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Author(s): L. BESE
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Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, Tomus XXII (1), pp. 123—132 (1969)

PREVERBS IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE MONGOLS

BY

L. BESE

This paper treats of those Mongolian preverbs that are found in the language of the *Secret History of the Mongols*. It relies on the results of two previous studies on Buriat and Khalkha preverbs,[1] and it completes them in respect of the history of language.

1. The following passages of the text of the Secret History will be examined:[2]

(1) *qa'an-u emüne če'el usun-i hoqtoru čeügen čilawun č e ü r ü dobtulǰu öksü* 'I shall drain the whirling water, I shall crumble the shining stone before the emperor.' (§ 147)

(2) *kebte'ül söni ordo horčin gebteǰü e'üten daruǰu bayiqsat kebte'ül söni oroqun haran-i ekit anu d a l b a r u mürüs anu ba'utala čabčiǰu o'orutqun* 'The night guards should take up their position around the palace-tent at night. The door-watching night guards — having rifted their heads asunder, having chopped off their shoulders — should cast out those who intend to enter during the night.' (§ 229)

(3) *kö'üd-ün aqa J̌oči ba qoyar büi ǰe qan ečige-de qolbaran güčün öksü dalda-riqsan-iyan d a l b a r u čabčildusu* 'J̌oči and we, we are the elder brothers of the boys. We shall help together [our] father, the qan. We cut down those who draw away from him.' (§ 255)

(4) *olon tarqaqsan-u qoyina qonoqsat kebte'ül-eče busut dotoqši ǰöričen oroqun haran-i bariqsat kebte'ül ekit anu d a l b a r u čabčiǰu o'ortuqai* 'As soon as the multitude dispersed, the night guards having rifted their heads asunder, should cast out any people, other than the night guards watching in the night, who, infringing the rule, want to enter.' (§ 278)

[1] See L. Bese, *A study in Buriat preverbs*: *Acta Orient. Hung.* XIX (1966), 217—244 and L. Bese, *On Khalkha preverbs*: *Acta Orient. Hung.* XXI. (1968), 225—235.

[2] As regards the Mongolian text, I use Professor Ligeti's transliteration. Cf. *A mongolok titkos története.* [*Histoire secrète des Mongols.*] Közzéteszi Ligeti Lajos. [Par L. Ligeti.] 223 pages: *Mongol Nyelvemléktár — Recueil des monuments de la langue mongole* III. Budapest 1964.

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(5) *tere kökidek Toqto'a-yin erüge de'ere inu oroǰu erkin e'ede inu e m b ü r ü da'ariǰu* . . . 'Stepping on the house of the timorous Toqto'a, smashing his abutment . . .' (§ 105)

(6) *Toqto'a beki-yin erüge de'ereče erkin e'ede e m b ü r ü đa'arin oroǰu* . . . 'Stepping on the house of Toqto'a beki, smashing his abutment . . .' (§ 109)

(7) *qa'an-u emüne če'el usun-i h o q t o r u čeügen čilawun čeürü dobtulǰu öksü* 'I shall drain the whirling water, I shall crumble the shining stone before the emperor.' (§ 147)

(8) *J̌ebe qoyinaqši h u r b a tataǰu dobtulǰu sundurču ayisuqun dayyin-i daruba* 'J̌ebe defeated the enemy who had arrived sidling from behind, attacking and tracing him.' (§ 247)

(9) *qal ke'eksen-tür qara gürü q a m q a r u dobtulǰu öksü* 'When he says: «Start!», I pound the black stone.' (§ 147)

(10) *ine'ebe ke'en Tayang qan k e m k e r ü gečkileǰü'üi* '— He laughed! — Tayang qan trod [the skull] asunder.' (§ 189)

(11) *tere söni Naiman buru'uyilan gödölkün bolun Naqu de'ereče qulatču de'ere de'ere'en qutaqlalduǰu yasu hüsü-ben k e m k e r ü unalduǰu hünǰi'ü bayitala daručaǰu üküldüǰü'üi* 'In the night the flying Naimans, having fallen down from the top of Naqu, having tumbled over one another, having bruised their limbs, having been compressed like felled tree-trunks, perished.' (§ 196)

(12) *gür ke'eksen qaǰar-a kökö gürü k e' ü r ü qal ke'eksen-tür qara gürü qamqaru dobtulǰu öksü* 'When he says: — «Go ahead!», I pound the blue stone. When he says: — «Start!», I pound the black stone.' (§ 147)

(13) *qoǰidaqsan-iyan borbin-iyan k i n g g ü r ü čabčildusu* 'We cut through the heel tendons of those who lag behind [You].' (§ 255)

(14) *ekes kö'üt aqa-nar de'ü-ner šikui hoi-tur qorqolaǰu Belgütei mudut q u q u r u tatalaǰu šibe'e bariǰu* . . . 'Mothers, sons, elder brothers, younger brothers, entrenching themselves in the forest; Belgütei, breaking off trees, raising barricades, . . .' (§ 79)

(15) *qutuq e'ede inu q u q u r u da'ariǰu* . . . 'Breaking up his holy door, . . .' (§ 105)

(16) *quduq e'ede inu q u q u r u da'ariǰu* . . . 'Breaking up his holy door, . . .' (§ 109)

(17) *Taičar-un niru'u inu q u q u r u qarbuǰu ala'at* . . . 'Shooting through Taičar's backbone, he killed him and . . .' (§ 128)

(18) *modun-u geši'üt q u q u r u tatalaǰu* . . . 'Breaking off branches of tree . . .' (§ 132)

(19) *Belgütei niru'u inu q u q u r u tata'at čirčü o'orkiǰu yorčiba* 'Belgütei cracked [Büri bökö's] backbone, [and] having dragged and thrown him away, he left.' (§ 140)

(20) *minu ǰebelegü aman čaqān qula-yin aman niru'u inu q u q u ken qarbula'a*

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'Who shot through the first vertebra of my white-cheeked bay steed of battle?' (§ 147)

2. From this corpus the following elements will be studied:

1. *čeürü* 'asunder' (1).
2. *dalbaru* 'apart' (2—4).
3. *embürü* 'asunder' (5—6).
4. *hoqtoru* 'out' (7).
5. *hurba* 'aside' (8).
6. *qamqaru* 'asunder' (9).
7. *kemkerü* 'asunder' (10—11).
8. *ke'ürü* 'asunder' (12).
9. *kinggürü* 'through' (13).
10. *ququ* 'through' (20).
11. *ququru* 'through, across' (14—19).

These are preverbs appearing in a direct pre-verb position, and they fulfil the conditions characteristic of Mongolian preverbs (cf. Bese: 1966 and 1968).

3. The preverbs of the SH can be divided morphologically into two groups: root-preverbs and derivative preverbs.

3.1 The preverbs *hurba* 'aside' (8) and *ququ* 'through' (20) are root-preverbs. They are proper equivalents of the present Buriat and Khalkha root-preverbs (cf. Bese, 1966: **2.** and 1968: **4.1**).

Haenisch and Pelliot try to emend the root-preverb *ququ* to the forms *ququs* or *ququru*.[3] But an emendation like this is not necessary, if only because of the root-preverb *hurba* 'aside'.[4]

3.11 Different kinds of bound morphemes may occur after the root-preverbs. Therefore the root-preverb is a non-closing morpheme in the language of the SH too, exactly like the root-preverbs of the modern dialects, which are similarly non-closing morphemes. The following examples can be found in the text:

1. with the verb-forming suffix *.či*:

hoqto.či- 'to cut into small pieces' : *hoqto*.
ququ.či- 'to break into pieces' : *ququ*.

[3] Cf. E. Haenisch, *Wörterbuch zu Mangḫol un Niuca Tobca'an*. Leipzig 1939, p. 71 and P. Pelliot, *Histoire secrète des Mongols*. Paris 1949, p. 42, Note 7.

[4] Ligeti does not emend the reading *ququ*.. Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 147.

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2. with the verb-forming suffix *.ra/.re/.rü/.r*:

čęü.re-/čewü.rü- 'to crumble into dust' : *čeü./čewü.*
hoqto.r- 'to cut' : *hoqto.*
kinggü.r- 'to break' : *kinggü.*
ququ.ra- 'to break to pieces' : *ququ.*

3. with the verb-forming suffix *.ri*:

hoqto.ri- «to cut' : *hoqto.*
kinggü.ri- 'to break' : *kinggü.*

4. with the verb-forming suffix *.l*:

hoqto.l- 'to cut' : *hoqto.*
kęmke.l- 'to break into pieces' : *kemke.*
kinggü.l- 'to break' : *kinggü.*
ququ.l- 'to break' : *ququ.*

5. with the suffix complex *.'ul.sun*:

qamqa.'ulsun 'tumble-weed' : *qamqa.*

6. with the suffix *.s*:[5]

ke'ü.s 'intermittently across' : *ke'ü.*
kinggü.s 'intermittently asunder' : *kinggü.*
ququ.s 'intermittently apart' : *ququ.*

[5] Murayama dealt with the *.s* suffix of the so-called converbum momentanei of the SH in a separate paper (cf. Sh. Murayama, *Genchō hishi mōkogo ni okeru -s ni owaru converbum*: *Gengo Kenkyū*, vol. 19—20, p. 51—67). Thus the material in question can be considered well-known. It is a problem whether the correction of text suggested by Haenisch and Pelliot (see Note 3) is justifiable; or, in other words, whether there is any difference between the uses of the preverb of Pr. *ru/rü* type and of the «converbiums» formed with *.s*.

In respect of the syntactical distribution several corresponding phenomena can be observed:

1) In general the «converbiums» formed with *.s*, too, appear directly before their verb.

2) According to the interrogative form of the preverb of Pr.*ru/rü* type (20), the negative particle *ülü* is inserted between the «converbium» and its verb (*hirmes ülü kin* § 194).

3) These «converbiums», too, can form pseudosyntagms (e. g. *qandaqai ketüs quluqana čöles aldaqu-yu'u* § 255).

4) The interruption of the continuity is also possible, as in the case of the expression *kinggüs oro-* 'to cross, to traverse' (§ 105): *edö'e bida dötelen Kilqo müren-ni k i n g g ü s saqal bayyan esen atuqai sal huyaǰu o r o y a.*

It is an essential difference that these «converbiums» may appear in the position of an attributive adjective too. E. g. *qaqas aldaltan* (§ 280), or even *qaqas qaqas yabudaltan*

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3.2 As a matter of fact, the problem of the derivative preverbs formed with the suffix *.ru/rü* also belongs to **3.11**. In this case the segmentation is supported by various data. Thus e.g. the segmentation of *ququru* 'apart' (14—19) into the morphemes *ququ.* and *.rU* is justified in respect of the morpheme *ququ.* by the forms *ququ* 'apart' (20), *ququ.či-* 'to break into pieces', *ququ.ra-* 'to break into pieces' and *ququ.la-* 'to break', while the morpheme status of *.ru/rü* is testified by the forms *dalba.ru*, *embü.rü*, *hoqto.ru*, *qamqa.ru*, *kemke.rü*, *ke'ü.rü* and *kinggü.rü* (cf. **2.**). Thus in the language of the SH this group of preverbs represents a derivative preverb of root + *.ru/rü* type.

3.21 No bound morpheme can be found after a derivative preverb of the root + *.ru/rü* type. Therefore this type of preverb must have been a closing-morpheme as early as in the language of the SH, like the derivative preverbs of similar type of the modern dialects (cf. Bese: 1966, p. 226—227 and 1968: **4.2**).

3.22 As regards *.ru/rü*, a few problems arise. Here the morpheme *.ru*, separable from *činaru* 'one opposite', is concerned. This *.ru* is considered a case-ending by Lewiczki, Ramstedt, Poppe and others,[6] but it is difficult to agree with this opinion.

It is worth considering that in the text of the SH the incidence-rate of the case-endings is very high. But the suffix *.ru* occurs only in the word

(§ 233). But, according to our present knowledge, the appearence of the «converbiums» of Pr.*ru/rü* type in an adjevtive position is unimaginable.

The morphological distributions of the two kinds of the «converbiums» correspond to one another in the respect that also the roots of the «converbiums» formed with *.s* represent a sort of non-closing morpheme to which can be added various suffixes. E. g. *kelbe.s* 'as distinguished from' : *kelbe.ri* 'to lean to one side' or *qaqa.s* 'distinct/ly/': *qaqa.l-* 'to break' etc.

The semantic distribution of these roots, however, differs from that of the preverbs, since after most of them (*čöle.*, *ginča.*, *hirme.*, *kelbe.*, *qubi.*, *nambali.*, *negü.*, *tulba.*, *ubi.*) the preverb-forming suffix *ru/rü* can not be used, and thus they could not occur as root-preverbs. The three examples quoted above (*ququ.*, *kinggü.* and *ke'ü.*) can at most modify this rule.

It is also a remarkable difference that the verb *ki-* 'to do' may not stand after the preverbs of Pr or Pr.*ru/rü* type.

Moreover, similarly a form like **qamqa.li.ru* or **ke'ü.li.rü* together with the words *namba.li.s* 'by way of' or *quči.li.s* 'go around' is unimaginable in the Mongolian.

The «converbium» formed with *.s* itself is a non-closing morpheme. E. g. Mo. *qaya.s.* 'distinct[ly]' : *qaya.s.la-* 'to divide in half'. A solution like this is unimaginable in the case of the Pr.*ru/rü*.

Finally, the «converbiums» formed with *.s*, too, can be considered a sort of preverb. But their problems must be carefully separated from that of the Pr.*ru/rü*.

[6] Cf. M. Lewiczki, *Przyrostki przysłowkowe -ra/rä, -ru/-rü, -ri/-rī w językach altajskich.* Wilno 1938, p. 4, 28; G. J. Ramstedt, *Einführung in die altaische Sprachwissenschaft* II, *Formenlehre.* Helsinki 1952, p. 38—39; N. Poppe, *Introduction to Mongolian Comparative Studies.* Helsinki 1955, p. 205.

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činaru 'one opposite', thus its case-ending character itself is doubtful. The term «rare or fossil ending» cannot be accepted either, if only because the previous language-level in which the *.ru* could have represented a case-ending is not known.

Apart from this, it is not without interest that in the text of the SH, beside *činaru* 'one opposite', the forms *činaqši* 'away from', *činadu* 'behind', *činaǰi* 'opposite', *činana* 'opposite' and *čina'un* 'opposite', too, occur. From these forms a stem *čina.* can be separated, and different suffixes (*.qši, .ǰi, .na, .'un*) and case-endings (*-du*) may be added to this stem. But there are no data proving that the foresaid suffixes could ever occur after the root-preverbs *čeü., dalba., embü.* etc., representing bound stems. Therefore the morphological distribution of the stem *čina.* differs remarkably from that of the root-preverbs. Consequently Street has good reasons to consider the morpheme *.ru* of the word *činaru* 'one opposite' a denominal noun-forming suffix.[7]

It is also not a negligable fact that the syntactical distribution of *činaru* 'one opposite', differs from the derivative preverb *čeürü* 'asunder', *dalbaru* 'apart' etc. too. The word *činaru* 'one opposite', appearing in the text of the SH, occurs exclusively in the position of a postposition, like a few occurences of the words *činaqši, činadu* etc. But we cannot say the same about the derivative preverbs, being controlled by one single structural rule in the language of the SH, namely: the rule of the Mongolian preverb. This rule works clearly and unambiguously in the present state of the language, too. Therefore the morpheme *.ru/rü*, occuring in the text of the SH, is simply a preverb-forming suffix, from which we may separate the problems of the morpheme *.ru* of *činaru* 'one opposite', not completely clarified for the time being.[8]

3.23 Street, too, expressed his view concerning the problem of the preverb-forming suffix *.ru/rü* occuring in the SH. He wrote as follows: «$-rU_1$ ('so.that') occurs in adverbials meaning 'in such a way as to *X*, so that [something] *Xs*' where *X* is the meaning of the verbal with which $-rU_1$ is in construction. This particle is very rare, occuring only about fourteen times in the SH.» (Cf. Street, *op.cit.*, 3.3212.) In connection with this opinion, let me remark the following.

In Mongolian the morphological structure is indifferent in several cases from point of view of syntactical position. Thus, following Street, in principle the derivative preverbs *čeürü* 'asunder', *dalbaru* 'apart' etc. could be classed with the converbials, too. Nevertheless, the syntactical distribution of Street's converbials (cf. *op.cit.*, 3.3212) is different, and in this respect the differences play an important role.

[7] See Street, *The Language of The Secret History of the Mongols.* New Haven, Connecticut 1957, 4.1112.

[8] The word *činaru* 'so far' is a well-known Old-Turkic form.

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4. Actually in this case the exchange of views concerns the opinions about the character of the preverb + verb stem complex. In the text of the SH the following preverb + verb stem complexes occur:

1. *čeürü dobtul-* 'to crumble' (1)
2. *dalbaru čabči-* 'to cut down, to sabre' (2, 4)
3. *dalbaru čabčildu-* v. rec. of *dalbaru čabči-* (3)
4. *embürü da'ari-* 'to smash' (5—6)
5. *hoqtoru dobtul-* 'to drain' (7)
6. *hurba tata-* 'to pass, march sidling (along)' (8)
7. *qamqaru dobtul-* 'to pound' (9)
8. *kemkerü gečkile-* 'to tread asunder' (10)
9. *kemkerü unaldu-* 'to bruise, break one another' (11)
10. *ke'ürü dobtul-* 'to crumble' (12)
11. *kinggürü čabčildu-* 'to cut through' (13)
12. *ququ qarbu-* 'to shoot through' (20)
13. *ququru tata-* 'to crack' (19)
14. *ququru tatala-* 'to break off' (14, 18)
15. *ququru da'ari-* 'to break up' (15, 16)
16. *ququru qarbu-* 'to shoot through' (17).

We have to seek for an answer to the question: where should these constructions be classed in the grammar of the SH? Should they belong to external morphology, that is to syntax, or to inner morphology, i.e. to the compounds?

In order to decide the problem, let me quote a phrase from the § 147: *če'el usun-i h o q t o r u čeügen čilawun č e ü r ü dobtulǰu öksü* 'I drain the whirling water, I crumble the shining stone' (1). If from this passage either the verb *dobtul-* 'to attack' or the preverbs *hoqtoru* 'out' and *čeürü* 'asunder' were omitted, the phrase would lose its sense immediately. A sequence **hoqtoru öksü* or **čeürü öksü* seems an obvious absurdity just as much as a solution like **če'el usun-i dobtulǰu öksü* or **čeügen čilawun dobtulǰu öksü* would be absurd, since the verb *dobtul-* 'to attack' cannot stand in a verb-object relation neither with the word *usun* 'water', nor with the word *čilawun* 'stone'; and this is an important criterion. Therefore here *hoqtoru dobtulǰu* 'draining' and *čeürü dobtulǰu* 'crumbling' form one single and inseparable unit. That is why the preverbs of the text of the SH (**3.1—2**) are to be included in inner morphology, exactly like the Buriat and Khalkha preverb + verb stem complexes (cf. Bese, 1966: **1.** and 1968: **3.**). That is to say: on the level of syntax the preverb + verb stem complex is a compound in the language of the SH, too.

This interpretation may be supported by indirect arguments too. E.g. two parallel passages, equivalents to (1), are:

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(21) *če'el usun niduralu'a*
čeügen čilawun čewürelü'e
'The whirling water drained,
the shining stone crumbled.' (§ 72)

(22) *čeügen čila'un-i čewülün*
če'el usun-i nitulun abai ǰe ta
'You crumbled the shining stone,
You drained the whirling water.' (§ 209)

It can hardly be doubted that in these three parallel phrases *hoqtoru dobtul-*, 'to drain', *nidura-* 'to [be] drain[ed]' and *nitul-* 'to drain' on one hand, and *čeürü dobtul-* 'to crumble', *čewüre-* 'to [be] crumble[d]' and *čewülü-* 'to crumble' on the other, are syntactically equivalent.

Being aware of these relations, the essential difference between the standpoint expounded here and Street's opinion has its explanation in itself.

5. The preverb and the verb stem are uninterruptedly connected sixteen times (1, 3—6, 8—11, 13—19) in the text of the SH, exactly as in the modern dialects (cf. Bese, 1966: **13**. and 1968: **3**.). There are four examples of the interruption, their interpretation constitutes a separate problem.

5.1 The continuity of the preverb and verb stem complex is broken once in the text of the SH by the interrogative word *ken* 'who?' (20). Here it is especially interesting that the word of interrogative is inserted between the preverb and the verb. An interruption like this is irregular in literary Khalkha, being deviant from the norm (cf. Bese, 1968: **2.4** and **2.6**). It may also be supposed that in this case the text of the SH preserved a vernacular or vulgar, possibly affective, form.

5.2 The passages (1, 2, 12) of the text of the SH represent special breaks. These passages can be analysed and presented in the following way:

qa'an-u emüne { a) *če'el usun-i h o q t o r u* / b) *čeügen čilawun č e ü r ü* } *dobtulǰu öksü* (1)

oroqun haran-i { a) *ekit anu d a l b a r u* / b) *mürüs anu ba'utala* } *čabčiǰu o'oritqun* (2)

a) *gür ke'eksen qaǰar-a kökö gürü k e' ü r ü*
b) *qal ke'eksen-tür gürü q a m q a r u* } *dobtulǰu öksü* (12)

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These sequences indicated above as a) and b) are co-ordinated. The fact that these co-occurences are manifestations of a kind of economy of the language, i.e. expressions of elegant style, has been already suggested (cf. Bese, 1966: **13**.).

Since the preverb e.g. in a sequence of *če'el usun-i h o q t o r u* type cannot be rewritten without a verb — here without the verb *dobtul-* 'to attack' —, the sequences of this kind can at best be considered pseudo-syntagms (cf. Bese, 1968: **5.8**).

6. Stylistically the preverbs, preverb + verb-stem complexes, breaks of sequences and co-occurences of pseudo-syntagms, appearing in the text of the SH, represent a separate problem.

6.1 In modern Buriat and Khalkha the incidence rate of the preverb + verb complexes is very low (cf. Bese, 1966: **15**. and 1968: **8.2**). That is why their use is remarkable from a stylistic point of view. Similarly, the twenty occurences, compared with the large corpus of the SH, can be considered a low percentage. However, it remains a problem to be examined later to what extent the separate co-occurences of the preverbs in the text of the SH emphasize the information, and, compared to other passages of the text, how they increase the stylistic value of the content.

6.2 The syntactic structures, too, have stylistic value, which can be expressed also by their incidence-rate. In this respect the co-occurences of pseudo-syntagms of (1, 2, 12) are very valuable examples. The occurence-rate of the solutions like this is very low in the modern dialects. From our modern Mongolian corpus, ten times as large as that of the SH, only a few similar construction can be pointed out (cf. Bese, 1966: **13**. and 1968: **5.8**). Their relatively high occurence-rate in the text of the SH is not necessarily contradictory to the conclusions drawn from the modern material. Thus these constructions can be considered stylistic peculiarities in the language of the SH; all the more, because their usage is limited in several respects in the modern material, too. They occur mostly in artistic prose and in folklore, especially in *üliger*'s. That is why these constructions can hardly be vernacular data.

7. The text of the SH may afford instructive information for historical dialectology, too. But, because of well-known reasons, one may only proceed in this respect with great caution. Let me, however, underline some of the problems.

7.1 In the text of the SH two instances of the root-preverb type occur as against eighteen occurences of the derivative preverb of Pr.*ɪu/rü* type; whereas the modern Mongolian dialects show a completely different distribution.

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In literary Buriat the derivative preverbs (Pr.*rA*) occur ten times less than the basic root-preverbs (cf. Bese, 1966: **7**.). At the same time literary Khalkha, does not at all tolerate the derivative preverb of Pr.*r* (cf. Bese, 1968: **4.2**). Moreover, the occurence-rate of this type is very low in spoken Khalkha, too. The situation is similar in Kalmuck. Apart from the passages copied from one of the versions of the SH, classical Mongolian does not seem to offer any data of the preverb type Pr.*ru/rü*. Thus the change, in comparison to the language of the SH, is enormous; the usage of the preverb-forming suffix *.ru/rü* has lost ground to an extraordinary extent in the course of time. In respect of the incidence-rate of the two types of preverbs in modern Mongolian, it is the Buriat dialect which is relatively nearest to the language of the SH.

It may be accidental but it is anyhow worth mentioning that the best examples of the co-occurences of pseudo-syntagms used in (1, 2, 12) have turned up from literary Buriat (cf. Bese, 1966: **13**.). Naturally it would be a mistake to conclude from all this that the language of the SH represented a certain modern Buriat dialect in Middle Mongolian. At the very most Buriat has better preserved a valuable archaism than the other dialects. Incidentally, it is very interesting that — except for the Dahur — in the peripheries of the area of Mongolian languages the preverbs are not known at all.

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