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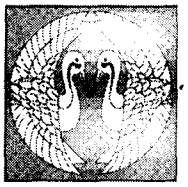

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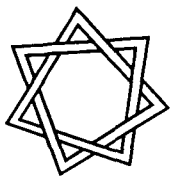

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TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS: DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH

A. G. Sazykin

MONGOLIAN HAND-WRITTEN BOOKS

During its more than seven-century history, Mongolian literature, which was closely linked to the political and cultural developments in the Mongol state, has known periods of flourishing and decline, intense literary activity or spiritual stagnation. Centuries-long contacts with the cultures of Central Asia, as well as India and China, could not but influence the process of the development and content of Mongolian literature, which preserved in its written texts the traces of the most varied cultural and literary traditions. Similar influences found reflection both in the Mongolian writing system, which has employed at least ten scripts, and in the format of Mongolian books — large, beautifully executed, illustrated manuscripts or small books, *poṭhī*, patterned after ancient Indian books on palm leaves. "Accordion"-form manuscripts are also frequently encountered, as well as quires of the most varied types and dimensions.

Even more varied are the contents of Mongolian manuscript books since manuscripts were the most common means of disseminating among the Mongols translations of Indian tales and parables, Tibetan stories and legends, and Chinese novels. Besides, the original works of the Mongols themselves were also represented most fully in manuscript form.

One of the most important features of the centuries-long history of the Mongolian manuscript book is the fact that the Mongols, unlike other peoples who were previously familiar with the manuscript book and later came into contact with printed materials, had already encountered book-printing in the first century of their literature's existence. However, the xylograph printing of Mongolian books, which originates from the second half of the thirteenth century, has failed to supersede manuscripts, which continued to be employed by the Mongolian peoples up to the beginning of the twentieth century.

The continued coexistence of the manuscript and print book among the Mongols, and the close links between them, provides grounds for a comprehensive examination of the manuscript book's history and the history of xylograph reproduction in the Mongolian language. Only the juxtaposition of the content, artistic and cognitive merits, ideological trends of these two types of Mongolian book, as well as the elucidation of their genesis and circulation specifics, can throw additional light to the not wholly interrupted nature of the Mongolian manuscript tradition and determine the true significance of the manuscript book in the history of Mongolian literature as a whole.

The continuous and extremely wide employment of the manuscript book among the Mongols has long received notice from Orientalists. In 1839, the Russian scholar O. M. Kovalevsky, in the foreword to his "Mongolian Chrestomathy", noted that "the method of printing which has up until now been used in China, Tibet, and Mongolia, taken together with the significant loss of time and not inconsiderable expenses, serves as a very great hindrance to the rapid distribution of new works. Manuscripts, so respected in Asia, retain their original price" [1].

It is, however, difficult to agree entirely with Kovalevsky's assertion. Certainly, the xylograph publication of books requires great efforts to prepare the manuscript text for blocks and to engrave the texts on them. But "once the blocks have been engraved, the paper cut, and the paint readied," reports Du Halde, who observed the work of a Chinese printer in the eighteenth century, "then a single person with a brush can indefatigably print nearly ten-thousand folios in a single day" [2]. Besides, the enormous number of xylograph editions in both Mongolian and Tibetan which have been discovered demonstrates that the "significant loss of time and not inconsiderable expenses" Kovalevsky pointed to, could not hinder considerably the rapid growth in the number of xylograph books among the peoples of Central Asia. For example, the Buddhist church contributed greatly to the spread of xylographing and increasing the number block-prints, having quickly evaluated the advantages of the new method of book production for the dissemination of Buddhist sacred texts.

Depending on their origin, all xylographs in the Mongolian language can be divided into four groups; these are Peking, Mongolian, Buryat and Oirat editions. The largest and oldest centre of book printing in the Mongolian language was Peking. The first xylographs in Uighur-Mongolian script and the "quadrangular script" of the 'Phags-pa Lama appeared in Peking in the second half of the thirteenth — beginning of the fourteenth century during

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the reign of the Yuan dynasty of Mongolian origin. With the expulsion of the Mongols from China in 1368, the printing of xylographs in Mongolian writing in China decreased significantly, or was halted altogether. From the period from the end of the fourteenth century to the mid-seventeenth century only a single xylograph collection of incantations, printed in China and dated to 1431, has come down to us. From 1650 on, the second active period of book printing in the Mongolian language began. An edition of the canonical *sūtra Thar-pa chen-po* ("The Great Liberator") appeared in that year, and that was the first edition in the Mongolian language, which came to light in the reign of the Ch'in dynasty. The renewal of printing was caused by the rapid development, beginning from the end of the sixteenth century, of literary activity among Southern Mongolian authors who were primarily the translators of vast Buddhist works, which was linked to the spread of Tibetan Buddhism, known as Lamaism in the European literature. It is only natural that at that time Buddhist canonical and ritual texts translated into Mongolian came to be published.

The few seventeenth-century Peking xylographs which have reached us are beautifully engraved, printed on fine, thick paper, often with the use of two- or three-coloured print, and are impressive in format and size. These editions were not cheap and were intended primarily for the numerous newly created Buddhist monasteries in Mongolia, which badly needed liturgical and dogmatic literature in Mongolian. They were also necessary for distribution among Mongolian nobility, in whose support and sponsorship the Buddhist church was particularly interested during the initial stage of its activity within Mongolia. As for Mongolian steppe aristocracy, it considered the Buddhist church as a great support to their secular. The Mongolian noblemen made generous gifts to *lamas*, including editions of religious literature. It is for this reason that we find among the names of initiators and, naturally, donators of translations and editions of Buddhist works the names of the most powerful Mongolian princes.

One such protector of Buddhism who greatly aided the spread of Buddhist literature in Mongolian, was the Altan Khan of Tümet. During his lifetime, in 1587, a Mongolian translation of *Altan gerel-tü sudur* was published. At the initiative of Altan Khan and members of his family, old translations of works from the Buddhist canonical collection *Kanǰur* were sought out and new ones produced. Ligdan Khan of Tsakhar was another powerful protector of the Buddhist church; at his initiative and with his support, the compilation of the first full version of the *Kanǰur* in Mongolian was completed.

The great role of the Buddhist church in "limiting Mongolian liberty" was duly noted by Manchu rulers of China too. Actively encouraging the activities of Buddhist monasteries in Mongolia, the Ch'in government contributed to the spread of religious literature, the most important means for the propagating of Buddhist ideas and relevant world-outlook. For this reason, two large print workshops which existed until the beginning of the twentieth century began to function in Peking in the mid-seventeenth century, publishing Buddhist literature in Tibetan and Mongolian.

More than 300 editions were prepared during this period in Mongolian alone, including such ambitious editions as the 108-volume *Kanǰur* which appeared in 1720 and the 225-volume *Tanǰur* printed in 1749. Among other of which contain canonical, dogmatic, and ritual texts, one can cite the "One Hundred Thousand Verses *Yum*" published in 12 and 16 volumes; the "Twenty-Five Thousand Verses *Yum*" printed in four volumes; and the four-volume *sumbum* (collection of works) of Lcang-skya Khutukhtu. A collection of legends about the deeds of Avalokiteśvara and the Tibetan ruler Sontsen-Gampo, *Mani gambu*, and the collection of *sūtras* and *dhāraṇīs*, *Sungdui*, appeared in two large volumes.

Among Peking xylograph editions in Mongolian, one can classify as non-Buddhist, or not entirely Buddhist in content, grammatical and medical works, dictionaries, oracles and calendars, astronomical treatises, instructions for Manchu emperors, the Confucian Canon, etc.

Peking print production also includes literary works which became extremely widespread and popular among the Mongols such as *Subhasita*, "History of Geser Khan", "Story of Molon-toyin", and several others. But they made up only an insignificant part of the basic quantity of Mongolian-script editions; furthermore, they were too expensive for the majority of the Mongolian population. The bulk of Peking xylographs, including Buddhist works, required an appropriately prepared reader sufficiently familiar with Buddhist dogmatics, philosophy, and terminology. Hence, according to B. Laufer, the most frequent purchasers of such books were "monks who lived in Lamaist monasteries both in Peking itself and around the city, and the numerous Mongolian traders who visited the city in the winter" [3]. These Mongolian traders bought up Peking xylograph editions, intending, of course, to resell them subsequently either to Mongolian monasteries or to wealthy buyers from the upper echelons of society, usually the feudal elite. Consequently, Peking publishers were primarily oriented toward the needs of Mongolian monasteries and, to a certain degree, elite readers who were able to acquire these expensive editions.

The flourishing production of Buddhist books in Peking with regular deliveries to Mongolia appears to have largely freed Mongolian *lamas* from the necessity of developing their own book-printing. In any case, collections of Mongolian manuscripts and xylographs contain only a handful of xylographs printed in the monasteries of Southern Mongolia and Khalkha.

After flooding the book market of Mongolia itself, Peking editions soon began to spread elsewhere. For example, they were hardly a rarity in Buryat *datsan* libraries. But the distance of the Buryat *ulus* from Peking's publishing houses and the attendant difficulties with delivering Peking editions, exacerbated by a toughening of frontier control in the 1850s, spurred Buryat *lamas* to organise in *datsans* their own production of xylograph books.

The first attempts to establish book printing in Mongolian were undertaken by Buryat *lamas* at the beginning of the nineteenth century. But the initiative did not receive the necessary development at the time and at present we know of only 13 Buryat early print xylograph editions which contain text in Mongolian writing. These are primarily reissues of Peking xylographs of Buddhist canonical works, as well as small prayers and *dhāraṇīs*.

At that time, and for the only time in the entire history of Buryat xylography, the 1715 Peking xylograph of the "Book of Death" was republished. Known in Tibetan as *Bar do t'os gros* and in Mongolian as *Sonosuyad yekede*

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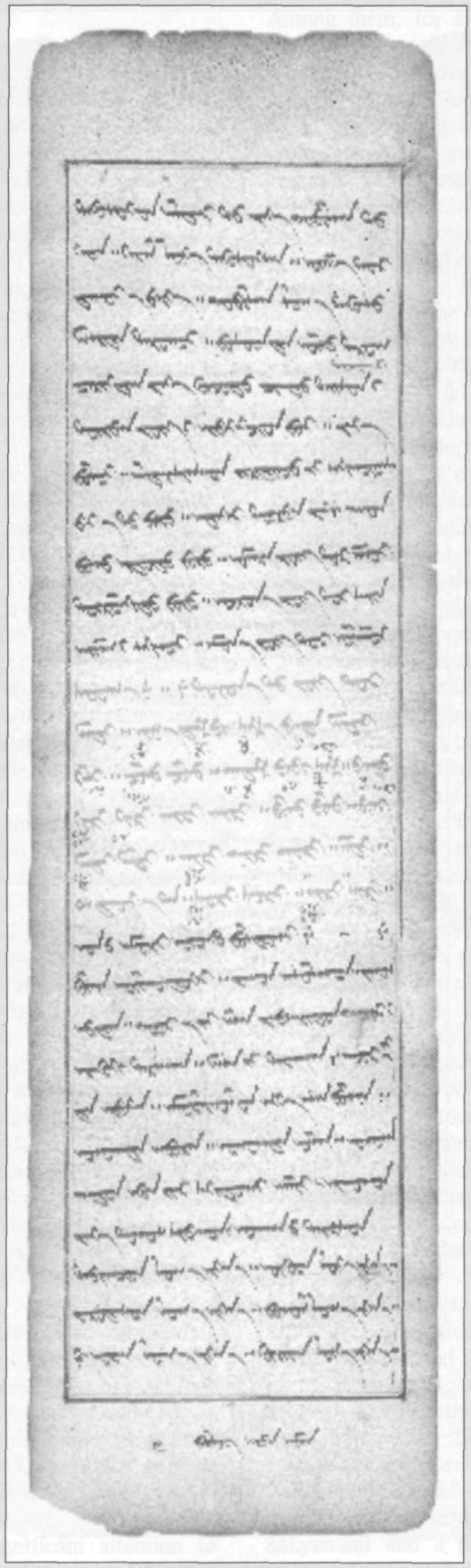

Fig. 1

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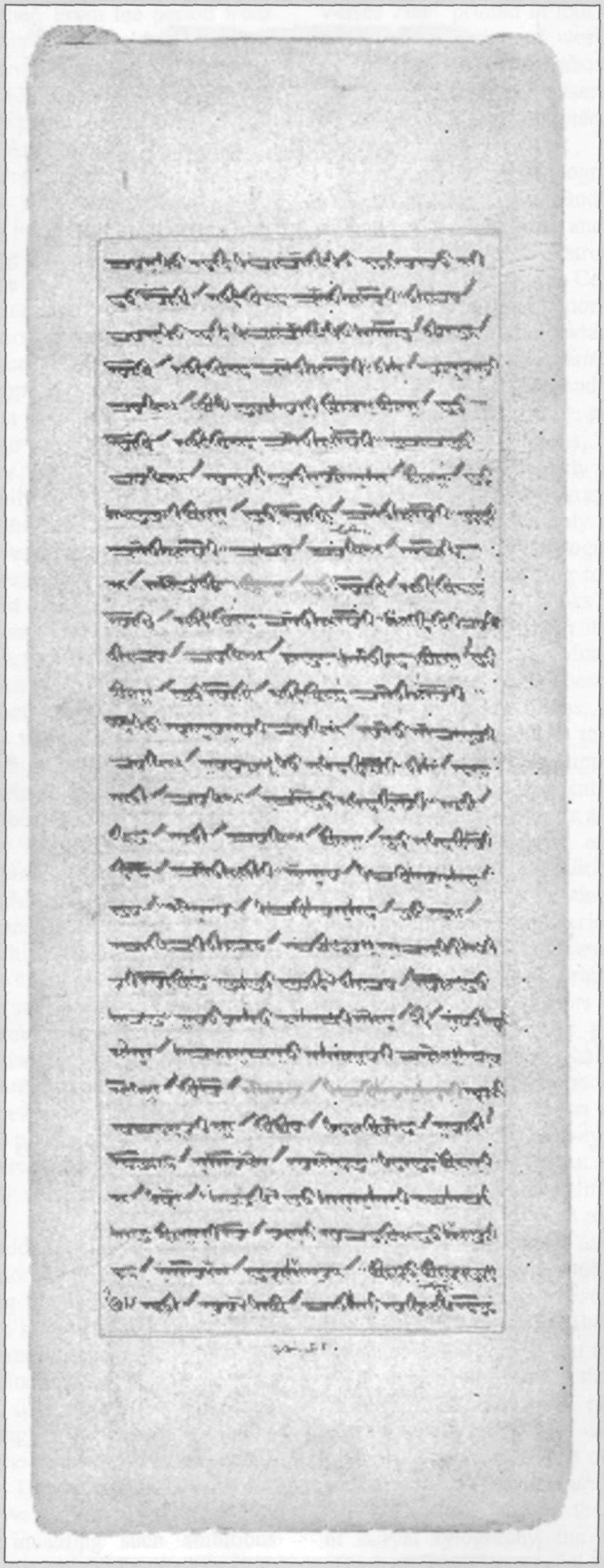

Fig. 2

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deceased. Also unique are a brief, trilingual version of the dictionary *Mahāvyutpatti* and an anti-shamanist sermon by the Mongolian Keüken Khutukhtu, printed in at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The second, or late, period of Buryat xylograph production began in the 1860s and continued until the 1920s. More than 500 xylograph editions were released in Mongolian (including Tibetan-Mongolian bilingual editions) during those years. And one must also take into account that in the print shops of Buryat *datsans*, only one of every five or six xylograph books was released with a text in Mongolian writing (the remainder were printed in Tibetan).

As in the previous period, Peking xylographs of Buddhist canonical and liturgical literature were actively reissued, often reproducing the original colophons. Among the most significant of the Buryat editions of canonical works published at the time were the *Altan gerel-tü sudur*, "Eight Thousand Verses *Yum*", *Čayan lingqu-a*, *Thar-pa chen-po*, and *Üliger-ün dalai*.

Among guides to the performance of Buddhist rituals published by the Buryat, we find reissues of eighteenth-century Peking xylographs with rituals for honouring a *lama*-teacher and a ritual in honour of Otoči (the Medicine Buddha). Moreover, a series of small brochures was published with descriptions of the ritual for professing the faith, the rituals of *lama-yōga*, and sacrificial offerings to the three objects of great value, rituals for the dead, etc. The *datsans* also printed up large quantities of short *sūtras*, prayers, laudations, hymns, and *dhāraṇīs* which are part of Buddhism's everyday liturgical and ritual literature.

Hagiographic literature was also reissued, including lives of the Buddha Śākyamuni, Atiša, Mar-pa, 'Brom ston-pa, Milaraspa, Tsongkhapa. A two-volume Buryat reissue of the 1712 Peking xylograph *Mani gambu* appeared as well.

Nor did Buryat *lamas* ignore Buddhist dogmatic and philosophical literature. They printed the large, medium, and small *Lam-rim* by Tsongkhapa and a commentary on it. Several commentaries on canonical *sūtras* and the Buddhist catechism *Tonilqui-yin čimeg* were published as well.

But Buddhist didactic literature made up the largest part of Buryat xylograph production. For example, the *Subhasita*, *Arad-i teǰigekü rasiyan-u dusul*, *Čayan lingqus-un baylay-a* collections of verse teachings and collections of tales known as commentaries on these teachings were printed on several occasions. Various *datsans* also printed collections of "Commentaries on the *Üliger-ün nom*" and "Commentaries Which Explain the Value of the Diamond *Sūtra*" in the form of stories. As concerns the narrative literature, *datsan* publishers took care to release the "Story of Molon-toyin", "Tale of the Moon Cuckoo", and "Story of Čoyiǰid Dakini".

One should note that in the distribution of didactic literature, the Buryat *lamas* did not limited themselves merely to reissuing already existing collections of teachings and tales. Much was translated anew, and in some cases new commentaries were even drawn up. As an example, one can cite the commentary on the *Subhasita* and the commentary on the *Arad-i teǰigekü rasiyan-u dusul* by Rintchin Nomtoev.

Buryat *lamas* also accorded significant attention to spreading the norms of Buddhist morality among believing laymen, for which purpose they published a series of didactic brochures drawn up by the *širegetü* (superior) of the Aginsky *datsan*, Dordzhi Dandzhinov. These brochures provide an accessible, popular exposition of all the main demands placed on followers by the Buddhist church. Among them, for example, are edifying passages on the necessity of respecting parents and elders, teachings on the benefit of virtue and the harm of sin, and instructions on carrying out Buddhist vows. Individual sermons condemn the wearing of expensive clothes and decorations, criticise smoking and taking snuff, excessive drunkenness, games of chance, etc.

Thus, Buryat *lamas* succeeded in a relatively short time in significantly increasing the number of xylograph editions in Mongolian. And one should note that in comparison with Peking xylographs, Buryat editions were to a much greater degree intended for laymen. As they were entirely accessible and inexpensive, they easily found readers not only in Buryatia itself, but also in Khalkha and Tuva, which is clear from the substantial number of *datsan* editions we have seen in collections in Ulan Bator and Kyzyl.

The outstanding results achieved by the end of the nineteenth century by Peking and Buryat publishers in the distribution of printed literature in Mongolian do not seem to have made much of an impact on the fate of the manuscript book. The number of manuscripts which appeared at that time not only failed to decrease, but increased. Furthermore, as before, a substantial part of them reproduced xylograph editions.

One of the main, and constantly relevant, reasons for the copying of print books, according to Prof. Gy. Kara, was the fact that "print books were always in short supply and they were not cheap" [4]. Such manuscript copies are at times of significant scholarly interest, as some of the xylograph originals have been lost and copies are now the only indication that print editions once existed. Among such manuscripts, one can cite, for example, the above-mentioned late sixteenth-century Mongolian edition of the *Altan gerel-tü sudur*, which has not reached us in print form, a copy of the 1673 Peking edition of the *Sungdui* collection, a copy of the Oirat xylograph edition of the "Diamond *Sūtra*" from the first half of the eighteenth century.

Another reason for the appearance of numerous copies of widely distributed and frequently printed xylograph editions of Buddhist works was the proposition in Buddhist dogmatics which treats the reproduction of sacred texts as a highly virtuous and extremely salutary act. According to Buddhist conviction, a manuscript text far surpasses a printed text in magical force. Moreover, the benefits of copying grew in accordance with the type of paper and ink used to produce the manuscript. The copying of a sacred text in "precious" ink on lacquered paper was thought significantly increase the value of the act. For example, the Mongolian collection at the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies contains a large number of such manuscripts among which copies of one of the Buddhist treatises significantly exceed the quantity of all others. We speak here of the "Diamond *Sūtra*" (Skt. *Vajracchedikā*), a comparatively small work included in the Buddhist canon and containing an exposition of a proposition in the teaching in the form of a discussion between the Buddha Śākyamuni and a pupil called Subhūti. This *sūtra* was translated from Tibetan into Mongolian no fewer than five times, and was frequently reissued in xylograph form for distribution among Mongolian Buddhists. Nine editions of

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the "Diamond *Sūtra*" were produced in Peking alone in the eighteenth century. We also know of Mongolian and Oirat xylograph works. Already at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the dawn of Buryat book-printing, three xylographs of the *sūtra* were released. Later, in the second half of the nineteenth century, at least 15 Buryat editions of the *sūtra* appeared in Mongolian script.

This proliferation of xylograph editions of the "Diamond *Sūtra*" was paralleled by abundance of manuscripts. Such manuscripts, often in many copies, are present in almost all manuscript collections. The Mongolian collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, for example, contains more than 70 manuscripts of the "Diamond *Sūtra*". Nine of these manuscripts were executed in "silver", "gold", or five-coloured "precious" ink on black lacquered paper. In the collections of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Language and Literature in Ulan Bator, the number of Oirat manuscripts alone of this *sūtra* in Zaya pandita "clear script" is 80.

An extremely typical feature of most copies of this work is their excellent preservation, which substantially distinguishes them from many other surviving Mongolian manuscripts. The reason is that Buddhists, as was accurately noted by Kovalevsky, "revere [such books] as a means of salvation and as a sacred object which guards against illness and misfortune, and not as a means of spreading enlightenment and education" [5]. Hence, as religious objects, they were sooner revered than read. It was for this reason that books sacred to Buddhists, carefully wrapped in a rag or placed in a special wooden box, were kept in the *yurt* of every cattle-breeder, even those who were illiterate, in the most honoured place — in a chest by the home's altar.

As concerns the abundance of xylographs and manuscripts of the "Diamond *Sūtra*", one must give credit to Tibetan and Mongolian *lamas*, who contributed greatly to the popularisation of this *sūtra* among Central Asia peoples. In Tibetan-Mongolian didactic literature, for example, each mention of the benefits to be obtained from copying sacred books was invariably accompanied by a reference to the "Diamond *Sūtra*" as an example. Moreover, Tibetan authors even took the time to draw up a special collection of tales dedicated solely to demonstrating and elucidating the extraordinary benefits to be reaped from copying and reading this *sūtra*. Mongolian literary figures subsequently reworked and augmented the collection significantly.

Any literate lay-person could, of course, copy sacred texts to add to his religious virtue, but the information contained in certain colophons indicates that so-called "steppe *lamas*" frequently participated in the copying of books. These were *lamas* not tied to a specific monastery who wandered the encampments and, when necessary, performed religious services and rituals. They also engaged in medical practice, fortune-telling, etc. In order to increase their earnings, such *lamas* also took orders to copy books, as is evident from a note added to one of the Buryat manuscripts from the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies: "... the copy was completed by a *lama* who made copies all along the Oka [district] for hospitality and gifts".

Yet despite the multitude of manuscript copies based on xylograph originals, their role in the development of Mongolian written literature is clearly disproportionate to their quantity, for in effect they were not decisive in the Mongolian peoples. In evaluating the significance of the manuscript book for investigating the large and varied literary legacy of the Mongolian peoples, Academician Če. Damdinsürüng wrote: "... works which expressed the interests of the people spread largely in manuscripts or orally. This was evident in the history of Mongolian literature. For this reason, we do not ascribe significance to the thick volumes published in xylograph form, and pay special attention to old, frayed manuscript books when we write the history of Mongolian literature" [6].

Among the Mongols' extensive manuscript heritage, one should first cite historical chronicles, representing the most ancient genre of Mongolian literature. For the Mongols, as for many other peoples, a knowledge of their ancestries, tribe history, were obligatory; through this knowledge emergent generations came to feel ties of kinship, ensuring a consciousness of ethnic unity [7]. At first, such information was passed from generation to generation in oral form. It is hardly surprising that with the advent of a written tradition, this was the material first recorded.

The earliest work of this type which has come down to us is the chronicle *Yuan chao bi shi* ("The Secret History of the Mongols"), compiled in 1240. The chronicle contains information primarily about the origins and deeds of Chingis Khan. Together with actual historical facts, the "Secret History of the Mongols" includes a significant number of legends, fables, and epic excerpts. The chronicle also presents magnificent examples of Mongolian poetry from the medieval period, as well as rich folkloric material: aphorisms, proverbs, sayings, etc. Thus, in describing the chronicle, one is justified in terming it a historical-literary work.

This syncretic historical-literary character is also found in several later Mongolian chronicles from the thirteenth and even the twelfth centuries which also include folkloric and epic fragments. In particular, chroniclers of the seventeenth century readily employed the text of the "Secret History of the Mongols". Many excerpts from it are included, for example, in the history of Sagan Sečen. The fullest employment of the text of the "Secret History" is found in the Lubsan Danzan's historical work, *Altan tobči*, which reproduces three fourths of the content of the oldest historical work to have reached us.

One should note that historical chronicles of various periods in Mongolian history are quite unevenly represented. While we know of works by historians from the thirteenth century, we now nothing about the chroniclers of the fourteenth — sixteenth centuries. Not a single historical work from the period has survived. It is difficult, however, to believe that no historical writing was conducted at that time. It is more likely that authors unknown to us recorded events contemporary to them in the fourteenth — sixteenth centuries and, as Ts. Zhamtsarano believed, it was "those writings which formed the basis for ... the chronicles of the seventeenth century when they discuss events of that time" [8].

It is unknown at present whether a link between the genre of historical chronicle and folk legends and traditions remained up through the fourteenth — sixteenth centuries. It is possible that during this period "the main form of historiographic activity among the Mongols ... was the compilation of genealogical records in the families of *tayji* — heirs

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A new stage in the development of Mongolian written history begins in the seventeenth century, sparked by the political situation in Mongolia at that time. The increasing disintegration of Mongolia, internecine strife among Mongolian principalities, as well as their growing dependence on China gave start to spreading the idea of uniting the Mongolian state, which we find in numerous writings of Mongolian historiographers. The strongest argument in favour of the country's unification was, in fact, an appeal to the past, when a single whole had been created from the scattered Mongolian tribes to form a powerful state.

At the same time, the chronicles of the seventeenth century continue the ancient Mongolian tradition of history writing, which implied an abundant employment of rich folkloric material. But both political and religious situation in Mongolia was quite different in that period, and by that time a new clerical historiography had been already emerging; it would become dominant in the eighteenth — nineteenth centuries. This period saw the appearance of a substantial number of Mongolian historical works, among which one can cite, for example, *Ganga-yin urusqal*, *Erdeni-yin toli*, *Bolor erike*, etc. These and a number of other chronicles which appeared at that time differ significantly from the chronicles of the thirteenth and seventeenth century; they are, in essence, works of a historical-genealogical nature. As before, the authors of such works were Mongolian noblemen, including numerous clerics. Such literature was in constant demand, primarily among the Mongolian steppe aristocracy.

It is worth noting that the Mongols' historical works were hardly ever printed in xylograph form, being distributed in manuscripts. The exceptions are the *Erdeni-yin tobči*, printed in Peking in the eighteenth century, and the "Tradition of the *Boydo* Chingis Khan Who Was Sent down by the Heavens", published in Buryatiya in 1869 and written by the *lama* Dylgyrov of the Tsugol *datsan*. This work provides a brief Chingis Khan's and subsequent khans' genealogy, up through Ligdan Khan, fully in keeping with the Mongolian chronicle tradition of the eighteenth century; it also includes a history of the spread of Buddhism.

In publishing this historical composition, the Buryat *lama*s ignored the historical chronicles of the Buryats. Buryat historiography, which arose at a much later date than Mongolian chronicles, nonetheless developed rapidly. According to G. N. Rumiantsev, "the Buryats created in the course of a single century a rich historical literature, mainly of a chronicle nature" [10]. Like Mongolian chronicles circulating in manuscript form, the historical writings of the Buryats, composed with the active participation of Buryat *noyan*s, were disseminated exclusively in manuscripts and represented the only well-developed genre of secular literature among the Buryats until the beginning of the twenties century.

Likewise, the historical works of the Western Mongols, the Oirats and Kalmyks, existed exclusively in manuscript form. The most significant Oirat-Kalmyk historical chronicles to have reached us are the "Story of the Oirats", written in 1737 by Gaban Sharab, and the "Story of the Derben-Oirats", drawn up by the *noyan* Bātur Ubashi Tumen at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Important historical information about the Mongols and Oirats in the seventeenth century is contained in the "Biography of the Oirat Zaya pandita Namkhai Jamčo". This fascinating example of Oirat written literature has earned a rightful place as one of the finest exemplars of Oirat historiography. The veracity of its information, accuracy in dates, absence of invention or unverified facts — all this stand in contrast to widespread hagiographic works filled with all sort of legends, magical and folkloric elements. And, in the view of B. Vladimirtsov, it makes this kind of literature lacking practically all value as historical document [11].

Oirat literature, which split off from the general body of Mongolian literature with Zaya pandita's creation of his "clear script" in 1648, did not arise from nothing, but was rather a continuation of a centuries-long tradition of old-Mongolian literature, the general cultural legacy of all the Mongol peoples. It is entirely natural that in its composition, the literature of the Oirats and Kalmyks always remained within the basic developmental framework of Mongolian literature. It is therefore difficult to agree with the assertion that Oirat-Kalmyk literature "was only related to general Mongolian [literature] in its origins" and that only "to a certain point ... can one posit the existence of a certain commonality in the development of the literatures of the modern Mongolian-speaking peoples" [12].

As concerns Oirat (Kalmyk) literature, this "certain point" of departure from general Mongolian literature is seen as coinciding, of course, with the appearance of "clear script". But one should also take into account that the literature of the Oirats was in no way limited to written sources recorded in "clear script". As B. Vladimirtsov observes, Zaya pandita literature never succeeded in fully supplanting old-Mongolian writing among Oirat tribes. Besides, in areas where the Mongolian and Oirat written traditions coexisted, Oirat writing often yielded to general Mongolian [13]. We know also that Zaya pandita Namkhai Jamčo, renowned not only for the invention of Oirat writing, but for his active work as a translator as well, began his labours as a translator from Tibetan long before creating his "clear script". All of these translations, significant in number, were recorded in Uighur-Mongolian writing, and only later transferred to Oirat script. Among such early works by Zaya pandita, one can cite, for example, his translation of *Mani gambu*, executed in 1643—1644. It was this translation that was reissued in Peking in xylograph form in 1712, 1718, and 1736. Also translated before the creation of "clear script" were *Pačoi* ("Book of the Father"), *Bučoi* ("Book of the Son"), and a number of other Buddhist works.

A substantial number of original works of Mongolian literature initially distributed in Uighur-Mongolian writing only later were transferred to Oirat script. These are, for example, the "Geser Khan Epic", a cycle of tales of Chingis Khan, the "Tale of the Knowing Parrot", "Story of Naranu Gerel", and a number of others. Also transferred to "clear script" were many Buddhist works, especially those which make up the Buddhist Canon. The manuscript folios from *Kanǰur* held in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies provide interesting examples of the transition period from Uighur-Mongolian to Zaya pandita's script.

Among works transferred from Mongolian writing to Oirat were numerous translations of Indo-Tibetan literature, such as the "Tales of Šiditü Kegür", "The Story of Ushandari Khan", "Tales of Bikarmidǰid Khan", and many others. These "adaptations" of Indo-Tibetan works circulated among the Oirat exclusively in manuscript form. It should be stressed that in other areas populated by

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Mongolian peoples where xylograph reproduction was better developed, this kind of literary compositions was represented by manuscripts solely.

The Buddhist church's neglect of literature, which absorbed tales and legends, extremely popular among the peoples of Central Asia, can be explained by the fact that these tales did not correspond to the spirit and tasks of Buddhist didactic literature. This made such literature completely useless for disseminating Buddhist religious and moral ideas, which had always been the most important aim of all publishers who released literature in Mongolian. In this regard, one should not be misled by the significant resemblance of several collections of tales known as "framed tales" to a collection such as *Üliger-ün dalai,* which was part of the Buddhist Canon. Indeed, while *Üliger-ün dalai* reveals an indubitable correspondence between form and content, in collections of tales such as "Tales of Šiditü Kegür", "Arǰi-Burǰi Tales", the framing story is used solely to introduce varied tales. Moreover, they vary not only in relation to each other, but, to an even greater degree, in relation to the section which frames them. In some cases, the framing tale is reworked in accordance with the aims of Buddhist didactic literature, as was the case with the Mongolian version of "Tales of Šiditü Kegür". But the compilers of such versions introduce only insignificant changes, so that, in the words of Vladimirtsov, "the element of ordinary secular life is paramount" [14], and the major part of the collection remains unchanged, contrasting sharply and even contradicting the framing section reworked in the Buddhist tradition. For this reason, the absence of xylograph editions of such collections in Mongolian, despite the constant interest of and numerous attempts by monastery literary figures to find in the rich Indo-Tibetan literary heritage engaging stories to popularise religious-moral dogmas, looks quite natural.

The similar composition of Oirat translated literature and Mongolian was due to the circumstance that in his literary and translation activities Zaya pandita always followed the Dalai Lama's injunction to spread Buddhist teaching among the Mongols and Oirats. Buddhist dogmatic, ritual, and didactic literature made up the basic repertoire of all other Mongolian translators. This translation activity had its specific feature, because, in the late-sixteenth — seventeenth centuries, Buddhism spread in Mongolia in its Tibetan form, which was modified by the Mongols. At that time, translations from Tibetan made up the great part of literature among the Mongols. As Če. Damdinsürüng, remarks, "Mongolian writers were not particularly concerned to compose original works. Many of them devoted all their lives exclusively to translating" [15]. This period saw the reworking of archaic translations from the time of the Yuan dynasty which had since become difficult to understand or the appearance of new translations; this activity encompassed all major Buddhist works and even in the eighteenth century "in Mongolian lamaist literature, a 'truly Mongolian language' predominated ... as the Mongols reaped the benefits of the preceding centuries' translating and literary activity" [16].

The large territory inhabited by the Mongol peoples, the abundance of mutually isolated Buddhist monasteries, in which *lama*s devoted their time to translations from Tibetan, frequently aided the appearance of several translations of the same work over a short period of time. Far from all these Mongolian translations were issued in xylograph form; many of them remained in manuscript. It should be noted also that sometimes we find the name of this or that Mongolian translator in the colophons of extremely rare (or even unique) copy of their work. To cite an example, Toyin-gushi's translation of the "Diamond *Sūtra*" exists only in two manuscripts stored in the collection of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest. Also, the only manuscript of Ergilu-a Rinchin's translation of the canonical "*Sūtra* of Vimalakīrti" and a single copy of Blôbjang ligs-bshad darǰai's translation of the "Story of Čoyiǰid Dakini" have survived (both in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies).

Despite common features literatures of the Mongolian peoples share, which seems natural since "two thirds or more of the works and an even greater proportion of books stem from Lamaist circles" [17], it is easy also to see the differences which became evident at the end of the eighteenth century. For example, it seems striking that Oirat literature in Zaya pandita "clear script" is almost completely lacking translations of Chinese novels. The only evidence of a translation of Chinese novel in "clear script" is found in an article by the Academician B. Rinchen on Oirat translations from Chinese. He writes of an Oirat manuscript of the Chinese novel "Journey to the West" (*Xi you ji*) which he saw in the 1920s (unfortunately, this manuscript was lost). We were unable to discovered other such examples in the catalogues of foreign collections, the collections of Oirat manuscript materials in St. Petersburg, and even in the lists of the rich collections of manuscripts in Zaya pandita writing held in Ulan Bator. Perhaps, the reason of the absence of Oirat translations (or even adaptations from Mongolian) of Chinese narrative prose is due to the fact that the Mongols did not begin seriously translating from Chinese until the eighteenth century, by which time the Oirat had considerably reduced their efforts in the field of translation. They abundantly used the fruits of translation activity of their predecessors who worked at that time of Zaya pandita and his pupils.

Unlike the Oirat, Mongolian readers were well familiar with translated Chinese novels and novellas. By the beginning of the twentieth century, such popular Chinese novels as "River Backwaters", "Tale of the Three Kingdoms", "Journey to the West", etc. had been translated from Chinese and Manchu, and now we know no fewer than 70 Chinese novels and novellas translated into Mongolian. The initiators, translators, and main readers of this literature were representatives of the Mongolian ruling elite or steppe aristocracy, who were not unfamiliar with the Chinese and Manchu and had absorbed much of Chinese customs, aesthetic views and literary tastes. The interest in translations of Chinese novels among the Mongols was great, but the translations circulated only in manuscript form and were often imposing in size and adorned with colour miniatures. However, several translated Chinese novels are found also in the library of the eighth Urga Rje-btsun dam-pa Khutukhtu, but this should be viewed as an exception which testifies to the personal inclinations and tastes of the *khutukhtu*, a "lover of secular literature and merry life" [18].

As concerns the Urga *khutukhtu*s, it is important to note two other genres of Mongolian writing which also existed only in manuscript form. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, significant distribution and popularity accrued among the Mongols to the so-called "injunctions" or

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"testaments" of mythological or historical figures, usually from the upper hierarchy of the Buddhist church of Tibet or Mongolia. These writings stress the necessity of carrying out religious commandments and foretold myriad impending misfortunes as punishment for neglecting matters of faith. The most numerous were prophecies which belong to or were ascribed to the Urga *khutukhtus*. Among other widespread prophecies were the "injunctions" of the *Dalai Lamas* and Peking *Janja-Khutukhtus*, as well as the prophecy of Avalokiteśvara, written on a stone which fell from the sky.

We find also the name of Rje-btsun dam-pa Khutukhtu in manuscripts containing descriptions of travels to sacred places. These manuscripts describe a visit by the Urga *khutukhtu* in 1803 to the monastery of Erdeni-Juu while on his way to Tibet and a journey to Peking in 1839. This, however, represents the extent of Mongolian literature on this topic. The genre of "travels" was significantly more developed among the Buryats and Kalmyks. The earliest such description concerns a journey to Tibet undertaken by the Buryat *khambo-lama* Zajaev in 1734—1741. These notes appeared many years later, in 1768, during Zajaev's stay in St. Petersburg and were drawn up at the request of the Empress Catherine II. Other records of Buryat pilgrims to holy places in Tibet appeared only in the late-nineteenth — early-twentieth century. The Mongolian collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies contains the reminiscences of four Buryat *lamas* of their visit to Tibet; the most complete and interesting account comes from Lubsan Mudžid-dordži, who describes his journey of 1882—1887. No less interesting are the itineraries by two Kalmyk *lamas* — Menkedzuev and Jungruev — who visited Tibet in the late nineteenth — early twentieth century.

In the context of Mongolian old-script literature, manuscripts of Buryat origin stand out thanks to another characteristic, one being linked to the history and specific nature of the Buddhist teaching and Mongolian writing's spread among the Buryat. This is that, in comparison with Mongolian written texts, Buryat manuscripts present more fully and in more varied fashion texts of so-called "shamanist lyrics". This provision stems from the fact that from the beginning of Buddhism's diffusion into Mongolia, the Buddhist church tried to extirpate decisively shamanist ideas and practices among the Mongols. And although this campaign was, without a doubt, successful, and shamanism lost its influence and virtually disappeared within Mongolia, shamanist beliefs endured a different fate among the Buryat. Buddhism, which spread later, did not allow the *lamas* to crush and supplant entirely the traditional shamanist views of the Buryat. The influence of shamans and the persistence of folk beliefs remained a significant factor in Buryat life even at the end of the nineteenth century, as is confirmed by numerous manuscripts of shamanist, or more frequently, mixed shamanist-lamaist content executed in Buryatia. In this regard, it is telling that even in Khalkha, the guardians of shamanist traditions were in fact the Buryat. And, as B. Vladimirtsov remarks, the activities of Khalkha shamans reflected "Buryat influence, the influence of Buryat shamanism in its current state" [19].

Buryat manuscripts of such content, although written at a relatively late date, usually no earlier than the beginning of the nineteenth century, are nonetheless of significant interest for studying the nature of ritual practice and content of mythological ideas among the Mongol peoples.

But it was not only texts of ancient ritual "shamanist" lyrics, often gems of folk literature, and not only historical chronicles and epic tales of the Mongols that remained invariably in manuscript form. The appearance of original works created already by individual Mongolian authors also, by all indications, failed to gain the attention of Ch'in rulers and Mongolian religious-feudal lords. These latter controlled publishing, but were entirely uninterested in a rebirth of national consciousness and original Mongolian culture. And for this reason the works of such talented nineteenth-century Mongolian poets as Sandaγ, Geligbalsang, Dangǰinvangiǰil, Kesigbatu were distributed exclusively in manuscript form.

Thus, in the history of the written literature of the Mongol peoples, the manuscript book played the role of a unique counterweight to official-clerical literature. And it is the manuscript book which still holds secrets, concealing significant opportunities for a more profound and accurate understanding of the actual processes which shaped the cultural history of the Mongol peoples and their literary ties with the peoples of Central Asia and China.

Notes

1. O. M. Kovalevskiĭ, *Mongol'skaia khrestomatiia* (Mongolian Reader) (Kazan, 1836), pp. IX—X.
2. Cited in D. Kara, *Knigi mongol'skikh kochevnikov* (Books of Mongolian Nomads) (Moscow, 1972), pp. 115—6.
3. B. Laufer, *Ocherk Mongol'skoĭ literatury* (An Essay on Mongolian Literature) (Leningrad, 1927), p. 24.
4. Kara, *op. cit.*, p. 112.
5. Kovalevskiĭ, *op. cit.*, p. IX.
6. *Mongolin uran zohiloyn toym* (Ulan Bator, 1976), ii, p. 62.
7. *Istoriia stran zarubezhnoĭ Azii v srednie veka* (A History of the Countries of Non-Russian Asia in the Middle Ages) (Moscow, 1976), pp. 217—8.
8. Ts. Zhamtsarano, "Mongol'skie letopisi XVII v." ("Mongolian chronicles of the 17th century"), *Trudy Instituta vostokovedeniia AN SSSR*, XVI (Moscow-Leningrad, 1936), p. 9.
9. Sh. Bira, *Mongol'skaia istoriografiia: XIII—XVII vv.* (Mongolian Historiography: 13th — 17th Centuries) (Moscow, 1978), p. 10.
10. G. N. Rumiantsev, "Buriatskie letopisi kak istoricheskiĭ istochnik" ("Buryat chronicles as a historical source"), *Trudy Buriatskogo kompleksnogo nauchno-issledovatel'skogo instituta*, fasc. 3: seriia vostokovedeniia (Ulan-Ude, 1960), p. 13.
11. B. Ia. Vladimirtsov, *Ėtnologo-lingvisticheskie issledovaniia v Urge, Urginskom i Kenteĭskom raĭonakh* (Ethno-Linguistic Research in Urga and the Urga and Kentey Regions) (Leningrad, 1927), p. 13.
12. A. V. Badmaev, "O nekotorykh problemakh izucheniia kalmytskoĭ literatury dorevoliutsionnogo perioda" ("On certain problems in the study of pre-Revolutionary Kalmyk literature"), *Problemy altaistiki i mongolovedeniia*, fasc. 1 (Elista, 1974), pp. 139, 143.
13. Vladimirtsov, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

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14. *Volshebnyĭ mertvets. Skazki* (The Magical Deceased. Tales), translation, introductory article, and notes by B. Vladimirtsov (Petrograd—Moscow, 1923), p. 10.

15. Če. Damdinsürüng, *Mongγol uran ǰokiγal-un degeǰi ǰaγun bilig orusibai* (Ulayanbayatur, 1959), p. 14. — Corpus Scriptorum Mongolorum, XIV.

16. Kara, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

19. Vladimirtsov, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

Illustrations

Fig. 1. *Pañcarakṣā*, Mongolian manuscript Q 2576 in the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies collection, 17th century, 47.5×12.7 cm, part II, fol. 18a.

Fig. 2. *Thar-pa chen-po*, Oirat manuscript I 57 in the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies collection, 18th century, 42.2×17.1 cm, fol. 58a.