
*Altan Tobči* is an important work in Mongolian historical literature. Definite data on its author, whose name is pronounced Lubsan Dandzan in Mongolian, and the time when he wrote his work are unknown, but, to judge from the contents of this history, it might have been written sometime between 1649 and 1736.

The publication reviewed here is a photo-offset reproduction of a book published by the Mongolian Scientific Committee in Ulán Bātūr in the twenty-seventh year of the Mongolian People’s Republic, i.e., 1937 in the European calendar. This new edition contains an editor’s foreword by Professor Francis W. Cleaves and a valuable introduction by the Reverend Antoine Mostaert.

This publication is based on a manuscript found in 1926 by the then chairman of the Mongolian Scientific Committee, Žamyang Güng (died in 1930). The manuscript, property of the library of the Scientific Committee, was sent in 1932 to the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in Leningrad and remained there for almost three years during which it was photostated and studied by Tsyben Žamtsarano. A detailed description of the *Altan Tobči* manuscript constitutes the fifth chapter of Žamtsarano’s outstanding work *Mongol’skie letopisi XVII veka* (Trudy Instituta Vostokovedeniya XVI, Moskva-Leningrad, 1936). At that time Žamtsarano, Kazakevič, and I planned a phototypic edition of the manuscript and the publishing house of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR issued quite satisfactory samples of a few pages of the manuscript. However, Žamtsarano and Kazakevič were arrested in 1937 and never heard of again, and the Academy of Sciences was reluctant to continue the work started by them. Meanwhile the Mongolian
Scientific Committee published the manuscript. Though that edition is not critical and lacks philological apparatus, it is of great value, because it makes the precious manuscript accessible to science. The first edition of Altan Tobči was little known outside Mongolia and the USSR and, therefore, the new Harvard edition is very welcome.

Altan Tobči is a brief history from the legendary ancestor of Chingis Khan, Börte Čino, to the downfall of Legden’s empire conquered by the Manchus. This history is valuable in itself as another chronicle of the Mongols, containing new details. But its value is increased considerably by the fact that it includes large portions of the Secret History presented in verbatim excerpts, which sometimes contribute to better understanding of the text of the Yüan-ch’ao pi-shih in Chinese transcription. On the other hand, the passages from the Secret History occurring in the text of the Altan Tobči are evidence of the fact that there once existed a complete copy of the Secret History written in Uighuric script, otherwise the author of the Altan Tobči would not have been in a position to quote them.

The great importance of Altan Tobči for studies on the Secret History was recognized by the Mongolian Scientific Committee. Its members knew that Pelliot was engaged in research on the Secret History and, therefore, a handwritten copy of the manuscript was sent to him. This copy is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. At the same time Kozín was preparing his edition of the Secret History, based on the reconstruction and translation made by Palladius. Kozín also recognized the great value of the Altan Tobči and included in his edition all passages of the Altan Tobči which coincide with those of the Secret History (Sokrovennoe skazanie, Moskva-Leningrad, 1940, pp. 321-397).

A complete description of the Altan Tobči and a comparison of its contents with those of other Mongolian chronicles are found in Žamtsaranó’s book mentioned above. Therefore, it is not necessary to dwell on the contents of Altan Tobči in this review and I shall confine myself to a few remarks on the language of the Altan Tobči.

Altan Tobči is written in a language characteristic of the works
of the secular literature of the second half of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century. It is not the Classical Mongolian used in Buddhist works but Written Mongolian influenced by the local dialects. On the other hand, it contains numerous archaic elements. The passages taken literally from the Secret History are particularly archaic and scarcely differ in language from Preclassical Mongolian. The archaic elements in the language of Altan Toböi were hard to understand even for the Mongols of the eighteenth century and the copyists of the manuscript deemed it necessary to explain them to the readers. Therefore, many words and locutions are glossed, e.g., (Part I) p. 8: qaryutai = SH gara’utu (epitheton of tergen “ carriage” translated as “black” in the Secret History which is doubtful) is glossed in AT as sekür (cf. Mo. seküigür “ brim of a hat, screen,” Kalmuck sekür “ anything put on, erected, superstructure”) which can be translated here as “shelter,” i.e., “a carriage with a shelter, a covered carriage, van”; p. 11: ečin-e “ in absentia, hidden, secretly” as dalda “secretly”; p. 12: ese dongqo’dba “made no sound” as dayun ese γarba; p. 14: embüle ger “ a dwelling made of twigs” as ebesüin görümeł ger “ a house twisted of grass”; p. 16: daryuliqui “ attack, act of attacking” as dobtulqui id.; p. 20: tün “forest” as siyui id.; p. 25: ayimas “ be angry!” as kilingle id.; p. 31: odur-un as yabun “ while going”; p. 31: čaq-a “ son” as köbegün id., in another place as nilq-a “ infant”; p. 38: sibege “ fortification, wall” as küriy-e “ wall, fence”; p. 41: biderey-e “ let us seek!” (cf. Buriat beder- “ to seek”) as eriq-e id.; p. 42: ösüg “ kumyss, fermented mare’s milk” as ayiray id.; p. 51: erüşgün “ vanquishing” as ilayun id.; p. 64: jor “ bow” as numun id.; p. 67: čerbi as türgiüi nøyan “ the first (or senior) lord”; p. 71: goor “arrow case” as qorumsay sayaday id.; p. 87: ariüqu (a rare word occurring in the manuscript written on birch bark, cf. Sovetskoe Vostokovedenie II, p. 100) as emiyeük “ to be frightened”; p. 86: emčü (instead of ömčü) irgen “ inherited people, people belonging to one’s apanage” as dotoyadu irgen “ inner people”; p. 113: buly-a as dayisun “enemy.” In the second part čayurayulbaï (derived from čayura- čaura- čuura “ military expedition”) is explained on p. 19 as čeriglegülbei “he
sent on a military expedition”; p. 20: ayan čıyurlağ “departing on a military expedition” (derived from the same stem čayura etc. as the preceding word) as mordağ id., etc.

It is to be noted that some place names are identified with their modern equivalents, e.g., the name of the river Tüngelég yoruqan, mentioned many times in the Secret History is explained on page 8 and passim as Çünggür tala.

Many ancient words and expressions were misunderstood by the copyists, however. Numerous glosses contain erroneous explanations of words as correctly remarked by the Reverend Antoine Mostaert (p. xi), e.g., p. 63 sawya (cf. Muqaddimat al-Adab, p. 319: sawyat “a welcome gift”) is explained as tejiy-e “bring up!”; p. 11: kögsimel qonin (“SH köngšišemel qonin “dried mutton”) as kögsin qonin “an old sheep”; p. 48: sidkiül (cf. HJAS 13.316, šidküül) “gift” as emüskel “garment”; p. 54: çegere “chest” as jeger-e “antelope” and bögere “kidney” as taulai “hare”; p. 56: sır-a “ankle bone” as jıya (instead of jıqa) “border, edge,” etc.

Numerous archaic grammatical forms occur in the text of the Altan Tobči. In a brief review only a few of them can be mentioned, e.g., various forms of the pronoun of the third person *i “he”: dat.-loc. imada p. 140, instr. ima gari (obviously misunderstood by the copyist and written separately) p. 126, etc.; plural forms in -yud, e.g., qarayčiyud “black” p. 130; unusual plural forms as γad “hands” p. 154 (like mód “roads” and other examples in old texts); agreement in number, e.g., kökeşed köked “the breasts which have been sucked” p. 37; forms of the verb a- “to be” which have disappeared in the modern language, e.g., ayu “is” p. 96; the rare verbal form in -d which is by origin a plural of the converbum modale in -n, e.g., uqud ta “you will understand” p. 140; forms with the suffix -yun / -gün, e.g.,

1 Kozen has transcribed this form correctly as uqud ta (op. cit., p. 375), but the editors of the Ulán Bátur edition have nuqda da, whereby the initial consonant of da is rendered with a character used only in medial position (Part I, p. 140). As written there, nuqda da does not make any sense. Comparison with Pelliot’s edition of the Secret History (end of § 209 on p. 82 of Pelliot’s edition) shows that this was originally uqad je “shall understand.” The particle je is replaced by the synonymous
(Part II) p. 37: degegūn "on," p. 74: ećinegūn "secretly"; the archaic pronoun teli "that" (Part II) p. 79, etc.

The introduction written by the Reverend Antoine MOSTAERT contains valuable data on the manuscript, its historical importance, and language. A synaptic table of passages of the Altan Tobči which coincide with those of the Secret History facilitates comparative studies of both works.

There is no doubt that Altan Tobči will be studied with great interest both by historians and linguists.

To conclude this review, I should remark that this important publication is the first volume of a new series projected by the Harvard-Yenching Institute for the purpose of making unedited Mongolian manuscripts and rare books accessible to science.

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Бурят-монгольско-русский словарь, составил К. М. Черемисов под редакцией Ц. Б. Цыдендамбаева, около 25 000 слов, с приложением краткого грамматического справочника по бурят-монгольскому языку, Государственное издательство иностранных и национальных словарей, Москва – 1951, 852 стр.


While there are several grammars of the Buriat language (officially called Buriat-Mongolian) and numerous descriptions of its dialects, no reliable dictionary of this language existed until

particle da in Altan Tobči. The latter particle still exists in Khalkha, Buriat, and in other Mongolian languages. On the other hand, da may stand for ta "you." The verbal forms in -d occur in the text of the Secret History, in the Hua-i i-yü, and in documents written with the bPags-pa script.