GEDANKE UND WIRKUNG

FESTSCHRIFT ZUM 90. GEBURTSTAG VON NIKOLAUS POPPE

Herausgegeben von
Walther Heissig und Klaus Sagaster



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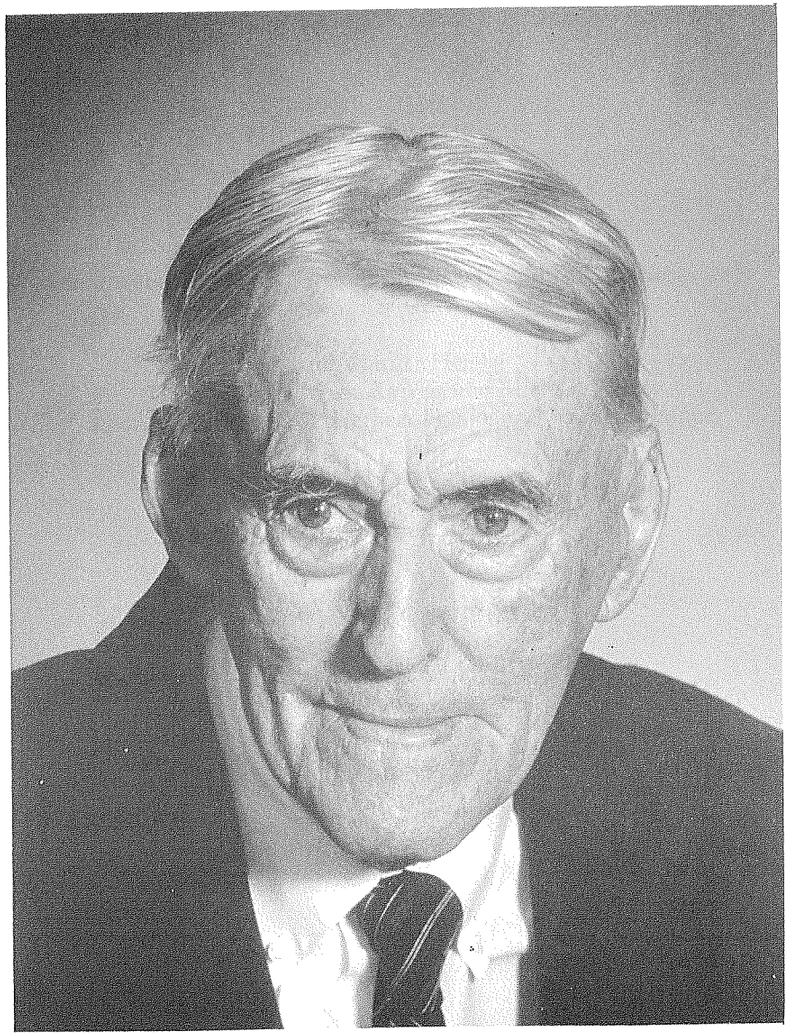
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Nikolaus Poppe

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THE ḥP'ags-pa LETTERS *e* AND *ė* REPRESENT ONE AND THE SAME MONGOLIAN VOWEL

1. In my article in Japanese entitled "Pakupa-ji (Pasupa-ji) ni tsuite, – Tokuni *e* no Ji to *ė* no Ji ni Kanshite –" (Concerning the ḥP'agspa Script, – Especially in Regard to the Letters *e* and *ė* –), which was published in Gekkan Gengo (Monthly Language, Published from the Taishukan Shoten), Nos.7 and 8, 1984, I investigated the shapes of these letters and the Mongolian vowel phoneme represented with them, referring to the origin of these letters. In this paper I will discuss only the Mongolian vowel represented with them.

First of all, I express my cordial appreciation of the following two books, without which this study would have been impossible.

Nicholas Poppe: *The Mongolian Monuments in ḥP'ags-pa Script.* Second Edition translated and edited by John R. Krueger, 1957, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden.

Louis Ligeti: Monuments en écriture 'Phags-pa, Pièces de chancellerie en transcription chinoise, 1972 & 1973, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest.

2. Professor Poppe writes on page 30 of the above book,

> The ḥP'ags-pa script distinguishes two kinds of *e* vowels: one is a somewhat open *e*; the other is a closed *ė*.

Professor Ligeti seems to be of the samē opinion, because he uses the same transcription while discriminating them with *ä* and *e* in his transliteration. Namely:

transcription		transliteration
e	=	*ä*
ė	=	*e*

Although I demonstrated in my article mentioned above that the ḥP'ags-pa letters *e* and *ė* were devised in order to represent two Chinese sounds which were phonologically different from each other, it is necessary to demonstrate separately that the Mongolian vowels represented with them were phonologically distinct from each other. The demonstration is necessary especially because the distribution of these two letters is almost complementary when they represent Mongolian sounds.

I agree with Professors Poppe and Ligeti in assuming that the ḥP'ags-pa Script *eė, uė,* and *euė* represent the Mongolian diphthongs /ei/, /ui/, and /üi/, respectively. However, I notice, at the same time, the fact that there are no combinations of the ḥP'ags-pa letters *ee, ue,* and *eue* in the representation of these Mongolian diphthongs.

Nextly, we find Mongolian words beginning with *be-, he-, ǰe-, k'e-, me-,* and *ne-,* but none in *bė-, hė-, ǰė-, k'ė-, mė-,* and *nė.*

While there are nine Mongolian words beginning with *de-,* only two words are found with *dė-.* One is the noun *dėŋri*(-) «Heaven, deity», which will be discussed later. Anyhow, there is no instance of *deŋri*(-). The other is *dėm* «inn, hostel», which is possibly a Chinese loan word. The original Chinese word is attested in *Mêng-ku Tzŭ-yün* (hereafter abbr. to *MT*) as below.

店 *dėm*³

The instance *dem* «inn» in the Edict of Qubilai is probably a Mongolised form of the same word.

The instance *lėm hu̯aŋ shi* «police office» is the transcription of a Chinese word 廉訪司, and the first morpheme is attested as *lėm*¹ in *MT.* The word *lėnγu̯a* «lotus» was loaned from Chinese, the initial syllable of which is attested as *lėn*¹ in *MT.*

There are nine words beginning with *se-,* but only the following two are found with *sė.* One is *sėŋgere-*, but no example of *seŋgere-* is found. The other is *sėnšhiŋudi* «Taoist monks (acc.)», which is usually written as *senšhiŋud*(-). The suffix *-ud* and the accusative ending *-i* are Mongolian, whereas *sėnšhiŋ* is a Chinese word 先生. It is *sen*¹-*šhiŋ*¹ in *MT.* That means that the majority of cases of this word transcribe correctly the original Chinese word, but *sėnšhiŋudi* transcribes it wrongly. I think this is an indication of indiscrinate use of *e* and *ė* in the Mongolian ḥP'ags-pa monuments.

The instance *šem si* is the representation of a Chinese place name 陝西, which is *šem*² *si*¹ in *MT. šen ·iŋ ǰü seŋ güŋ* is for 善應儲祥宮, a Taoist temple, which is *žen*² *'iŋ*¹ *džü*¹ *zeŋ*¹ *güŋ*¹ in *MT.*

The instances *yėke* «great», *yėkes, yėket'u, yėrt'inǰü* «world» are Mongolian words. *yėw mėw* is, however, for a Chinese name 堯廟, which is *yėw*[1] *mėw*[3] in *MT.* The only example with *ye-* is *yen hĭa gon,* which is for a Chinese name 煙霞觀, i.e. *jen*[1] *hĭa*[1] *gon*[1] in *MT.*

Among the remaining instances, which begin with *č'e-, čė-*; *ge-, gė-*; *t'e-,* and *t'ė-,* four paires of the same Mongolian words are found with both *Ce-* and *Cė-*. Thus,

č'erig «army»	č'ėrig «ibid.»
č'eri'udun «of troops»	č'ėri'udun «ibid.»
geyiddur «at the dwelling»	gėyiddur «ibid.»
t'eri'un «first»	t'ėri'un «ibid.»

Now, we can safely conclude that the ḥP'ags-pa letters *e* and *ė* represent one and the same Mongolian vowel.

3. The remaining job is to examine the examples with initial vowels. Professor Ligeti distinguishes between transcription and transliteration, the latter of which is shown here in [ ]. P. and L. are the abbreviations of Poppe and Ligeti.

In Professor Poppe's Glossary only three words begin with *e-,* and all the others with *ė-*. The three Mongolian words will be examined below.

P. *ebdere(ˊesu)* «if it is destoyed» H II 29.
L. *ėbdere'esü* ['eb-dä-rä-ˊä-su] P XII 29.

P. *egil* «common» H I 34, H III 30, H III 31.
L. *ėgil* ['e-gil] P II 31, VIII 34, II 30.

P. *eldeb* «various» XIII 5.
L. *ėldeb* ['el-däb] KyO 5:6b.

Namely, Professor Ligeti transcribes with *ė-* all the three words, which Professor Poppe transcribes with *e-*.

Accordingly, I examined the original inscriptions, and found the following facts.

The initial vowels of the first and second words are represented with ཨེ ཨེ ཨེ (= *ė*), so that Professor Ligeti is correct in this respect.

The third word, however, has a non-ḥP'ags-pa letter ཀ in the initial position. This letter resembles the letter ཀྱ (*e*), but it cannot be a mis-carving of the latter, because if it were ཀྱ, it would have been preceded by ཨ. (This point will be mentioned later.) Therefore, it is probably a mis-carving of the letter ཨེ (*ė*).

Incidentally, Professor Ligeti shows an example of *eǰen* (KyO 4:5c), which is trascribed as *ėǰen* «ruler, master» by Professor Poppe. Examining the original inscription, I found that this is a misprint of Professor Ligeti's book.

Now, only one Mongolian word, for which the two professors do not agree in the way of transcription has remained. All the instances of this word will be enumerated below, three by three. (– indicates that the corresponding instances are not found in Professor Poppe's Glossary.)

P. –
L. *erdeni'er* ["är-di-ni-ˊär] SrnP 11a8. (sic)

P. [*ė*]*rdini*(*dur*) «jewel» A II 4.
L. [*e*]*rdini-dür* [....r-di-ni-dur] SrnP 10a4.

P. –
L. *erdini-yin* ["är-di-ni-yin] SrnP 11a1.

Examining the fragment of *Subhāṣitaratnanidhi,* published by Professor Pentti Aalto in 1959 in Helsinki, I found that Professor Ligeti's transcription *er-* and transliteration ["är] are correct, because the initial vowels of these nouns are represented with ཨེ.

The remaining three instances are:

P. *ėrdinis* «jewels» XII 3, XIII 10.
L. "*ėrdinis* ["er-di-nis] KyE 3:4b, KyO 10:11b

P. *ėrtini* «jewel» XII 7.
L. "*ėr̲tini* ["er-ti-ni] KyE 7:9c

P. *ėrtinis* «jewels» XII 7.
L. "*ėr̲tinis* ["er-ti-nis] KyE 7:9a (sic)

Examining the *Chü-yung-kuan* inscriptions, I found that both professors are correct, because the initial vowel of these nouns are represented with ཨེ.

Now, it seems possible to assume that the usual representation of the initial *e* is ཨེ, and that of the initial *ė* is ཨེ. For that reason I have revised the non-ḥP'ags-pa letter ཀ into ཨེ in the case the Mongolian word *ėldeb* mentioned above.

However, we have to inquire why the initial vowel of the word *ėrdinis,* etc. was represented not with ཨེ or ཨེ but with ཨེ. This seems to be an exceptional representation.

My assumption is that this is because the word meaning «jewel» was for the writer(s) of the texts of the inscriptions an exceptionally important one, to which he or they tried to give a more dignified graphic shape.

At any rate, it is to be noted that both letters *e* and *ė* are used in order to represent the initial vowel of one and the same word: *erdini* and *ėr̲tini* (*ėrdinis*). That is, the two letters represent the same Mongolian vowel.

3.1. Incidentally, it is a well-known fact that there is a remarkable discrepancy between the ḥP'ags-pa script and the *Yüan-ch'ao Mi-shih* in regard to the representation of the Mongolian word meaning «Heaven». The former represents it with *dėŋri*, while the latter with 騰格理舌 (teŋ-ge-ri), 騰格里舌 (teŋ-ge-ri), and 騰吉里舌 (teŋ-gi-ri). On the other hand, the preclassical mongolian monuments represent the word with an exceptional Uighuro-Mongolian spelling: *tngri*. Concerning these representations, I propose the following hypothesis.

The *Mi-shih* represents the word faithfully to the contemporal pronunciation, while the preclassial monuments preserves the old orthography which was probably borrowed from Uighur. In the ḥP'ags-pa inscriptions this word often occurs in the collocation: *moŋ-k'(a) dėŋ-ri*. If they would have written as *moŋ-k'(a) t'ėŋ-ge-ri*, it would have destroyed the symmetry of the written shape of the collocation. Besides that, among the letters ཏ (*t*), ཐ (*t'*), ད (*d*), *d* has the simplest and most dignified shape for the representation of the extremely important word meaning «Heaven». As for the choice of the two letters ེ (*e*) and ཻ (*ė*), the latter has much more appropriate shape to come betwen the letters *d* and *ŋ*. In the inscription of the edict of Ayurbarvada (in 1318), we find even an instance of *moŋ-k'(a) diŋ-ri*, which indicates that even ི (*i*) is better than ེ (*e*). For all these reasons, they chose the spelling *dėŋ-ri* for this word in inscriptions and *p'ai-tzu*. However, it is possible that there existed some other documents, where this word was written as *t'eŋ-ge-ri*, *t'ėŋ-ge-ri*, or *t'eŋ-gi-ri* in the ḥP'ags-pa script.

4. To our regret, the lexicon of the whole monunets is too small to reinforce the above conclusion by means of a comparative study of modern Mongolian languages and dialects. I will try, however, to the possible extent.

{ čerig «army» { erdini «jewel»
{ čĕrig «ibid.» { ėr̲tini «ibid.» ėrdem «virtue»

Kalmuck	tserĭg	erdə̆nᵢ, erdṇ̊	erdṃ̊
Buryat	sereg	erdeni	erdem
Khalkha	tsereg	erdene	erdem
Ordos	tširik	erdeni	erdem
Monguor	tš'irig	—	rdiäm

Ordos and Monguor have changed **če-* into *či*. Accordingly, in so far as these data are concerned, it is possible to state that the vowels in the first syllables of the above three nouns were the same in the proto-language. Anyhow, we see no indication to the effect that we have to posit two **e*, i.e. a narrower **e* and a wider **ɛ* for the proto-language.