

ABODE OF THE SOUL OF HUMANS, ANIMALS AND OBJECTS IN MONGOLIAN FOLK BELIEF

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The soul of man resides in different parts of the body on each day of the month. The concerned body part should be handled with care, as if it is hurt, it causes extreme harm. The yurt, just like animals, also has a soul. The paper presents five small hand-books – from the collection of the Oriental Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, from the St. Petersburg Oriental Collection of the Russian Academy and from private possession – indicating the abode of the soul in humans, the yurt and animals.

Key words: Mongol folk religion, soul belief, Mongol folk religious texts.

Mongol people believe that humans have at least three souls. The first soul (*amin*) stays in the body during the entire life of man. It resides in the bones, in the whole skeleton. After death this soul, together with the last breath, leaves the body and stays in the grave or around the dead corpse to protect it.

The second soul (*sünesün*) is immortal and not dependent on the material body of man. It can leave the body in the form of a wasp or bee through the nose or mouth. The soul can also become a bird. It can take several forms and is imagined in the form of a small man, or just the contrary, as a giant. This soul, most probably, resides in the blood. However, the heart, the lungs, the liver can also be its home. When one is frightened, or chuckles or sneezes, this soul drops out of the body and is chased by the evil spirits. That is why it is dangerous to frighten people, especially children whose souls leave the body more easily. If the soul leaves the body man falls ill or dies, as his soul is taken away or eaten up by the spirits (Sárközi–Sazykin 2004).

The third soul (*sülde*) is a protective genius that stays with the person and decides his or her fate (Birtalan 2001; Bawden 1962; 1970; 1985).

The soul of man (*sünesün*) resides in a different part of the body on each day of the month. It moves from one part of the body to another according to the time of

day and month. It is important to know these locations, as the concerned body part should be handled with special care at that time. If this part is hurt or hit on that day it causes extreme harm for a man (Bawden 1962). A Tibetan medical text mentions that there is a certain 'soul pulse' indicating that the pulse is considered the abode of this soul (Karmay 1998).

In some cases the place of the soul is well known to people, as it is handed down from generation to generation. However, there are special handbooks indicating the places where the soul stays on a given day. The same concept is well known also in Tibet (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975, p. 481). These are short booklets, or better, slips of paper, written in hand just giving the dates and the body part, which is concerned. They are very rare in the oriental collections; perhaps they have not been highly valued by collectors and researchers. Even though, they are extremely interesting as written evidence of the belief in wandering of the soul inside the human body. There are some manuscripts of this type in the St. Petersburg Collection of the Russian Academy of Sciences that is very rich in folk belief texts (Sazykin 1988)¹.

1. The Oriental Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences also preserves such a manuscript (Kara 2000, Mong. 61). Its translation is as follows:

[1b] The dwelling place of the soul from day to day:

On the 1st it is in the big toe of the foot;

On the 2nd of the first ten days of the month – in the outer ankle-bone;

On the 3rd of the first ten days of the month – in the buttock;

On the 4th of the first ten days of the month – in the waist;

On the 5th of the first ten days of the month – in the mouth;

On the 6th of the first ten days of the month – in the hand;

On the 7th of the first ten days of the month – in the inner ankle-bone;

On the 8th of the first ten days of the month – in the joints of the feet and hands;

On the 9th of the first ten days of the month – in the coccyx;

On the 10th of the first ten days of the month – in the back;

On the 11th – in the nose;

¹ Vol. I, No. 1951: *sünesü üzekü biciq ene bui* [Booklet to examine the soul], No. 1952: (1) *kümün-ü sünesü üjekü nom bolai* [Book of examining the soul] (2) *Mal-un sünesü üjekü* [Examination of the soul of animals] (3) *kümün-ü sünesü uridaki-ni bui mal-un sünesü qoyinaki-ni bui* [The first one is for the human soul, the next one is for the soul of animals], No. 1953: *Mal-un sünesü üjekü biciq Kümün mal-un sünesün güikiy-yin cay anu* (Booklet to examine the soul of animals. Wondering time of the soul of humans and animals), No. 1954: *köl-ün ulan-a* [in the sole of foot], No. 1955: (1) *...xaburiyin yurban saradu ayu suu yuyadu zuni yurban saradu...* [in the third month of the spring the soul resides in the thigh, in the third month of the summer ...], (2) *... nigen nasun amandu xoyor kezüün-dü yurban ekin-dü ...* [in the age of one in the mouth, in the second and beginning of the third ...], No. 1956: (1) *Mal-un sünesün-i üjekü* [Examination of the soul of the animals], (2) *Aliba mal adayusun-i emnikü simkekü-yi [cimekekü-yi] üjekü inu ene bui* [Examination of when to cure and to castrate several kinds of animals], No. 1957: (1) *Mal-un sünesü üjiküi-yin sudur ene bolai* [Book for examining the soul of the animals], (2) *Aliba mal oytalqu imnikü jasaquyin üjilge* [Examination of when to operate surgically or make earmark by cutting for several animals], No. 1958: *Mal-un sünesü ene bui* [This is the soul of animals], No. 1959: *Ger-ün sünesü egüber üjemüi* [Examining the soul of the yurt with this one].

On the 12th – in the tuft of hair on the temple side;
 On the 13th – in the gum of the teeth;
 On the 14th – in the hearth;
 On the 15th – in the whole body;
 On the 16th – in the chest;
 On the 17th – in the breast;
 On the 18th – in the buttock;
 On the 19th – in the feet;
 On the 20th – in the inner ankle-bone;
 On the 21st – in the little finger of the hand;
 On the 22nd – in the outer anklebone;
 On the 23rd – in the liver and in the foot;
 On the 24th – in the back of the hand;
 On the 25th – in the sole of the foot;
 On the 26th – in the chest;
 On the 27th – in the knees;
 On the 28th – in the thighs;
 On the 29th – in the shin bone;
 On the 30th – in the sole of the foot.²

The text does not give any instruction how to protect the given part of the body. It must have served as a hand-booklet just reminding people to take care.

2. Not only human beings have souls but animals as well. Just as the soul of man, that of an animal also roams around in its body. Another small manuscript of the Oriental Collection of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences indicates which day where the soul of the animal stays. It is written in Oirat (Kara 2000, Mong. 195).

Text for consulting the soul.

On the 1st of the first ten days of the month – it stays in the sole of the hoof;
 On the 2nd – in the shin bone;
 On the 3rd – in the shin bone;
 On the 4th – in the leg above the hock;
 On the 5th – in the knee cap;
 On the 6th – in the hip bones³;
 On the 7th – in the haunch;

² Mong. 61: [1b] *edür büri sünesü-ü aqu oron inu: nigen-e köl-ün erekei quruγun-dur amui 2 sinede γadayadu siyan-dur amui : 3 sinede bögsen-e 4 sinede belkegijsün-e amui : 5 sinede aman-a : 6 sinede γar-du: 7 sinede dotoγadu siyan-a 8 sinede köl γar-un iyes-dü : yisün sinede oqor segül-dü : 10 sinede aru-du 10 nigen-e qabar-du : 10 qoyar-a sanciy-du : 10 γurban-a sidün-ü büile-dü 10 dörben-e jirüken-ü tos amui : 0 tabun-a бүкү bey-e-dü : 0 jiryuyan-a cegeji-dü amui : 0 doloγan-a omoruγun-du : 0 naiman-a bögsen-dü : 0 yisün-e köl-dü : qorin-a dotoγadu sinay-du : 20 nigen-e γar-un sigci quruγun-du : 20 qoyar-a γadayadu siyan-du : 20 γurban-a eligen ba köl-dü 20 dörben-e γar-un aru-du 20 tabun-a köl-ün ölmei-dü: 20 jiryuyan-a cegejin-dü : 20 doloγ-a ebüdüg: 20 naiman-a alan-du : 20 yisün-e silbi-dü yucin-a köl-ün ulan amui :*

³ *olon yasun* “hip bone” – personal communication of Prof. Kato.

On the 8th – in the kidneys;
 On the 9th – in the sole of foot;
 On the 10th – in the foreleg's knee;
 On the 11th – in the spleen;
 On the 12th – in the shin bone;
 On the 13th – in the rump;
 On the 14th – in the shoulder;
 On the 15th – in the whole body;
 On the 16th – in the neck;
 On the 17th – in the neck;
 On the 18th – in the scapula;
 On the 19th – in the chest;
 On the 20th – in the forehead;
 On the 21st – in the teeth;
 On the 22nd – in the palate;
 On the 23rd – in the tongue;
 On the 24th – in the spine;
 On the 25th – in the cheeks near the mouth;
 On the 26th – in the pericardium;
 On the 27th – in the mouth;
 On the 28th – in the abdomen;
 On the 29th – in the teeth;
 On the 30th – in the whole body of people and animals.
 It will be surely fulfilled.
 It will be surely fulfilled.
 It will be surely fulfilled,
 Surely ten [times].⁴

3. Another similar text is preserved in the Oriental Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences No. 310/8 that just gives the dates and parts of the animal where the soul stays that day. It is as follows:

Consulting the soul of animals
 On the 1st in the sole of the hoof
 2nd in the pastern
 3rd in the shinbone
 4th in the kneecap
 5th in the hip

⁴ Mong. 195: [1a] *Sünesün üzekü bicig* [1b] *nige sinedü tabaγ-tu 2-du silbidü 3-du silbidü 4-du boribaadu 5-du toyiy-du 6-du olon yasun-du 7-du süjidü 8-du börödü 9-du uritu tabaγ-tu 10-du uritu öbödög-tü 11-du delüüdü 12-du silbidü 13-du γuy-a-du 14-du buγulduγdu 15 бүкүн beyen-dü :: 16-du küzü-dü 17-dü küzü-dü 18-du daldü 19-du [2a] ceji-dü 20-du mangnaidu 21-du südüindü 22-du tangnaidu 23-du kele-dü 24-du nurγan-du 25-du jabajuu-du 26-du ünggölceg-dü 27-du ama-du 28-du öröi-dü 29-du südü 30-du kümün naliin бүкү beyedü :: : :: mayad önggödöi (?) mayad önggödöi mayad önggödöi mayaa arban (?)* [Reading and translation of these three last sentences is uncertain].

- 6th in the hipbones
- 7th in the kidney
- 8th in the hoof of the long leg
- 9th in the sole of the long leg
- 10th in the shinbone of the long leg
- 11th in the knee
- 12th in the radius
- 13th in the rump
- 14th in the ribs near the spine⁵
- 15th in the whole body
- 16th in the lower part of the cheek
- 17th in the neck
- 18th in the udder
- 19th in the chest
- 20th in the vein wall
- 21st in the teeth
- 22nd in the roof of the mouth
- 23rd in the tongue
- 24th in the liver
- 25th in the chest
- 26th in the pit of the stomach
- 27th in the waist
- 28th in the flesh of the waist
- 29th in the rectum
- 30th in the whole body⁶

4. In addition to people and animals, objects also have souls. The Mongols regard the yurt as a very outstanding space that is the symbol of the whole universe. Traditional prescriptions and taboos strictly decide the intercourse between humans and the dwelling place. Special places are marked out for male and female members of the family and also for newborn animals. Certain works and activities can be carried out at specially determined place. The yurt is the living abode not only of people, but several supernatural beings as well. It is strictly forbidden to step on the threshold, as it is the abode of spirits and he who hurts them could have been put even to death. The roof-ring is the living place of the five genii protecting the yurt (*ger-ün tabun qaγan*). The main one of them is the khan of the fireplace (*γal γolumta-yin qaγan*) staying in the centre. The others are the *ger-ün tusalaqu dörben qaγan* who are responsible for a given quarter of the yurt (Wasilewski 1976). So, it is no wonder that the yurt also

⁵ *boγdaluγa* “rib near the spine” – personal communication of Prof. Kato. Cf. also *buγalγa* (Dorzhgotov – Songino 1998, p. 12).

⁶ *Mal-un süniis üjel. 1 sin-e-dü tabaγ-du 2 berekei-dü 3 silbin-dü 4 toyiγ-du 5 següüjin-dü 6 olan yasun-du 7 bögören-dü 8 urtu köl-ün tabaγ-du 9 urtu ulan-du 10 urtu silbin-dü 11 ebüdeg-dü 12 boγtos-du 13 γuyan-du 14 biγdaluγa-du 15 бүкүү beyen-dü 16 jaciγur-du 17 küjigün-dü 18 deleng-dü 19 cegejin-dü 20 qananjar-du 21 sidiün-dü 22 tanglai-du 23 kelin-dü 24 elegen-dü 25 öbcigün-dü 26 ayulaqai-du 27 bel-dü 28 bel miqan-du 29 caγan miqan-du 30 бүкүү beyen-dü.*

has its own soul that roams around during the month. I had the opportunity to consult such a manuscript that is in private possession. It is as follows:

The soul of the yurt is to be consulted with this (booklet)

The soul of the yurt stays in the felt covering of the wall on the first of every decade of every month. If it is damaged, children, people and animals will fall ill.

On the 2nd of every decade of every month it stays in the four-legged iron support of the kettle. If it is damaged, it is bad for the master of the house as well as for his wife.

On the 3rd of every decade of every month it stays in the felt covering of the upper part of the yurt. It is dangerous to damage this covering.

On the 4th of every decade of every month it stays in the door. If it is damaged, it is bad for women staying in the yurt.

On the 5th of every decade of every month it stays in the winter felt board covering the bottom part of the yurt. If it is damaged it is bad for the elder girl.

On the 6th of every decade of every month it stays in the ends of the sidewalls. If the end of the sidewall is damaged it is bad for the elder son.

On the 7th of every decade of every month it stays in the fireplace. Do not damage the fireplace!

On the 8th of every decade of every month it stays in the whole tent. Do not damage the tent; it would be bad for the daughters-in-law.

On the 9th of every decade of every month it stays in the lattice wall. If it is damaged it is bad for the body of the grown-up man.

On the 10th of every decade of every month it stays in the frame of the smoke hole. If it is damaged, all the family will fall ill.

On the days of the dog, of the dragon, of the ox, of the sheep – on these four days – the soul of the earth stays in the earth. Do not get a bride, do not move to a new settlement, do not move the yurt, do not take out the dead, and do not dig a well on these four days. These are the days when one should make a fire offering to the earth and to the lord of the fire.

Let there be blessing!⁷

The end of this latter text indicates that there is also a soul of the earth (*ɣajar-un sünesün*) that spends four days, named after animals, in the earth. On the four days

⁷ [1a] *Ger-ün sünesü egüber üjemüi*

[1b] *Ger-ün sünesü aliba sar-a-yin 3/1-dü tuury-a-du sayumui tuury-a ebdebesü ketüdked kümün mal-du ebedcin kürekü : 3/2-du tuly-a-du sayumui tuly-a ebdebesü ger-ün ejen ba em-e 2-dür mayu : 3/3-du degeber-dü sayumui : degeber ebdebesü mayu bui : 3/4-du egüdün-dü sayumui : egüden ebdebesü ger-deki em-e-dü mayu : 3/5-du qayabsi-du sayumui : qayabsi ebdebesü yeke ökin-dü mayu : 3/6-du ger-ün dotoraki qacara sayumui ger dotoroki qacar ebdebesü yeke köbegün-dü mayu : 3/7-du yoluntu-du sayumui : yolunta buu ebde : 3/8-du örgö-dü sayumui örgö buu ebde ebdebesü beriner-dü [2a] mayu bui : 3/9-du qanan-du sayumui qana ebdebesü yeke kümün-ü bey-e-dü mayu : 3/10 toyonada sayumui : toyona ebdebesü ayıl büri-yi ebdeyü :: : ::*

noqai luu üker qoni ene 4 eder-üd-dü ɣajar-un sünesü ɣajar-du bayıqu bui : ene ederiüd-dü beri ülü abqu sine nutuy ülü bayıqu ger ülü ködölgekü nögcıgsen-ü yasu ülü bariqu quduy ülü uququ : ɣajar-da ɣal ɣal ejen-ü ergikü eder bolui :: : :: öljei qutuy orciqu bolıyay

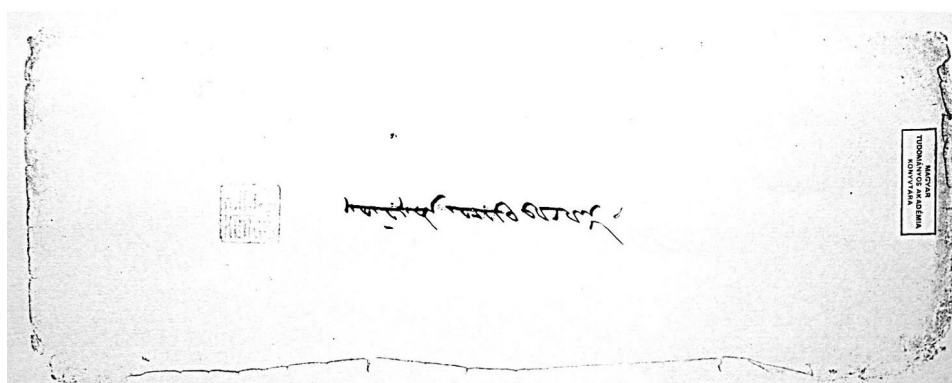
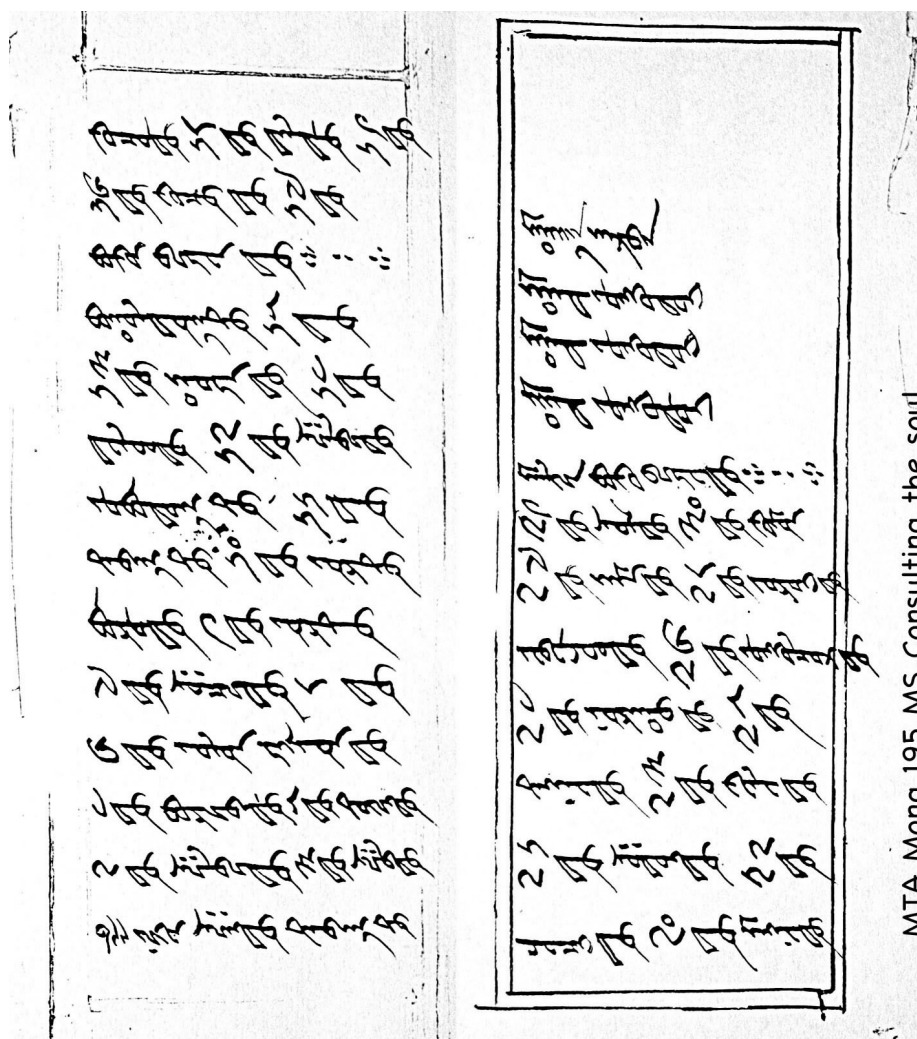
when this soul is in the earth one should not dig the ground, or marry off one's daughter or take a daughter-in-law, or become a sworn brother, or dispose dead bodies, since if one does, further deaths will occur. Bawden quotes Pallas who was aware of the belief: "On the day of the soul of the earth (*γajar-un sünesün-ü ediür*) it is forbidden to dispose dead bodies, as it can cause further deaths" (Bawden 1962, p. 83; Pallas 1776–1801, p. 310).

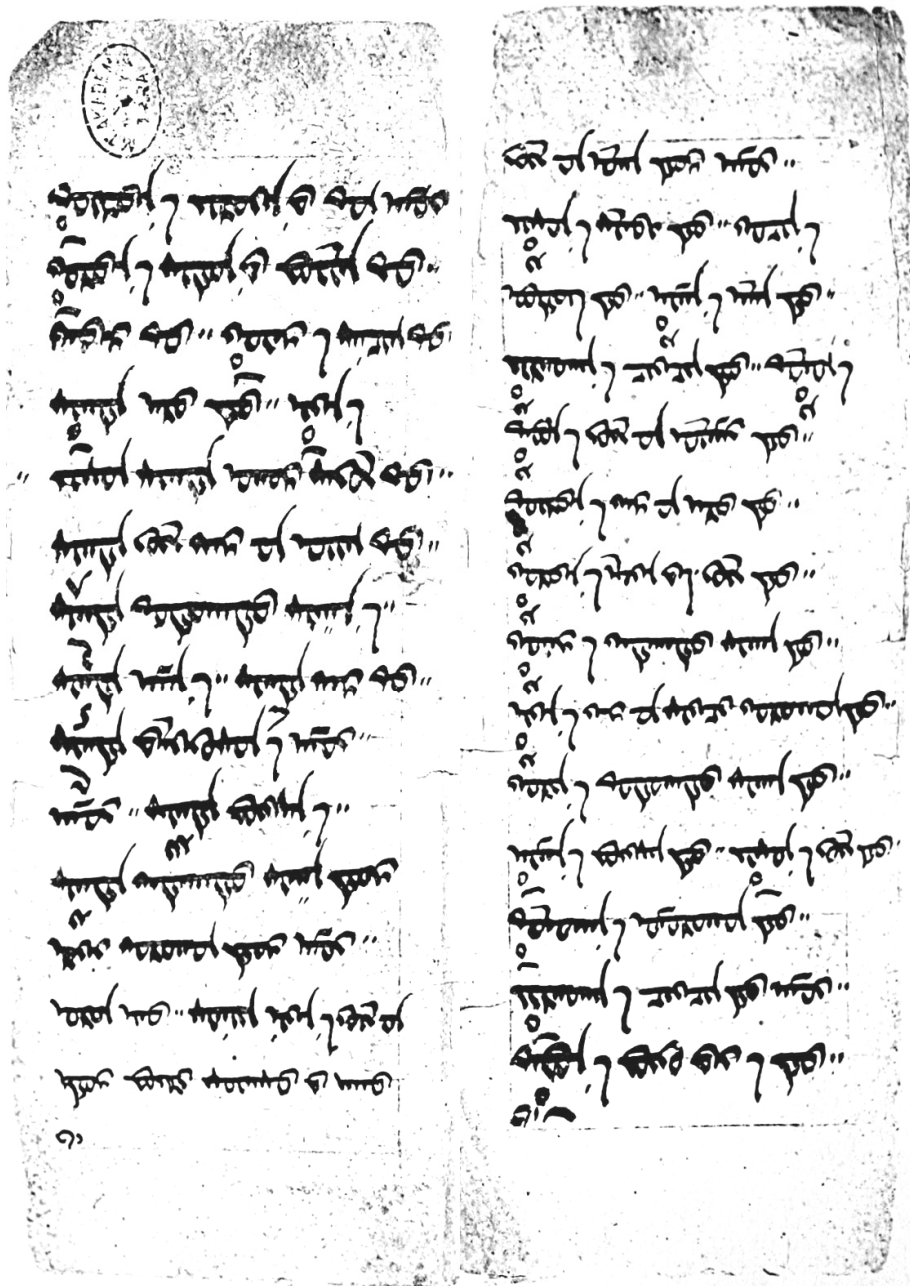
The given data of the souls' residence are not identical in every text. It indicates that these places changed from territory to territory and there was no uniform system for all over Mongolia.

Later, folk beliefs concerning the abode of the soul were taken over by the Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhist Church. Official manuals of astrology indicate the same conception. The well-known astrological manual, the *Qas qayurcay* "Prognostication of the Jade Box" (Heissig–Bawden 1971, No. 299; Kara 2000, No. 15), that is a 'Complete examination of years, months, days, times, planets and stars' gives advice for those days when the earth soul is in the earth, in the intermediate sphere or in the heavens, respectively.

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