

*Releasing the astral soul
from one's ashes*



From *Isis Unveiled*, II pp. 602-3.

IN JAPAN AND SIAM there are two orders of priests, of which one are public, and deals with the people, the other strictly private. The latter are never seen; their existence is known but to very few natives, never to foreigners. Their powers are never displayed in public, nor ever at all except on rare occasions of the utmost importance, at which times the ceremonies are performed in subterranean or otherwise inaccessible temples, and in the presence of a chosen few whose heads answer for their secrecy. Among such occasions are deaths in the Royal family, or those of high dignitaries affiliated with the Order. One of the most weird and impressive exhibitions of the power of these magicians is that of the withdrawal of the astral soul from the cremated remains of human beings, a ceremony practiced likewise in some of the most important lamaseries of Thibet and Mongolia.

In Siam, Japan, and Great Tartary, it is the custom to make medallions, statuettes, and idols out of the ashes of cremated persons;¹ they are mixed with water into a paste, and after being moulded into the desired shape, are baked and then gilded. The Lamasery of Ou-Tay, in the province of Shan-Si, Mongolia,² is the most famous for that work, and rich persons send the bones of their defunct relatives to be ground and fashioned there. When the adept in magic proposes to facilitate the withdrawal of the astral soul of the deceased, which otherwise they think might remain stupefied for an indefinite period *within* the ashes, the following process is resorted to: The sacred dust is placed in a heap upon a metallic plate, strongly magnetized, of the size of a man's body. The adept then slowly and gently fans it with the *Talapat Nang*,³ a fan of a peculiar shape and inscribed with certain signs, muttering, at the same time, a form of invocation. The ashes soon become, as it were, imbued with life, and gently spread themselves out into a thin layer which assumes the outline of the body before cremation. Then there gradually arises a sort of whitish vapour which after a time forms into an erect column, and compacting itself, is finally transformed into the "double," or ethereal, astral counterpart of the dead, which in its turn dissolves away into thin air, and disappears from mortal sight.⁴



¹ The Buddhist Kalmucks of the Astrakhan steppes are accustomed to make their idols out of the cremated ashes of their princes and priests. A relative of the author* has in her collection several small pyramids composed of the ashes of eminent Kalmucks and presented to her by the Prince Tumene himself in 1836.

[*Most likely Miss Nazyezhdá Andreyevna de Fadeyev (1829-1919), sister of H.P. Blavatsky's mother. She was only two years older than Blavatsky and they engaged in quite an extensive correspondence through the years. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

² [It is most likely that H.P. Blavatsky has in mind the mountains known as Wutai Shan or Wu-t'ai Shan, in the Northeast part of the Shansi province of China, close to the border of Inner Mongolia. They are situated at about thirty miles Northeast of the town of Wutai, and their highest peak is 9,974 feet high. This region has been considered sacred by the Mongolians, and the mountains contain many lamaseries frequented by pilgrims. It is not clear what particular one of the lamaseries H.P. Blavatsky has in mind. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

³ The sacred fan used by the chief priests instead of an umbrella.

⁴ See Vol. I, p. 476 of the present work.