

On After-Death Ritual Texts Mentioned by Travellers (A. M. Pozdneev and Bálint Gábor of Szentkatolna)

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Summary: In the present article I analyse after-death ritual texts mentioned by A. M. Pozdneev and Bálint Gábor of Szentkatolna, both from the 19th century, describing two different geographical areas of the Mongols: where Bálint Gábor is concerned, Khalkha and Kalmyk, and where Pozdneev is concerned, Khalkha areas. The article aims at identifying the texts mentioned by the above travellers, comment on their role among the after-death rituals according to the special aims of the texts and related rituals, place them into the time frame of after-death rituals (before death, immediately after death, disposal of the body, after the funeral/disposal, remembering the deceased), and into the twofold aims of the death rituals of the Tibetan tradition (helping the deceased to find the best possible rebirth, protecting the bereaved from potential danger caused by the death event) The article also gives parallels from present-day practice. The other aim is to show an example of how descriptions of travellers can be used for research purposes following one's own interest.

Introduction

In addition to the data found in early historical sources, even early travellers to Mongolia, for example Plano Carpini, Willelmus Rubruk (both of them middle of the 13th century) and Marco Polo (end of 13th century) mentioned the death-related customs of the Mongols. However, these customs relate to the early traditions and mostly describe some details of the mourning traditions, the burials themselves, and several connected rites such as cleansing rituals by fire and water after the funerals, or taboos related to death and dying. These customs, mirroring mainly the soul beliefs of the Mongols, are well documented. Later the co-existence of Folk

religion and Buddhism was mirrored in the burial customs. Most travelers of the 18–20th centuries, in the descriptions or diaries I had a chance to read, only mention the most ‘strange’ customs of open-air disposal of the bodies and open-air disposal cemeteries near the monasteries, while even the few available photographs concentrate on this ‘strange’ custom.

However, describing or even mentioning the names of different kinds of Buddhist death rituals, which are in fact abundant in number, occurred only later on the part of researchers with a proper background knowledge for doing this. Among the early descriptions, Pallas described the burial customs of the Mongols (Pallas 1801, pp. 249–306), giving the translations of two texts, one of them being the *Khal*. *Altan saw* burial manual (which in itself includes names of other rituals recommended for the dead or their bereaved). Also among the pictures in his book we find three related to the burial customs showing cremation of a high-ranked monk (Pallas 1801, XVII., XVIII., XIX.), and one showing a funeral ritual at a *cac* [T. *tsha tsha*, originally meaning miniature conical figures molded of clay and used as offerings, also the name for Kalmuks burial monuments of the same shape] (Pallas 1801, XVI.).

In the present article I analyse texts mentioned much later by A. M. Pozdnev and Bálint Gábor of Szentkatolna, both from the 19th century. Bálint Gábor’s materials are from the middle of the century, and Pozdnev’s from the end of century, describing two different areas inhabited by the Mongols: in the case of Bálint Gábor, Khalkha and Kalmyk, and in the case of Pozdnev, Khalkha areas. There exist other records of after-death and funeral rites among the Mongols, or of different Mongolian ethnic groups, but for this present article these two travellers’ descriptions were chosen. The article aims to identify the texts mentioned by the above travellers, comment on their role in the after-death rituals which follow the special aims of the texts and related rituals, place them into the time frame of after-death rituals (before death, immediately after death, disposal of the body, after the funeral/disposal, remembering the deceased), and into the twofold aims of the death rituals of the Tibetan tradition. These aims are to help the deceased to find the best possible rebirth, and protect the bereaved from potential danger caused by the death event. I also give parallels from present-day practice based on my own recent fieldwork on the same topic. So this article is one of my

publications related to the topic of Tibetan after-death rituals as practised in Mongolia, for the study of which I received a three-year postdoctoral fellowship and research grant 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 The other aim of the current article is to show an example of how materials from descriptions of travellers can be used for one’s own research purposes, be it even such a specialized area in the study of Buddhist rituals as after-death rites.

After-death rituals of Mongolian Buddhism, their texts and aims

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 in preparing for funeral, funeral rites, rites after the burial and commemoration of the dead – is called Khal. *buyanii ajil* in Mongolian (‘merit making work’). 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 Khal. *Altan saw* ‘The Golden Vessel’ (T. *gser gyi sgrom bu*), the special burial manual, though only for settling all details of the measures that have to be taken, texts to be recited and all other details of the burial (mode, time, direction, etc.) based upon calculations (Khal. *Altan saw neekh*, T. *gser gyi sgrom bu* ‘bye ‘Opening the golden vessel’ or Khal. *Shinjee neekh* ‘Opening / Analyzing the signs’) from birth and death dates.

Buddhist lamas have a twofold role in relation to any death event. First, they are to help the deceased by helping his consciousness through the difficulties he faces after death through guidance in the intermediate

1) The current article was written in the framework of a research project funded by the Hungarian National Research, Development and Innovation Office (Nemzeti Kutatási, Fejlesztési és Innovációs Hivatal) – NKFIH, with the contract number PD 116108.

state by reciting texts and performing rituals and by cleansing his negative karma through purification rituals, recitations and merit making – thus promoting better rebirth and better future life for him (Khal. *khoidiin buyan* ‘virtue of the future’, that is, ensuring a virtuous future life (Khal. *buyan* is the equivalent of the Tibetan term *dge ba* ‘virtue’). 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 it is still possible to clean and whose rebirth it 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.

The main aims of the recitations and rituals therefore are guiding the consciousness of the deceased in the intermediate state, helping him to attain a new rebirth soon and to suffer less in the intermediate state, helping him to find a better rebirth or even attain liberation from the cycle of existence (samsara), urging him to be reborn in a special buddha-field, helping his detachment from the living 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 ‘souls’ of the deceased from becoming ghosts (Khal. *chötgör*) or souls (Khal. *süns*) not being able to find a rebirth and coming back to haunt, performing rites to comfort the evil spirits, etc. Several of the texts aimed at restoring health and averting death are used also as after-death rituals (for example Khal. *Manal*, T. *sman bla* ceremony of the Medicine Buddha; and the Tantric Khal. *Lüijin*, T. *lus sbyin* ‘body-offering ritual’). Also, the different burial types (Khal. *orshuulga*) have their own texts: burial in soil, cremation, feeding to the vultures or simply ‘leaving or losing the body’ or abandonment of the body, disposal in water (very rare), etc. [also mummification which 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. There are also texts recited in the event 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.

Here I provide only a short summary of these text types as an introduction to the descriptions of Pozdneev and Bálint and the texts mentioned by them. For more details and a list of many other related text titles see an article of mine on the different types of after-death texts as used in today's Mongolian Buddhist practice (Majer 2018a). The same work can be consulted for references to scholarly works and articles on the study of Tibetan funeral rituals, as in the current article I do not have space for detailing the research background of the topic.

Pozdneev, end of the 19th century

It is Pozdneev from whom we have the most detailed and valuable descriptions of monastic life in Mongolia at the end of the 19th century. He gave detailed accounts of different rituals, ceremonial events, as well as life in the monasteries. His descriptions are an invaluable source material even for today's researchers elaborating research on any aspect of Mongolian Buddhist practice. It is no wonder that in the case of after-death rituals, it is in his works that we find the more precise data and the most texts listed and explained.

In one of his books Pozdneev described Mongolian burial customs (Pozdneev 1887, pp. 453–474). In one of his other books, we find frequent mentions of burial grounds around the monasteries (Pozdneev 1971). In his third book he described several after-death rites in detail (Pozdneev 1978, chapter 5, pp. 591–617). Here the titles of 16 related texts or rituals are mentioned – unfortunately some still remain unidentified. In the current article I try to give an analysis of the relevant material from this book, and comment on the texts titles and their descriptions given by him.

The fifth chapter in his book starts with rituals for curing serious illnesses (ibid. pp. 591–594), such as the *joliy yaryaqu* rite² (Written Mongolian *joliy yaryaqu*, Khal. *zoliḡ gargakh*, destroying the substitute for the sick person / 'exorcism ritual of the effigy of devil'), a rite for ransoming the sick person's soul from death. However, the biggest part of the

2) The spelling of the English edition of Pozdneev's book is kept in this article.

chapter is in connection with the death rites (ibid. pp. 594–601, subchapter [Death rites]³).

According to Pozdneev's description: "It is necessary according to Mongolian custom, to provide the soul of the dying person with useful advice for life beyond the grave." He adds: "No one dies without a lama being present... it is his sacred duty to deliver the soul from evil rebirths, and to guide it into the blissful fields of Sukhāvati paradise."⁴ (ibid. p. 594).

Here he mentions the first text, the *Jayuradu-yin sudur*,⁵ saying that "to the dying person they read the jayuradu-yin sudur". He gives parts of the translation of the text (ibid. pp. 595–601) and adds that the text is "Composed by Padmasambhava – contains information about just what the soul will meet and experience after leaving the body." Later he says: "I happened to be present several times in the yurts of dying persons, and listen to the jayuradu-yin sudur", and adds, giving details of the circumstances in which the text is recited, that "[The lama] puts his gusun-tuk⁶ on the bosom of the dying person and begins recitation." The text he mentions and partly translates here, ("then the lama begins approximately the following speech" (ibid. p. 595)), what he calls *jayuradu-yin sudur*, translated into Khalkha would be Khal. *Zuurdiin sudar / yerööl* 'The sūtra of the Intermediate State / Bardo sūtra', is the well known short prayer known today in Mongolia as *Bardiin yerööl / Bardo molom*, T. *bar-do smon-lam* 'Prayer of the intermediate state). This is one of the most frequently chanted of such prayers even today. The text is recommended "for the deceased, to attain a new rebirth soon and to suffer less in the intermediate state". There is another text under a somewhat similar title, *Bard soldiw / Bardo soldiw* (T. *bar do'i gsol 'debs* / full title: T. *bar do'i 'phrang*

3) In the present article I give the subchapter titles of the English edition (not given by Pozdneev in his original work) in square brackets.

4) Khal. *Diwaaĵin*, T. *bde ba can*, the Blissful Realm (the pure land of Amitābha Buddha).

5) For the titles given by Pozdneev, the spelling of the English edition is kept. I give the Khalkha version and the Tibetan form, if known in square brackets in the text or in the quotations from his book.

6) Khal. *güsüntüg*, T. *sku gsung thugs* 'body, speech and mind', sacred objects symbolizing the enlightened body, speech, and mind, usually being a Buddha statue, a sūtra and a stūpa.

sgrol gyi gsol 'debs 'jigs sgrol gyi dpa' po 'Prayer of the intermediate state, 'Prayer saving from the perilous journey of the intermediate state, hero saving from fears') written by Lobzang Chokyi Gyeltsen (Luwsan Choji Jaltzen in Mongolian pronunciation, T. Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan), the 4th (1st to be given the title) Panchen Lama. The text's general recommendations are the same as for the above-mentioned other Bardo prayer "for the deceased ones, to attain a new rebirth soon and to suffer less in the intermediate state". In today's Mongolia, it is much more widely used.

After mentioning the *ḥayuradu-yin sudur*, in his description Pozdneev goes on to (1978, p. 601) say that, besides this, the lama reads the following Tibetan sūtras. About the aim of their recitation, he adds: "these three noms (Khal. *nom* 'book, scripture') consist entirely prayers of penitence, which establish a calmness of spirit". So here we have three more titles needing clarification.

The first of the three is *Maidari-yin dam-bca*,⁷ about which he says (ibid. p. 601): "the story about Maitreya's solemn oath is quoted, viz, not to allow the souls of animate beings to fall into the three ill-starred rebirths." This text, *Maidari-yin dam-bca*, Khal. *Jambiin / Maidariin damjaa*, T. *byams-pa'i dam-bca*, S. *Maitreyapratijñā* is the text on the 'Dedication / oath of Maitreya'. Though we have parallels from today's practice to almost all other texts mentioned by him, no data was acquired on the use of this text in present-day Mongolia during my two pieces of fieldwork on Mongolian Buddhist after-death rites made in 2016 and 2017, which makes its mention by him interesting.

The second of the three texts is *Mingtingiin toytayal*. Pozdneev only lists this title (1978, p. 601), without giving any detail about it or explaining its exact use, and the identification is missing from the English translation, too. *Mingtingiin toytayal*, Khal. *Mintügiin togtool* or *Mintüngiin sün*, T. *mi-'khrugs-pa'i / mi bskyod-pa'i gzungs*, is not a ceremonial text, but simply the 'dhāraṇī of Akśobhya, the Unshakable Buddha', who is one of the five wisdom tathagatās, emanations or representations of the five qualities of the Buddha (T. *sangs rgyas rigs lnga* 'the five buddha families', the term five dhyani buddhas is also used for them in western literature

7) The Tibetan term is correctly *dam bca*, but here the transliteration of the English edition was kept, which gives a Mongolicized version.

only). From today's practice, I only heard about using it after somebody's death, as explained to me by the lamas of the newly established two temples of the Jonangpa sect in Ulaanbaatar (Jonan Dagdan mindollin opened in 2014 and Jonan Dagdanchoipillin opened in 2015), and their Tibetan master residing in the summers in Mongolia.

The third of these three texts, *Gundelegin zarak*, is also only listed by Pozdneev, without details (1978, p. 601). Krueger makes the following guess for identifying this: "T. *kun bde legs* + mong. *jaryu*?" Unfortunately, I can not identify it. I can confirm only the first part, T. *kun bde-legs* 'auspiciousness/happiness to all / everywhere', but have no guess for the term *zarak*.

In the next chapter (Burial rites and decrees concerning this) Pozdneev (1978, pp. 601–615) gives some details of the first duties after someone's death: "when a Mongol dies, everyone leaves the yurt... some of the relatives go to the dzurukhaichi⁸ in the monastery and advise him on the death of the sick person ask him to determine who can prepare the deceased for burial, which khurals⁹ must be held for him, on what day he can be buried, at what hour, and on which side he must be carried out, and finally, how his burial must be performed." (ibid. p. 602). They solve these questions concerning the burial from the evidence of different astrological works, among others, the 29th chapter of the *Vaidurya dkar-po*. These works prescribe the person who must clean the deceased, ..." (ibid. p. 602.). What is mentioned here, is not a ceremonial or ritual text, but the astrological treatise based on the Tibetan system of elemental divination called 'White Vaidūrya', 'White Beryl' by regent Sangye Gyatsho (T. sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, 1653–1705) and the death horoscopes in it. This is similarly used today by astrologer lamas in Mongolia for calculating, based on birth and death dates, the procedures to be taken after someone's death.

Pozdneev then goes on by describing the way in which the body of the dead person is arranged: "The person who cleans the deceased is called buyanči,¹⁰ 'a person who performs a virtuous deed'" (ibid. p. 603). [He]

8) Khal. *zurkhaich* 'astrologer'.

9) Khal. *khural* 'ceremony, ritual'.

10) Khal. *buyanch*.

“washes the body of the deceased, wraps it up in ta-pu, lays it on its right side, puts the right hand of the deceased under his right cheek, and with his fourth finger stops up his right nostril, straightens his right leg, and bends his left one at the knee; the left hand however he stretches out as much as possible, and puts it on the pelvis of the deceased.” Pozdneev adds that this posture is used for all corpses which are not embalmed and are not buried in a sitting posture and says that Shakyamuni died in this position, called in Mongolian *arsalan-u kebtelge* ‘lying like a lion position’. In several cases, actions to correct evil signs are also needed, which are also carried out by the buyanči. “Bad signs are often disclosed at the death of a person, and to suppress them a lama is invited by the buyanči as an advisor and instructor” (ibid. p. 603). As for these bad signs, Pozdneev lists the followings: if someone dies with his mouth open, with his eyes open, squeezes his hands together or dies in the gesture of beckoning someone. These arrangements described by him above are not practiced any more in Mongolia due to the changed funeral methods, which means today being placed in coffins or cremated, for which a different arrangement of the body is needed. The corrections of bad signs mentioned by him, however, are still practiced today.

As Pozdneev describes, only after this can the readings for the deceased be performed: “only when all his [the buyanči’s] duties to the deceased are finished can the reading of noms for the deceased be performed” (ibid. p. 604). “These are not carried out in the yurt where the deceased is, but in a neighbouring one, uninterruptedly by day or night, the lamas are almost always divided into shifts.” He then continues his description mentioning other three text titles: “There are innumerable readings for the deceased, but whenever I happened to see funeral rites I found that the lamas only read the yeröols [Khal. *yerööl*, T. *smon lam* ‘prayer, aspirational prayer’] known as Öljei dabqur and Naiman gegen, and twice I encountered the Sonosuyad yekede tonilyayci neretü yeke kölgen sudur” (ibid. p. 604). The term he uses here, Khal. *yerööl*, T. *smon lam*, means prayer, aspirational prayer, and many repetitions of various short dedication and aspiration prayers are recommended as after-death recitations to enhance the chances of a better rebirth. Today, the most used among them in Mongolia are the six prayers known collectively as Khal. *Zurgaan yerööl* (T. *smon lam drug*) ‘The six prayers’, namely Khal. *Püljin* or *Diwaajingiin yerööl* /

Diwaajin molom (T. *phul byung* (beginning of the text), T. *bde ba can gyi smon lam*, full title: T. *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)'; Khal. *Dagii janchiw* or *Bod'satwagiin yerööl* (T. *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 Bodhicaryāvatāra by Śāntideva; Khal. *Sanjid molom* or *Yerööliin khan* (T. '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' (*Sanjid molom* in distorted Tibetan) or 'King of prayers' (*Yerööliin khan* as translated to Mongolian); Khal. *Sanje gūnla / Sanjaa gūnla* (T. *sangs rgyas kun la* ('To all Buddhas ...,' beginning of the text (in fact, its second line)) or Khal. *Maidariin yerööl / Jambiin yerööl* (T. *byams pa'i smon lam* (as given in the title) 'Prayer to Maitreya', T. '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 *Jambiin yerööl*, as well as in the Mongolian translation of this later form as *Maidariin yerööl*; Khal. *Gewaan di / Gawaan di* or *Sandüin molom* (T. *dge ba 'di* ('this virtue', beginning of the text), T. *gsang 'dus smon lam*), 'Guhyasamāja prayer' composed by Tsongkhapa; and Khal. *Chogjü jalwa / jalba* (named after the beginning of the text, T. *phyogs bcu(i) rgyal ba*, the full title is: T. *thog mtha' bar gyi smon lam*) 'The victorious one of the ten directions' or 'Prayer from beginning to end', composed by Tsongkhapa.

In his description Pozdneev does not mention any of these prayers, but mentions three other titles. The first of these is named by Pozdneev as *Öljei dabqur*, literally meaning 'Double/twofold auspiciousness' (the Tibetan term for Written Mongolian *öljei*, Khal. *ölzii* is T. *bkra-shis* 'auspiciousness, good fortune, blessing). This text must be the same as the widely used Khal. *Dashzewge / Dashzeweg*, T. *bkra shis brtsegs pa* (long title: 'phags pa bkra shis brtsegs pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo) 'Heap of auspiciousness' / 'The mahāyāna sūtra entitled the noble heap of auspiciousness', which is frequently chanted today, as the short descriptions displayed in temples to inform devotees say, "For all types of remedies:

moving to a new house or a new place, starting new work etc.”¹¹ and also after someone’s death, usually for the benefit of the bereaved. It is part of the Khal. *Sundui*, T. *gzungs bsdus* ‘Collection of recitations’.

The second is the text of *Naiman gegen*. This is the well-known *Naiman gegeen* or *Nanjid*, T. *snang brgyad* / long title: *’phags-pa gnas-sa snang brgyad zhes bya-ba’i theg-pa chen-po’i mdo (bsdus-pa)* ‘Eight brightnesses / illuminations’, ‘(the shortened version of) the mahāyāna sūtra entitled the eight brightnesses of the noble sacred place’, a widely used remedy prayer (Khal. *zasliin nom*), recited for example ‘in the event of moving to a new place, starting a new work or setting up a new yurt.’ As seen also from this description, in fact, this text is not in connection with death rites, but even today it is recited also for the bereaved after a death in the family, being among the various, but not specialized texts used for the purpose of protecting the living ones after death or rather ensuring their better future life.

The third *yerööl* text mentioned here by Pozdneev is the so-called *Sonosuyad yekede tonilyayci neretü yeke kölgen sudur* ‘The mahāyāna sūtra entitled The great liberation through hearing’. In my interpretation, this title could stand for the text known as the ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’, the most well-known text for the dead in the West, which is, on the other hand, not a mahāyāna sūtra (the title given by Pozdneev includes zhis, as ‘*yeke kölgen sudur*’). This text is not a prayer (and thus not really a *yerööl* as Pozdneev says, though it has prayers in its text as well) in fact, but a longer text in which directions are given to the dying person or to the consciousness of the dead, traditionally read at the bed of a dying person or beside the dead body.¹² The text is called today in Mongolian *Toidol / Bardo toidol (songgood) / Songgood toidol* or *Songgood tonil-gogch*, T. (*bar-do*) *thos-grol* ‘Text which liberates through hearing (in the

11) With the aim of giving some data on these texts from today’s ceremonial practice, I give a short description of what a certain text is recommended for, as included on the list of the different temples displayed for the information of devotees after each title in this article, where available. This is done with the aim of giving some insight into how the texts are used today in Mongolian temples.

12) Besides the ‘Tibetan Book of the Dead’ as known in the West, there were many texts aimed at leading the consciousness through the intermediate state.

intermediate state)' / 'Liberation through hearing (in the intermediate state)' / 'Text which liberates through hearing (in the intermediate state)'. The recitation of this text, according to the short descriptions used today "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 (Khal. *zawsariin töröl*)". As seen also from this short explanation given for the believers, it is still in use today, though all my informants said it is not recited any more at its full length at the bed of a dying person, nor beside the dead body.

Then Pozdneev (1978, p. 604) mentions the next ritual done: "Besides the lamas that read at the funeral, two more lamas are indispensable. They perform a khural according to the Serdebe chakjai outside the yurt, and from time to time go around the yurt with a censer (boipur)¹³." The ritual can not be identified by the title Pozdneev gives: we find the following guess in the English translation by Krueger: "T. *gzer bde ba'i ph'yag-rgya?*" of which only T. *phyag-rgya* 'seal, mudra, hand gesture' sounds like a possibly correct Tibetan transliteration. Unfortunately I don't have a clue for the other part of the term, which remains unidentified. Anyway, from Pozdneev's description it is clear that this must be a rite for the purification of the yurt or home of the deceased, which is done even today using different *san* (T. *bsangs*) or smoke-offering texts, usually right after the burial, as soon as the relatives get home, and involves the circling of the yurt by a censer. Pozdneev (1978, pp. 604–605) writes the same about the purpose of this rite: "The purpose of all these readings and rites is to drive evil spirits away from both the corpse and his relatives in the khoton ['settlement']. Such readings are usually performed right up to when the deceased is removed from his home, and his burial".

Pozdneev then gives a short passage from the astrological work on instructions on the hour the deceased must be carried out, depending on his death hour (ibid. pp. 605–606).

In the next chapter he gives descriptions of burials (Ways of burial, burial places, burial of princes and rich Mongols) saying that "Lamas do not point out the day of burial, but the hour when the deceased must be

13) Khal. *boipur*.

carried out of the house, on which side he must be carried, and how he must be buried.” (Pozdneev 1978, pp. 604–612). On the ways of burying a dead person he gives an account of the burial according to the elements (earth, water, fire, air and wood) and recounts also that the direction in which the deceased must be carried out of his house, the direction his head must be facing at the burial place, and how the burial is to be performed are all determined by the instructions in the astrological books. Then follows a more detailed description of different burial types according to the elements, and an account of which type is the best, middling and worst way of burial for the deceased (ibid. pp. 606–609). He then also describes how “the modern Mongols have considerably simplified funeral rites” (ibid. p. 610), first mentioning burials according to the fire element: “very few are burned, corpses of the poor are never burned”, then describing burial into earth: “graves are not dug at all deep: only enough to place the corpse in and to cover it with a layer of dirt from above”, then saying: “in all other burial modes they simply carry the deceased into the steppe and put them in an open area”, then mentioning how burials according to the water element are executed: “they pour out water at the burial place of those who must be buried in water” and giving details of when somebody is buried according to the wood element: “those who are to be delivered unto wood are also laid in the steppe, simply having been placed on a plank beforehand”, and accounting this about funerals according to the air element: “those to be buried in the air are simply carried out and laid in the steppe”. These simplified ways of burials according to the elements can be seen today, in even more modernized versions, where for example cremation became widespread, but even in this case urns for example can be made of different materials according to the elements, or the urn can be buried by a tree (wood element), or the body be wrapped in silken cloth coloured according to the element needed.

Afterwards Pozdneev (1978, pp. 610–612) describes the custom of putting up 4 or 5 poles with dartsoks¹⁴ with manis¹⁵ sketched on them on the 4 sides of the grave or the corpse, and additional details of the burials of ‘Better-off Mongols’: “The burial of princes and rich Mongols [...] is

14) Khal. *dartsag*, T. *dar lcog* ‘flagstaff, prayer flag’.

15) Khal. *maan*, T. *ma ŋi* ‘mantra’.

marked by greater luxury.” As he describes, for the funeral many lamas gather for days, and the bodies of these rich Mongols “are not left on the open steppe, but small pyramids of a special kind are always built from raw brick called *bunkhans*.”¹⁶ “The bodies of princes are for the most part buried in a sitting posture, and their arms and legs are put together in prayer posture.” “Still more often the bodies of princes are given to be burned”.

Afterwards, Pozdneev (1978, pp. 612–613) speaks about other rites for purification: “When the funeral rites for the corpse of a Mongol have been concluded, the lamas always return to his yurt and there perform a *khural* of purification, the purpose of which is to guard the living from misfortunes which may have been cast about by the spirit of the deceased. The prayer read at this ceremony is performed in the presence of all who lived in the same *khoton* as the deceased.” Here Pozdneev (*ibid.* pp. 613–614) gives the translation of a text for purification, but without its title being given, saying that “this prayer which purifies and preserves one against the deceased is always read after every burial.” However, the text itself says (*ibid.* p. 613) that it is against misfortunes, obstacles, demons, illnesses, and the misfortunes brought by *ada*’s,¹⁷ *albin*’s¹⁸ and *čidkür*’s,¹⁹ so it is meant rather for protection against the benevolent spirits than against the deceased himself. He does not give the title for this ritual he mentions, but still we can conclude it is one of the many kinds of ritual aimed at the protection of the bereaved, the relatives (Khal. *zasliin zan üil* ‘protective rituals’, *zasliin nom* ‘protective texts’). The aim of these is to protect the relatives threatened after a death in the family from dangers (Khal. *khlorol* ‘danger, harm, damage’), and to clear away the danger of death (Khal. *ükheeriin buzar* ‘contamination / dirt of death’), which is believed to be greater after a death in the family. These dangers are believed to be twofold and this explains Pozdneev’s description. On one hand, they could be caused by the benevolent spirits (Khal. *bug, chötgör*) that caused the death of the deceased. They may still be nearby, thus endangering the relatives as well. In this case they should be removed, averted or stopped

16) Khal. *bunkhan*.

17) Khal. *ad* ‘benevolent spirit’.

18) Khal. *albin* ‘benevolent spirit, goblin’.

19) Khal. *chötgör* ‘benevolent spirit, demon’.

in order not to harm the living ones. The other reason is that the soul, or using the Buddhist term, the consciousness of the deceased itself, in the event that it has not found its way to its new rebirth, may turn into a benevolent being (Khal. *bug, chötgör*) and thus may still be around the relatives, putting them into danger (Khal. *khorkh* ‘harm’). In this case measures have to be taken so that it does not harm relatives – this is helped by the different rituals and readings aimed at guiding his consciousness away. In the meantime, there are also those rites which aim at protecting the bereaved from such dangers. Several of such *zasal* rituals involve the offering of a *balin* (T. *gtor ma*) ritual cake, or other offerings. These protective rituals are closely connected to the astrological calculations, based upon which the lamas calculate what problems are present in the given case, what rituals are needed to solve them, or which relative is in potential danger and exactly which ceremony should be performed to avoid it. Though here Pozdneev does not give any ceremonial name or title, in what follows he mentions several of these kinds of protective rituals.

Then Pozdneev (1978, p. 614.) continues by saying that “there are cases when the deceased dies with clear unlucky signs for the living” and quotes parts from the astrological work on how it is determined who is threatened by that misfortune, which is needed so as to take due measures against the threat in time.

In the next subchapter (Rites after the burial and commemoration of the dead) he first describes in detail two rites which are performed for the protection of the bereaved (Pozdneev 1978, pp. 615–617).

About the first one, which he says is done “in order to ward off misfortunes from living persons who are threatened by danger from a dead person on account of having the same birth year as the deceased” he says: “a special ceremony is performed, usually on the second or third day after the funeral. [...] the lamas make two small figures of dough, both depicting persons, and color one of them white, the other black. Then they spread out two sheepskins in the middle of the yurt, one of them white and the other black, and on the white sheepskin they put the white person, and on the black, the black one. Again they add to each of these figures small stones, seven white and seven black” (ibid. p. 615). Then he mentions the text read during this ritual, calling it *tačiyal-un qariyulya* (ibid. p. 616), and adds that “it ends by pronouncing the *jirüken-ü tarni* of the seven

burkhans, when uttering each *dhāraṇī*²⁰ they strike the white person with a small white stone, and the black person with a black one, and after that everything is thrown out onto the steppe.” The title of this ritual, if translated, would be Khal. *Tachaaliin khariulga* in Khalkha, meaning ‘Stopping or preventing grasping’, literally ‘To turn back/cut off grasping’. We do not find it under the same title today, but the second part of the term, *khariulga* equals the Tibetan term, T. *bzlog* ‘to reverse, ward off, cast back, turn away, drive out, exorcize’, or T. *bzlog bsgyur*, exorcism, rite of exorcism, and we can meet many kinds of texts of this type today. There are also a wide variety of texts for separating the living ones from the dead ones, as the evil spirits that caused a death are believed to be still dangerous for the bereaved: they may take more lives if they are not prevented from doing this. Therefore one form 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. For example, special protection is needed for those relatives born in the same year of the 12-year cycle as the deceased or with the same astrological constellations (Khal. *suudal*) as they are believed to be at extreme risk due to their ‘similarity’ to the dead person. In today’s practice²¹ a similar ritual, with the same content and accessories used as described by Pozdneev, is called *Gar salgakh / Gar salgakh zasal*, T. (*gson gshin*) *lag ‘brel* ‘(Remedy) separating hands (of the living and the dead)’. Its recitation is recommended „if one ‘sits on the same seat’ as the deceased (Khal. *nas baragchtai khamt neg suudald suukhad*), 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”. Alice Sárközi analyses a Tibetan-Mongolian manuscript of this text in her two articles (Sárközi 1987, 1993), and I published a translation of its two versions from today’s practice, too (Majer 2018b). As for the *dhāraṇīs* Pozdneev mentions as the *jirūken.ū tarni* of the seven burkhans, I propose that probably these are the *dhāraṇīs* of the seven

20) Khal. *tarni*, S. *dhāraṇī*.

21) On the topic of the text types for the protection of the bereaved, with a more precise list of these text types and their titles an article of mine was published in Hungarian in the volume published for the 75th birthday of Alice Sárközi (Majer 2018b).

buddhas who already appeared in our kalpa preceding Gautama buddha, called ‘seven heroic buddhas’ (T. *sangs rgyas dpa’ bo bdun*) or ‘seven universal buddhas’ (T. *sang rgyas rab bdun*). There is no data on its use from today’s practice, so this remains an assumption only.

In Pozdneev’s work, after this ritual another one is mentioned for the protection of a relative considered to be in danger (1978, p. 616): “After returning from the steppe to the yurt, they again make a three-sided baling²² as a propitiating offering to the dokshits,²³ and prepare a lamp and a dish with some grain. In a short prayer the lud [T. *glud*] read on that occasion, the patronage of the dokshits is requested for the person who has the misfortune to have his birth year correspond to that of the deceased”. This ritual called Khal. *Lüd*, T. *glud* ‘Ransom ritual’ / ‘the ritual of substitute effigy for a person’ / ‘Offering an effigy as a ransom to malevolent spirits’, whereas the substitute effigy is destroyed, is still used in today’s practice to avert the evil spirits and prevent them from causing further misfortunes to relatives. In most cases however the ritual is performed for sick persons, by the substitution of the effigy for the sick person and ransoming his soul from death. 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”. We can meet the same ritual also as Khal. (*Amiin*) *zolic* (*gargakh / gargal*), ‘(Performing) the exorcism ritual of the effigy of devil or enemy’. Its recitation is recommended “as protection against illnesses and sufferings. It is also performed to ensure safety in the intermediate state (between death and rebirth) and ensure quick rebirth”. In this case, the case described by Pozdneev, when the *Lüd* is performed after someone’s death, it can be part of the beforementioned *Gar salgakh* ritual (whereas two dough figures are used). These are among the most widespread rituals averting the evil spirits and preventing them from causing further misfortunes, sickness or death to the relatives or loved ones of the deceased.

Pozdneev (1978, p. 616) finishes the description of the *Lüd* ritual saying that: “then 3 yeröols are uttered, which express good wishes for that

22) Khal. *balin*, T. *gtor ma* ‘dough offering, sacrificial cake’.

23) Khal. *dogshid* ‘wrathful deities’.

person. When uttering each of these *yerööls* the unlucky person is strewn round about with the grain mentioned. Here the ceremony ends". Here Pozdneev mentions three *yörööl* texts, 'prayers/blessings', but unfortunately does not list the titles of these here. These are the beforementioned various Khal. *yerööl*, T. *smon lam* 'prayer, aspirational prayer' texts.

After describing the rites for the protection of the living ones, the bereaved relatives, Pozdneev (1978, pp. 616–617) goes on to describe other rites for the deceased: "Having protected the persons living from the influence of the deceased on their lives, the lamas continue fulfilling their duties to the latter." "These duties consist in performing *tülesi*, or a commemoration for the dead, which for princes and rich Mongols continues uninterruptedly for 49 days and nights, but for the poor is restricted to a *khural* performed for one day only. The third or seventh day is mostly chosen for this purpose" (ibid. p. 616). The term he uses here, *tülesi*, Khal. *tülsh*, means literally 'fuel', but the ritual named *tülesi-yin öglüge*, T. *sbyin-sreg*, is a kind of 'fire-offering'. Pozdneev adds the name of the text that is recited on these occasions: "The content of the *khural* is exactly the same. It consists of reading the Tibetan nom *dod-yanga* [T. 'dod-yon lnga?]' (ibid. p. 617). Neither Pozdneev, nor the English editor Krueger commented on this. Apart from giving the Tibetan equivalent of the term, T. 'dod yon lnga, which means 'five sense pleasures, five objects of desire', and also relates to a group of offerings 'pleasing the five senses, I have no exact idea either on what text he mentions. My suggestion is that it must be in connection with the different offerings to the deceased (when for example food, sweets, milk, incense, etc. are placed with the body at funerals or cremations), often in a symbolic form, as for example described by Kelényi (Kelényi 2011). However, the text itself remains one of the texts mentioned by Pozdneev remaining unidentified. As for the ritual called *tülesi-yin öglüge*, T. *sbyin-sreg* 'fire-offering' by him, I can conclude that this term today, pronounced as *Jinsreg*, relates to a certain kind of Tantric fire-offering ritual performed on various occasions, such as, for example, after a meditative session period to clear away possible mistakes, thus it is not exclusively in connection with after-death rituals. What is meant under the term by Pozdneev is called today (and also in Tibetan) the *Sür / Tsasür / Sür tawiulakh* (T. *gsur / tsha gsur*), 'Burnt offering' / long title: 'the method of performing burnt offering'. It is 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, also 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 mostly read during the nights. The text should be recited within 49 days after the death, as mentioned also by Pozdneev. (A name variation is *Janraisegiin süur*, T. *spyān ras gzigs (gyi) gsur* ‘Burnt offering performed to Avalokiteśvara’).

Another text is mentioned here, during the description of the same ritual: “To this, according to the rule bequeathed by the Dalai lama Ngagdbang blo-bzang rgya-mtsho, a reading of the Manla-yin čoya is added. This khural cannot be performed by less than four lamas, and furnishes a very large profit to the monasteries. [...] to commemorate the soul of the deceased, one-tenth of the entire property of the deceased must be given, but usually even more is taken” (Pozdneev 1978, p. 617). The ritual he mentions, *manla-yin čoya*, Khal. *Manaliin choga*, T. *sman-bla'i cho-ga*, is the ‘ritual of the Medicine Buddha’. Several of the texts aimed at restoring health and averting death are also used as after-death readings, and among them the Medicine Buddha ritual is performed similarly today in this situation, for the health of the remaining family members.

Bálint Gábor of Szentkatolna, end of the 19th century

Hungarian researchers, starting as early as the 19th century with the linguist Bálint Gábor of Szentkatolna, have conducted research with lamas and collected data on Mongolian Buddhist rituals, among them after-death rites. The Hungarian linguist Bálint Gábor of Szentkatolna (1844–1913) recorded folklore and ethnographic texts in Kalmyk and Khalkha areas (1871–1873). In these, he recorded contemporary spoken language, as well as ethnographic and folklore-data in the spoken languages Kalmyk and Khalkha. The particular richness of Bálint’s material lies in the fact that he gave records of many aspects of the everyday life of that time. As part of this, he also collected data on after-death rites. His works are published in several publications by Ágnes Birtalan (Birtalan 2016, 2015, 2014, 2012, 2011, Bálint 2009), together with her own interpretations of the texts. She

has already published the Kalmyk material (Birtalan 2011), but Bálint's manuscript of Khalkha language, folklore and ethnography is still unpublished, or at least only parts of it have been published (Birtalan 2016).

In this article I include and comment on the relevant part of the already published Kalmyk material of Bálint Gábor. The unpublished Khalkha material was not available to me, only a brief extract from his descriptions (Birtalan 2015, handout), therefore it is not analysed here, but may form the basis of another article.

Bálint spent about 8 and a half months among the Kalmyks (September 1871–12th May 1872). The material he collected there is available in an edition by Ágnes Birtalan (Birtalan 2011). In this volume, the relevant part of his Kalmyk material consists of the translation by Ágnes Birtalan of the material collected on after-death rituals by Bálint Gábor (Birtalan 2011, *The Death among the Kalmyks, Bálint: Xal'imigīn üküül, Kalm. Xal'mgīn üükl*, pp. 144–146), the facsimile of his original manuscript (Birtalan 2011, pp. 181–184); and the explanations to these by Ágnes Birtalan (Birtalan 2011, *Rites du passages 2. The Last Transformation*, pp. 145–148).

In this otherwise highly valuable material only 4 texts are mentioned in a short description of the different tasks carried out after someone's death, but he provides in this a full description of the measures taken after death and the method of burial.

His description starts with the measures taken in the event of a fatal illness (ibid. p. 144). Here he says that family members send for a physician and monks of *gelng-rank*²⁴ to pray (Bálint: *mörgöl unğšituya*, Kalm. *mörögl unğštxā*²⁵) *in addition to the healing treatment and that the physician and the monk[s] diagnose the patient's illness from his urine and pulse, before prescribing a remedy. The first text is mentioned here. Bálint writes that "Then in addition to praying, the The Book of the Dead [as identified in footnote 1048 by Birtalan: Bálint Zūradīn sudur gedek deker, Kalm. Zūrdīn sudr or Zūrdīn nom], the Mongolian translation of the Tibetan 'Book of intermediate state' (T. bar-do thos-grol)] will be read above the sick person's head. The monks used to say that if the The Book of the Dead is read above the head of an ill person, the sickness (Bálint, Kalm.*

24) Khal. *gelen*, T. *dge slong* fully 'ordained monk'.

25) All Kalmyk terms here are taken from Birtalan's book (Birtalan 2011).

gem) will improve, that is why our Kalmyks are keen on it, if the [monks] read The Book of the Dead when they are sick.” The text he mentions here, Khal. *Zuurdiin sudar* ‘The sūtra of the Intermediate State / Bardo sūtra’, was of course mentioned by Pozdneev, too, so its role in today’s practice is already described there. Bálint uses the name *Zūradīn sudur gedek dekter*, which literally means ‘the sūtra of the Bardo / Intermediate state’, and here it relates not only to a prayer, but the whole text that became known at the west as the Tibetan Book of the Dead. Here in Bálint’s description we see similarly how it is used as a preparation for death, as the directions on how to proceed well in the intermediate state given in it are read to the dying person.

Then his description continues with the measures taken in the event that someone dies (ibid. pp. 144–145), when they call many monks. “Then the astrologer monk (Bálint: *zurxāči geleng*, Kalm. *zurxāč gelng*) looks at that person’s heart and touches the corpse (footnote 1051: Bálint: *yasaīn’i köndädek*, Kalm. *yasīg n’ könddg*), too. [The monk] also designates the burial place (Bálint: *orošiūlxu yazar*, Kalm. *oršālynā yazr*), and furthermore instructs what kind of cloth [the corpse] must be dressed in. [Then tells] whether [the corpse] must be washed or not (Bálint: *uyaxu ese uyaxun’i*, Kalm. *uyāx es uyāx n*).” As soon as the first preparations are made, the next text is mentioned in his description: “Then he reads the blessing of intermediate state (footnote 1053: Bálint: *zūradīn yöräl ungšidok*, Kalm. *zūrdīn yörāl*).” This text was also mentioned by Pozdneev and described there. No wonder both authors mentioned it, as it is still among the most used texts today, called as Khal. *Bardiin yerööl / Bardo molom*, T. *bar-do smon-lam* ‘Prayer of the intermediate state’.

Then Bálint describes how a horse is prepared to carry the body (ibid. p. 145).

Afterwards two other texts are mentioned (ibid. p. 145): “Thereafter the *jangya* and the *danjik* books are read above the corpse (footnote 1059: Bálint: *yasa dēren’i*, Kalm. *yasn dēr n*) of that person.” On *jangya* Birtalan has the following explanation in footnote 1057: “Bálint: *jangya*; Pallas provided a detailed description of the ceremony transcribed by him as Dshanga “Seelmesse” (Pallas II. p. 293), cf. Kalm.Ö. *jangya* “Glocke (Musikinstrument)” (R. 108). *jangya* refers probably to the texts recited during the above ceremony.” On the *danjik* books Birtalan explains in

footnote 1058: “Bálint: *danjik gedek nom*, [...] might be in connection with the danšig-ceremony (T. brtan-bžugs, Mong. dangsuy, translated as batu orusil into Mongolian) the maṇḍala-offering to the high ranked Lamas.” My own interpretation of this is different, I propose that maybe this is the text entitled *Dünshig*, T. *ltung-bshags* ‘Confession of downfalls’, the confession before the Thirty-five Buddhas of Purification, the text of prostrating chanted to clear away sins by confessing them. My opinion is based on the fact that practicing rites such as purification (especially the Khal. *Dünshig* ‘Confession of downfalls’) is among advice given to Buddhist believers after the death of a relative to help their deceased. However, there is no proof of this linguistically.

Following this, concerning the protection of the relatives Bálint has a short note only (ibid. p. 145): “After finishing these books, if that person’s brothers and [other] relatives are [born] of the same year (?), they ask about their year from that man [i. e. that monk].” This short note relates to the investigations into whether any relative is in potential danger after the death in the family, through calculations based upon astrological works. From the birth and death dates of the deceased, and from the birth dates of relatives, they advise on what protective rituals should be performed for whom, what texts should be recited or what other measures should be taken in order to avoid further problems. In Pozdneev’s more detailed description we have seen several such protective rituals mentioned (Pozdneev 1978, pp. 615–617), and have discussed them and their usage in today’s practice above.

Then Bálint describes forms of burial (Birtalan 2011, p. 145) but mentioning only burial in the ground. In short, if the deceased is to be buried in a nice cloth, the corpse is washed and a cloth worn by him when he was healthy is put on him. The corpse is put into a coffin (Bálint: *xäircäk*, Kalm. *xārcg*) or a chest (Bálint: *abder*, Kalm. *awdr*), taken and buried. Four prayer flags are raised at the four cardinal points around the grave (Bálint: *mān’i*, Kalm. *mān’* prayer [woods]), and on them white kerchiefs with Buddhist prayers written on them are hung.

Bálint also mentions (ibid. p. 145) that “For the merit (footnote 1066: Bálint: *kūnān’i buyindu*, Kalm. *kūnā n’ buyind*) of that dead person his/her remaining family members offer [to the monks?] much of livestock and money.”

Afterwards we have a mention (ibid. p. 145) of purifying rituals performed at the home of the deceased after the burial, but unfortunately without knowing which texts are used: “After the monks have buried the corpse, they return and through praying purify (footnote 1067: Bálint: *ariüldik*, Kalm. *Arüldg*) his/her home. Further the astrologer monk tells when the [so called] “period of the deceased” [up to the next ritual] will end.” Apart from averting any possible danger, illness, loss, even further death, in the period after death, emphasis is also put on ensuring good or improved living conditions for the bereaved. It must be ensured that they remain healthy, live in peace, have long life, and are abundant in money, wealth, food and drink, and that all obstacles are removed from their way. These rituals are performed mainly after all measures related to the burial have been taken (Khal. *buyanii ajil* ‘deeds of virtue/merit’, the term meaning all measures related to death and burial), and after the burial itself has already been concluded, and the ‘period of grieving’ has already ended (Khal. *gashuudal tailakh* ‘ending the grieving period’). When the dangers have been averted, and measures taken to guide the consciousness of the deceased away, emphasis is put on ensuring for the bereaved a life of better quality. From among the texts used widely for this purpose we can mention the smoke-offering or *san* (T. *bsang(s)*) texts, used for example to clean the home of the deceased, and to ensure health for the bereaved. Basically in the old times after the death of someone, the yurt was moved to a new site. If that was not possible, the yurt or today the flat was thoroughly cleaned, and the *san* ceremony performed for purification. *San* texts exist in many variations, for example *Ariun san / Nolsan* (T. *mnol bsangs*) ‘Smoke offering for purification’, *Dashchiiraw san* (T. *bkra shis char ’bebs(kyi) bsang(s)*) ‘Smoke offering causing a rain-fall of fortune’, *Khiimoriin san / Lündai san / Madjün jinlaw* (T. *rlung rta’i bsangs*, *rmad byung byin rlabs* (beginning of the text) ‘Incense offering for vitality’ / ‘Excellent blessing’, *Galiin san* (T. *me’i bsangs / me lha’i bsangs*) ‘Incense offering to the fire (god)’, *Tsagaan öwgönii san* (T. *rgan po dkar po’i bsangs*) ‘Incense offering to the White Old Man’. Another type of texts, the *dallaga* (T. *g.yang gugs*) texts or texts ‘calling prosperity’ have a similarly central role in ensuring the health of the bereaved. These are also today used after burial, when people arrive home, and also at the ritual when the ‘period of grieving’ is at an end (Khal. *gashuudal*

tailakh ‘ending the grieving period’), which is held before the 49th, usually on the 48th day. Such texts include *Altangereliin dallaga* (T. *gser 'od kyi g.yang 'gug(s)*) ‘Golden Light sūtra for calling forth prosperity’, which is also called *Buyan khishgiin dallaga* ‘ritual calling forth prosperity and merits’; and the *Dashchiirawiin (sangiin) dallaga / Dashchiiraw san dallaga* (T. *bkra shis char 'bebs kyi bsangs g.yang 'gugs*) ‘(incense offering) and ritual calling forth prosperity, causing a rainfall of fortune’, also known as *Ölzii khutgiin dallaga* ‘Ritual calling forth prosperity’ in its Mongolian title. All of these *dallaga* texts are recited for wealth, abundance in food, health, and to collect merits.

After mentioning the purifying rituals, Bálint says that after the mentioned days have passed, the fire offering will be undertaken (Bálint: *yal täidik*, Kalm. *yal tādḡ*) (Birtalan 2011, p. 146). Pozdneev also mentioned a kind of fire ritual under the name *tülesi-yin öglüge*, which refers to T. *sbyin-sreg*, as “a commemoration for the dead, which for princes and rich Mongols continues uninterruptedly for 49 days and nights, but for the poor is restricted to a khural performed for one day only. The third or seventh day is mostly chosen for this purpose” (Pozdneev 1978, p. 616). In Bálint’s description, however, it is mentioned under the name *yal täidik*, Kalm. *yal tādḡ*, Khal. *gal takikh* ‘fire offering’, and as a closing ritual after the required days of the after-death period have ended. This must stand for the same *Sür*, T. *gsur* burnt offering ritual performed for beings in the intermediate state, already mentioned above.

At the end Bálint gives a short description (Birtalan 2011, p. 146) of differences if a novice, a master monk, a nobleman, a *zääsng*²⁶ or a monk of *gelng* rank of good fame dies, saying that “they are not buried as the commoners, they will be cremated (burnt) [Bálint: *činderledek (tüledek)*, Kalm. *čindrlxe*], describing how the cremation takes place on the top of a hill, and how a small square house (footnote 1076: Bálint: *caca*, Kalm. *cac*) is erected for the dead person at the site, with a [Buddhist] image (footnote 1077: Bálint: *šüten*, Kalm. *šütēn*) and a candle burning night and day inside.

26) Khal. *zaisan* ‘general’.

Concerning the period after death till the taboos are kept he writes: “Until these forty-nine days have ended, the family members do not go to others’ homes”, and this is where his short description ends.

Conclusion

Both materials cited and analysed in the article are invaluable in terms of providing detailed descriptions of how the Mongols buried their dead, and what Buddhist ceremonies accompanied this. Several rituals or measures carried out after death are described by both authors (for example reciting the Book of the Dead at the bed of a dying person, the necessity of astrological calculations, the preparation of the body for the funeral, protective rites for the bereaved, the funeral itself and its procedures (Bálint mentions only burial in the ground and the cremation of high ranked lamas and nobles), purifying rites after the funeral at the yurt, a fire ritual), again some are only mentioned by one of them. Also, both descriptions emphasise the differences between the burial of a common person and the funeral of a lama or a wealthy Mongol. Though the descriptions concern different areas (Kalmuk and Khalkha), apart from some unique features in the burial customs of the different Mongolian ethnic groups, the main Buddhist rituals, and the texts used were the same, a fact which is partly mirrored in the descriptions, too.

As for the texts themselves, Pozdneev, an expert on Mongolian Buddhism, whose main works concentrate exclusively on this topic, has of course more titles mentioned in his book on Mongolian Buddhism than Bálint, for whom the description of these rites was only part of his ethnographic material, with short descriptions of different topics concerning daily life. As analyzed in the current article, where I tried to identify these texts on the basis of my recent fieldwork on after-death rituals in Mongolian Buddhist practice today, several of the texts continue to be used today, among them well-known ones such as the *ḡayuradu-yin sudur* (*Zūradīn sudur gedek dekter* in Bálint’s material), *zūradīn yōrāl*, *Sonosuyad yekede tonilyayci neretü yeke kölgen sudur*, and several rituals for the protection of the bereaved, such as the *tačiyal-un qariyulya* performed under a different name today, the lud ritual, and the *manla-yin*

čoya mentioned also by Pozdneev. On the usage of several texts mentioned, for example *maidari-yin dam-bca*, we have no parallel data from today's practice. Unfortunately, some texts and their rituals mentioned by the two travellers could not be identified, even on the basis of present-day data: *Gundelegin zarak*, *Serdebe chakjai*, 'dod yon lnga from Pozdneev's description, and the *danjik* ritual in Bálint's description.

The texts and rituals mentioned in the two descriptions show well the many types of after-death rituals and texts in terms of their particular purposes (helping the deceased to find the best possible rebirth, protecting the bereaved from potential danger caused by the death event, ensuring prosperity and well-being to the relatives), the descriptions and thus the texts mentioned follow the appropriate order of the measures taken after death (before death, immediately after death, disposal of the body, after the funeral/disposal, remembering the deceased), and also the different locations of the different rituals (home of the deceased, place of burial, monastery). By reading these descriptions, even though there exist a great many other texts from the different text types used in today's practice, according to the different traditions, or requiring different initiations to perform them, the reader still gets a complete view of the aims, methods and text types of Mongolian Buddhist funeral practices. In the same way, the rich treasury of the descriptions of travellers can be utilized for studying any other research topic, looking at parallels from the past centuries.

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