

**PhD DISSERTATION
THESIS**

ERZSÉBET TÓTH

MONGOLO–TIBETAN LANGUAGE CONTACTS

2008

1. Subject of dissertation

Tibetan monks played a decisive role in the spread of Buddhism in Mongolia. The close and fruitful Tibeto-Mongolian relations for over seven centuries and the deep respect fo Mongolian monks towards the Tibetan language resulted in an extant and high-level literature created by them in Tibetan, which also contains numerous historical works.

The introduction of Tibetan Buddhism in the second half of the 16th century powerfully influenced the culture and speech of Mongolia. The Mongols are known to have had considerable cultural contacts with Central Asian tribes professing Buddhism, and we know that in the early days of the Mongol Empire, Mongols were familiar with Buddhist Culture through the Uighurs, through whom they obtained a large number of Sanskrit loan-words in Sogdian and Uighur garb. During these early contacts the general tendency was to incorporate Sanskrit Buddhist terms without attempting to translate them into Mongolian, a practice no doubt due to the paucity of philosophic terminology. The first Tibetan contacts go back to the Imperial Period, to the 13th century when a number of Tibetan Buddhist hierarchs, heads of influential Buddhist sects, were invited to the Mongol Imperial Court. The famous 'Phags-pa bla-ma (1235–1280) was the author of the so-called National “square” script (*dörbeljin*, or *Hor-yig*) which was introduced by Imperial Edict in 1269, and was based on the Tibetan *dbu-can* script. The first translations from Tibetan evince a tendency to translate Buddhist philosophic and religious terms into Mongolian avoiding the incorporation of Sanskrit loan-words. In this Tibetan translators of Buddhist texts into Mongolian followed the tradition established by the early Tibetan lō-tsā-bas, or translators of Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Tibetan, who had adopted the policy of translating Sanskrit terms instead of incorporating them as loan-words. This policy was adopted in the IX-th century. Prior to that there was a time in the history of the spread of Indian Buddhism in Tibet when Sanskrit words were incorporated as loan-

words, for example the use of the Sanskrit *dharma*, "law, doctrine", instead of the usual Tibetan *chos*.

This style of writing persisted until recent times in Khams–Derge in Eastern Tibet. The work of translating Tibetan Buddhist texts continued throughout the 14th–16th centuries. It received a new impetus in the second half of the 16th century resulting from the religious and political alliance of the third Dalai Lama bSod-nams rgya-mtsho and Altan-qan of the Tümed Mongols (1577–1578) when one of the Khalkha Mongol Princes, Abatai, paid a visit to Köke-qoto in Southern Mongolia and met the Dalai Lama. On his return to North Mongolia he built the first Khalkha Buddhist monastery of Erdeni-jū in 1585–1586.

The 17th century saw the beginning of a great literary renaissance in Southern Mongolia under Ligdan-qan (1604–1634) when the Tibetan Bka'-'gyur was translated into Mongolian (1624). Many of the Tibetan loan words, especially technical philosophic terms, were incorporated in the 18th century when appeared the revised xylograph edition of the Bka'-'gyur in 1720, and the classical form of the Mongol language was finalized.

The bulk of Tibetan loan-words, however, belongs to a later period, to the second half of the 18th and 19th centuries which coincided with the spread of monkhood in Mongolia supported by the Manchu Emperors when Mongol monks in ever increasing numbers entered Tibetan monasteries for study. First came the philosophical and religious terms which were adopted as loan-words by the translators of the Tibetan Canon into Mongolian under Ligdan-qan. Then, with the spread of the knowledge of the Tibetan language, single words and even whole expressions used in the every day life became incorporated into Mongolian, to such an extent that a person knowing spoken Mongolian will find it difficult to understand his interlocutor speaking the monastic jargon loaded with Tibetan loan-words.

A purpose cél of research is twofold:

- to provide a survey of the history of Buddhism in Mongolia on the basis of Tibetan historical works;
- to study the linguistic consequences of Mongolo–Tibetan contact, with focusing on the stock of loan words, borrowed from one another.

2. History of research

The basis of research consist of works on religious histories (*chos-’byung*), chronicles (*lo-rgyus*), biographies of outstanding lamas (*rnam-thar*), local chronicles, etc. Most of them are examined by Lokesh Chandra in his publications: *Eminent Tibetan Polymaths of Mongolia* and *Materials for a History of Tibetan Literature*), and studies by S. Bira *Монгольская тибетоязычная историческая литература (XVII–XIX)*, in English *Mongolian Historical Literature of the XVII–XIX Centuries Written in Tibetan*]), and Vostrikov *Тибетская историческая литература*, in English: *Tibetan Historical Literature*]) munkája nyújt alapvető és átfogó tájékoztatást.

3. Methods

3.1. Mongolian loan words in Tibetan

A main feature of Tibetan is that it incorporates few loan words, instead, they tend to find out a new word for an object or concept they come across for the first time. That may be one of the reasons why Berthold Laufer’s study which I used as basic source comprises not more than 328 word acquired from 15 languages.

Languages	Items
Sanskrit	108
Persian	34
Arab	14
Uyghur	7
Turkish	10
Mongolian	30
Manju	2

Languages	Items
Chinese (105)	
old	28
modern	77
Portuguese, English used in India, English, Russian	18
Total	328

The list shows that one third of the loan words are of Sanskrit, one third of Chinese origin, and all the remaining constitute the last one third.

Besides Laufer's study I consulted the general dictionaries in which the origin of loan words is indicated: Tibetan–English dictionaries by Das (1908), Goldstein (1978), Jäschke (1881), the Tibetan–Chinese dictionary edited by Tshe-tan-zhab-drung–Krang-dbyi-sun (1985), the set of digital dictionaries *The Tibetan to English Translation Tool* compiled under the guidance of Pellegrini (2006), for the meanings of the Mongolian equivalents I made use of the Mongolian–Hungarian dictionary by George Kara (1998).

I found 78 words altogether, 8 of which I had to exclude from the investigation due to lack of necessary data.

Concerning grammatical categories, all of them are nominals.

The range of subjects is presented in the table below:

Subjects	Items
Mongol népcsoportok neve	8
Más nemzetiségek, országok elnevezése	2
Állatok	9
Növények	4
Egyházi rangok	9
Buddhista kifejezések	2
Világi méltóságnevek, rangok	10

Subjects	Items
Közigazgatás	7
Katonai tárgyak	3
Használati tárgyak, ruházat, táplálkozás	9
Orvosi kifejezés	1
Egyéb	6
Összesen	70

3.2. Tibetan loan words in Mongolian

The search of loan words in Mongolian can easily be carried out owing to the dictionary by Sühbaatar (1997) which primarily aims at collecting a – as far as possible – complete list of the loan words in Mongolian. The dictionary contains approximately 2370 words which originate from 25 languages. More than third of them are declared to be of Tibetan origin.

Languages	Items
Chinese	~ 480
Manju	~ 95
Persian	~ 30
Sanskrit	~ 485
Sogdian	~ 15
Tibetan	~ 880
Turkish	~ 145
Uygur	~ 30
All others (17 languages)	~ 210
Total	~ 2370

Besides the Sühbaatar's dictionary I studied the data from two more dictionaries which are consequent in indicating the origin of loan words: Charles Bawden's

Mongolian–English dictionary (1997), and George Kara's Mongolian–Hungarian (1998) dictionary.

The 3 sources included altogether 827 words, most of which are elements of the Buddhist religious language. Most of them are nominals, a few verbs and adverbs can also be found among them.

The 3 tables show the ranges of subject they belong to.

1. Words of religious subjects

Common words:

Subjects	Items
Buddhist schools, Tibeti buddhist schools	11
Buddhista teaching	49
Religous literature, technical terms of linguistics	34
Tantric Buddhism	35
Creatures and object of mythology	23
Medication – anatomy, diseases, medicine	43
Numbers	11
Time, calendar	10
Religious buildings	20
Monastery economy	4
Religious persons, ranks, posts (77)	
Non-Buddhist	4
Buddhist	73
Monkhood	24
Clothes	19
Rituals, accessories, symbolic objects	86
Incenses	6
Musical instruments	17
Total	469

Proper names

Subjects	Items
Buddhist masters	6
Book titles	8
Tantra-circles	3
Gods, mythological beings	25
Astrology	7
Geographical names (34)	
Hills, rivers, lakes	16
Countries, provinces	15
Towns	3
Monasteries	15
Total	98

2. Words of common language

Subjects	Items
Animals	17
Plants (120)	
Herbs	78
Other plants, fruits	42
Minerals, gems, chemical substances	21
Nationalities	5
Secular ranks	2
Office accessories	3
Economy, houseware	34
Other (58)	
Geographical expressions	3
Weapons	2
Colours	3
Games	2
Luck / Unluck	5
Order	6
Hindrance / Aid	5
Behaviour, conduct	8

Subjects	Items
Unclassified	24
Total	260

Mongolian religious vocabulary

Terms of Buddhism are mostly of two origin: Uygur (< Sanskrit) and Tibetan. Many of the religious words were borrowed from both languages:

Days of the week and the planets

Days	Planets	Mongolian (< Uygur / Sanskrit)	Mongolian (< Tibetan)	Tibetan
Mondaz	Moon	сумъяя / sumiy-a	даваа	zla-ba
Tuesdaz	Mars	ангараң / angyaray, anggarag	мягмар	mig-dmar
Wednesdaz	Merkur	буд / bud, bus	лхагва	lhag-pa
Thursdaz	Jupiter	бархасвадь / barqasbadi	пүрэв	phur-bu
Fridaz	Venus	сугар / sugar, suyar	ба(ваа)сан	pa-(wa)-sangs
Saturdaz	Saturn	санчар, санчир / saničar	бямба	spen-pa
Sundaz	Sun	адъяа / adiy-a	ням	nyi-ma

4. Results

Tibetan loan word on religious subjects

Examples for Tibetan loan words in Mongolian

- a) Examples for loan words in connection with Buddhism which have not changed their meaning

Tib: bla-brang	Mong: лавран, лаврин labrang
TTT: lama's residence, monastic household	Baw: dwelling or palace of a high lama KGy: rég főpapi palota

Tib: rab-gnas	Mong: аравнай, равнай rabnai
TTT: (ritual) consecration (of a sacred image), consecration ceremony, dedication	Baw: consecration (of an image, etc.) KGy: <i>buddh</i> fel szentelés, -avatás <i>равнайлах:</i> to consecrate <i>аравнайлах:</i> felszentel <személyt, képet, szobrot>

b) An example for loan words which has not changed their meaning but has also been related to other religions

Tib> bla-ma	Mong: лам lama, blam-a, lam-a
TTT: lama, guru, spiritual teacher, master, priest, highest one, spiritual master, preceptor	Baw: lama KGy: <i>vall</i> láma, buddhista pap v szerzetes, bonc; pap, szerzetes <i>хар лам:</i> clergyman, minister, priest (Christian) <i>лалын лам:</i> mohamedán pap

c) Examples for loan words which have widened their meaning, preserved their religious meaning, and also acquired non-religious meaning

Tib: dkon-mchog gsum	Mong: гончигсүм, гончигсүм yongčoysum
TTT: Three Precious Jewels, the Triple Gem, the three rare and sublime ones (sangs rgyas) Buddha, (chos) Dharma, (dge 'dun) sangha	Baw: the Three Jewels of Buddhism: the Buddha, the Monkhood and the Teaching <i>еэз гончигсүм минь:</i> oh my goodness!

My research work has not yet finished, I plan to go on analysing as many dictionaries and vocabularies on special subjects with the purpose to fix – as correctly as possible – the range of loan words in both languages.

5. Related publications

Dzsingisz kán származásának leírása tibeti nyelvű vallástörténeti művekben. In: Birtalan ÁgnesRákosi Attila (szerk.): *Bolor-un gerel. Kristályfény. Crystal-splendour. Tanulmányok Kara György professzor 70. születésnapjának tiszteletére. Essays Presented in Honour of Professor Kara György's 70th Birthday*. ELTE Belső-ázsiai Tanszék–MTA Altajisztikai Kutatócsoport, Budapest 2005, 791–806. oldal.

A mongóliai buddhizmus történetének tibeti nyelvű forrásai. In: Birtalan Ágnes–Yamaji Masanori (szerk.): *Orientalista Nap 2003*. MTA Orientalisztikai Bizottság–ELTE Orientalisztikai Intézet, Budapest 2003, 146–154. oldal.

Contribution of Professor Louis Ligeti to the investigation of the history of Buddhism in Mongolia. In: Sárközi Alice–Rákosi Attila (eds): *Preceedings of the 45th Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference, Budapest June 22–27, 2002*. Research Group for Altaic Studies, Hungarian Academy of Sciences–Department of Inner Asian Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest 2003, 353–357. oldal.