearing (in the intermediate state)’ / ‘Text which liberates through hearing (in the intermediate state)’, [known as the Tibetan Book of the Dead]. The recitation of this text, according to the short descriptions⁴⁰ “saves from sudden and premature death and from the dangers in the intermediate state – it is enough only to hear it and one will find the virtuous way. Against stealing and lies. The text should be recited within 49 days after the death, as it is for the intermediate state (*jawsarīn töröl*)”. The text title *Toidol lamrim*, Tib. *thos sgröl lam rim*, ‘The gradual path of liberation through hearing’ was also met, but it is still unclear what this text is.
 - the **rituals with an effigy card or name card** as a substitute for the dead (*Ĵančog / Čančog*, Tib. *byang chog*). The following variation was also met: *Ĵigjīdīn čančog / Ĵigjīd jančog*, Tib. *jigs byed byang chog*, ‘Ritual with a name card, based on Ĵigjīd (Tib. ‘jigs byed, S. Bhairava, ‘the ‘Terrifying’, epithet of Yāmāntaka, one of the three main yellow sect tantras/deities, one of the ten wrathful protector deities)’’. The recitation of this text is recommended “mainly for the deceased to save them from bad rebirths and to ensure a short stay in the intermediate state for them and to ensure rebirth in the Sukhāvati heaven (*Diwājīn*) of Amitābha”. In these kinds of rituals the lamas purify the karmic seeds of the deceased that would cause rebirth in the six realms (Tib. *gnas ‘dren*, ‘deliverance from the realms’). This ritual carried out with the effigy (card) instead of the body is important, because the ceremony can be performed in this way with an effigy (card) instead of the body (death rituals of similar kind but performed in the presence of the dead body are called ‘corpse ritual’, Tib. *ro chog* in the Tibetan traditions, to differentiate rituals with the dead body from the general ‘death ritual’, Tib. *gshin chog*).
 - Texts **urging the deceased to be reborn in a special buddha-field**, for example that of **Amitābha**, the Buddha of Infinite Light. This in Buddhist practice means rather a state of the consciousness than a paradise as a physical place. Beings gaining rebirth in these paradises or pure lands listen to the teachings of the given buddha till they are ready to enter nirvana. The most popular such rituals are based mainly on the prayers and meditation on the Buddha of Infinite Light.

⁴⁰ I give the short description of what the certain text is recommended for, as included on the list of the different temples for the information of devotees after each title in this article, where available.

- *Awidn čogo* or *Diwājingn čogo* (Tib. *‘od dpag med kyi cho ga / bde ba can gyi cho ga*), ‘Ritual of **Amitābha**, the Buddha of Infinite Light’ / ‘Ceremony of the **Sukhāvati** paradise’. The recitation of this text to **Amitābha** (**Awid** in Mongolian, Tib. *‘od dpag med*, S. Amitābha, ‘Boundless light’, the Buddha of Infinite Light) is recommended “for the virtue of the next life of the deceased ones, and is aimed at clearing away all sins and praying for the deceased to take rebirth in the paradise of Amitābha Buddha (Sukhāvati) located in the west”.
 - *Püljn* or *Diwājingn yeröl / Diwājin molom* (Tib. *phul byung* (‘accomplished / excelled’, beginning of the text) / Tib. *bde ba can gyi smon lam*, full title: Tib. *bde ba can du skye ba ‘i smon lam*), ‘Prayer for being reborn in **Sukhāvati**, the Blissful Realm’ (the pure land of **Amitābha** Buddha). This is one of the six prayers known collectively as *Jurgān yeröl* (Tib. *smo lam drug*), ‘The six prayers’ (see below).
 - *Lagwī molom / Lxagwī molom* (Tib. *lhag pa ‘i smon lam*, full title: Tib. *lhag pa ‘i smon lam them skas (ma)*), ‘Superior prayer’ / ‘Superior prayer of steps’, which is also a prayer for rebirth in **Sukhāvati**, the pure land of Buddha **Amitābha**. The recitation of this text is recommended “to save all sentient beings of the six spheres from bad rebirths and to help them to be reborn in the Blissful Realm, Sukhāvati (*Diwājin*, Tib. *bde ba can*), the pure land of Buddha Amitābha”. The text is attributed to Nāgārjuna, the Buddhist philosopher and founder of the Madhyamaka (Tib. *dbu ma*, ‘Middle Way’) school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. According to its colophon the prayer was written by Dpal mgon ‘phags pa klu sgrub, which is Nāgārjuna garbha, another name for Nāgārjuna, but can be a lama named Dpal mgon ‘phags pa klu sgrub after Nāgārjuna, but not Nāgārjuna himself.⁴¹
- Texts based on the practice of other deities, for example **Sarvavid Vairocana**, the Buddha of Purgation of the Inferior Realms; **Avalokiteśvara**, the Buddha of Compassion; the Hundred Peaceful and Wrathful Deities, Tib. *zhi khro*; Vajrabhairava (or Yamāntaka, Tib. *gshin rje shed / ‘jigs byed*, Khal. *Ĵigjid* or *Yamandag*), the Eliminator of the Lord of Death; and Vajrasattva (Khal. *Bajarsad / Dorjsembe*, Tib. *rdo rje sems dpa’*), the Buddha of Purification.
- *Lxog(o)toi gūnreg / Gūnregn lxogo* (Tib. *lho sgo kun rig*), ‘The south gate of **Sarvavid(yā) Vairocana**’. The recitation of this text is recommended “for the deceased ones, to help them to better rebirth.” *Gūnregn lxog(o)*, Tib. *kun rig gi lho sgo*, ‘South gate of Sarvavid(yā) Vairocana’. A rite performed in honour of Sarvavidyā Vairocana (Gūnreg, Tib. *kun rig* shortly for Gūnreg Nambarnanjad, Tib. *kun rig rnam par snang mdzad*, “all-knowing Vairocana”, name of an Adibuddha popular in Sakya tradition) for the deceased. It is performed in order to

⁴¹ On this prayer an article of mine is under publication in the forthcoming volume commemorating 80th birthday of Professor György Kara, under the title: “Lagwī molom, a prayer on daily chanting in Mongolian monasteries aimed at saving all beings from bad rebirths and helping them to a better one in Sukhāvati”.

help the deceased ones to better rebirth, to help them to the realm of Buddha through the south gate of his palace by getting them to the blessing of Buddha. Part of the *Lxogtoi gūnreg* ceremony.” The following similar texts are also in use in different temples: *Manalīn lxog(o)*, Tib. *smān bla’i lho sgo*, ‘The south gate of the Medicine Buddha’. This is recommended “for sick people and for those who are suffering. Part of the *Manalīn dončid* (Tib. *smān bla’i stong mchod*) ceremony.” *Jigjīdīn lxogo*, Tib. *jigs byed kyi lho sgo*, ‘The south gate ritual performed to Yāmāntaka’. The description of the text says that “the requester must bring a picture of the deceased”. *Xandīn lxogo*, Tib. *mkha’ gro’i lho sgo*, ‘The south gate ritual of the sky-goers / dākinīs’. The recitation of this text is recommended “to ensure the future path or rebirths of the deceased.” *Lamīn čodwīn lxog(o)*, Tib. *bla ma’i mchod pa’i lho sgo*, ‘The south gate of the offering for the masters’. The recitation of this text is recommended as an “entreat for Buddhas and lamas for virtues and good fortune. For the deceased.” Of these four three (except for *Manalīn lxogo*) seems to be used for helping the deceased.

- Texts urging the deceased to be reborn in Shambhala mythical kingdom, such as:
 - *Šambalīn čogo*, Tib. *šam bha la’i cho ga*, ‘Ritual of Shambhala’. The recitation of this text is recommended “for the deceased and for merits in the future rebirths”.
 - *Šambalīn yerōl*, Tib. *šam bha la’i smon lam*, ‘Prayer of Shambhala’. The recitation of this text is recommended “for the deceased”. [This exists in many variations of different length]
- Several from among the variations of texts aimed at restoring health and averting death are also used as after-death rituals:
 - Texts of rituals aimed at **preventing** the soul of the deceased **form becoming ghosts** (*čōtgōr*) **or souls** (*sūns*) not being able to find a rebirth but coming back to haunt are the so called ‘**calling back the soul of the dead**’ texts. In these, the soul not finding his or her way to new rebirth are called to come back and accept guidance. These texts originally are not for the deceased, but for sick people, and their titles are:
 - › *Sūns dūdax* (Tib. *‘chi bslu*), ‘Calling back the soul of the dead / sick person or ransoming the soul’.
 - › *Sūld (jasal)/ Sūld dūd(ūl)ax*, Tib. *bla ‘gugs*, ‘(Remedy of) Calling back the soul’. The recitation of this is recommended “in case one having problems related to the wind element, to restore one’s health and to revive one’s spiritual strength / vitality. To prolonge life and to have health. In case of losing one’s spiritual strength (*sūldgūi bolson xūnd*)”.
 - *Čiwel* (Tib. *‘chi bslu / ‘chi ba(‘i) bslu ba*) texts, ‘Saving one from death by paying ransom / deceiving death’. The recitation of this text is recommended “to get rid of illnesses and sufferings.” (In the different Mongolian temples the following variations of this were found to be used: *Dar’ Exīn čiwel / čiwul / cewel*, Tib.

sgrol ma'i 'chi ba bslu, 'Saving one from death by paying ransom / deceiving death by praying to Tārā'. The recitation of this texts is recommended „for quickly recovering from illnesses and to get saved from death by getting obstacles ceared away. Against all kinds of evil spirits”. *Manalīn čiwel*, Tib. *sman bla'i 'chi ba bslu*, 'Saving one from death by paying ransom / deceiving death by praying to the Medicine Buddha'. Its recitation is recommended „for sick people”. *Sanjīdīn čiwel / Sanjīdmolomīn čiwel*, Tib. *bzang spyod (smon lam gyi) 'chi ba bslu*, 'Saving one from death by paying ransom / deceiving death with the Prayer of good actions'. It is recited „to clear away all kinds of obstacles and for those harmed by different demons (*ad, don*)”.

- the *Manal* (Tib. *sman bla*), ritual of the Medicine Buddha
 - *Lüjīn (Biyēn öglög* in Mongolian translation of the Tibetan term) (Tib. *lus sbyin / lus kyis mchod sbyin*), 'body-offering (ritual)', a Tantric body offering ritual, typical for Red Sect tradition, used in *Jod* (Tib. *gcod*) practices. The text when recited „saves from all kinds of bad things and from demons and bad spirits (*ad, bug, čötgör, jetger*) and from the contaminations of death. It is a protection for families by clearing away all obscurations and impurities, and problems and obstacles caused by gossips, and curses. For health in the family. Also recited for the future merits of the deceased. For the fulfillment of one's aims and work”. In several temples it is also found under the name *Öngörsön xünī xoitīn Lüjīn*, Tib. *lus sbyin*, 'Body offering ritual for the future (rebirth) of the deceased'. This is recited „for the deceased”.
- There are also rites helping **detachment from the living ones**, helping **detachment from material objects and this life**, for example as described by Humphrey⁴². However, there seem not to be any special text for this.
 - A connected ritual type is the *Sür / Casür / Sür tawiulax* (Tib. *gsur / tsha gsur*; long title: Tib. *tsha gsur gtong tshul bzhugs so*), 'Burnt offering' / long title: 'the method of performing burnt offering', a remedy including the burning of tsampa (barley flour) and sacred substances with a meditation on Avalokiteśvara to comfort the evil spirits by its good smell. It is performed for the deceased and those in the intermediate state, who are believed to feed upon smell. If performed regularly it clears away all obstacles. This text is read during the nights by the so called night guard lama on duty. The text should be recited within 49 days after the death. A name variation is *Janraisegīn sūr*, Tib. *spyān ras gzigs(gyi) gsur*, 'Burnt offering performed to Avalokiteśvara'.
 - There are also various **short prayers recommended as after-death recitations** to enhance the chances of a better rebirth:
 - *Bard soldiw / Bardo soldiw* (Tib. *bar do'i gsol 'debs* / full title: Tib. *bar do'i phrang sgrol gyi gsol 'debs 'jigs sgrol gyi dpa'po*, 'Prayer of the intermediate

⁴² Humphrey, Caroline: *Rituals of Death*.

state’, ‘Prayer saving from the perilous journey of the intermediate state, hero saving from fears’) written by Lobzang Chokyi Gyeltsen (Luwsan Čoiji Jaltsen in Mongolian pronunciation, Tib. Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan), the 4th (1st to be given the title) Panchen Lama. The text is recommended „for the deceased ones, to attain a new rebirth soon and to suffer less in the intermediate state”.

- ***Bardīn yerōl / Bardo molom*** (Tib. *bar do smon lam*), ‘Prayer of the intermediate state’. The text is recommended „for the deceased, to attain a new rebirth soon and to suffer less in the intermediate state”.
- ***Lagwī molom / Lxagwī molom*** (Tib. *lhag pa’i smon lam*), ‘Superior prayer’, a prayer for rebirth in Sukhāvati, the pure land of Buddha **Amitābha**. (Already mentioned above among the texts urging the deceased to be reborn in a special buddha-field).
- ***Pūljīn* or *Diwājīngīn yerōl / Diwājīn molom*** (Tib. *phul byung* (beginning of the text), Tib. *bde ba can gyi smon lam*, full title: Tib. *bde ba can du skye ba’i smon lam*), ‘Accomplished / Excelled’ / ‘Prayer for being reborn in **Sukhāvati**, the Blissful Realm (the pure land of **Amitābha** Buddha)’, one of the Six Prayers. (Already mentioned above among the texts urging the deceased to be reborn in a special buddha-field).
- Apart from *Pūljīn* or *Diwājīngīn yerōl*, any other of the ***Jurgān yerōl*** (Tib. *smo lam drug*), ‘The Six Prayers’ texts, or usually these six texts collectively. The other five prayers known under this collective name are the following:
 - › ***Dagī jančiw* or *Bod’satwagīn yerōl*** (*bdag gis byang chub* (‘Shall I attain enlightenment...’, beginning of the text), *spyod ’jug smon lam*), ‘the Prayer of entering to the bodhisattva’s way’, a prayer on Bodhicharyā Avatāra by Śāntideva.
 - › ***Sanjīd molom* or *Yerōlīn xan*** (Tib. *’phags pa*) *bzang spyod smon lam* (*gyi rgyal po*), S. Bhadracharyāpranidhā / Bhadracharyā-pranidhānarāja sūtra), ‘The (noble) (king of prayers), prayer of good actions / excellent deeds’, known alternatively by two names in Mongolian as ‘Prayer of good actions’ (*Sanjīd molom* in distorted Tibetan) or ‘King of prayers’ (*Yerōlīn xan* as translated to Mongolian).
 - › ***Sanje gūnla / Sanjā gūnla*** (Tib. *sangs rgyas kun la* (‘To all Buddhas ...’, beginning of the text (in fact, its second line)) or ***Maidarīn yerōl / Jambīn yerōl*** (Tib. *byams pa’i smon lam* (as given in the title), ‘Prayer to Maitreya’, Tib. *’phags pa byams pa’i smon lam gyi rgyal po*, ‘The noble king of prayers to Maitreya’). Known in Mongolian by the distorted Tibetan form of the beginning of the text as *Sanje gūnla* or by its distorted Tibetan title as *Jambīn yerōl*, as well as in Mongolian translation of this later as *Maidarīn yerōl*.
 - › ***Gewān di / Gawān di* or *Sandūin molom*** (Tib. *dge ba ’di* (‘this virtue’, beginning of the text), Tib. *gsang ’dus smon lam*), ‘Guhyasamāja prayer’ composed by Tsongkhapa.

- › **Čogjü jalwa / jalba** (named after the beginning of the text, Tib. *phyogs bcu* ('i) *rgyal ba*, the full title is: Tib. *thog mtha' bar gyi smon lam*), 'The victorious one of the ten directions' or 'Prayer from beginning to end', composed by Tsongkhapa.
- The texts of the **different funeral/burial types** have their own texts (burial into soil, cremation (Tib. *ro sreg*), feeding to the vultures (*Tasīn dūdlaga*, 'summoning the vultures'), or simply 'leaving or losing the body' or abandonment of the body, disposal in water (very rare), and the also rare mummification for high lamas). These have not yet been covered by my preliminary researches, further research is required on the texts used in Mongolia for these purposes.
- The recitation of many other, rather **general texts** are also often recommended in case of death, mainly the followings:
 - **Manal**, Tib. *smān bla*, 'Medicine Buddha' / 'the Medicine Buddha [sūtra]'. It is recited „to promote health, and to remove illnesses”.
 - **Ĵadamba**, Tib. *brgyad stong pa / brgyad stong pa'i gzungs*, Part of the *Sundui* collection. ' (Dhāraṇī of the) Eight thousand verses (of Prajñāpāramitā)'. It is chanted „for virtue in the next rebirths, for attaining our aims, for spreading virtues and good fortune, and to promote intelligence and wisdom”.
 - **Sanduīn jūd**, Tib. *gsang 'dus rgyud*, Guhyasamāja tantra
 - **Dorj jodow / Dorj jodow**, Tib. *rdo rje gcod pa / Tib. 'phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa rdo rje gcod pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*, Ārya badzra tsatshe da ka pradznyā pa ra mi ta nā ma ma hā yā na sū tra, by Mi pham zla ba, 'Diamond(-cutter) sūtra' / 'The mahāyāna sūtra entitled the noble Prajñāpāramitā Diamond(-cutter) sūtra'. Its recitation is recommended „to remove bad dreams and omens, and for gathering virtues for the next rebirths”.
 - **Altangerel**, Tib. *gser 'od*, Ārya su bróa pra bha sad ta, Tib. *'phags pa gser 'od dam pa'i mdo*, title of the short version: Tib. *'phags pa gser 'od dam pa'i bsdus*, 'Golden Light' / 'The noble sacred Golden Light sūtra' / Translation of the title of short version: 'The abridged noble sacred Golden Light [sūtra]'. The text is recited „to increase wealth of the individuals or families, to secure prosperity and to gather merits, and also as a protection against sudden dangers”.
 - **Ganjūr**, Tib. *bka' 'gyur leygen*, Kanjur (The collected Words of Buddha). It is recited “to gather virtues in the present life and for better later rebirths”.

Additional titles I found reference as being recommended as after-death recitations:

- **Mānīn yerōl / Mān' yerōl**, Tib. *ma ṇi smon lam*, 'Mañi prayer'. The text is recommended „for the deceased ones to gather virtues. The text should be recited within 49 days after the death in order to ensure that the deceased could gain a better rebirth”.
- **Owō / Joriulax / Joriulga**, Tib. *bsngo ba*, 'Dedication (of merit), turning over (of one's merit to all beings), transfer (merit)'. The recitation of the text is recommended

“for the deceased, but it is also performed in order to help everyone to reach enlightenment and to ensure that, till the time they attain it, they do not live in want”. This is recited at for example, all the *Oroin yerōl* ceremonies (Tib. *smon lam*, ‘Evening Prayer’), and the fifteen day’s *Oroin yerōl*, *Ix yerōl* (Tib. *smon lam chen po*, ‘Great Prayer’) or *Čoinpürel molom yerōl* (Tib. *chos ‘phrul smon lam*, ‘Prayers of miracle showing’) ceremonies of *Cagān sar*, the Lunar New Year (on the 1–15th of the first spring month) commemorating Buddha’s defeat of the six masters, holders of heretical doctrines (*tersūd*, Tib. *log par lta ba*), which he succeeded by mysterious methods of manifesting miracles for fifteen days (this is called *Čoinpürel jon ā*, Tib. *chos ‘phrul bco lnga*, ‘15 miracles’) being one of the so called ‘great festival days of the Buddha’ (*Burxan bagšīn ix düicen ödrūd*). During its recitation one of the lamas reads out loudly the names of the day’s donators (*ĵandag*, Tib. *sbyin bdag*, or in Mongolian translation *öglögīn ejen*), or those who have paid donations for this text (*nom bičūlex*) and the names (and number of their family members) of those deceased whose names were made listed through their relatives’ donations.

- **Owō mān**, Tib. *bsngo ba maṇi*, ‘Maṇi and dedication’. The text is recited “for the deceased ones”.
- **Tarwačimbo / Tarwačembo / Tarawčimbo**, Tib. *thar pa chen po*, ‘Sūtra of the Great Liberation’. The recitation of the text is recommended as it „shows the way to become a buddha and to get rescued from lower rebirth and to clear away stains and sins”.
- **Dagāš**, Tib. ‘*da’ka ye shes / ‘phags pa ‘da’ka ye shes kyi mdo*, Ārya ta dznyā na nā ma mahā ya na sū tra, Tib. ‘*phags pa ‘da’ka ye shes zhes bya ba theg pa chen po’i mdo*, Part of the *Sundui* collection, ‘Sūtra on the wisdom of the moment of death’ / ‘The noble mahāyāna sūtra entitled the wisdom of the moment of death’. No data is available on what are the indications of requesting this text, but as its content is a short teaching by Buddha on what should be kept in mind at the moment of dying, its is often recited as an after-death text without doubt.

In several temples I found on the list of requestable texts the general title ‘reciting for future rebirths’, which is not a text title, but most probably means the recitation or performing of the adequate texts and rituals in general:

- **Khünt xoid mör ailtgax**, ‘Reciting texts for one’s future rebirths’. The recitation of the text is recommended „for the deceased to ensure him or her to be reborn in a good life form”. The same as **Khoidox dātgax jan üil**, ‘ensuring one’s better future (life)’

Texts for the Protection of the Bereaved

These texts are specially for the protection of the relatives or friends, the bereaved with the aim of defending them from risk/misfortunes caused by his or her death.⁴³ These misfortunes can come from two sources: from the evil spirits that caused the death of the deceased and may there be still present endangering the relatives; and also there is the assumption that the ‘soul’ (according to Buddhist teachings, the term ‘consciousness’ should rather be used here) of the deceased might not find his way to next rebirth, and in this case it should be prevented from causing any trouble in future to the living ones, this being solved by guiding him or her.

All titles here were taken from the lists of requestable recitations of present-day Mongolian temples, which means they are part of the current practice in them, or in any of them. Several of these are folk religion texts, and their involvement and exact use in the monastic environment requires further study. The following texts are used in Mongolian practice:

- Texts for **separating the living ones from the dead ones**. The evil spirits that caused the death are believed to be still dangerous for the bereaved as they may take more lives if are not prevented from doing this. A kind of prevention is to separate the living ones (relatives of the dead) from the dead ones – in this way the evil spirits would not find new subjects among the ones left here. [From the Buddhist point of view separating the dead from the living is important as a means of helping detachment from the living ones and as such, from this life he/she has to leave now]. Such text is the text entitled *Gar salgax / Gar salgax jasal*, ‘(Remedy) separating hands’. Its recitation is recommended „if one ‘seats on the same seat’ as the deceased (*nas baragčtai xamt neg sūdald sūxad*), i.e. if one was born in the same year of the 12 year cycle as the deceased. The requester must come with a drawing of black and white hands”.
- Special rites are performed for example for **those relatives born in the same year** of the 12 year cycle than the deceased **or with the same astrological constellations (*sūdal*)** as they are believed to be at extreme risk due to their ‘similarity’ to the dead person. This ritual is called *Sūdal salgax*, ‘Separating the seats’. The recitation of the text is recommended „if one ‘seats on the same seat’ as the deceased (*nas baragčtai xamt neg sūdald sūxad*), i.e. if one was born in the same year of the 12 year cycle or rather under the same astrological constellations as the deceased”.

⁴³ On this topic with a more precise list of these text types and their titles an article of mine is under publication in Hungarian in the volume published for the 75th birthday of Alice Sárközi (Majer, Zsuzsa: Néhány adat és egy rövid szöveg két változata a haláleset után a hozzátartozók védelmét szolgáló mongol buddhista szertartásokhoz. In: *A Tan örökké ragyogjon! Tanulmányok Sárközi Alice tiszteletére*. Ed. Szilágyi Zsolt. L’Harmattan, Budapest 2018, pp. 69–95 [Some Data on Mongolian Buddhist After-Death Rituals for the Protection of the Bereaved and Two Variations of a Short Text. In: *May the Dharma flourish forever! Essays in honour of Alice Sárközi*].

- Texts **averting the evil spirits** and preventing them from causing further misfortunes/sickness/death to relatives or loved ones of the deceased are also widely used. For example the *Lüd* (Tib. *glud*), ‘**Ransom ritual**’ / ‘the ritual of substitute effigy for a person’ whereas the **substitute effigy** is destroyed. The recitation of the text is recommended „for the deceased and their family and relatives. Also to ask protection from the wrathful deities. Offering an effigy as a ransom to malevolent spirits”. Another name for it in other cases is *Amīn jolig* (*gargax / gargal*), ‘(Performing) the exorcism ritual of the effigy of devil or enemy’ (substitution of the effigy for the sick person and ransoming his soul from death). Its recitation is recommended „to get saved from illnesses and sufferings. To ensure safety in the intermediate state (between death and rebirth) and ensure quick rebirth”.
- There are also **general texts** recommended for the bereaved in case of death of a relative as remedies. Among them we usually meet the followings:
 - *Čoijō dügjū*, Tib. *chos rgyal (gyi) drug bcu*, ‘Sixty sacrificial cake offerings to Yama’. The recitation of the text is recommended “to clear away obstacles and to be saved from suffering”.
 - *Sundui*, Tib. *gzungs bsdus*, ‘Collection of recitations’. The recitation of the text is recommended as a „remedy for different purposes, such as to cure illnesses, to clear away bad dreams and suspicions”.
 - *Barčad lamsel*, Tib. *bar chad lam sel / bar gcod thams cad sel ba’i gzungs*, long title: *gsol ‘debs bar chad lam sel*, Part of the *Sundui* collection. ‘(Dhāraṇī of the) Lamp clearing obstacles [of the Path] away’ / (Dhāraṇī of the) Lamp dispelling the darkness and illuminating the path’, ‘Prayer entitled the lamp clearing obstacles away’. The text is chanted „to clear away obstructions, troubles and difficulties that hinder the path to enlightenment”.
 - *Naiman gegēn* (*8 gegēn*) or *Nanjīd*, Tib. *snang brgyad / ‘phags pa gnas sa snang brgyad zhes bya ba’i theg pa chen po’i mdo (bsdus pa)*, Ārya ba ra yang gyang rta, ‘Eight brightnesses / illuminations’. ‘(the shortened version of) the mahāyāna sūtra entitled the eight brightnesses of the noble sacred place’.
 - *Ganjūr*, Tib. *bka’ gyur*, Kanjur. The text is recited „to gather virtues in the present life and for better later rebirths”.

The texts are also of different length, including short essential prayers (*soldew*, Tib. *gsol ‘debs, yeröl*, Tib. *smon lam*) and longer ceremonial texts (for example *čoga*, Tib. *cho ga*). Some of them exists in different variations and in variations of different length. Basically all Buddhist texts are applicable in case of a death event, as all are performed for the well-being of all living creatures.

In the above only a preliminary typology of the text types and their aims could be given this time. A more thorough study of these texts, their aims and types is still ahead, which I plan to complete in the coming years with fieldworks in Mongolian monasteries for data on the current practice.

After-Death Texts in the Regular Ceremonial System of Mongolian Temples

Several texts appear in the regular or fixed ceremonial system of the individual Mongolian temples as daily, weekly or monthly rituals.⁴⁴ This fixed ceremonial system is different in every temple. To have any connected ceremony on the fixed schedule means that on these occasions the bereaved can request the recitation of the given text for their deceased ones (not only in case of recent death, but practically anytime for any of your deceased ones), which is then performed for them in masses in the temple. The following rituals performed for the deceased were found in the regular system of Mongolian temples:

- *Awidān čogo* or *Diwājīngīn čogo* (Tib. *'od dpag med kyi cho ga / bde ba can gyi cho ga*), 'Ritual of Amitābha, the Buddha of Infinite Light' / 'Ceremony of the Sukhāvati paradise'. For example in Daščoilin monastery, but also in several other temples it is held in once a month.
- *Lxog(o)toi gūnreg / Gūnregīn lxogo* (Tib. *lho sgo kun rig*), 'The south gate of Sarvavid(yā) Vairocana'. In several temples it is held weekly. In many bigger Mongolian monasteries it is held weekly, as for example in Gandan main monastery on every Saturday, and in Daščoilin monastery on every Sunday.
- *Oroin yerōl* (Tib. *smon lam*), 'Prayer', 'Evening prayer' performed with the aim of promoting better rebirth for the deceased ones. During this ritual, for example all of the Six Prayers are chanted. It is also held weekly in several monasteries, for example on every Saturday for example in Daščoilin monastery. In Gandan it is held regularly at the request of individuals. The ritual is performed with the aim of promoting better rebirth for the deceased ones, and also gathering virtues by this way.
- *Šambalīn čogo* (Tib. *sham bha la'i cho ga*), 'Ritual of Shambhala'. According to its recommendations, this ritual is held for the deceased and for merits in the future rebirths. This ceremony was actually found to be held regularly in only two Ulānbātar temples. One of them is Dečingalaw dacan / Dūinxor dacan (Tib. *bde chen bskal pa, dus 'khor grwa tshang, Ix amgalant cag* in Mongolian translation, 'Fortunate Aeon / Kālacakra monastic school') of Gandan monastery, where it is held on the 15th of the first autumn month annually. In the other temple it is held, which is Lamrim dacan / Ĵančub lamrim dacan (Tib. *byang chub*) lam rim grwa tshang, 'Monastic school of the Gradual Path (to the enlightenment)', Lamrim monastic school) situated on Janabajar Street, which leads to Gandan, on the right side, it is held similarly annually although there is no fixed date for it.

⁴⁴ Data from the ceremonial system of Mongolian monasteries is available to me from my previous field-works on the revival and ceremonies of Mongolian Buddhism for my PhD dissertation (Majer, Zsuzsa: *A Comparative Study*).

Several short texts recommended for the deceased may also appear of Mongolian temples as part of the everyday reading called *Cogč̄in* (Tib. *tshogs chen*, ‘general assembly / great assembly’), which is a set of different shorter and longer texts recited in a given monastery every day in the given order.⁴⁵ In Daščoilin monastery, this list consists of 52 texts being of different length from some line stanzas to lengthy ones, while in Gandan it is made up of 35 texts, and in smaller temples around 15–20 titles. The variety of texts included on a given individual temple’s list of everyday chanting (*gorim*, Tib. *go rim*, ‘sequence, order’, meaning the set of these texts), apart from the tradition followed, mostly depends on the temple’s size, that is, the number of its lamas, meaning a restricted number of texts and therefore shorter everyday ceremonies for temples with extremely few lamas. In general, every temple has on its list the same basic texts (sometimes with slight variations). The texts chanted mainly are basic Tibetan prayers and therefore the *gorim* of Mongolian temples do not differ considerably from readings in Tibetan monasteries, though reforms in Mongolian chanting introduced by Öndör Gegēn Janabajar (1635–1723), the 1st *jewcündamba xutagt*, are mirrored in the everyday chantings of the present Mongolian monasteries as well, both in the melodies being different from the Tibetan melodies, both in that several of the prayers composed by him or other Mongolian lamas are included.

Lagwī molom (Tib. *lhag pa’i smon lam / lhag pa’i smon lam them skas (ma)*, ‘Superior prayer’ / ‘Superior prayer of steps’), a prayer for rebirth in Sukhāvātī is chanted daily in many Mongolian monasteries. It is included in the daily chantings in Gandan and its *dacans* (Tib. *grwa tshang*, monastic college); in Daščoilin monastery; as well as in many of the smaller monasteries and temples of Mongolia, as many tend to follow the readings of these. Other related texts included in the daily chantings of Mongolian monasteries are two of the Six Prayers, *Sanjīd molom* or *Yerōlīn xan* and *Sanje gūnla* or *Maidarīn yerōl / Jambīn yerōl*. The Gandan monastery daily readings also include *Čogjū jalwa* of the Six texts.

Apart from the ceremonies in the regular schedule, many of the texts appear on the list of the requestable texts, as actually almost all the text titles I deal with in this article were collected from these lists.

The Schedule of Tasks / Rituals to be Performed Upon Someone’s Death and the Usage of the Individual Texts in It

As the basis of studying the exact usage of the individual texts (exact place and time where and when to be performed) the schedule of all measures taken, tasks and rituals to be performed upon someone’s death in the Buddhist practice of Mongolia is

⁴⁵ Data on the daily chanting texts of Ulānbātar monasteries was collected for my PhD dissertation (Majer, Zsuzsa: *A Comparative Study*).

important. Connected topics, such as Mongolian mourning traditions, taboos related to death, traditional Mongolian burial types, and other details of Mongolian traditions serve as a background and context to the special Buddhist rites. In this preliminary study it is only possible to give a short and undetailed sketch the schedule, which is as follows:

Before death:

- tasks and rites performed when death approaches (during dying)

Immediately after death:

- the first rites with the dead body performed right after the death or as soon as possible in the home of the deceased
- the opening of the Golden Vessel or the investigation of the death (*Altan saw nēx* or *Šinjē nēx Altan saw (nēx)*, Tib. *gser gyi sgrom bu* ('bye), '(Opening) the golden vessel') depending on which the measures to be taken, recitations to be performed and the instructions for the way, mode, time and direction of the funeral are given
- rites and readings performed during the 49 days following death at the home or in the monastery
- greater ceremonies performed in every 7 days after death

Disposal of the body:

- requesting land (*gajar guix*) which is when the exact place of installation is chosen;
- taking the chosen funerary place (*gajar awax*)
- the preparation of the corpse for funeral (for example *gar xürgex*, the first touching of the body)
- the carrying out of the corpse
- the funeral itself (texts of the different burial types)

After the funeral/disposal:

- the feast after the funeral (*gar cailax*, 'whiten the hands')

Remembering the deceased:

- commemoration of the dead, etc.

Details of the practice of performing the individual rituals in the schedule of after-death rites the specifications or instructions for performing the given rites and details of when the individual texts are used exactly after death (in the temple, at the home, before and during/after the funeral) is to be studied.

Further Connected Research Plans - Still Unstudied Issues and Questions

Further data on certain questions still to be studied can only be gained on the field. I plan to carry out two shorter fieldworks in Mongolian monasteries studying their

related practices and texts used, ceremonies and practice of readings upon individual request following death, making consultations with specialized astrologer lamas who do the calculations after someone's death and other specialist lamas, observing ceremonies and related readings and rituals, as well as studying and analysing the related ritual texts. The ritual practice will be studied in the context of the modern Mongolian circumstances, dealing with the question of how these death rituals were revived in Mongolia after 1989 in the new democratic socio-political situation. The possible differences between the practices of different traditions / monasteries / lamas and the reasons for these differences (Yellow Sect / Red Sect temples, specialized monasteries, or deriving from different traditions followed / different main deities worshipped, etc.), as well as the differences from the Tibetan Buddhist after-death rites will be analysed, too. Further details are needed to gain a much complex view of how this fits into the current everyday practices in modern Mongolian temples (fixed ceremonial schedule and chantings on request). The main emphasis during the planned fieldworks will be not on the personal participation at rites connected to someone's death, but on details of the text usage (and its differences between the different traditions and temples), details of the practice of performing the individual rituals in the schedule of after-death rites, specifications or instructions for performing the given rites and details of when the individual texts are used exactly after death, text typology and text analysis, mainly based on information gained in interviews with the specialist lamas.⁴⁶

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⁴⁶ The current article was written in 2015. Afterwards, in 2016 and 2017 I had the possibility for fieldwork and research on the topic, therefore most of the research planned here had already been executed by the publication of this volume. However, the outcomes could not be incorporated in this article, but are published in my other, new articles.

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