

CALLING THE SOUL OF THE DEAD

SILK ROAD STUDIES IX



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SILK ROAD STUDIES

IX

Alice Sárközi — Alexey G. Sazykin

Calling the Soul of the Dead

**Texts of Mongol Folk-Religion in the St.Petersburg
Institute of Oriental Studies**

I

**in collaboration with
Tibor Szabó**

BREPOLS

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Foreword

Research of Mongolian folk-religion has been the subject of special attention in recent years. Publication of extant texts and the translation, edition and analysis of these texts have appeared. We have got detailed descriptions of certain rituals, whole books have been dedicated to till now neglected areas.

The present study examines a very special and less known ritual of folk-religion, the ceremony of calling back the soul of the dead or of the sick person. Among the Mongols and at the surrounding areas it was commonly believed that illness and death were caused by the absence of the soul, so a special ritual was required to call back the wandering soul.

Our research has been based on special texts preserved in the Collection in the St.Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. By way of background we give an outline of the observations of researchers who carried out fieldwork and travelers who have visited the relevant areas. We also include the material from personal communication of Mongols from different areas where Mongol peoples live.

The material of the Hungaro-Mongolian ethnographical and dialectological expedition offers proof that these rituals are living and being practiced till the present time. Our informants

related that they themselves or their relatives were cured by this method.

The ceremony seems to be a rather old one. It must have belonged to a very early layer of folk religion, however, and it has become a ritual carried out by the Lamaist church. The texts show the influence of Tibetan Buddhism. The ritual carried out in Mongolia is very similar to those among the neighbouring peoples. The Introduction gives a general description of the ritual among several nations of Central Asia. It also presents the material collected by the Hungarian-Mongolian expedition in the field.

A special chapter is dedicated to the evil spirits mentioned in the texts. With the kind and active help of colleagues and collectors in Hungary it has become possible to depict these creatures in pictures that. I wish to express my indebtedness to T. Szabó, J. Farkas and G. Bethlenfalvy who have put their rich collection at my disposal. In the chapter on supernatural beings the ownership of the pictures is indicated. When it is not, the picture belongs to T. Szabó.

Special thanks are due to Dr. R. I. Meserve who kindly read through the English of the book and to M. Szőke and A. Kónya for their inestimable technical help.

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Alice Sárközi

**Texts in the Collection of the St.Petersburg's Branch
of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian
Academy of Sciences**

The Collection of the St.Petersburg's Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences has several texts for calling back the soul of the deceased or of a sick person. Poppe analysed these texts in his "*Opisanie mongol'skih 'shamanskih rukopisei'*"⁴⁶ These texts are the following according to the new catalogue numbers of Sazykin⁴⁷:

Sazykin 1270 *Sünesün dayudaqu-yin sudur orosibai* "Book of Calling the Soul."

Sazykin 1271 *Sünesün dayudaqu-yin sudur bui* "Book of Calling the Soul."

Sazykin 1272 Without title. "Calling the Soul."

Sazykin 1273 *Sünesün dalalqui sudur orosiba* "Book of Beckoning the Soul".

Sazykin 1274 *Qutuy-tu Badmasambay-a bayši Čakravatan qaγan-i čilegerkeǰü bayiqu-du sünesün dalalaysan ubadis ene bolai* "Instruction of Beckoning the Soul Performed by Padmasambhāva when the Wheel-turning King Has Fainted [=Died]".

Sazykin 1275 *Kümün-ü sünesün dayudaqu sudur orosiba* "Book of Calling Man's Soul."

Sazykin 1276 *Sünesün-i uriqui sudur orosibai* "Book of Calling the Soul."

Sazykin 1277 Without title. "Calling the Soul."

Sazykin 1278 *Kümün-ü sünesün dayudaqu sudur orosiba* "Book of Calling Man's Soul."

Sazykin 1279 *Sünesün dayudaqu yeke kölgen orosiγulba* "Great Vehicle Book of Calling the Soul"

Sazykin 1280 Without title. "Calling the Soul."

⁴⁶ pp. 193-195

⁴⁷ A.G. Sazykin, *Katalog mongol'skih rukopisej i ksilografov Instituta Vostokovedenija Akademii Nauk SSSR, Tom I.*

Some of the texts are identical, others are similar in subject and patterns, but different in wording.

The first manuscript that arrived into the possession of the Aziatskij Muzej of St.Petersburg (SPB F IVRAN) (Sazykin 1275, old call number I 20) is written on Russian paper that has the watermarks “1785” and 1786”. It belongs to the first collection of the Museum. The manuscript was brought back from the journeys of Jahring between 1781 and 1787. As one of the best pieces of the Jahring (died 1795) collection it was incorporated into the catalogue of Jahring put together in 1789. (List of the Mongolian and Kalmük books and manuscripts preserved in the Asia Museum of the Academy of Sciences according to the chronological order of their acquirement, 1891 March. Archiv Vostokovedov SPB F IVRAN raz. 1. op. 3. eg.hr.61, p. 11)

The next manuscripts that were acquired by the Asian Museum are: Sazykin 1272, (old call number C 143) and Sazykin 1274, (old call number C 145). Both of them are Buriat manuscripts written on bluish Russian paper and date to the beginning of the 19th century. They were collected by Žamcarano during his journeys to the Buriats in 1903.

Manuscript Sazykin 1273 (call number B 204 (B236)) was also acquired by Žamcarano but from South Mongolia from the Abaga Banner in 1910. It is written by calamus in Indian ink on Chinese two-layered paper.

Manuscript Sazykin 1270 (call number: C 242) belonged to the Rudnev Collection and dates from the beginning of the 20th century. It is also a Buriat manuscript written in ink with pen on a yellowish Russian paper.⁴⁸

Manuscript Sazykin 1271 (call number C 382) is of the collection *Mongolica Nova*. It is written in Indian ink with calamus on old hand-made paper. Its origin is unknown.

Sazykin 1280 (call number B 139 (B 163)) is the only manuscript in the collection written in Oirat characters. It was acquired by N. O. Očirov during his journey to the Kalmyks of

⁴⁸ Cf. B. Ja. Vladimircov, *Mongol'skie rukopisi i ksilografy, postupivšie v Aziatskij muzej Rossijskoj Akademii Nauk ot prof. A. D. Rudneva*, p. 1567, No. 70.

Astrachan in 1911.⁴⁹ It is written in ink with pen on bluish Russian paper and dates from the beginning of the 19th century.

The other four manuscripts: Sazykin 1276 (call number Q 264), Sazykin 1277 (call number Q 1427, missing from Sazykin's catalogue, (call number Q 2206), Sazykin 1287 (call number 2678), Sazykin 1279 (call number Q 2988) all were taken over into the Mongolian collection of the Academy from the Tibetan Fond in the 1970s.⁵⁰ They are all Buriat manuscripts written on Russian paper and date from the beginning of the 19th century.