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Traditional Buryat Burials: Changes and Stereotypes

Buryat burials are described with regard to the age and social status of the deceased. Changes and conservative features are evaluated, and cultural stereotypes are discussed. Certain novel traits are due to a recombination of traditional elements; others are caused by external stimuli. Environmental adaptations and the role of cultural factors are assessed. There are two traditional types of low-rank burials: above-ground under cover with accompanying goods; and cremation. Both were practiced throughout the Buryat ethnic area. The latter's inclusion in the Russian Empire and the spread of Buddhism resulted in the emergence, in the Baikal region, of two major religious groups—shamanists in the Cis-Baikal region, and Buddhists living east of Lake Baikal. The changes affected burial practices as well. Under the impact of the Russian tradition, inhumation burials in coffins emerged. Under Buddhism, only members of the clergy (but not lay persons) had been cremated. Cremation became the principal rite west of Lake Baikal, while disappearing east of it. Above-ground burials from that time on may be divided into two subtypes—shamanistic and Buddhist, the latter being predominant in the Trans-Baikal region. Burials of children fall in several categories: air burial, cremation, both types of above-ground, and inhumation. Burials and commemoration practices relating to shamans and the Buddhist clergy are described. One evolutionary line demonstrates changes in burial practices concerning ordinary people, and contributing to the integration of the traditional culture into the outside world; another line highlights the sacral stereotypes, preserving the core of the traditional culture. Both opposing lines maintain the integrity of the Buryat ethnic tradition in both space and time.

Keywords: *Buryats, burials, memorization, cultural stereotypes, cultural changes.*

Introduction

This article presents a new version of the burial typology of the Buryats, and aims at describing specific aspects of burials for the groups of Buryats of varying age and social status. The innovations that have emerged from the recombination of elements of the tradition or under the influence of another culture are identified, and the limits for introducing innovations into traditional system are outlined.

Burial rituals sustain a conservative form of stereotyping the social experience (Semenova, 2006: 9).

On the one hand, these rituals typically reveal their archaic nature, which persists in the burial of sacred persons and in ideological beliefs; on the other hand they are influenced by social and economic processes generating social dynamics. Habitation environment facilitated the emergence of regional types of burials among the Buryats. They live in a territory with a prevalence of either forest-steppe or steppe zones. The climate is such that the earth is frozen for half a year. Low population density also plays an important role. The specific nature of burial types is also conditioned by the traditional world view—shamanistic, and later Buddhist.

The chronology of this study covers the historical processes after the accession of Buryatia to Russia, accompanied by the transformation of all aspects of life. These involved administrative allocation of clans' territories, reduction of the *porodnye* ('clans') lands* and nomadic routes, as well as the gradual adoption of a sedentary lifestyle. Buddhism, whose innovations fit into traditional culture, was spreading among the Buryats in the same period. Buddhist doctrines radically changed their worldview and beliefs concerning death, and led to the emergence of two large subregional communities of the Buryats in the Baikal region, differing primarily in religious affiliation of the shamanists of the Cis-Baikal and the Buddhists of the Trans-Baikal region, who in turn split into smaller groups, each with its own specific features. As is known, a part of the Buryats practiced dual faiths (shamanism and Orthodox Christianity), while another part followed triple faiths (shamanism, Orthodox Christianity, and Buddhism). A formalized approach, which allows us to view the topic in synchrony at the level of both the Cis-Baikal and Trans-Baikal regions, is used for creating a typology in this study. This article also describes the subjects of preserving the burial types in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Their uniformity in the pre-Russian and pre-Buddhist periods throughout the entire ethnic area confirms the concept of a unified culture of the ethnic group, which had been proven earlier, for example, by E.M. Zalkind (1958: 166, 169). Today, when the new tribalism is expanding in present-day Buryatia, a study that verifies the idea of the historical unity of the people becomes relevant.

The research is hampered by the lack of visual traces, since the Mongolian-speaking Buryats did not leave any outstanding funerary structures or above-ground monuments. This work is based on the field materials gathered by the author and A.S. Suvorova. Ethnographic information and archaeological data are also used, as well as archival materials—in particular, the manuscript of B.B. Bambaev, *Description of the Funeral Rite and Its Origin* (Center of Oriental Manuscripts and Xylographs of the Institute of Mongolian, Buddhist and Tibetan Studies (hereinafter, COMX IMBTS) of SB RAS, F. 11, Inv. 1, D. 13).

Research history

Despite the fact that there is no monographic study of funeral rites, the literature on the subject is extensive, and includes specialized articles and parts of ethnographic and archaeological works of general and local nature, etc. (Suvorova, 2014: 4–9). However, there are not many

works on the types of burial. In his manuscript, Bambaev noted, "...funeral rites of non-spiritual persons differ in details. The main factor is the nature of the inhabited area. In the steppe, the burial is above-ground without a coffin; in the rocky mountainous areas, the stone mound is piled above the grave; in the forest areas, the corpse is either burned, inhumed in a coffin accompanied by the construction of mound, or buried in the cribwork above the ground" (COMX IMBTS SB RAS, F. 11, Inv. 1, D. 13, fol. 31).

T.M. Mastuygina, who studied the burial ritual of the Buryats, distinguished specific aspects thereof differing between the shamanists and Buddhists. She identified the traditional methods, such as leaving the deceased, including children, on the surface of the ground; burial of shamans on platforms-*arangases*; and cremation of shamans and ordinary people. In the case of cremation, the remains were left for disposal by predators. Burial in the ground in a cemetery emerged under the influence of the Russians. Mastuygina noted that the Buryat Buddhists commit the deceased to various elements (earth, water, fire, air, and tree) depending on the season, place of death, and social status (1980: 91–93, 96).

Using the materials of the Oka Buryats and Soyots, L.R. Pavlinskaya identified three types of burial: above-ground burial (on the ground, on the ground under dry trees or under stone mound), air burial (on a tree), and cremation. In her opinion, inhumation was not practiced by the peoples of Siberia (Pavlinskaya, 2002: 240). The typology of the Old Buryat burials was offered by N.V. Imenokhiev, who identified rock burials, flat burials, air burials, and cremation (2010).

A variant of the typology of the Buryat burials appeared in the dissertation of Suvorova, written under the supervision of the author of the current article (2014: 15–16). The stereotypes of burials of shamans and Buddhist priests are analyzed in joint articles (Zhambalova, Suvorova, 2013; 2015). When preparing the monograph, it became clear that the topic needed some further elaboration. This article presents new materials, their analysis, and findings.

Types of ordinary people's burials

The first type of traditional burial of the Buryats is above-ground. Apparently, this was common in their entire ethnic area. The Buryats employed above-ground burials as the most suitable for the steppes long before the spread of Buddhism; but under its influence, this type reached a new stage of development, which led to the emergence of two subtypes. The first subtype is a traditional above-ground burial of the pre-Buddhist period. Mastuygina believed that this was a typical form of burial by the Cis-Baikal Buryats in the 17th–18th centuries, which

*In the 19th century, the lands where individual clans would tend their herds.

disappeared in the mid-19th century (1980: 91). The existence of this practice in the region is confirmed by archaeological materials. In the Cis-Baikal region, at the Elga XII burial ground, two out of the eight unearthed Buryat complexes were above-ground burials. Five out of seven unearthed burials at Elga XIII were above-ground chambers adjoining rock outcrops (Kharinsky, 2006: 180, 192, 194–195).

The hypothesis that the Buryats of the Cis-Baikal and Trans-Baikal regions had similar types of burial before the spread of Buddhism corresponds to the opinion of Bambaev. In 1928–1929, he noted the principle behind the introduction of Buddhist innovations, “...over several decades, the traditional funeral rite has changed, completely unnoticed by the population. Or rather, it was created on the basis of the former rite” (COMX IMBTS SB RAS, F. 11, Inv. 1, D. 13, fol. 41). Further, Bambaev wrote, “With great difficulty I was able to find an old man... According to him, in ancient times, when the Trans-Baikal Buryats were still shamanists, people washed the faces of the deceased, combed their braids, and dressed them in their favorite clothes. After fastening the bow, arrows with quiver, and sword to him, and supplying him with the flint, knife, tobacco, and smoking pipe, and, in the case of a woman, with a needle and scissors, people took the deceased away, mounting him on a horse. Upon arriving at the burial place, people took him down, placed him on the saddle blanket, with his head to the northeast face up, and put the saddle with its right side under his head; or in the woods, people buried the deceased in cribworks. They brewed tea in a cauldron and sprinkled it in all directions, so the earth would receive him, and left the cauldron with tea near the deceased. They killed the horse at the grave of the deceased, or tied it to a pole, so it would die after a while. The bridle was the only thing they did not leave” (Ibid.: fol. 41–42).

Specific placing of the body, presence of grave goods, and structures over the grave technically characterize the pre-Buddhist above-ground burials as more sophisticated than Buddhist burials. There is no evidence as to leaving the exposed deceased on the surface of the ground at that time. In the 14th–15th centuries, the inhabitants of the Cis-Olkhon area, whose ethnicity is still unknown, built quadrangular structures of stones to the rock for the deceased (Kharinsky, 2006: 189). Archaeological data correspond to ethnographic materials. In the late 20th to early 21st century, dozens of burials under stone mounds were found among the Oka Buryats. These are located on the southern slope of steep rock and are oriented along the NS line (Pavlinkaya, 2002: 236–237).

Buryat cemetery and an above-ground burial under the cover are called *daraan*. Bambaev, who worked in a school among the Kabansk Buryats-shamanists in 1920, wrote, “Until the recent years, the deceased among the Kudara Buryats were not dug into the ground, but were

covered with boards, and a large pile of trees was placed over...; not so long ago people placed the pile of stones called ‘*daraan*’ on the grave, or made an earthen mound called ‘*bulasha*’” (COMX IMBTS SB RAS, F. 11, Inv. 1, D. 13, fol. 39). Burials on the ground under dry trees were made the East-Sayan Buryats. Their funeral rite combined shamanistic and Buddhist traditions, typical of the peripheral regions of Buryatia (Pavlinkaya, 2002: 236, 241). In case of the above-ground burial, the deceased, lying on his right side, with his right hand under his head, with legs bent, was wrapped in red or yellow cloth (the colors of the Tibetan Buddhism), and was covered with dry trees. Sometimes, the body was left in taiga, placed on the ground on the felt and covered with dry vegetation. The sleigh, on which the deceased was transported, was chopped and thrown on top. The horse was killed and left nearby. People tried to take the body to the places inhabited by predatory animals, so the soul of the deceased would quickly depart to the ancestors (Ibid.: 236–237, 241).

Buddhism corrected the above-ground type of burial and introduced fundamental ideological innovations. Technological simplification was caused by the Buddhist concept of life and death, body and soul. It was typical of other Buddhists in Siberia. Among the Tuvans, the corpse, wrapped in fabric, was left on the ground, without accompanying goods, placed on his back or on his side in the sleeping position (Dyakonova, 1980: 116–117). G.M. Osokin assigned the long preservation of this method of burial, despite the protests of the Russian State and the Russian Orthodox Church, to Buddhism. According to him, people were buried on the surface of the ground by the orders of lamas, who read in books that the person should be buried precisely that way (Osokin, 1906: 219).

In the Trans-Baikal region, this method of burial was common in the 19th to early 20th century, and survived in the form of relic until the mid 20th century. Among the Agi Buryats, it continued to be actively practiced during the Soviet period, which was caused by the beliefs on the possibility of fast rebirth (Tsydenova, 2007). The burial on the ground of a body wrapped in cloth, either in a cloth bag or thin board coffin, was recorded by archaeologists in the southern steppe regions of Buryatia in the second half of the 20th century (Imenokhoev, 2010: 30). In 1929, Bambaev, who participated in an expedition to the Zakamensk Buryats, noted the vitality of that custom (COMX IMBTS SB RAS, F. 11, Inv. 1, D. 13, fol. 49). It follows from the stories of informants that the abandonment of bodies of adults on the ground was practiced until about the 1940s, and was less frequently observed in the 1950s. There is some evidence on this practice in the Kizhingsinsky District of the Republic of Buryatia in the mid 20th century. The movie *Close to Eden* by N.S. Mikhalkov demonstrates the

existence of this tradition in the second half of the 20th century among the Mongols of Inner Mongolia.

The above-ground burial of Buddhists was accompanied by sophisticated ritualistic actions, conducted by lamas. The presence of the same funeral rite among the Mongolian Buddhists is confirmed by the following evidence. In the early 20th century, this was the only method of burial (*il tawikh*) among the Altai Uryankhai people. The deceased was brought out of the yurt by lifting its wall, and was taken to a specially chosen worshipful place. People chose sunny terrain, bordered by mountains from the north and east. The body in a white shroud, sewn with hair threads, was laid on the ground on its right side, facing the setting sun, covered with white fabric or sheet of paper with the printed Buddhist text (*nomyn khunzhel*). People placed brick tea under the head of the deceased and covered him with blue *khadak*. The deceased was oriented towards the nearby mountain or to the north. The oldest person from among those present threw grain toward the deceased, sprinkle vodka to four sides, and then people drank it. After the prayer, they went around the body three times and left (Lkhagvasuren, 2013: 129, 131–132).

The above-ground burial of the Buryats, accompanied by construction of cribwork (*munkhan*), was rare. Its presence it attested in the materials of 1864 in the Barguzin Steppe Duma (State Archive of the Republic of Buryatia (hereinafter, SARB), F. 7, Inv. 1, D. 1208). Bambaev also mentioned above-ground burials in cribworks (COMX IMBTS SB RAS, F. 11, Inv. 1, D. 13, fol. 56).

Second traditional type of burial of the ordinary Buryats is cremation. It is simpler than cremation of sacred persons. Despite the fact that reliable data pertain to the Cis-Baikal region, there are reasons to believe that this custom is common throughout the entire ethnic area. In the 1760s, M. Tatarinov wrote that the Cis-Baikal Buryats of both sexes, dressed in the best clothes, were laid around with firewood and cremated in the forest (Opisaniye..., 1958: 20). In the late 19th century, E.E. Sno noted the presence of cremation among the Buryats (1904: 27). M.N. Khangalov wrote that they had the custom of burning the dead people without distinction of sex and age. According to Khangalov, this custom gradually disappeared, and in the late 19th century it was practiced only with the deceased shamans (1958a: 387). There is a wide range of field material testifying to cremation of not only shamans, but also of ordinary people aged 70–80 years and younger, in Ekhirit-Bulagatsky, Bokhansky, and Olkhonsky Districts of the Irkutsk Region. People leave instructions to commit them to the fire, believing that it cleanses them from earthly sins and quickly sends them to their ancestors (Nanzatov, Sodnompilova, 2005: 54).

Cremation of modern ordinary people was first observed in the Olkhon materials of the late 20th century. The rite of *selmedeg* (from the word ‘clear, pure’) gives

the soul a thousand years of life (Zhambalova, 2000: 293). According to the beliefs of the Buryats, the soul of the shaman or the shaman himself rises to the sky in the smoke of fire, and leads a pleasant life there (Khangalov, 1958a: 390). In the 17th–18th centuries, poor Yakuts were burned together with their dwellings, and those killed far from their native places were cremated, so the ashes could be delivered to their homeland (Gurvich, 1980: 97).

There are few Trans-Baikal materials on the cremation of ordinary people at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries. Among the Oka Buryats, cremation was practiced until the Soviet period (Pavlinskaya, 2002: 238). Owing to the spread of Buddhism in the Trans-Baikal region, cremation, as is shown below, became the prerogative of lamas and, occasionally, noble people. The same situation can be observed among the Kalmyks. Modern Buryats, including those living in Ulan-Ude, often want to be cremated (Basaev, 2011).

Flat burial (inhumation) was probably known to the Buryats in the pre-Russian period of their history. The lack of reliable data is probably due to the fact that they did not have special cemeteries at that time, and the graves quickly overgrew with vegetation. Bambaev believed that in the pre-Russian period noble people were buried in this way for protection of rich accompanying goods (COMX IMBTS SB RAS, F. 11, Inv. 1, D. 13, fol. 57). In the 17th–18th centuries, rich Yakuts were buried in flat graves (Gurvich, 1980: 97); while among the Agi Buryats, asocial members of community, persons who committed suicide, criminals, and black shamans were buried in this way (Tsydenova, 2007). Buryat burials in the ground are attested in the archaeological materials of A.V. Kharinsky, who dated them to the Russian period (2006: 194–195).

There is rich written evidence on forcing Buryats to practice inhumation. It was imposed under the pressure of sanitary requirements of the Russian administration and ideological requirements of the Russian Orthodox Church. D.I. Stakheev described the lamaist rite of inhumation in the 1860s: the grave was shallow and was surrounded by poles covered with ropes, to which scraps with funeral prayers were tied (see (Mastyugina, 1980: 96)). With time, this innovation took root, and inhumation became the fourth type of burial of the ordinary Buryats. It was distinguished by the small depth of the grave pit, absence of a coffin, etc. Gradually, new type of funeral rite became established—inhumation in coffins at cemeteries. It finally took root in the first half of the 20th century, and now dominates in individual Buryat cemeteries.

Types of children's burials

Specific nature of children's burials among the Buryats is associated with the special social status of the children. The age of a child mattered. The following age groups

were distinguished: infants, children from 3 to 5 years of age, and children from 5 to 12 years of age. In the Cis-Baikal region, after 12 years of age, children participated in burial rites together with adults (Khandagurova, (s.a.)), and, accordingly, they were also buried as adults. Traditional burial of small children among the Buryats, like among the Yakuts and other peoples, is determined by the idea of children's "subhumanity", and thus it was not ritually formalized: people did not make a coffin, nor dig a grave, nor slaughter commemorative cattle, etc. (Bravina, Popov, 1992: 161–162). Among the Buryats, the death of small children was denoted by the word "lost" (*gegde*), while of deceased adults it was said that they "took the road", "exhausted their age" (*mordokho, naha barakha, nahanhaa nugshekhe*), etc.

The first type of children's burial is the sacred air burial of infants. The child was wrapped in birch bark, tied around with hemp rope, and attached to a birch tree. This type of burial is associated with the tripartite model of the universe and the cult of the World Tree, wherein the tree's crown personifies the upper celestial world. According to the beliefs of the Buryats, children's souls fly from there as birds to the Upper World, and then descend to earth, and enter the wombs of women. Traces of such burials were preserved in Okinsky District of the Republic of Buryatia at the turn of the 20th to 21st centuries (Pavlinkaya, 2002: 240).

The second type of children's burial is cremation. Children over 3 years of age were cremated at Olkhon. In 1840, two drowned boys 3 and 8 years old "were taken to the forest on the second day and burned according to the shamanistic custom" (Zhambalova, 2000: 292). R.I. Bravina and V.V. Popov suggested that children were cremated among the Yakuts (1992: 34, 162, 195).

The third type of children's burial is above-ground burial, which is subdivided into several subtypes. A.V. Potanina confirmed the shamanistic ritual of above-ground burial, "Children even now are not buried, but people lay stones on the coffin" (1912: 25). The Olkhon Buryats call such a burial of newborns *darsaldag* ('huddle, pile up') (Zhambalova, 2000: 295). Children up to 3–4 years of age were considered the beings of a different world, who did not depart to the world of dead, but received a new incarnation in another person. Therefore, according to the Buddhist tradition, which persisted until the 1930s, a child was left at the distance of hearing the knock of a tea mortar (Galdanova, 1987: 63). K.M. Gerasimova observed the practice of leaving the deceased children in the steppe in the Kizhingsky District of the Republic of Buryatia (1969: 113). According to the informants, in the Kizhingsky and Dzhidinsky Districts, before the 1960s, children who died prior to 2 years of age were wrapped in a bag, tied to the cart, transported to the steppe, and became "lost" when the rope was untied. According to the field

materials, during the Soviet period, the bodies were left on the ground in the rocks, in a primitive coffin *khaptaga*.

The fourth type of children's burial is inhumation. It is known that before the 1960s, children up to 3 years of age were buried in the ground at the backyard near a barn. This example of contamination, the emergence of a new aggregate from the mixture of tradition and innovation, is not unique.

Stereotypes of burial of the society's sacred persons

The goal of this article cannot be accomplished without considering another aspect of public life—stereotypes of burial of the society's sacred persons. The main research findings have been published (Zhambalova, Suvorova, 2013, 2015). A holistic picture, illustrating both aspects of development (dynamism and stereotypy), is emerging from the verified and refined conclusions of these studies. Social stereotype is understood here as a universal mechanism closed for dynamic movement and intended to sustain the invariant stable core of the culture. Stereotypes of shamans' and lamas' burials differ fundamentally from each other, and from the types of burials of ordinary people. Burials of shamans and lamas are strictly regulated social events, which have important social and ideological meaning for the society.

The burial of shamans among the Buryats was always accompanied by memorization relying on the idea of cultural immortality. These are the symbols of the World Tree and the cult of ancestors, named *serge, obo*, and *barisa* (Zhambalova, 2000: 265–269). Six stereotypes in the burial of shamans can be identified. Their constant and accurate reproduction ensures the life of the society (Zhambalova, Suvorova, 2013). Some of them are more common in the Cis-Baikal region, others in the Trans-Baikal region. The first stereotype is air (celestial) burial, when the deceased is buried on a platform (*aranga*), suspended on poles or between trees in shaman groves. This is occasionally done even now, far from human eyes. In 2011, informants from the Irkutsk Region saw larch slabs that were hung on chains from four trees in the 1970s and 1980s. Other found larch slabs on hair ropes (Ibid.: 136–137). In 2007, informant A.A. Vankevich complained that the shaman grove near the village, formerly inaccessible to ordinary people, is becoming desacralized. The Internet is full of information about the Buryat sacred shaman groves, often posted for promotional tourist purposes.

The next two stereotypes are combinations of air burial and cremation. Cremation of shamans was technologically and ideologically difficult; it was not practiced in its pure form, and accompanied air burial

on *aranga* or in a tree. It could have appeared as a concession to the sanitary standards for utilization of the remains from the air burial. The second stereotype consists of three stages: burial on a platform; cremation after the completion of the sacred days; and burial of the specially collected ashes in a tree. The burial place is called *tabisa* (a place on a mountain pass for the offering to the mountain spirits). A hollow is made in a pine-tree, where the bag with ashes is placed. After that, the hollow is closed and the tree becomes a shaman's tree (Khangelov, 1958a: 389). Shamans' cemeteries existed in the Barguzinsky District of the Republic of Buryatia and in the Irkutsk Region in the Soviet period. The body of a shaman was placed on a platform, and in 49 days the remains were cremated (Lamaizm..., 1983: 133). The third stereotype is cremation of shamans with subsequent burial of the ashes in a tree, after a sacred period of time. The place where the burial is performed is called *shandan* (*shandar*u – 'white ashes').

The fourth stereotype is burial on the mountains between stones. This is probably more common in the Trans-Baikal region. This innovation could have resulted from adapting to the conditions of the Buddhist hegemony, as evidenced by the following story. By the order of the Trans-Baikal lamas, the Selenga great shaman Shara *nokhoi* was exiled to Olkhon, Sarma. He died on the island, and was buried on *aranga* on Mount Ontkhoi. Later, according to the custom of the Trans-Baikal people, his bones were laid on the ground and covered with stones (Zhambalova, 2000: 215). Here, a combination of two types of burial, air and above-ground, is evident, paying tribute to both the Cis-Baikal and Trans-Baikal traditions. The method of burying shamans on the ground on the mountains, on high sacred places, was engendered by the spread of Buddhism, when cremation became the prerogative of lamas.

The fifth stereotype is burial on inaccessible rock, in a mountain cave, or in a special grotto. The shaman in his armor is seated, and the entrance is built up with stones, leaving the clearance needed for the deceased (Zhivopisnaya Rossiya..., 1895: 159).

Essentially, all the above stereotypes are air burials. They convey the main idea of the Ascension: the sacred person returns to the divine world. Not only shamans were buried in this way. Those who were struck by lightning, as chosen by the heavens, were also subject to air burial. Smiths, who were particularly sacred persons in the society, were more often cremated (Suvorova, 2014: 22).

The sixth stereotype of burial is of the opposite nature. This is the burial of black shamans, dangerous for the society. Khangelov wrote that their souls are sent to the Lower World, or become completely destroyed through ritual manipulation. For frightful, most often black shamans, who supposedly ate people's souls, the underground burial was made with the use of aspen.

They were buried face down, so they could not go back to the surface of the earth (Khangelov, 1958b: 484–485). Ritual flat burial with the use of aspen is known to the Siberian peoples, and is indigenous (Zhambalova, Suvorova, 2013: 136).

Burial and memorization of Buddhist priests are also stereotyped (Zhambalova, Suvorova, 2015). These are conducted in accordance with the written canons, following the Buddhist books. The method of burial depends on the will of the deceased and on divination, but more on the rank of the lama in the Buddhist hierarchy. There have been cases when ordinary lamas were buried almost like ordinary people, on the ground, and such cases are not considered in this study. A.M. Pozdnev described in detail two stereotypes of burial of the reincarnated persons (*khubilgan*) in Mongolia: embalming followed by cremation, and embalming with preservation of the body in the mummy's state of *sharil* (1993: 272–275). In Buryatia, the concept of reincarnated persons has not been developed; therefore these burial stereotypes are little known there. The primary stereotype in this region is cremation of lamas of high status, but below the rank of reincarnated persons. It has been practiced until the present day. This ceremony is simpler than the burial of reincarnated persons, but it is much more sophisticated than the burial of ordinary lamas and ordinary people. The added complexity of technique (special stoves, the use of large amount of melted butter, sophisticated rituals, etc.) is caused by the sacred nature of lama. For all Buddhists of Russia, cremation is a prerogative of lamas; it embodies the rite of the Ascension. In the Trans-Baikal region, cremation becomes impossible for lay people. In rare cases, noble people sought to obtain it. After the burial, a cycle of rites for memorization of the spiritual person is performed. On the next day or on the third day, people gather ashes, "the treasure of all treasures". Places of cremation in the future are good for the above-ground burial of ordinary people (Gombozhapov, 2006: 82). Ashes are added to the compound for the formation of *tsa-tsa*—miniature symbols of the cosmic body of the Buddha. Ashes are placed inside sacred stupas; these are often personal and are dedicated to specific lamas.

Another stereotype is flat burial in a special box, which makes it possible to arrange the deceased person in a meditative pose, with the subsequent exhumation usually of the well-preserved body. This is followed by cremation and memorization by placing ashes in stupas. Two hypotheses can be put forward. This stereotype is preferred for lamas who possess secret knowledge "enabling" them to enter the state of eternal *samadhi* meditation. Alternatively, it could have emerged in the Soviet period: the lamas believed that after the forthcoming end of the Soviet dictatorship they could be exhumed and traditionally memorialized. They were as if waiting for the arrival of a new wave of Buddhism.

Reliable stories are now known about lamas buried in Soviet times in the ground (in accordance with their wills), and returned as sacred objects to the post-Soviet areas via exhumation, cremation, and the erection of personal stupas. Their lives, deaths, and historical memories are legendary. The landscapes of the modern Trans-Baikal region are replete with stupas, and of the Cis-Baikal region with shamanistic attributes, which are important for the formation of ethnic and religious identity of the society, favorable vital territory, and its tourist attraction.

The incorruptible body of XII Pandito Khambo Lama D.-D. Itigelov is one of the holy objects of Buddhism. Here it is important to emphasize the following facts. Buddhists believe that Khambo Lama D.-D. Itigelov did not die, but left to the other world in 1927 on a personal decision during meditation, surrounded by lamas, who were asked to read the necessary prayers. After the ceremonies, he was placed in a cedar box and buried in the ground. In accordance with his will, he was taken out for inspection after 30 years, and again after 75 years. In 2002, the final exhumation was conducted. Now, Khambo Lama D.-D. Itigelov is in Ivolginsky Datsan and, according to Buddhist belief, is in a state of *samadhi* meditation, controlling his physical state.

Conclusions

The types of burial of ordinary and sacred people are fundamentally different. Prior to the radical historical events that led to dynamic changes in all spheres of life, ordinary people were typically buried in above-ground burials with covers and accompanying goods, or cremated. Such burials were made in the whole ethnic area and resulted from adaptation to the environmental conditions in accordance with specific worldview. Sanitary requirements of the Russian Empire and the Russian Orthodox Church led to a gradual transition to inhumation in coffins at cemeteries. Buddhism introduced innovations formed by recombination of the elements of tradition; therefore they quickly took root.

Accession to Russia and the spread of Buddhism resulted in the emergence in the Baikal region of two subregional religious groups—shamanists of the Cis-Baikal region and Buddhists of the Trans-Baikal region. The changes affected burial practices as well. Two types of the above-ground burials became common—shamanistic and Buddhist. In the peripheral Buddhist regions, contamination can be observed. In the Cis-Baikal region, cremation of ordinary people became widespread, while in the Trans-Baikal region, above-ground burial without cover, carried out according to Buddhist rules, became common. The types of children's burials are determined by their social status and age group, and include air burial,

cremation, above-ground, and flat burial. Burials of sacred persons of the society are stereotyped, and the subsequent memorization is mandatory. Six stereotypes of shamans' burials have been identified; five of them convey the idea of Ascension, and one is of the opposite nature. Burial of the Buddhist clergy is conducted in several sophisticated ways. Social gradation has determined two trends in the development of funeral rite among the Buryats. One (profane) trend is characterized by dynamism, which allows the ethnic group to harmoniously fit into the global world. Another one (sacred) is stereotyped and closed to innovation, which preserves the traditional core of the culture—the basis of the ethnic group's identity. Both trends ensure the preservation and development of the Buryat society in the space-time continuum.

The section on the burials of children is fundamentally new in this typology. The impossibility of air burial for ordinary people has also been revealed; the presence of two types of above-ground burials (shamanistic and Buddhist) has been emphasized; contamination in the peripheral Buddhist regions as a result of dual faith has been observed. Other adjustments have also been made.

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