

Multilayered Construction of Mongolian Buddhist Works; a Case Study¹

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Abstract: Most Mongolian Buddhist works available at present, including the Buddhist canons, are modern productions, supposed to have been translated into Mongolian after the so-called second introduction of Tibetan Buddhism. Careful inspection into their lines, however, presents us of many archaic forms which had been in use in the Middle period but became obsolete thereafter as well as elements which have no correspondence in the original Tibetan texts. These facts can enable us to presume that a number of Mongolian Buddhist works were translated from the Uighur originals, with the other versions being referred to, at the time of the introduction of Buddhism and the other works were translated from the Tibetan ones after the Tibetan Buddhism became prevailing in the Mongols. Later after the so-called second introduction of the Tibetan Buddhism in the 16th century they all were hastily and not thoroughly modernized and remolded as if they had been directly translated from the Tibetan originals. In this paper will be verified this hypothesis in view of a number of Mongolian Buddhist works.

Keywords: Tibetan Buddhism, Mongolian Buddhism, translation, revision, historical linguistics

Özet: Günümüze ulaşmış Budist külliyatı da dâhil Moğol Budist eserlerin çoğu, Moğolların Tibet Budizmi ile ikinci kez tanışmaları sonrasında Moğolcaya çevrilmiş çağdaş ürünlerdir. Bununla birlikte, satırlar arası yapılan dikkatli bir inceleme bize Tibetçe aslında yer almayan bazı unsurlarla birlikte orta döneme ait ancak günümüzde artık kullanılmayan bazı arkaik biçimlerin de söz konusu eserlerde yer aldığını göstermektedir. Bu durum, bize birtakım Moğol Budist eserlerinin Tibet Budizminin Moğollar arasında yayılmasının ardından Tibetçe

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kaynaklardan çevrilen diğer çalışmalardan ayrılan farklı kaynaklardan, eserlerin Uygurca asıllarından çevrilmiş olabileceğini düşündürmektedir. 16.yüzyılda Tibet Budizminin Moğollar ile ikinci kez tanışmasının ardından, söz konusu eserler sanki Tibetçe asıllarından doğrudan çevrilmiş gibi gösterilmek amacıyla hızlı ve özensiz bir biçimde yenilenmiş ve biçimlendirilmiştir. Bu makalede söz konusu önerme çeşitli Moğol Budist eser örnekleri ile doğrulanacaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Tibet Budizmi, Moğol Budizmi, çeviri, yenileme, tarihsel dilbilim

0. Buddhist works were firstly translated into Mongolian in the late 13th century, when Tibetan Buddhism introduced then had taken the place of Uighur Buddhism, which had been imported to the Mongols together with the writing system. The oldest document at our hand is among so-called Turfan Fragments; a fragmentary comment of *Bodhicaryāvatāra* dated 1305, in the colophon of which it is described that the original Mongolian translation of *Bodhicaryāvatāra* was produced in 1302. At first the original of Mongolian translations were Uighur versions². After the Tibetan Buddhism had become predominant in the Mongols, it was on Tibetan versions that Mongolian translations were dependent. In terms of fidelity to the originals, translations produced then were not of the same quality; some are free from errors and can be regarded as masterpieces, for example *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, which was translated by Chos kyi 'od zer, but others are far from exact translations, as will be shown below.

Unfortunately, most of the works made in the Yuan period are believed to have been lost thereafter, whether their originals were Uighur or Tibetan. Mongolian Buddhist works available at present are only

² Among good examples are manuscript fragments of *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* excavated at Turfan. The details are discussed in Higuchi, Koichi. How Were Mongolian Versions of the *Lotus Sutra* Translated, Compiled and Transmitted?: through Examination of the Turfan Fragments. *Актуальные вопросы тюркологических исследований. Сборник статей к 75-летию В. Г. Гузеев*. Санкт-Петербургский Государственный Университет Восточный Факультет. 317-330. Санкт-Петербург. 2014 and see also Higuchi, Koichi. The Value of Mongolian Buddhist Works from the Linguistic, Philological and Historical Viewpoint. *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko (The Oriental Library)* vol. 74. The Toyo Bunko. Tokyo. 2016. (forthcoming).

productions after the so-called second introduction of Tibetan Buddhism after the late 16th century. It has been clarified, however, that the original translations of the Yuan period had probably been transmitted from generation to generation and were utilized in many cases as sources in translations or publications in the 17th century or after. They often were arranged as if they had been from the very beginning translated from the Tibetan originals by well-known Buddhist monks, for example Chos kyi 'od zer and so on. In view of the fact that Tibetan Buddhism had attained high dignity in the Qing period, it is natural that monks of those days should have yielded to temptation to add prestige to their achievements by embellishing them as if they were of Tibetan origin, although in truth the originals of some of them were not Tibetan.

Furthermore, many of the translations of the modern period, though attributed to famous monks in the colophons, are in reality translations, or more exactly, revisions with superficial formal modernizations by anonymous monks far less learned. They were supposed to be ill-versed in Buddhism and Tibetan or else to be forced to finish their tasks hurriedly, since many primitive mistakes that can be scrutinized as such by beginners, in terms of not only the Tibetan linguistics but also the Buddhist doctrines, are left uncorrected. Some of the mistranslations can be ascribed to the anonymous modern revisers but the others not; the latter are supposed to be there in the utmost originals of the Yuan period. Thus, though they seem homogenous at a mere sight, Mongolian Buddhist works available at present are of different qualities and antiquities; some are excellent and elaborate translations while the other are poor ones and some are modern productions, some others can be traced to the Middle period and the other are the revisions of the middle original.

1. To be spotlighted here as an illustrative example of such heterogeneity is an unpopular Buddhist work, *Qutuy-tu bilig-ün činadu kijayar-a kürügen quriyangyui silüg (The Collection of Verses of the Holy Supreme Wisdoms)*³. The Sanskrit original was an independent

³ The Sanskrit title is title *Ārya-prajñāpāramitārratṇaḥṣaṣṭyāyagāthā* and that in Tibetan is 'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa yon tan rin po che sdud pa tshig sub cad pa. We have two Sanskrit versions; one consists of 303 verses

monograph which consists of about over 300 verses. In Tibet this work was on the one hand published as an independent monograph, on the other hand was incorporated into a larger work, *the Perfect Wisdom of 18,000 verses* or *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*, as its 84th chapter. The Tibetan canons contain both and do so the Mongolian canons. We have eight Mongolian texts at our disposal and they all are printings of the 18th century, which can be classified into three series⁴:

while the other 302 verses. Also do we have two Tibetan translations; one has 302 verses and the other 300 verses. Further, there exists a Chinese translation, that is *Fo-shuo fo-mu bao-de-cang ban-ruo-jing*. Bibliographical descriptions of the Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese versions are discussed in detail in Bibliographical Notes in Yuyama (ed.): Yuyama, Akira (ed.). *Prajñā-pāramitā-ratna-guṇa-saṃcayagāthā*, (*Sanskrit Recension A*). Cambridge University Press. Cambridge London-New York-Melbourne. 1976, which tells us that relationship among them is quite complicated. The lines of the Chinese version are so different from those of the other that we are attempted to regard it as based on another Sanskrit original now missing. Since this translation can furnish us almost no information, we do not refer to it hereinafter. The Sanskrit lines cited in this paper are those of a Sanskrit-Tibetan bilingual version edited by Obermiller: Obermiller, Eugène. *Prajñā pāramitā-ratna-guṇa-saṃcaya-gāthā. Sanscrit and Tibetan Text*. Bibliotheca Buddhica 29. Akademii Nauk SSSR. Leningrad. 1937. The Tibetan lines are those of a monograph version contained in the Peking edition of the Tibetan canon, Otani 735: Suzuki, Daisetz Teitaro. (ed.) *The Tibetan Tripitaka: Peking edition: kept in the Library of the Otani University, Kyoto*. Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute. Tokyo-Kyoto. (abbr. as Otani). 1955-1962.

⁴ Version A consists of 300 verses and is divided into 9 chapters while the other two have 302 verses, consisting of 8 chapters. Quite strangely both ways of divisions do not coincide with that of the Tibetan originals. As for the details of the number of verses and the divisions into chapters, see 5-7 of Higuchi, Koichi. *The Mongolian Ratnaguṇasamcayagāthā, Introduction, Texts, Translations and Notes* (in Japanese). Keisuisha. Hiroshima). 1991. We have no Uighur version of this work.

A: two monographs; a Kanjur version (K767)⁵ and a Peking xylograph (PLB34)⁶

B: four xylographical texts contained in Dhāraṇī collection (PLB13, 49, 67, 42)⁷

C: the 84th chapter of two xylographical texts of the Perfect Wisdom of 18,000 verses (K764 and PLB32)⁸

2. There are many archaic forms in A and B and some of them are very rarely attested in Middle works. This fact enables us to suppose the original to have been translated in the 14th century. One of the demonstrative proofs for the antiquity of A and B is presented in the following passage⁹:

I-6(c)

A tere qamuy nom-ud-tur ülü an orosil ügegüi-e yabuju :

B tere bodisdv qamuy nom-ud-tur ülü an ayal ügegüi-e yabuju :

C tere nom бүкү-дүр үлү orosin orosiyçi ügegüi-e yabumu :

“He (who has no sensual addiction) does not rest on all beings but keeps practice, without abiding at any place”

We discover here a very precious form *an* ‘resting’, a verb *a-* ‘to be’. This verb is defective in Modern Mongolian though it was productively used in Middle Mongolian. Some inflectional forms of this verb, however, had become in rare use even in the Middle period. One of them is *an*, a modal gerundive form; in fact, this is replaced with an equivalent form *orosin* in C. Only three instances of this gerundive form in the Middle literature have been reported so far; in the letter written in 1305 to Öljeitü by Philippe le Bel, Turfan manuscript fragments of *The Alexander tale* and

⁵ See 184-5 of Ligeti, Louis. *Catalogue du kanjur mongol imprimée*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest. (abbr. as K). 1942-44.

⁶ See 35 of Heissig, Walther. *Die Pekinger lamaistischen Blockdrucke in mongolischer Sprache. Materialien zur mongolischen Literaturgeschichte*. Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden. (abbr. as PLB). 1954.

⁷ Ibid at 22-23, 58 and 61 respectively.

⁸ Ligeti op. cit. 181 and Heissig op. cit. 35.

⁹ The citing convention follows that of Higuchi 1991.

xylographical fragments of *Shiao-qing* once each¹⁰. This work provides us the fourth instance of this form¹¹.

3. Both A and B are not free from translating mistakes, which are telling testimonies for the incompleteness of the translation in the 14th century. The fact that they were left untouched also proves the half-heartedness of the revisions performed in the Modern reproduction. On the contrary, no archaic forms are found in C, where we come across only typical modern forms not to be found in the Middle literature. This holds true not merely in the 84th chapter but also the whole text of *The Perfect Wisdom of 18,000 verses*. Thus, the last one can be regarded as a new translation made in the Modern period, probably at the compilation of the Mongolian canons. The following verse confirms this hypothesis:

¹⁰ As for the form attested in the first one, see 57 of Cerensodnom, Dalantai-Taube, Manfred. *Die Mongolica der Berliner Turfansammlung. Berliner Turfantexte XVI*. Akademie Verlag GmbH, Berlin. 1993. The second one is mentioned at 67 of Mostaert, Antoine and Cleaves, Francis, Woodman. *Les lettres de 1289 et 1305 des ilkan Arġun et Ölġeitü à Philippe le Bel*. Harvard-Yenching Institute. Cambridge/Mass. 1962. The last instance is discussed at 87 in Rachewiltz, Igor de. *The Preclassical Mongolian Version of the Hsiao-ching. Zentralasiatische Studien des Seminars für Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft Zentralasiens der Universität Bonn* 16. 1-109. Universität Bonn. 1982.

¹¹ Though spatial restriction prevents us from showing the example, we have further evidence to the same effect, namely the presence of *bügsen*, a perfect verbal nominal form of a copula *bü-*. It also became defective in Modern Mongolian while in Middle Mongolian this verb could more freely combine with various verbal suffixes, although *bügsen* has been attested only nine times so far in the Middle Mongolian literature such as *The Secret History of the Mongols*, *Vajracchedikā* and *Bhadracarya* and so forth. As for the details, see 23-24 in Higuchi 1991.

8-2(a)¹²

- A bayatud büjig-iyer yabur-un bilig baramid-iyar :
 B bayatud büjig-iyer yabur-un bilig baramid-un küčün-iyer :
 C bayatur qamiy-a yabuqui-dur bilig baramid-iyar :

(b)

- A yurban yirtinčü-eče üneker nögčiged teyin büged toniluysan ber busu :
 B yurban yirtinčü-eče mayad nögčiged bügetele nirvan-dur aqu ber busu :
 C yurban yirtinčü-eče üneker nögčigsen bügetele sayitur getülügen ču busu

(c)

- A nisvanis-i arilyayad bügetele ber töröl-i üjügülyü :
 B nisvanis-i arilyayad bügetele ber töröl-i üjügülyü :
 C nisvanis-i arilyaysan bolbaču törökü-yi üjügülün üiledümüi :

(d)

- A ötelkü ebedkü ükükü ügei ber bügesü ükül yegüdkel-i üjügül-ün bui ::
 B ötelkü ebedkü ükükü ügei ber bügesü ükül yegüdkel-i üjügül-ün bui ::
 C ötelkü kiged ebedkü ba ükükü ügei bolbaču ükün yegüdkeküi-yi üjügülmüi ::

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The Tibetan and Sanskrit corresponding lines are as follows:

Tib.

- (a) dpa' bo gar spyod shes rab pha rol phyin pa yis (=Mo. (a))
 (b) khams gsum yang dar 'das la nmam par grol bang mi (=Mo. (b))
 (c) nyon mongs bsal bal gyur kyang skye ba ston par byed (=Mo. (c))
 (d) rka dang nad dang 'chu ba med kyang 'chi 'pho ston (=Mo. (d))

Skt.

- (a) trai-dhātukaṃ samatīkrānta na bodhisattvāḥ (Mo. (b))
 (b) kleśāpanīta upapatti nidarśayanti (Mo. (c))
 (c) jara-vyādhi-mṛtyu-vigatāś cyuti darśayanti (Mo. (d))
 (d) prajñā pāramitā yatra caranti dhīraḥ (Mo. (a))

“Having, through Wisdom, comprehended the essential original nature of dharmas, He completely transcends the triple world and the states of woe. Having turned the precious wheel of the Mightiest of Men, He demonstrates Dharma to the world for the complete extinction of aging, illness and death.”

Worth noting above all is the discrepancies between *büjg-iyer* ‘by dancing’ of A and B and *qamiy-a* ‘where(ever)’ of C found in the first line. The difference is too great for us to believe that these three translations correspond to one and the same original. The key with which to solve the mystery is Tib. *gar*, which is a homonym meaning ‘dance’ on the one hand and ‘whither, where’ on the other¹³. Taking into consideration the fact that its equivalent Sanskrit form is *yatra* ‘to which place, where’, we can easily come to a conclusion as for which is appropriate. This makes it clear that the translators or the revisers of A and B consulted only the Tibetan original and at that they were also poor in Tibetan¹⁴.

4. Our further attention goes to a concessive particle *ču* ‘even’ in C in the second line and *bolbaču* ‘even if he/she is’ in the third and the fourth line. The latter form is a concessive gerundive form of a copulative verb *bol-* ‘to be, become’ and originally was a combination of a past perfective form of this verb *bolba* with this concessive particle *ču*. We never come across *ču* or a concessional ending with this particle, *-baču*, in the Middle literature; as far as it is known, the earliest usage of the latter is

¹³ See 67 in Jäschke, Heinrich August. *A Tibetan-English Dictionary: with special reference to the prevailing dialects; to which is added an English-Tibetan vocabulary*. Routledge & Kegan Paul. London and Henley. 1881

¹⁴ As for mistakes found in Mongolian Buddhist works and their implications, see Higuchi, Koichi. Implications of Mistakes in Mongolian Buddhist Works. *Altai Hakpo: Journal of the Altaic Society of Korea* 9 (Memorial Volume for Retirement of Prof. Dr. Seong Baeg-in.) 12-36. The Altaic Society of Korea. Seoul. 1999.

A form worthwhile to note is *yabur-un* ‘performing’ in the first line of A and B. A preparatory gerundive suffix *-run*, which was only found in a few fossilized idioms such as *ügüler-ün* ‘saying (that)...’ or so in the Modern literature, had been widely and productively in use in Middle Mongolian, of which the typical usage is the form in question.

an instance in a Mongolian document involved in *Man-wen yuan-dang*, dated in 1632, where *-bači*, an orthographical variant of *-baču* is used¹⁵. Therefore, its occurrence in C affords us a decisive proof that this version is a modern translation or a revision. The particle is used 78 times independently and 35 times in the combination in C, while we find no usage of this particle in both.

Another proof provided by C for its modernity worth presenting is a usage of a deictic form *mön* ‘the very same’ as a copula found in the following stanza:

17-7(d)

A tedeger kemebesü ülü ničuqui belges buyu kemen medegdeküi ::

B tedeger kemebesü ülü ničuqui belge buyu kemen medegdeküi ::

C ülü ničuqui-yin belge anu edeger mön kemen medegdeküi

“These should be wisely known as the characteristics of the irreversible.”

It should be noted that the equivalent to *mön* in C is a copulative form *buyu* in A and B. In the present day Mongolian, we frequently witness this form as a copula but this usage has not been attested in the Middle literature. One of the presumably earliest usage of this form as a (part) of copula in another *Man-wen yuan-dang* document dated in the same year, where we find it in a construction *mön bol-* with a function as a copula¹⁶. This means that the grammaticalization of this form from a substantive to a copula was still under way in the early 17th century.

5. As far as the lines shown above are concerned, we are convinced that the Mongolian version of *The Perfect Wisdom of 18,000 verses* is a modern and elaborate translation. Our expectation, however, is discouraged; here again we find such primitive errors as have been shown so far. One of them is as follows:

¹⁵ See 145 in Kuribayashi, Hitoshi and Hailan. *A Study of the Mongolian Documents Involved in Man-wen yuan-dang, Written in the Early 17th Century*. Center for Northeast Asian Studies, Tohoku University. Sendai. 2015.

¹⁶ See Kuribayashi and Hailan op. cit. 153.

15-4(a)¹⁷

A tere metü yabuıçı dalai erdem-tü ügülekü-yin saran boluyad :

B tere metü yabuıçı dalai erdem-tü ügülekü-yin saran boluyad :

C tere metü yabudal-tu sayitur amudurayçı ügülekü-yin saran boluyad :

“Coursing thus, the Oceans of Qualities, the Moons of the doctrine (become the shelter of the world, and)”

The form *sayitur amudurayçı* ‘one who lives appropriately’ in C seems quite awkward in this context and in fact its equivalent does not exist in the line of A and B or of the Tibetan original. Instead, we find there a frequently used epithet of Buddha meaning ‘the Oceans of Qualities’, which is exactly translated into Mongolian in A and B. It is probable that some unknown translators misread Tib. *mtsho* ‘lake’ as Tib. *’tsho* ‘to live’, since these two forms look alike when written in Tibetan letters. But it goes without saying that those who were well-trained in Tibetan would never commit such an error. Whether it may be a new translation or a revision of the former original, the monk(s) who was (were) at work are supposed to be poor at Tibetan and the Buddhist doctrine or else to be forced to do his (or their) work in haste.

6. As has been shown above, Mongolian Buddhist works are far from homogeneous. It also can hold true of the Mongolian Buddhist canons. They had been published sometimes under the auspices of dynasties and embellished as if they had been translated from the Tibetan original but it is not the case; they were collections of works of different ages and origins. Some works are considerably faithful to the originals of the 14th century, some other ones are revisions of the original at the time of the Modern compilation and the others are new translations of the modern period. Closer inspection of the lines of Mongolian Buddhist works will afford us significant forms in view of Mongolian historical linguistics, as well as facts which enable us to consider the history of translations, revisions and compilations of the Mongolian Buddhist works.

¹⁷ The corresponding Tibetan line is as follows: *de ltar spyod pa legs mtsho smra ba ’i rnams*.