



Dr. Saida Daukeyeva

The Sound Space of Rituals for the Dead: Mobility, Religiosity and Sociocultural Change among Mongolian Kazakhs

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Wo: Invalidenstraße 118, Raum 507 (5. OG)

The Kazakhs in western Mongolia commemorate the dead in rituals involving Qur'anic recitation and mourning lament that are held in the traditional nomadic yurt. This practice has persisted among the local Kazakh community since their arrival in Mongolia in the late 19th century through the socialist era, sustained by their mobile pastoral way of life, cohesive kinship and lineage bonds, and syncretistic worldview that blends Islam with indigenous shamanic beliefs. The political, socioeconomic and cultural transformations in Mongolia and the migration of ethnic Kazakhs to Kazakhstan from the 1990s onwards have, however, wrought changes in the spatial and sonic arrangement of the rituals among a transnational community of Mongolian Kazakhs. Memorial feasts can currently occur in a variety of venues – from the felt yurt and a wooden or mud-and-brick house in western Mongolia to an urban apartment or even a restaurant in Kazakhstan – and performance of lament may no longer take place or be adapted to the new architectural settings and religious contexts of the practice.

The presentation explores the interplay of space and sound in Mongolian Kazakh funeral and commemorative rituals, based on ethnographic field studies conducted in 2004–2015. It examines historical and contemporary factors that contribute to a fragmentation of a 'community of practice' (Wenger 1998) and highlights the role of migration and mobility in inducing a social and cultural change.

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