AN ESSAY IN MONGOLIAN ON
MEDICINAL WATERS

by NICHOLAS POPPE

The collection of Mongolian manuscripts and xylographs belonging
to the British Museum contains a rare specimen of Mongolian medical
literature, viz., an essay on the curative powers of a mineral spring in
Transbaikalia.1 The document in question is of Buriat origin and is probably
one of the very few of this kind outside of Russia. It was donated to the British
Museum by Theodore L’voff2 in 1871 and bears the registration number
P. N. 10, 131 of the 28th of August 1871, and is kept under the call number
Or 1094. L’voff’s letter accompanying his present gives the circumstances
under which the manuscript donated came into his possession.3

Le 25 d’Août 1871,
London, 21 Norfolk Street, Strand

En quittant Londres, je prie l’administration du Musée Britannique,
wù j’ai passé plusieurs heures bien instructives pour moi, de vouloir bien
recevoir et accepter dans sa riche bibliothèque l’offre d’un manuscrit en
Mongol, que j’ai trouvé dans un lieu bien désert de la Sibérie à 60 mille
anglaises environ de la route qui passe de Verchne-Oudinsk à Nertchinsk
vers l’orient, nommé Courka Khassartou rachian (prononcé archon) qui
veut dire source minérale.

1 The author takes pleasure in expressing his gratitude to the Director and the
librarians of the Division of Oriental Manuscripts of the British Museum for their
assistance during the author’s studies at the Museum which were conducted under a
research grant from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation (1959).

2 Theodore L’voff, in Russian spelling Фёдор Николаевич Львов, (1823-85)
graduated from an artillary school in Russia and specialized in chemistry. Later he
became a professor of chemistry at the same school. In connection with the trial of
the revolutionary group of the so-called Petrashevsky he was exiled to Siberia in 1849.
In 1870 he returned from exile. One of his learned works is О свирепых зверях,
замеченных в некоторых источниках Восточной Сибири, Записки Сибирского Отдела
Императорского Русского Географического Общества 1864, книга 2 (On the sulphurous smell noticed in some springs in Eastern Siberia,
Memoires of the Siberian Division of the Imperial Russian Geographic Society, 1864,
book 2). Some additional data on L’voff is found in О. А. Бровкин и И. А. Воронов,
Энциклопедический словарь, том XVIII, Санкт-Петербург, 1896, p. 137.

3 In reproducing L’voff’s letter verbatim, the author of this article has only supplemented
the accent aigu and accent grave lacking in a few words.
On m’a offert ce manuscrit justement parce que j’ai été envoyé par l'administration de la Siberie Orientale pour faire l’analyse des sources minérales sur les lieux-mêmes.

Certes ce n'est pas un document historique et ne date que de 1840, mais il est intéressant comme un spécimen de la médecine lamaque—c'est une instruction pour les malades écrite par un lama (prêtre-médecin) nommé Vanchik Sagoueff qui s’honore aussi de savoir inoculer la petite verroie. Il est à remarquer que ce lama a déterminé tout à fait juste la qualité de l’eau en mettant dans la catégorie des eaux alcalines, la manière de s’en servir dans certaines affections et les règles hygiéiques qu’on doit servir pendant le traitement—de sorte qu’un docteur en médecine européen n’aurait pas hésité à souscrire sous cette instruction son nom.

Théodore de L’voff.

The document reproduced in prototype and transcription is a typical specimen of Literary Buriat, i.e., Written Mongolian in Buriat adaptation. This kind of Written Mongolian abounds in Buriat colloquialisms, its spelling reflecting the Buriat pronunciation, mainly the phonetic features of the Khori dialect which is spoken in most parts of Transbaikalia.4 Numerous typical Buriat grammatical forms are found in this language and its vocabulary contains Burut languages and Russian borrowings.

In Vanchik Sagiev’s Essay the following deviations from traditional Written Mongolian are found:

In spelling:

- ki = Bur. χi instead of kei “air, wind; vital functions”;
- tobilabasu = Bur. tobilto- instead of tobilta- “to abbreviate, to speak in brief”;
- atiriq = Bur. atirya instead of aturqa “to be cramped”;
- qoboya = Bur. qobd instead of qoby-y “gutter”;
- qiitun instead of qitun “rotten”;
- ajiibee instead of ajibei “(1) saw”;
- ayqut instead of ayqut “to drink”;
- niryu = Bur. nirguq, Khalkha nurū, instead of niruyun “back, spine”;
- treyen instead of ireyen “he who has come”;
- rašya or rašyan instead of rašyan “mineral spring, mineral water”;
- rašya-i instead of rašyan-y (accusative) “mineral water”;
- kütün-i and kütün-yer instead of kütün-ü and kütün-yer respectively “(of the cold)”, “through the cold”;
- qaniyadan instead of qaniyadun “cough”;

1 The original size is 14 x 5 in. or 36 x 14.5 cm.
2 The Khori-Buruts are the most civilized group among the Buruts. They became Buddhists at an early date and created a rich literature. On the Khori dialect vide A. D. Rudnev, Хорин бурятский говорь, выпуcс 1, Опыт изслadования, Петроград, 1913-14.

In vocabulary:

- yasila = Bur. gašila “to be spoiled”;
- kimayqatay = Bur. xingqatay “thirty, careful”;
- adagqa = Bur. adaqgila- instead of afyila- “to make observations, to observe, to notice”.

Mongolian Text

(1) ene kürbi-yin qasuurtai-yin rašyan-u čidal-i, qori-yin qudai oto-ya un (2) abalbu kiged. Ėkéc-ün ušiniy vangćiy sa-a-gin ber, egün-dür treyen (3) ken kümün-u amur medeči-yin tula ilerkeylikleni anu.


AN ESSAY IN MONGOLIAN ON MEDICINAL WATERS

[disturbance of] vital functions

[disturbance of] vital functions

[disturbance of] vital functions

[disturbance of] vital functions

[disturbance of] vital functions

[disturbance of] vital functions

[disturbance of] vital functions

[disturbance of] vital functions

The tax-payer of the Khudi clan of the Khoris,2 and apprentice of smallpox vaccination,3 Vanchik Sagin,4 elucidates the power of this mineral spring5 of Khasurtai-on-Kurb6 for the sake of peace of anyone who has [ever] come here.

In the book called Köhe Vaidurya7 five kinds of medicinal waters are named.

First, it is said of the marks of a mineral spring which removes the [disturbance of] vital functions:

The power of the water on this side [of the spring manifests itself in the following manner].

One heats it well to the boiling point and drinks, in the early morning, as much mineral water as one can, and after it has been digested 1) one drinks not wasting any time. After this has been digested, one drinks mineral water [once again]. After this too has been digested, 2) the day meal [is eaten]. After this too has been digested, mineral water [is taken]. After this too has been digested, tea [is had]. 3) After this has been digested, one drinks [some more] mineral water and after it has been digested, 4) one has supper.8

It has been observed that when people started drinking in this manner, in accordance with their capabilities, four times a day, it brought them

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1 "Tax-payer" translates albatu "subject, payer of tribute" and is here equivalent to the Russian word податный.

2 The Khoris are one of the four major Burat tribes, the others being the Ekhrit, Bulagan, and Khongodor (Xongodor). The Khoris tribe was originally divided into eleven clans: galsod, xitain, xildi, gurul, tarad, yagana, xudai, kodlong, xalba, sagin, and khotanai. As a later time the yagana, xitsai, and xildi clans were divided into six clans, eastern and western, and the total number of Khoris clans became fourteen.

3 "Apprentice" translates the word үлтиму үнгасны "pupil, disciple, apprentice". At the beginning of the XIX century, the Russian authorities introduced preventive smallpox vaccination to the natives of Siberia. For this purpose, special medical sides called "apprentices of vaccination" were trained. The author of the Essay was one of such apprentices.

4 The correct transcription of this name is Vamdyr (or Vandury) Sagin. He was eni buihi, i.e., the "medical preceptor" of the Khoris Buruts and in 1865 he compiled also a brief history of his native Khoris clan, cf. H. H. Hetman, Legenda Mitbaourini buriKH, vol. 1, Хроника Тугулуур Тобеев и Ваджаана Магаса, Москва-Ленинград, 1935. p. 47; В. А. Казакевич, Делоин Хоринского биркит, вып. 2, Казакевич gives his name incorrectly as Vanchin Sakhniev.

5 "Mineral spring" translates Вртнит Mongolion rasyan үнс кин rasyana. It has been called arify in Burut and has two meanings, viz., "consecrated or holy water" and "mineral water or mineral spring", cf. K. M. Черемисов, Биркит-хоринский, Москва, 1931, p. 66.

6 The river Kurb, in Russian Хурба, in Burut Khirbe, is a right-hand affluent of the river Uda (in Burut Uda). At the confluence of the Uda and Seleng, is located the capital of the present Burat-Mongolian Autonomous Soviet Republic, Ulan Ude (Улды Уда), formerly Веркиндуорс.

7 The place Khasurtai (in Burut Kasurtai) is located on the river Kurb. The name Kasurtai means "having (or covered with) fire", derived from qair or qairta "fire".

8 Köhe Vaidurya, in the original Köhe Budurya, "Blue Vaidurya", i.e., "Blue Lapis lazuli" is the Mongolion translation of the Tibetan title Бая-рьа мон-по "The blue lapis lazuli". This is a very famous work on medicine compiled by Sarungyas rGyur-mtsa' between 1745 and 1750. Its full title is given by W. A. Unkriy, cf., his "Zur Einführung" in P. Cyril v. K. Krassniq, Tiberische Mediizin-philosophie-Der Mensch als Mikrokosmos, Origo Verlag, Zürich, 1933, p. xxii.

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1 The verb arifya- means "to purify, cleanse" and "to remove". The spelling buihi corresponds to classical Mongolian buihi "air, wind" and to Tibetan run "air, wind". In the vocabulary of Burut lamas it means also "vital functions" and "disturbance of vital functions".

2 Badkan is Tibetan bad-khan, Sanskrit chidhāṃ "cow, phlegm". Tibetan bad-khan-rin "phlegm and air" is a medical term. Thus the mineral springs of the kind described are believed to bring relief from "phlegm and air". Burut badgara means "gastric catarrh" and "cancer", cf. Cheremisov, op. cit., p. 81. The same word is pronounced бедже in Ordos and means "a gastric disease", cf. Antoine Mostaert, C.I.C.M., Dictionnaire ordon, tome I, Peking, 1941, p. 67. Therefore, badkan in this text has the same meaning as it has in Modern Burut, viz., "gastric catarrh, cancer".

3 One should keep in mind that the author of the essay was a Burat.

4 "In person" translates myur degeo = Burut hir deko literally "on the face".

5 The word adagiboasa is a conditional form of adagibo = Writen Mongolion afiyja- "to notice, to observe", Burut adagibo- "to observe", cf. Cheremisov, op. cit., p. 31.

6 The original has orowyuq "to make enter". The expression usun-dur oro- "to go in the water" means "to bathe, to swim, to take a bath". Accordingly, the causative stem orowyuq- is translated as "make take a bath".

7 The words in brackets have been supplemented by me.

8 The words lay ῥή ῥέ ῥή ῥή ῥή ῥή means "as much as not to delay the time". The verbal form "drinks" does not have a direct complement. It is obvious, however, that one cannot any beverage other than mineral water is meant here.

9 The word "supper" translates udekiyin idege "the evening meal".
relief from indigestion and catarrh, constipation, and so forth, in brief, from indigestion of food and from [all] kinds of cold.

When one heats this water and takes a tub bath its power is [as follows]. It gives relief from pain in the back and legs caused by the cold of the kidneys, from cold rheumatism, stiffness of and cramps in the arms and legs caused by various kinds of disturbances of vital functions, etc. In brief, its power is [that of] heat.

The kinds of diseases in the case of which this mineral spring is not suitable are fevers, [all] kinds of fevers of yellow and grey substances, influenza, pneumonia, relapses of diseases, and injuries, in brief, it has been observed that it is not suitable in the case of diseases accompanied by high temperatures.

Second, the power of the water on that side. It has been observed that it is useful when eye patients wash and keep their eyes open under the stream [running] down a small pipe, and when they drink it warm or cold.

The diet. Mutton or beef, whatever suits best, is appropriate when served hot. Butter, boiled cream, bread, tea, and so forth, and hot or lukewarm strong drugs also help. The meat of goat or deer, or whatever is

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1 "Indigestion" translates ese linggisen ebelen “the disease of not absorbing, not digesting”.
2 "Catarrh" translates the expression urunu arifyayel ike qayaydanu “the shutting off of the vital functions of removing in the downward direction”.
3 "Küiten" means literally “cold” but in Burjat küiten is also “gonorrhoea”. I am not sure about which is meant here and translate küiten tentatively as “cold”.
4 I translate saba dotara orosam as “when one takes a tub bath”. It means literally “when one gets into a vessel”.
5 "Cold of the kidneys" translates the expression bubergi-küiten. The word küiten = Wr. Mong. küiten, also means “gonorrhoea” but the meaning “cold” looks more suitable.
6 "Cold rheumatism" is the literal translation of küiten herak, the latter word corresponding to Burjat ýërgé “rheumatism”, cf. Cheremisinov, op. cit., p. 629.
7 "All kinds of fevers of yellow and grey substances" translates gara ba harum-galıgyan-u füli. The word füli-a means in Written Mongolian “bile, gastric acid”, cf. Kowalewski, Dictionar II, p. 1317, and “heartburn” in Burjat, cf. Cheremisinov, op. cit., p. 691. It is hard to say what disease is meant by “bilious” or “acid fever”. The other kind of fever, etc., “the fever of the grey substance” is still more obscure.
9 "Relapses of diseases" translates ýigerișsee, cf. Written Mongolian ýigeri - “to become again sick with the same disease”, Kowalewski, Dictionar I, p. 574. Khalkha ýiger - “to have complications” (said of diseases), cf. A. P. Ryzhko, Краткий монгольско-русский словарь, Москва, 1947, p. 239.
10 Mongolian genštes see means “damaged, crippled”.
11 "Under the stream" translates uruqait dotar-a “in the stream, within the stream”.
12 "Down a small water-pipe” translates ulakum gobo-oy-bar. The word gobo means “gutter, water-trough”. It is possible that an eye-dropper is meant here.
13 "Boiled cream" is čermah. Written Mongolian čermah = čerm-a, Khalkha čermö, Khot-Burlat čerm. Milk is put in a big pot and slowly boiled, the cream rises and becomes a thick skin which is removed and dried. This is a Mongolian delicacy.

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1 Mongolian saīkin means "wind", but it can be "cold" here.
2 Burjat diqahari is a Russian loan word, cf. декабрь “December".