

**THE MAIN POINTS OF THE DOCTORAL  
DISSERTATION**

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**THE STUDY OF THE CULT OF DAYAN DEGEREKI, A  
MONGOLIAN DEITY, BASED UPON AN OFFERING TEXT  
IN TIBETAN**

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## I. The introduction of the topic and the analysed texts

The cult of Dayan Degereki, who became a protector deity of the Buddhist Faith from a spiritual entity of the Mongolian initiation rites, provides an exciting field of research for those scholars who want to study the phenomena of religious syncretism. All the religions that ever appeared in Inner-Asia, either they played a dominant or an insignificant role, shared their essential or superficial characteristics and absorbed the foreign elements which appeared in a direct or indirect way in their systems. The author is mainly a philologist but besides analysing the Tibetan offering texts, which constitute the main subject of his research, he intends to study the religious phenomena described in them; this phase is an indispensable stage of a larger, comprehensive research. The present dissertation aims to describe and sort out into groups a part of the religious elements that appear in Dayan Degereki's cult, namely the phenomena related to the Buddhist offerings, through an analysis of the text.

The Tibetan text analysed in the dissertation: The method of the offering prepared for the Great Deity, the Great Layman Skye ri, the Hero Without Fear, Ta yan Te ri khe, The Jewel King which Fulfils the Desires Falling Similarly to the Rain (tib. *Lha-chen dge-bsnyen skye-ri chen-po 'jigs-med dpa'-bo Ta-yan Te-ri-khe zhes grags-pa-la mchod gtor 'bul-tshul 'dod-dgu'i char-'bebs yid-bzhin dbang-rgyal zhes bya-ba bzhugs-so*). Several variants of the text exist, and two of these variants were available to me while writing this dissertation. The first text variant, which I called Basic Text (BT) was collected by the Hungarian-Mongolian Dialectal and Folklore Research Expedition in Mongolia in 1998 and Ágnes Birtalan made it available for me. A Tibetologist, Gergely Orosz, drew my attention to the other variant, which is to be found in the Eastern Collection of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences under No. 629/11.

The work that summarizes the whole offering ceremony belongs to the *sādhana* (Tib. *sgrub thabs*; the tools of fulfillment) texts, which are of Indian origin, and the description of an offering ritual; *mchod pa* constitutes its main part.

In my work the materials of several shamanic invocations have been studied to find starting points to a comparative analysis of the phenomena of religious syncretism. Ágnes Birtalan made the materials in Darkhat language, collected by the Hungarian-Mongolian Dialectal and Folklore Research Expedition in the Mongolian counties Uws and Xöwsgöl and in Ulanbator between 1992 and 2001, available for me. They have been analysed in her

manuscript work and published in some studies.<sup>1</sup> Most invocations were performed orally and were recorded on tapes and later they were transcribed in Latin characters. The invocations belong to the genre *dūdлага* (Khalkha form) “calling, invocation, addressing”. The Mongolian invocation analysed by Alice Sárközi<sup>2</sup> was published by Damdinsüren in his book of Collection of Mongolian Literature,<sup>3</sup> and this text was presented along with text variant in Bayit dialect, which was also collected by the Hungarian-Mongolian Dialectal and Folklore Research Expedition.

Géza Bethlenfalvy made some other shorter texts that derive from Mongolia and are related to the cult of Dayan Degereki, which I intend to study later, available for me. In my dissertation I give a summary of one of these rituals, one performed in order to avert evil powers.

## II. The planned and completed stages of the research

1. The collection and study of materials. During my study of the three Tibetan offering texts I drew up a list of the religious elements that are to be found in it (offering objects, methods of sacrifice, deities and other beings, the forms in which Dayan Degereki can appear) and then they were compared with the phenomena observed in the Mongolian shamanic texts and the ceremony performed against the evil powers. I carried out a linguistic analysis of the variants of the Tibetan offering text and I drew up a chart which can be used to compare the variants. These results and a translation of the whole text are presented in my dissertation. Concerning the essential part of the offering ceremony, the *gtor-ma* offering, I gained some personal experiences during a field work. Karmadorje, the Tibetan lecturer of the Faculty of Humanities at Eötvös Loránd University, performed at his home the method of offering and prepared some offering cakes on my request.

I have given an account of the results of the analysis of the text in several studies and lectures. When presenting the religious phenomena I tried to detect those factors (historical background, social structure and other particularities of the interactions of different religious

<sup>1</sup> Birtalan, Á.: *Darkhad Shamanic Texts. Performers – Communication – Genres*. Budapest, 2005. (manuscript)

<sup>2</sup> Sárközi A.: Dayan Degereki megidézése. In: *Helyszellemek kultusza Mongóliában. (Őseink nyomán Belső-Ázsiában 3.)* Ed. Birtalan Á., Új Mandátum, Budapest, 2004. pp. 161-176. [An Invocation to Dayan Degereki.]

<sup>3</sup> Damdinsüring, Č.: *Mongyol uran vokiyał-un degevi vayan bilig orosibai*. (Corpus Scriptorum Mongolorum XIV), Ulaan Baјatur, 1959.

systems) that might help to understand the reasons and process of the formation of this phenomenon.

2. Future plans. As a follow-up of the work I have done so far I intend to study all the extant Tibetan texts in connection with Dayan Degereki to widen the scope of my research. At the same time I would like to take part in field research in county Xöwsgöl, Mongolia, the centre of Dayan Degereki's cult, where I can gain more information through the research of the local tradition and life in the Mongolian cloisters.

During the study of the collected material I will try to find answers to some questions pertaining specifically to the syncretism characteristic to Dayan Degereki's cult. For instance, I would like to examine whether a religious phenomenon has the same significance among both nomadic groups or whether certain central elements can become marginal in the receiving religion.

I aim to establish a new comparative system in which the syncretic phenomena and features of the Inner-Asian religious development can be interpreted.

In the study of particular phenomena I try to reveal the reasons and the motivations that played a role in the emergence and the quality changes of this phenomenon. This research can only be carried out if one knows the whole historical background of the religious development because the religions and the mythological beliefs spread through Inner-Asia in different ways.

### **III. The description of the religious elements that are to be found in the analysed texts**

#### **1. The aspects of the deity Dayan Degereki**

The excerpts of the Darkhat, Mongolian and Tibetan texts that I have studied give a full picture of the powers and properties the local deities were credited with and their place among the beings of the other world and of those deeds through which they can help the living creatures. Based upon the religious texts about Dayan Degereki his roles can be categorized as follows:

*Protector of the Faith.* The texts of the 'yellow shamans' and the Buddhist texts emphasize that he was a layman. As a Bodhisattva he took an oath to protect the law of Buddha's doctrine, to destroy the pagans and the adverse powers that pose a threat to the

Doctrine. He perfectly knows the Doctrine, and his strength can be compared to that of Buddha.

*Protector god.* He protects the believers against every kind of inner and outer harm, illnesses, demons, and he helps them to become rich both spiritually and materially.

*Fertility god.* In exchange for sacrifices he provides with children those who turn to him.

*The protector of the shamanic religion.* He is an enemy of Buddhism, he initiates the shamans.

The character of Dayan Degereki is one of multiplicity and contradiction. He is a venerable being who shows many faces, displaying many aspects from which a researcher can approach him. The deity of the shamanic religion is white and black at the same time (he appears in the same invocation in the escort of the venerable persons of the 'yellow religion' and as the enemy of lamas and monk novices), he can provide anyone with children and material wealth; but if the offering made to him is not satisfactory, he can also cause epidemics. The Buddhists elevate him to the rank of the deities protecting the Faith, his homeland is Tibet, the sacred land, and although he remains a layman he is mentioned in the same rank as the other sacred beings. The melding of the fertility god, the guarding spirit of the shamanic initiations, the protector deity and the protector of the Buddhist Faith into one, Dayan Degereki is a deity with syncretic features.

## **2. The aspects of the offering objects and the transcendental beings related to the deity's cult**

I gave a short account of the benevolent, ambivalent and evil spirits and then I drew up a chart of them. One of the advantages of the chart analysis is that the definitions are given in several languages and they demonstrate in a conspicuous way the cultures in which a particular phenomenon is known: e. g. in the case of the words that have Indian background, their Sanskrit equivalent is also given whereas in the case of Tibetan words they lack. According to this conception if a definition is displayed only in the BT, that is only in Tibetan language and it does not occur in the other sources I do not give its Mongolian etc. equivalent.

In the examination of the transcendental beings I could observe several methods of the syncretic phenomena. In some cases the role of a particular being is the same in the giving and the receiving religions (e. g. the Tibetan demon *gdon* is the exact equivalent of the

Mongolian *dong*), in other cases the name with some alterations remains the same but the being that bears it can display different features according to the local beliefs (like the chthonic being that is called by the name *nāga* in Sanskrit, *klu* in Tibetan and *luus* in Mongolian) and thirdly, mainly in the case of those gods that were taken over by the shamanic religion from Buddhism, there is no information whether their role remained the same in the receiving religion or if it underwent some changes, or if their names were mentioned purely with the aim of legitimation. The study of these problems requires further research.

In the description of the other phenomena, offering objects and impersonal harmful powers that can be found in the Mongolian, Darkhat and Tibetan ritual texts I followed the above mentioned method. In the detailed analysis of the texts I added some commentaries to them and displayed them in a chart similar to the above mentioned ones.

### **3. The translation of the Tibetan offering text and a comparison of its two variants**

The aim of the system elaborated and presented by me is to show the discrepancies between the Basic Text (BT) and its variant labelled with MTA No. 629/11. The table does not only show the differing letters, words or passages but it also displays where certain corresponding units can be found within the text. The elaboration of a system like this can serve as the starting point of further philological researches. If several variants of one text come to light, the study of the differences and their linguistic analysis makes it possible to date them and certain linguistic rules of language development can also be observed. Another advantage of this system is that it makes the task of philologists much easier if particular text variants can be inserted into the scheme.

Having analysed the texts, I have come to the conclusion that these texts are not the results of copy work. The monks memorized the original written text, they handed it down to one another in speech, and later this oral version was written down again. This theory is supported by the following facts: 1. the discrepancies between the words are not accidental but constant; 2. it is not only words that differ from each other but also longer passages, which cannot be the result of a careless copy or one that was intended to improve the original; 3. likewise the order of particular rites might have altered in the course of verbal tradition; 4. the BTV contains text excerpts that are missing from the BT.

## IV. Academic publications and lectures of the author

### Articles

Dayan Degereki mongol hegyistenséghez szóló tibeti nyelvű áldozati rituálészöveg, In: *Orientalista Nap 2004*, szerk. Birtalan Á. – Yamaji M., MTA Orientalisztikai Intézet, Budapest, 2004. pp. 126-135. [A Tibetan Offering Ritual Text to Dayan Degereki a Mongolian Mountain Deity]

A Dayan Degereki hegyistenséghez szóló tibeti nyelvű áldozati rituálészövegek összehasonlítása, In: *Bolor-un gerel. The Chrystal-Spendlour of Wisdom. Essays Presented in Honour of Professor Kara György's 70th Birthday*. I-II. Szerk. Birtalan Á. – Rákos A., ELTE Department of Inner Asian Studies – HAS Research Group for Altaic Studies, Budapest, 2005. pp. 821-826. [A Comparison of the Offering Ritual Texts to Dayan Degereki, a Mountain Deity]

In preparation:

A Comparison of the Two Variants of the Offering Ritual Text to a Mongolian Protective Deity. In: *Dimension of Buddhism and Jainism*. Ed. Buddhadev Bhattacharya. Delhi, (handed in: 2006, about 10 pages).

Egy mongol tanvédő istenség, Dayan Degereki kísérete egy tibeti nyelvű áldozati rituálészöveg alapján. In: *Démonok és megmentők (Őseink nyomán Belső-Ázsiában IV)*, szerk. Birtalan Á. – Kelényi B., Új Mandátum Kiadó, Budapest, (expected publication: 2008, about 15 pages.) [A Mongolian Protector God of Buddhist Faith and his Attendance]

### Lectures

*Dayan Degereki mongol hegyistenséghez szóló tibeti nyelvű áldozati rituálészöveg.* Orientalista Nap, Szegedi Tudományegyetem Altajisztikai Tanszék, 2004. április 5-6. [A Tibetan offering ritual texts to Dayan Degereki Mongolian Mountain Deity. Orientalist Day, Szeged, 5th-6th of April, 2004. ]

*Egy tibeti nyelvű felajánlási szöveg bemutatása.* Démonok és megmentők. Népi vallásosság a tibeti és mongol buddhizmusban. Hopp Ferenc Kelet-Ázsiai Művészeti Múzeum, Budapest, 2004. május 17. [A Presentation of a Tibetan Offering Text. Demons and Protectors. Folklore Beliefs in the Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism. Hopp Ferenc Museum of Eastern Asian Arts. Budapest, 17th of May, 2004. ]