Altaic Religious Beliefs and Practices

Proceedings of the 33rd Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference
BUDAPEST June 24-29, 1990

Edited by
Géza Bethlenfalvy
Ágnes Birtalan
Alice Sárközi
Judit Vinkovics

Research Group for Altaic Studies, Hungarian Academy of Sciences
Department of Inner Asiatic Studies, Eötvös Loránd University
A Turkic word böğü meaning 'sage, wizard' is attested in not a few Turkic historical texts, as having slightly different meanings. The word seems to connote both wisdom and mysterious spiritual power (Clauson 1972:324). In the Orkhon inscriptions which are the oldest Turkic texts about 8th century, this word occurs two times as a ruler's title bögi qagan (TI N10, TII 56). In Uighur manuscripts, bögi occurs as not only a title but also a term meaning 'sorcery, witchcraft, sage': bögi qayan (T 50), bögi qan (TT II 6,33); bögiqer qovra-yinda (TT V 10, 107) in the assembly of sages', bögi Kung Futu 'the sage Confucius' (TT V 26, 104), bögi keligen toymfaq (U II 44:33), ilgi bögi elığar (M III 35:17), toraq İnuq bögi (M III 35:1), bögi elığ (M III 28:6) etc. In Uighur manuscripts, bögi was used with bilig and bilig together in the Hend. i.e., bögi bilig (Suv. 89:9, BT XIII 14:2) and bögi bilig (Kuan 207). The form of bögülîq (< *bögül-leq) meaning 'wise' occurs in Uighur texts (Suv. 436:11, Usp 90:6, Kuan. 188). In MK, the word bögi is attested in the Hend. bögi bilig "learned, wise, intelligent". In Osman Turkic the word preserves its original meaning "sorcery; spell; charm" in the form of büyû or büyû. An Anatolian dialect has bögi (Derl. 758) with the meaning 'söz seçen adam' which is supposed to be developed semantically from "sage, wise".

Besides the word bögi, there are two forms bögün- and bögü which seem to have a connection with bögi in their origin. As far as I know, bögü meaning "wisdom" is found only in Liguurica II 9:12. The other form bögün- which is never attested in Middle and Modern Turkic languages, occurs several times in Uighur manuscripts. Firstly, the verb bögün- occurs in Suv. 615:13. As for the meaning of the word bögün-, for the first time, Gabain (1941:306) suggested "erkennen" or "to be aware of". Çağayı (1945:87), however, rejected the meaning Gabain suggested in Alt. and proposed "diğermek" or "to think" as the meaning of the verb in the phrase of Suv. Her view seems to be plausible, even though Drev. gives the meaning "urazmevât" or "to understand, perceive" for the word bögün- in the same phrase of Suv. i.e., kıştımiş kıyıımın qantuına yay tep bögünüp. Secondly, the verb bögün- occurs in TT III 143. Bang and Gabain (1929: 18, 31) read this verb pükän- with the meaning "verweifen" or "to reject, dismiss". In Drev. (1969:116) the reading and the meaning were corrected and proposed bögün- meaning "postigat" or "to understand, grasp". However, Clauson (1973:328) accepted Drev.'s reading of the verb but for the meaning maintained the old view, i.e. uücküsə nömlärty bögünüp "discarding (or ?opposing) transitory doctrines". In my opinion, this phrase would be translated as follows "thinking over transitory doctrines" being the meaning of the verb bögün- "to think over, think". Thirdly, bögün- is attested in the phrase in the Suv. 228:16: münecuelle sidelined bögünüp "thinking straightforwardly in this way".

In Buddhist texts recently published by S. Tezcan and P. Zieme, the verb bögün- (to be read bügün- by them) occurs two times. S. Tezcan (1974:33), in the sentence buzan inça tep bögünüp yarlıqadı, translates the phrase bögünüp yarlıqadi as "zu erkennen (und sagen)" and Zieme (1985:149) translates the phrase yincüri köngült bögünür as "Wenn man, sich verneigend, im Sinn erkennt". However, these
In my opinion, the meaning of the verb bögän- would be "to think, to think over" more than "to understand, to know or to be aware of." Actually, the phrase of Suv. 706:16 strongly supports my theory that bögän- was used with saqin- "to think" in the Hen., i.e. öngärkin munçuša bögän-sa saqin-yarlağınaan "He does not deign to think over the previous in this way." 

Up to the present, not many etymological explanations of the word bögäi have been suggested. N. Poppe (1924:309; 1960:60) and Ramstedt (1935:66) equated Turkic bögäi (to be red bögäi by them) with Mongolian böge meaning Shaman. S. Tezcan (1974:87) translates bögä as bögäi and also bögün- as bögün- and proposes "bögäi as the stem of these words. E. V. Sevorton (1978:294) maintained that this word etymologically consisted of *bök- or *böök- and a deverbal noun suffix (-1), and that the words like bögäi (Cafr. EUS 49), bögij (Gabain 1941:306) "wisdom" and bögün- "to know" (*bögün-) were derived from the same stem. Sevorton also considered the forms of Anatolian dialects byu, bü, bö as "sorcery, witchcraft" as the stem.

As a matter of fact, the verb bögün- "to think, to think over" as Sevorton and Tezcan propose, if their transcriptions are not considered, is derived from the stem *bögäi whose form, as far as I have looked into it, is never attested in historical and modern Turkic languages. In my opinion, the stem *bögäi is a loan-word from Ancient Chinese pak > Mandarin pu, Canton pak "to divine by torture-shell, to divine; to foretell; to think," Sino-Japanese boku id. (Shuowen, Kangxi, Giles, Karl.757), Sino-Korean pak "divination by burning torture shells; to divine; witchcraft, sorcery; to think."

Generally, it is correctly supposed that the borrowing of verbs is quite difficult. No one, however, can argue that there are no exceptions to it. As it is known, there are not a few verb borrowings between Mongolian and Manchurian as well as between Mongolian and Yakut. Actually, the verb borrowings among Altic languages were not usual but might have occurred especially in the early stages. Chinese is not a member of the Altic languages. However, there are not only noun borrowings, but, even though they are just a few, there are also verb borrowings between Turkic and Chinese, as well as between Korean and Chinese, owing to the geographical positions and the close cultural relations.

Verb borrowings between Turkic and Chinese languages that I confirm are as follows: Uig. (IrkB 57) tong: "to be frozen hard," MK, Chag., Kom., Kip. tong id., cf. MK tong "frozen hard," Xwar., Kip. tong "solid ice" // Chin. ACh. pang > Mandarin täng, Canton tung "to freeze," Sino-Japanese to (tou) id. (Karal. 1146), Sino-Korean tong "to freeze; solid ice"; Uig. (Suv. 418:23) mang: "to walk," KB (3659, 3702, etc.) mang: "to step, to walk," Chag. mang id., cf. Uig. (U II 24:2; U VI 72:17; TT VII 24:13, 24:16; BT VIII B 221; BT XIII 5:28; Hi X 44, etc.) mang: "gait, step, fast gait," Uig. (BT VIII: B 221) măngia- "to step" < *măngia-, Uig. (BT II 59:1035) măngia-"gait, pace" < *măngia- KB (1211) măngia- "to step" < *măngia-i- // Chin. ACh. bêng, bêng: "the walking figure of a horse" (Kangxi), Sino-Korean phaeng: "the walking figure of a horse; to walk."

There is an example of the verb borrowings between Korean and Chinese languages in the early stages: Ko. ssi="to write" //Chin ACh. sîwò >

In my opinion, this word should be read bögi, as Malov suggested for the first time. For most Sino-Korean and Sino-Turkic were borrowed from Northern Chinese, rounded vowels of Sino-Turkic correspond to those of Sino-Korean; rounded-low vowels o, ö in Ancient Chinese became high vowels u, ü in Sino-Turkic and Sino-Korean and on the contrary, rounded-high vowels in Ancient Chinese became low vowels in Sino-Turkic and Sino-Korean.

Actually, in the Chinese source T’ang-siu, the Chinese characters for bögi which is the name or title of Inel Kagan son of Kapangan Kagan, support this theory that the reading of the word should not be bögi or bögi, but bögi: Chin. 仿 bülük-ku, Sino-Ko. pok-ku, Sino-Japan. puku-ku.

As for the Mongolian word böge meaning a male shaman, although Ramstedt and Poppe considered Turkic bögi and Mongolian böge as a cognate being not a borrowing, this word should be borrowed from Turkic bögi as Clauson (1972:324) stated in his etymological dictionary. The reason why the second vowel of böge is not rounded but unrounded is but the result of the phonetic change occurring in borrowing from Turkic to Mongolian. In addition to bögi, there are not a few Turkic loan-words in Mongolian that suffered “unrounding” phonetic change: Mo. torga(n) "silk" < Trk. torga, Mo. tusa "profit, advantage" < Trk. tusu, etc.

REFERENCES

W. Band und A. von Gaian 1929, Türkische Turfantexte.
Drevniyurkskii slovar’. Leningrad. (= Drev.)
Kangxi, Kangxi zidian (K’ang-hsi tsien-tien).
S. E. Malov 1951, Pamyatniki drevnyurkskoy pis’mennostî. Moskva.
F.M.K. Müller 1919, Uigurica II.
N. Poppe 1924 ‘Chuvashskii yazyk i yego otnoshenie k mongol’skomu i t’urkskim jazykam’, IRAN, T.18, No.12-18.