East Asian History

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THE MISSING FIRST PAGE OF THE PRECLASSICAL MONGOLIAN VERSION OF THE HSIAO-CHING: A TENTATIVE RECONSTRUCTION

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The Preclassical Mongolian version of the Chinese Classic of Filial Piety (Hsiao-ching 孝經) is a well-known text, several times edited by Mongol and Western scholars and twice translated into English.1 It is the only 'Mongol' book of the Yuan period to have physically survived in China, almost certainly because it was a Chinese classic in a bilingual

The only other Preclassical Mongol work to have survived the Ming restoration and the nationalist fervour accompanying it is the famous tetraglottal blockprint of 1431 of two Buddhist Tantric texts edited by W. Heissig in W. Heissig, "Zwei mumamisch mongolische Yuan-ubersetzung un d ihr Nachdruck von 1431," ZAS 10 (1976): 7–115. It is quite possible that the Hsian-chang version that has been handed down is also a Ming print, possibly made from original Yuan blocks. See de Rachewiltz, "Preclassical Mongolian version," 1982, pp.17, 25, n.25.

3 A single leaf (5r–v) from another (lost) exemplar of the same work was found by W. Fuchs in Peking in the 1930s, it was published together with a transcription, translation and commentary by A. Mostaert in Monumenta Serica 4 (1939–40): 325–9.

4 See Lu, 4 (lines 2, 4–7); Cleaves, "The first chapter," 1982, p.71 (lines 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7); de Rachewiltz, "Preclassical Mongolian version," 1982, p.28 (lines 6–7).

5 As it will become apparent, the strict limits imposed by the amount of space available for the Mongol text in each line leave little room for choice. Therefore, while in theory several reconstructions are possible, this is not so in practice.

6 The measurements in ems are purely conventional, but since they are used for comparison with passages and lines throughout the book, they are valid for the purpose of the present reconstruction.

7 See above, n.1.

8 It is unlikely that, as postulated by Cleaves, "The first chapter," 1982, p.71, the Mongol title followed immediately after the Chinese title since this is not the case with the section title, which is always by itself, on a separate line. Lu, 4 and 27, has, in fact, correctly (in my view) placed the Mongol title in 1r2.

9 This is the practice throughout the work. See 3v–b (4 char.), 4v (2 char.), 6r (3 char.), 7v–8r (3 char.), 9v (3 char.), 10v (3 char.), etc.

10 Iden as above, n.9, Cleaves, loc. cit., is consequently mistaken in making the Mongol version of the sectional title follow immediately after the Chinese text. Lu, 4 and 28, has correctly isolated edition; the Chinese text in it has saved it for posterity. It is virtually complete, except for a few minor lacunae, and the title page and the first page (1r) which are unfortunately missing. We do not know whether it contained also a preface and/or a postface or a colophon.

Xa. Luvsanbaldan (Qa. Luvsanbaldan), F. W. Cleaves and the present writer have already attempted to reconstruct in full or in part the missing page on the basis of the Chinese text; however, none of them seriously tried to restore the entire Mongol text of 1r taking into account the space available in each of the lines, and the arrangement and distribution of the Chinese text which, in fact, determines the availability of space. I shall endeavour now to establish a new reconstruction taking all factors into consideration. I am reasonably confident that the solution presented here is the correct one or, at any rate, quite close to it.

The two basic criteria for the ‘selection’ of the missing words in the Mongol text are 1) the arrangement of the Chinese text following the pattern and format adopted in the book, and 2) the amount of space available in each line for the Chinese characters and the Mongol words on the basis of the average distribution of both throughout the work. The portion of a line occupied by a letter of the Uighur-Mongol alphabet will conventionally be referred to as an em. Please note that, for the sake of convenience, the space between words (and between a Chinese character and a Mongol word following it) is reckoned as 2 ems, and the characteristic Uighur final dactus as being equivalent to 3 ems. The letters with a dactus will be highlighted in transcription whenever necessary by being printed in bold type. Since measurements by ems and cm. must be carried out on a photo-reproduction of the text which is clear and in which the frames are of uniform size, all references are to the text published in Zentralasiatische Studien 12:1978, 159–235.

With regard to (1), it is evident that the first line of 1r contained the Chinese title of the book; the second line, the corresponding title in Mongolian on the same line, the third line, the title of the first section (章) in Chinese at a lower level (corresponding to the space occupied by two to four Chinese characters above it); and the fourth line, the Mongol version of the title of the first section on the same level of the third line. The following three lines (1r5–7) must, therefore, have been occupied by the first two sentences of the text proper with their respective Mongol translations, the Mongol rendering of the second sentence continuing on 1v1–2. To fit the above in one seven-line page it is essential that we adhere strictly to the limits imposed by (2).
Concerning the book title in the first line, it is likely that it was followed by the two words i chüan 一巻 ‘one chapter’. Since the Mongol term bőlog ‘chapter’ is used by the translator to render ch. chuang 章 ‘chapter, section’ throughout the work (see below), the only other term that could be employed in the circumstances is debter ‘book, volume’. There is, indeed, some evidence that in the 13th–14th centuries the word debter was in the Mongol translations of Buddhist texts in the same way as ch. chüan. However, since it is not mentioned that in this book the title Hsiao-ching was followed by i chüan, I shall put both i chüan and its presumed Mongol version nigen debter in parentheses.

As for the Mongol rendering of Hsiao-ching, I have discussed the issue in de Rachewiltz 1982, 19, where I reached the conclusion that, contrary to Luvsanbaldan’s opinion, it must have been a phonetic transcription of the Chinese followed by bőlog ‘book’, viz. *Qiaung bőlog. In place of *Qiaung, Ligeti suggested *Kaung. Since either transcription is possible, I propose *Qiaung/*Kaung bőlog (nigen debter) for the Mongol title of the Hsiao-ching in 1r.

For the rendering of the section title 開宗明義章第一, lit. ‘First Section on (Opening =) Explaining the Essentials and Elucidating the Meaning’, comprising altogether seven characters, its Mongol version in the fourth line must have ended with the words nigen debter bőlog ‘first chapter’ as shown by Cleaves 1982, 75, n.3, on the basis of the regular renderings of section numbers throughout the text. Since the fourth line began at the same level of the third line, the space available for the Mongol version of the first four Chinese characters of the title is, by necessity, limited, and a full literal rendering is excluded. In the available space we cannot, in fact, fit more than five average-length words (ca. 45 ems, see below), two of which are nigen debter bőlog, together with their suffixes.16

What the Chinese four-character text says in effect is that this section explains the essence of Confucius’ discourse and the meaning of filiality; the Mongolian version must say the same with not more than three words.17

Now, ‘to explain, elucidate’ in pmo. and mo. is tayyl-, and ‘meaning’ is uðqa, written udq̪a.18 For ‘essential’, i.e., ‘basic’, the two words that immediately come to mind are yol and tūb, both also well attested in pmo. The expression yol uðqa is, indeed, a common compound in mo. and the modern Mongolian languages for ‘basic meaning, central concept(s) = plot (of a play),’ ‘idée de l’essentiel’.22

12 Cf., the title of the lost Preclassical Mongolian translation of a known Buddhist sûtra discussed by G. Kara in his article “On a lost Mongol book and its Uighur version,” in G. Hazai, P. Zieme, Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur der altsächsischen Völker, Protokollband der XII. Tagung der Permanent Inter-

/national Altaistic Conference (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1974), pp.287–289, at p.287. In the second line we have the expression qojar debter nom’s book in two parts, in which qojar debter would obviously correspond to ch. chüan 二巻 ‘two chapters.’ See Kara’s remarks, ibid., p.288. Cf. also the use of
although to my knowledge not attested in pmo. texts, there is no reason
to doubt that this expression already existed in the 13th–14th centuries. 

From the early 14th-century Mongolian version of Santideva’s Bodhicaryāvatāra and other preclassical texts we know that the word udāqa had a rather wide semantic range, expressing notions like ‘purpose, aim, intention (→ duty, obligation),’ ‘concept, idea,’ ‘the essential (→ what is useful), essence,’ and ‘(natural) quality or qualities,’ beside that of ‘meaning (→ truth)’—a conceptual relation existing between ‘quality’ and ‘essence,’ and between these and ‘concept,’ ‘meaning’ and ‘purpose.’ Several of these derivative meanings developed under Buddhist influence. 

Thus, the translator of the Hsiao-ching, taking advantage of the polyvalent nature of the word udāqa, could have brilliantly solved the problem confronting him by rendering the Chinese sectional title with a simple sentence like I’iul udāqa-yi tayilqu ngedéidég bólôq, i.e., ‘First Chapter Explaining the (Central =) Fundamental (or Basic) Meaning of (the Text),’ viz., the very essence of the work. Such a sentence, while adequately conveying the sense of the original, occupies only 45 ems and is exactly within the space limit. Cf. 3v1 (44+7 ems), 4v3 (47 ems), 6r3 (41+4 ems), 8r1 (46 ems), 9v5 (48 ems), 10v4 (45+6 ems), etc.

I wish to emphasize that, while other solutions are possible of course, they would involve a greater number of words (as the one proposed in Lu) or longer words, which in either case would automatically disqualify them.

The fifth line would necessarily begin with the first sentence of the Hsiao-ching 仲尼居子子侍, lit. ‘Chung-ni (i.e., Confucius) was sitting (and) Tseng-tzu was waiting upon (him),’ i.e., ‘When Chung-ni was sitting (at leisure, at home) and Tseng-tzu was waiting upon him,...’ Taking into consideration the pmo. language and the space available in the line, the above sentence could be rendered as Jungni sañju Singsi taqin bakūi-dur “When Jungni (= Chung-ni) was sitting (and) Singsi (=...
Tseng-tzu) was waiting upon (him).23 The space occupied by these words is 43 ems, also within the permissible limit. Cf. 6v2: 43 ems followed by six Chinese characters, exactly as in our sentence but in the inverse order, which makes no difference.

The sixth line contains thirteen characters of text, viz., 日子日王有至德齊道以順天下, lit. "The Master (i.e., Confucius) said, 'The former kings possessed (supreme ➔) perfect virtue and the essential course (i.e., principles, rules) of conduct by means of which they regulated (fall) under Heaven ➔ the world.'"24 The space left in that line is 5.9 cm., which is just what is required to accommodate the first two words of the Mongol translation, viz. Kungvusikügeluren "Kungvusi (= Confucius) said."25 Cf. 14r5 which has fourteen characters: if we remove the fourteenth character and measure the remaining space, it is 5.9 cm. The length of the two words Kungvusikügeluren in 11r2 is exactly 5.9 cm.

The seventh line would then contain the first part of Confucius' statement which continues in 1v1–2. The following reconstruction, proposed in 1982,26 still stands (the continuation of the sentence in 1v1–2 is given in parentheses): terde boydla qad anggangan-u sayin ayali aburi (töro yosun qoyar-iyar delekei ulus-i ilütegegin) jasaayan-u tula "(because) the sage rulers of old (suitably governed the world with) perfect virtue (and propriety)."27 Both Lu, 4, and Cleaves, 71, omit in their reconstructions of the same line the words anggangan-u sayin which render ch. chib 至 'supreme ➔' perfect', but they should not be left out since they are not only required by the context, but there is space for them in the line. With their inclusion, the last line of 1v occupies 56 ems—a long line indeed, but there are even longer ones in the Mongol text. Cf., e.g., 13v7 (65 ems).

By combining the Chinese and Mongol texts of the missing first page (1r) of our Hsiao-ching, we obtain the following tentative reconstruction, line by line:

23 For the names Jungni = Chung-ni, and Singsi = Tseng-tzu, see Cleaves, "The first chapter," 1982, p.76, an. 6, 8. Prms., mo., sayu- (mno. sa-) is the exact counterpart of ch. chu 與 'to dwell, stay; to sit', just as prms. taq-t (mno., mo. takt-) is of ch. chib 至 'to attend upon, to wait upon.' In § 216 of the Secret History of the Mongols these two verbs occur in close association in the following alliterative passage: čaqgan de el emissi / čaqgan alta unu ufu / sa tari de ere / sa alfu takfu He (i.e., Old Usan) shall wear a white dress / And ride a white gelding; / He shall sit on a (high) seat / / And be waited upon.' Cf. The Secret History of the Mongols, A Mongolian epic chronicle of the thirteenth century, translated with a historical and philological commentary by Igo de Rachewiltz (Leiden: Brill, 2004), p.148. Cf. also the use of both verbs in lines 15–17 of the Mongolian text of the Sino-Mongolian inscription of 1335 studied by Cleaves HJAS 15 (1950): 72–3, where taq-t = taq-t. I have little doubt that sayu- and taq-t were likewise used in the passage of the Hsiao-ching under discussion.
24 For a discussion of the key expressions found in this sentence, see de Rachewiltz, "Preclassical Mongolian version," 1982, p.53, n.6. In his reconstruction, Lu, p.4, ignores the space taken by the thirteen Chinese characters, whereas Cleaves, "The first chapter," 1982, p.71, makes them fill the entire sixth line. Both authors are obviously at fault.
25 For the Mongolian transcription 'Kungvusi' of ch. Kung fu-tzu 竺夫子 'Master Kung', Kung being Confucius' surname, see Cleaves, "The first chapter," 1982, p.76, n.10. For the expression Kungvusikügeluren—a recurrent one in the Mongol version of the Hsiao-ching, see ibid., pp.76–7, n.11.
27 In my former transcription of the Mongol text of 1v1 (ibid., p.28), I wrote ilütegegin. It is now my opinion that this word should instead be read ilütegegin, as in Lu, pp.4, 28 (d), the meaning being unaltered ('suitably'). I think, in fact, that the Secret History word ilüte in § 280, meaning 'convenient, suitable' (see Haenisch's Wörterbuch, 82, cf. de Rachewiltz, The Secret History of the Mongols, 1, p.216, II, p.10/0, corresponds to the ilüde, id., of the Hua-i-i-yi (Shufang Shuzi) of 1389, III, 6v4. See A. Mostaert, Le matériel mongol du Housa i-yu (1389), I, ed. by I. de Rachewiltz with the assistance of A. Schönbaum (Bruxelles: Inst. Belge H.E.C., 1977), p.63.
28 Pace Cleaves, "The first chapter," 1982, p.78, n.19, I regard both the ilüte of the Secret History and the ilüde of the Hua-i-i-yi as nomina adiectiva in =de ('-mno., -de') from *ilü 'advantage, convenience.' See de Rachewiltz, "Preclassical Mongolian version," 1982, p.52, n.4. However, I now believe that the end suffix is not, as formerly assumed, the so-called diminutive suffix -ker/-ge/-garn, but the rare suffix -ker(-yarn), on which see A. Mostaert, F. W. Cleaves, "Trois documents des Archives secrètes vaticanes," HJAS 15 (1952): 452–5.
1. [孝經 (一卷)]
2. *Qiاعشه/ْKaاعنْhقِbُهٔg (nigen debier)
3. 開宗明義章第一
4. *tool udq a-ya taylqu nigeđüger bölög
5. 仲尼居曾子侍 Jungni sayuju Singsi taqin bukai-dür
6. 子曰先王有至徃要道以順天下 Kungensis ügüler ün
7. uridu boydas qad angqan-u sayin ayali aburi]

In memory of my friend James Russell Hamilton, 1921–2003

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