

## Linguistic and philological value of Mongolian Buddhist works\*

### 0. Introduction

Most of Mongolian Buddhist works were firstly translated into Mongolian in the 14<sup>th</sup> century when Buddhism was introduced into the Mongols by the Uighurs, but they are missing today. At our hand are only their modern versions revised after the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the Tibetan Buddhism was said to be secondly introduced. However, careful examinations into their lines enable us to assume that the revisions were not so exhaustive that we find many archaic forms of much linguistic value as well as many mistaken forms there, which can give us a well-founded conjecture as to how Mongolian Buddhist works were translated and had been transmitted from generation to generation.

### 1. Mongolian versions of *Ratnajāli*

Spotlighted below are the Mongolian versions of *Ratnajāliparipṛcchā* or *Qutuy-tu erdeni tour-tu-yin öcigsen neretü yeke kölgen sudur*. We have a manuscript and four printings of it, which can be classified into three groups, A, B and C, in terms of philological as well as linguistic features<sup>4</sup>. Though they all are productions of the modern period, we find many archaisms in their lines; worth noting is Pre-classical orthography *-qi-*, as well as forms like

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<sup>4</sup> Version A is a manuscript which belongs to the Hedin Collection of the Swedish Ethnographical Museum [Aalto 1954: 81]. Version B consists of another manuscript of the Collection and two Peking xylographs [Heissig 1954: 10, 47]. Version C is a Kanjur version [Ligeti 1942–44: 244]. Only the last mentioned has a colophon in which it was described that this one was a revision of the translation by Unükü-tü bilig-tü tai güüsi, who was a real historical figure performing central roles in the publication of the Mongolian Kanjur under the reign of Ligdan Qan of Chaqar in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

*büsire*- ‘to believe in’, *güre*- ‘to beg’, *jılmağan* ‘soft’, *siğun* ‘voice’, *bilge bilig* ‘prajñāpāramitā or perfect wisdom’, *quvraç* ‘monk’ and so forth, all of which are quite rarely attested even in the literature of the middle period.

## 2. Archaisms in *Ratnajāli*

Here we presented an example of *-qi-*. This orthography, peculiar to Pre-classical Written Mongolian, cannot be found in the modern literature and even in the middle period its equivalent *-ki-* was predominant, so we can utilize it as an index of the age of production of manuscripts or printings. We attest *-qi-* 16 times in A but they all are replaced with *-ki-* in the other two versions. Given below is the 35<sup>th</sup> verse<sup>5</sup>;

<35-ab>

A *ked ba doloğan edür söni : būrin ilaııısan-u ner-e-yi baribası :*

B *ked ba doloğan edür söni : būrin ilaııısan-u ner-e-yi baribası :*

C *ked ba doloğan edür söni : būrin ilaııısan-u ner-e-yi baribası :*

<cd>

A *burqan-a sayisiyaıdaısan qıııalal ügegü : teyin büged ariıun nidü-tü bolıyu :*

B *burqan-a sayisiyaıdaısan kıııalal ügegü : teyin büged ariıun nidü-tü bolıyu :*

C *burqan-a sayisiyaıdaısan kıııalal ügegü : teyin büged ariıun nidü-tü bolıyu :*

“Anyone who, for seven days and nights consecutively, has been reciting the holy name of the Conquered, namely Buddha, will be praised by Buddha and have limitless and perfectly clear eyesight given.”

These forms can convince us that the original of A was produced in the middle period and B as well as C was a modern revision. But different from typical middle period works such as *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, a masterpiece of Chos kyi ’od zer, *Ratnajāli* has not a few mistakes in the lines which cannot be supposed to have made by well-versed monks.

<sup>5</sup> This work consists of 195 stanzas and prose. The manner of citation adopted here is the same as that in [Higuchi 1994]. See the introductory remarks of the second part of the monograph.

### 3. Mistakes and their implications

The contrast in the second stanza is worthwhile to note: A and B *lingqu-a* ‘lotus’ vs. C *degedü-yin* ‘of the superior, sacred.’

<0047-ab>

A *ende ibegel-ün ner-e-yi sonosbasu : masida çiyuluşsan lingu-a egesig-tü :*

B *ende ibegel-ün ner-e-yi sonosbasu : masida çiyuluşsan lingu-a egesig-tü :*

C *ende ibegel-ün ner-e-yi sonosbasu : masida çiyuluşsan degedü-yin egesig-tü :*

<cd>

A *samadi-yi ödter olqu bol-un : költi erdem-üd-i sayitur daşurisqayu ::*

B *samadi-yi ödter olqu bolun : költi erdem-üd-i sayitur daşurisqayu ::*

C *samadi-yi ödter olqu bolun : költi erdem-üd-i sayitur daşurisqayu ::*

“If they heard here the name of the Savior, namely Buddha, it would be sound as the voice of assembled lotus (sic!), and helping them obtain *dhyāna* quickly, it would glorify the limitless virtue.”

The phrase ‘the voice of lotus’ which is almost meaningless has no equivalent in the Chinese version or the Tibetan one. The fact that its Tibetan counterpart is *dam pa* ‘holy’ makes us to conclude that in A and B this form must be misread as *pad ma* ‘lotus’ and only in C this mistake is corrected. However, even C is not free from such careless mistakes, although we have no space to present them here.

With these facts presented so far at our hand we can suppose that the Mongolian *Ratnajāli* was originally translated from the Tibetan original in the 14<sup>th</sup> century in haste by monks not so acquainted with Tibetan and that the original had been transmitted from generation to generation with careless revisions and linguistic modernizations. These facts also warn us that colophons are not always trustworthy.

### References

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