On the interplay between diachrony, literary rhetoric, and dialectology – a diasystematic approach to the common passages in the „Secret History of the Mongols“ and Lubsandanjin’s Altan Tobci

Stefan Georg

The recently published *Introduction to Altaic Philology* by Igor de Rachewiltz and Volker Rybatzki, a truly wonderful book, which introduces us the the oldest texts of the Turkic, the Mongolian and the Tungusic language families, laments, right on page 1, that „philology“ is now „*for many an outdated or outmoded term, and one indeed discarded in most countries, especially in the English-speaking world“*.

I do not know whether this is really a truthful assessment, but I do know that the reference to the „English-speaking world“ as a realm where the discipline of philology is allegedly particularly under pressure, is not really justified, since the „world“ I come from, the German-speaking academic landscape, surely shows signs of the same development: „philology“: isn’t this something entirely and hopelessly outdated, our grandparents’ way of dealing with language data, long since superseded by the methods of linguistic analysis and gaining insights?

On the other hand, again from the literature on „Altaic“ or, in this case, on the nature of the remnants of the *Koguryo* language in Korea (an continental variant of Japanese/Japonic or not?), I may quote Christopher Beckwith, who, in a recent issue of the Korean journal Altai Hakpo, called philology *the indispensable discipline*.

Instead of trying to offer some learned definition of what *philology* is in the first place, and how it can and should be differentiated from (and linked with) other disciplines of the language sciences, I think it might be more useful to show, within the boundaries of one language-specific example, what philologists *do*, or at least what they should be doing, and how what they are doing, for better or worse, is intertwined with the rest of linguistics, especially, of course, historical linguistics. After this, I might, then, be allowed to attempt a shorthand definition, which I have not come up with myself, but which I found elsewhere, and for the revelation of which I have to ask you for a few minutes’ patience.

For the time being, I will treat philology summarily as nothing but the *careful study of texts*, mostly of course of texts from the past, with the objective of explaining their form and their content to modern readers and, of course, with the ultimate goal of contributing to an in-depth understanding of whatever these texts talk about, and the worlds and times they were written in. Part and parcel of this is the exact understanding of the *linguistic form* and, since language changes all the time, and since many texts of the past are written in languages which somehow survive into later times, this study of ancient texts and their languages is of course one of the foundations the discipline of *historical linguistics* builds upon.

That said, one way of approaching the question of, no, not, what philology *is*, but rather of what philology is *good for*, may be to point at instances of cases, where the *neglect* of what philogogical research may reveal, may be detrimental to the findings of other disciplines, mostly, again, historical linguistics, but also the study of language relationships.

Thus, some common pitfalls of an approach to historical linguistics which fails to pay proper attention to philological data and problems are, among others, that

- earlier attestation is always equal to earlier stages of the language, i.o.w., since language changes with time, earlier texts will always show earlier linguistic characteristics than later texts;
- or, a text from the past will always and only reflect the linguistic characteristics of the language as spoken at the time of the composition of the text
- or, in comparing different stages of a language it will suffice to take what one finds in a grammar of, say Middle English or, in our case, Middle Mongolian, and one will be safe to assume that, whatever one finds there to differ from the contemporary language one is accustomed to, will be manifestations of the earlier stage of the language and, consequently, all differences will be a function of the factor of time, in other words, diachronic phenomena
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...and similar concepts, none of which is of course entirely untrue, but none of which is entirely true either, and which, when confronted with the hard facts of real texts from the past, will more often than not have to undergo thorough reformulation, if not rejection.

Now, my concrete example from a philologist's workshop comes from the history of the Mongolian language, and here from the study of its textual tradition in the realm of *historical chronicles*, one of the texts studied being the so-called „Secret History of the Mongols" or „Monggol-un ni'uca tobca'an" from the 13th century, the other one being the „Altan Tobci", or the „Golden Summary" by Lubsandanjin from the 17th century.
Mongolian is a language family of East and Central Asia, the map under (1) on your handout may give you some idea of its historical and present extension.

This is more or less the situation in the present, but Mongolian has also records from the past, which begin with the rise of Chinggis Khan and the Mongolian empire in the 13th century and continues uninterrupted to modern times, and Mongolian is still one of the major written languages of Eastern Central Asia.
We usually refer to the language of the *first* monuments of Mongolian proper as „Middle Mongolian", which deserves some comments – why not "Old Mongolian", since these are the oldest attestations in the first place? Fair enough, but there is of course some reason to do this, and this is intimately connected with the concept of relative vs. absolute chronology, which leaves us with a somewhat paradoxical situation, which may be unique for Mongolian. In all shortness, I will come back to this tomorrow, of course:

(HA: agu, egü etc. → MM a'u, e'ü)

The phoneme sequences V(owel)-g/g (velar consonant)-V(owel) are written, in any Mongolian text written in the so called Uighuro-Mongolian script, as such from the earliest text (1227) to this very day (at least in Inner Mongolia, where the Uighur script is still in use). In most variants of modern Mongolian, though, they have developed into long vowels, for example *agu* > *uu*, *egü* >, respectively (Mongolian languages written in, say, Cyrillic script, reflect this faithfully). Now, the indermediate stage of this sound

change is of course represented by a stage, in which the intervocalic consonant is dropped and the adjacent vowels remains – for a while at least – intact, forming either a diphthong or, rather, a sequence of two vowels seperated by a hiatus, maybe a glottal stop. This is not only the intermediate stage in theory, this is also attested – in the earliest Mongolian monuments which were *not* written in Uighur script, as for example the "Secret History of the Mongols", which I'm going to talk about today - here we have, to take these examples, *a'u* and *e'ü*. The paradox thus is: The one oldest Mongolian written monument, a stone-inscription in Uighur script, shows this "oldest" stage of these phoneme sequences – and may thus with some justification be called a monument of "Old Mongolian" – but the next monuments in line, among them the sizable text of the Secret History, shows the *intermediate*, thus "Middle Mongolian" state-of-affairs. To complicate matters a bit more, the Uighur script continued and continues to be used for Mongolian throughout its entire history, to our times, of course, and makes no effort to change its behaviour with respect to this orthographic peculiaritiy, with the outcome that any Mongolian text written today in, say, Köke qota, is, *orthographically*, closer to "Old Mongolian" than anything else(certainly not in terms of morphology or syntax), whereas the bulk of the *absolute chronologically oldest* texts is usually referred to as "Middle Mongolian" (reinforced by the fact that these texts come from centuries which by and large correspond to the European concept of the "Middle Ages" of course), with some (not all, more on this tomorrow) "Old" Mongolian characteristics attested only in later texts.

Mongolistics is a tiny discipline, and the few people concerned with it manage quite well to get along with this kind of terminological infelicities, so I might be allowed to stick to it here. *Middle Mongolian* is, thus, phonologically (the mentioned phoneme sequences are the most prominent, but not the only example of this) quite progressive, but when we look at other areas of the linguistic system, we do however, find what we expect when looking at the oldest monuments of a language – archaisms, and archaisms galore.

I will not enumerate these here – some of them will have to be mentioned anyway in connection with the comparison I'm about to undertake today – but I want to say so much at this point, that the most interesting archaisms of Middle Mongolian conspire to paint a picture which is rather surrising when approached from an "Altaic" point of view.

As you all may be aware, the so-called "Altaic" language families – related or not – show a great deal of typological similarity, which go as far as to allow a translation of sentences in one of these languages, say, a Turkic one, into another one, say, a Mongolian one, by just exchanging morphemes from one language by morphemes from the other one and leaving the underlying – typological – structure intact. This has its limits, of course – and you will know similar examples from Japanese and Korean, if you study both languages – but by and large the typological makeup of these languages is relatively uniform (and can be captured by the label of SOV, A-N, postpositional, for those of you familiar with Greenbergian typology).

The earliest attested Mongolian deviates from this familiar and typcally Eurasian pattern, sometimes strikingly – thus it shows a much freer word order, with the verb not necessarily always final, and with adjectives sometimes not preceding their heads, but following them, phenomena of agreement (mostly of number, which is very rare in Altaic languages, but present, for example, in Northern Tungusic languages), and, most unheard of in the whole group, a somewhat strange and admittedly only patially understood,

distinction of grammatical *gender*, which, to make things even more strange or, then, interesting, manifests itself in *verbal*, rather than nominal morphology. All these phenomena, and some more, have been given up in later stages of the language, which do look like a well-behaved "Altaic" language should after all look like. Mongolian, thus, underwent a process of "altaicization", more exactly one of "turkicization", which shaped it from its quite "un-Altaic" beginnings to the garden-variety Altaic typology it shows today – and all this happened under our very eyes, during the period of the attested written history of the language. We will have a look at some of these and other phenomena, but before Icome to this, some, necessarily brief, words on my sources, the two texts which I mentioned in the title of this paper, are probably in order.

The so-called "Secret History of the Mongols" is, as its name properly conveys, a record of the pre-history and the more recent history of the "Mongols", i.e. the lineage of Chinggis-Khan, from somewhat mythical and supernatural beginnings down to the author's or compiler's time. When I say "author" or "compiler", I have to add that this person (or, more likely, these persons) remain anonymous for us (though the name of Sigi-Qutuqu is sometimes mentioned in the scholarly literature); we can, however, date this text, and, details aside, 1228 is a quite secure date for a first redaction, with considerable additions made by 1240.

The text, containing of 282 chapters, and thus quite sizable, was almost certainly originally written in Uighur Script Mongolian, a version, which surely has been around for some time, and which was, among others, available to the Persian historian Rashid ad-Din, who used it extensively in the 14th century (and refers to it as the "Altan Debter") for his own dynastic history of the Mongols, the Jami' at-Tawarikh. Nevertheless, this version is lost for us, and the only version we are lucky enough to possess, comes from later, more exactly Ming, times, and is written in – Chinese characters. This version survived mainly in the Ming encyclopedia of 1403-08, the Yungle dadien. It is not in the Chinese language (though the text we have does contain somewhat abridged chapter-by-chapter summaries in Chinese – the "Yuan chao pi shi", sometimes takes as the title of the whole work, but erroneously so, its original title was very probably only "Cinggis qahan-no huja'ur, the "Origin of Chingis Khan"), but in Chinese characters which are meant to be read phonetically; it served very obviously as a kind of "Mongolian textbook", aimed at Chinese scholars who, in this time, begin to be interested in foreign, barbarian, languages as a means to know more about the going-ons in the North and elsewhere, and to avoid future "Mongolian" or "nomad" catastrophes – not entirely with undiluted success, as we know.

One might expect that this use of Chinese characters – to be read phonetically – to render the sounds of a typologically (and phonologically) quite different language will be a rather clumsy affair, and that deciphering it today will be a task riddled with problems and obstacles – which is of course true, when it comes to details, but, on the other hand, an educated modern Mongolian native speaker from Inner Mongolia, for whom written Chinese is of course second nature, is generally able to read this text aloud from the page rather fluently without stumbling too frequently over difficult passages – and for these, we have philology, of course.

Later Mongol authors used this text extensively for their own chronicles – the literary history of the 17th to the 18th century is, as far as non-translated literature is concerned,

fairly dominated by the literary genre of the "historical chronicle" - and rather devoid of *belles lettres*, in the narrower sense of the word.

The most important of these readers and users of the Secret History in later centuries was, without doubt, Lubsandanjin, who, despite his fully Tibetan name, was a Mongol who wrote the chronicle "Altan Tobci", our second text for today, in or around 1655. We do not know much about this person (his name is as ubiquitous in his cultural context as, perhaps, Miller or Smith, if you allow me a slight exaggeration), but there are some shreds of evidence hat he might be identical with a bearer of this name who can be localized at this time in Southern Mongolia, somewhere in or between the tribal areas of the Ordos or Chakhar – thus not from the "North" or the "Khalkha" territory, which is, by and large, coextensive with present day independent Mongolia – I will find some opportunity to make mention of this fact again.

His chronicle, Altan Tobci, the "Golden Button", with "button" being a wide-spread metaphor for "something abridged, or condensed", the "Golden Summary" perhaps, is, just like the other historical works written in this and subsequent centuries after the Mongols succumbed to Tibetan Buddhism, framed in a thoroughly Buddhist garb, as could be expected, and consequently it begins with the beginning of the world according to Buddhist (and that is ultimately Indian) accounts, something the anonymous chronicler of the 13th century hadn't even heard of, but eventually, when approaching more secure historical soil, Lubsandanjin uses the Secret History (or, more correctly, the lost Uighur Script original, the Altan Debter) extensively, or, to be again more precise: he copies it almost verbatim. All in all 233 paragraphs of it (which, in one modern romanized edition, cover 184 printed pages) found their way verbatim into his Altan Tobci.

Verbatim? Well, yes and no, and it is of course the "no", and this is what will interest us here, otherwise there would of course be little point in approaching the comparison of these texts in the first place.

It has been observed that Lubsandanjin is a work with a very interesting, if not unusual, linguistic makeup – its language contains at least two different layers, which can be and have been referred to as a traditional/conservative and a "progressive layer". As an illustration of these linguistic layers I may use the table of nominal cases printed on HA # 2:

	Middle Mongolian (SH)	"Classical Mongolian"	Altan Tobci (progressive layer)
Nominative	*usun*	*usun*	*usun*
Genitive	*usun-u*	*usun-u*	*usun-i*
Accusative	*usun-i*	*usun-i/usu-yi*	*usun-i*
Dative-Locative	*usun-tur* *usun-a*	*usun-dur* *usun-a*	*usun-du* *- (obsolete)*
Ablative	*usun-aca*	*usun-aca*	*usun-asa*
Instrumental	*(usun)-iyar/-i'ar*	*usun-bar/usun-iyar*	*usun-ar*
Comitative	*(usun)-lu'a* *(X)-tu (m.)/(X)-tai (f.)*	*usun-luġa* *(-X)-tu/-tai (no diff.)*	*usun-la(r)* *(-X)-tu/-tai (no diff.)*

SH ist the "Secret History", "Classical Mongolian" is the, unlike the chronicles and other texts rather uniform, some say "petrified", language of the Buddhist Canon, translated entirely from the Tibetan, and the rightmost column shows Lubsnandanjin's colloquialisms, which are already, as far as the Uighur script is able to reveal this at all, pointing in the direction of modern Mongolian languages, where, for example, the ablative with –s, rather than –c- rules supreme, the dative-locative has no more a final –r and so on.

We may, provisionally, speculate that the "progressive layer" is found in passages where Lubsandanjin more or less speaks "himself", i.e. where he formulates his thoughts and statements directly, using the language of his time, as far as the Uighur scripts allows him to do that, and that, possibly, he uses more traditional/archaic forms where a source of some kind, which he quotes directly, directs his language – unfortunately this has to remain a working hypothesis, since it remains to be shown that the linguistic "layers" found in his text are really dividable along the lines of "original author's voice" and "second hand quote", and I will not dwell on these two "layers" here – and identifying these sources is still very difficult; Lubsandanjin himself refers to them mostly only with a very lapidary *jarim teüken-tür* (some history books say...), in this being no different from the father of history himself, Herodotus, who keeps doing the same, much to the chagrin of posterity.

Instead, I want to have a closer look at what possibly could be referred to as a third such "layer", that is those (numerous) passages Lubsandanjin took over directly from the Secret History, or, as we have learned, the lost original of the Ming-edition, the Altan Debter.

In the following, I will try to illustrate some of the findings of the comparison of the text of the „Secret History of the Mongols“ with the passages of exactly this work, which found their way into Lubsandanjin’s chronicle some 400 years later – 400 years, that is roughly the time span which seperates present-day English from the English of Shakespeare, to be exact to the year, from the language of the Bard’s *The Tempest*, which is commonly dated to 1611.

We could expect Lubsandanjin to do just the same thing he did with the other (alleged) sources he used – copy the text verbatim and, in doing so, introduce an archaic flavour of some passages of his work, which then would live peacefully side by side with his more colloquial or "progressive" passages.

But apparently this was not so easy to do, since *this* source is considerably older than any other "classical" or "quasi-classical" Mongolian source he may or may not have used. Its language could not be rendered morpheme by morpheme in a text for a 17th century readership, changes *had* to be made, as much as we would have to if we were to make a screenplay out of the Tempest in 2011 (provided we would want to have any cinema-goers watching it).

My focus will be mainly on morphological and morphosyntactic phenomena, and here on cases where the later text, Lubsandanjin's Altan Tobci, seems to deviate *systematically* from the usage of the Secret History, on cases that is, which may or may not reveal *language change* between the two texts. This is certainly the *default assumption* of historical linguists – to find the differences between such texts to be interpretable in terms of language change; but we should also be on our wtach, whether there might be cases,

where this default assumption, however, doesn't help, and where we might have to look for other motivations of changes of the source text in its later version.
Let us begin with a phenomenon from nominal morphology, namely that of *differential object marking*, or the use of the – morphologically unmarked - *casus indefinitus* (or, then, nominative, in the table on your HA) vs. the (marked) *accusative*.
Mongolian languages have an accusative case, which is of course used for direct objects, but with the restriction that direct objects marked this way have to be further characterized by *definiteness* (definiteness can be achieved in discourse in different ways, thus a preceding genetive will make a noun definite, also its retrievability from the disource-context – an overt marker of definiteness, something like an article, is, however, not available in the language).
If we compare the (quite representative) examples under # 3 on your HA, we can see that this technique of marking definiteness in direct objects very obviously was not the rule in Middle Mongolian (which I use here as shorthand for the language of the Secret History of the Mongols). In the 17th century, just as today in most living Mongolian dialects, this rule, *does* hold, however, and Lubsandanjin changes the text to reflect exactly this (my glosses here will not necessarily fulfill all criteria of linguistic typology) -note the *-i* of the accusative in the AT:

(3)

SH 2613f. (38)

eme kö'ün inu ecültele hawuluya #
wife son his completely will-kill

We will kill all his wives and his sons.

AT em-e köbegüd-i inu ecültele aguluy-a #

- id. -

(As an aside, I might mention that the SH does not mark the plurality of the object here, whereas L. does, but this is not a recurrent or systematic pattern). Definiteness is, here, achieved by the particle *inu* "his").

SH 3514 (39)

tere qurim bidan-aca belgütei jasa'at ..
that feast we-ABL B. oversee-CONV...

From us, Belgütei oversaw this feast, and...

AT tere qurim-i bidan-aca belgütei jasaGad ...

- idem -

(Here, the demonstrative pronoun secures definiteness).

This is a pattern generally found in our corpus, and we safely conclude that we see here a purley *diachronic phenomenon – differential object marking* was unknown, or at least not the rule, in the 13th century, but it became the rule by the 17th century. Note that the accusative suffix *did* exist in the 13th century, only the rules of its usage are not identical to those of later times.
In the short characteristic of the archaic (and even un-„Altaic“) features of Middle Mongolian I mentioned the unique – and still only partially understood – system of gender, or rather *sexus* marking of the language, which vanished without a trace in later stages of the language.
One morphological subsystem, besides verbal morphology, where we can observe its gradual replacement is that of some system of case markers, namely the *comitative suffixes*, the original pattern being that the suffix *-tai/-tei* was used for *feminine* heads, and the variant *-tu/tü* for non-feminine ones.
The original system is already lost in the 17th century, and Lubsandanikin uses both suffix shapes rather unsystematically.

In (4), while Alan Qoa is a *girl*, which fact should trigger *-tei* as the comitative, he uses both forms in one and the same sentence:

SH 526f. (41)

	qo'a	sayin	aldar	nere	yeke-tei alan-qo'a	nere-tei ökin aju'u #
	beautiful	famous	name		big-COM A.Q.	name-COM girl was

There was a beautiful and well-reputed girl with the name of A.Q.

AT goo-a sayin ner-e aldar yeke-tei Alun-goo-a nere-tü ökin ajugu #

The next example clearly shows that Lubsandaniin used these comitative markers *promiscue* in one and the same sentence, both times with *male* referents, showing that he is still aware that these different markers exists, but obviously at a loss what they were used for, respectively what they used to differentiate – a phenomenon, which is quite often found in the last stage of the obsolence of grammatical distinctions.

(5)

SH 1231f.

	temüjin-ni	yisün	nasu-tu	büküi-tür	joci-qasar	dolo'an	nasu-tu büle'e #
	T.	9	year-COM	be-VN-DAT	J.Q.	7	year-COM was

When Temüjin was nine years old, Joci Qasar was seven years old.

AT temüjin yisün nasu-tu büküi-tür coci-qasar dologan nasu-tai bülüge #

But there are also examples, in which Lubsandanjin faithfully reproduces what he finds – this is most notably the case in poetic, versified passages, like the following, both with the same poetic formula, almost a Homeric *epitheton ornans*, once with a male, and once with a female referent:

(6)
SH 1302f.

kö'ün	cinu	nidün-tür-iyen	qal-tu	ni'ur-tur-iyan	gere-tü	kö'ün	bui
son	your	eye-DAT-own	fire-COM	face-DAT-own	beam-COM	boy	is

Your son is a boy with fire in his eyes and splendour in his face.

AT
köbegün cin-u
nidün-tür-iyen gal-tu
nigur-tur-iyan gerel-tü
köbegün buyu

SH 1324f.

ni'ur-tur-iyan	gere-tei	nidün-tür-iyen	qal-tai	ökin-i	üje-jü...
face-DAT-own	beam-COM	eye-DAT-own	fire-COM	girl-ACC	see-CV

AT
nidün-tür-iyen gal-tai
nigur-tur-iyan gerel-tei
ökin-i üjejü...

He saw a girl with splendour in her face and fire in her eyes.

(The verse-character of this and other passagages is not secured by a certain meter of sorts, but by the alliteration between the first and the last, and in turn the two line in the middle – Mongolian uses *stave* rhyme.)

Another, aside, observation here (together with the whole discourse context, not reproduced here), the SH uses the accusative marking with a clearly *indefinite* noun (*ökin*, *a* girl), thus underlining that differential object marking is indeed not operative in this stage of the language – this time, Lubsandanjin imitates this, obviously, because it is a poetic formula.

Switching to *verbal* morphology, I first want to present a kind of statistical analysis I have carried out on the common passages of the two works, which you find in the table under # 7.
There, in the rightmost column, you will also find – very short and label-like - definitions of the functions of these affixes – needless to say that any single one of these would of course need a much lengthier explanation to do it full justice – as in any language, anywhere. The lines represent the suffixes in the Secret History, and the columns stand for AT – the numbers in the intersecting cells tell us that a given suffix in the SH is, in what are historically the "same sentences", represented by the given verb form in the AT so-and-so many times. Clearly visible is the fact that the largest figures are found on a diagonal line from the upper left to the lower right cell (the shaded cells) – here are the cases where no difference is found, i.e. where Lubsandanjin simply uses the same verb form as his source. There are two things we can learn from this, first, that the linguistic difference between the two texts is, of course, not tremendously great (after all, we still

can read "The Tempest" today with comparable ease), and that Lubsandanjin obviously did not change anything when he didn't feel the need to – i.e. when the text he found was still reasonably understandable to him and his prospective readers.
The more interesting and important are the cases where he **does** deviate from the morphological choices of his source, and it is the philologer's task to ask, each time, whether a reason for doing so might present itself with more or less convincing force.
In the following, I will have a look at some (of course not all) of these deviations, and attempt to give some of these answers – and, as you will understand, I will confine myself to those instances where an answer seems to possible at all.

SH → AT↓	-mu	-yu	-ba	-lu'a	-ju'u	-n	-ju	-'ad	-basu	-tala	-ra	-run	
-mu	55	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	
-yu-	-	8	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
-ba	2	-	694	3	14	2	16	-	4	-	-	-	
-luγa	1	1	8	156	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	
-juγu	-	-	6	1	167	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	
-n	1	-	1	-	1	194	26	8	-	-	1	-	
-ju	-	-	13	-	11	17	1557	11	1	-	-	3	
-γad	-	-	2	-	1	7	15	138	-	-	-	2	
-basu	-	-	25	-	6	1	11	-	217	-	-	-	
-tal-a	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	57	-	-	
-r-a	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21	-	
-r-un	1	-	3	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	1	110	

As could be expected, this statistics points to a rather great deal of diachronic stability of most verbal affixes, but, on the other hand, it serves as a first diagnostic to possible diachronic developments in this realm. A historical linguist's working hypothesis, after having a look at this statistics, may be that it reveals some diachronic trends.
We, being not only historical linguists, but for this afternoon also philologists, want to have a closer look, though. Our question will be: what do the *deviations* in usage between the two variants of this text *really* reveal? Is it always *purely* diachronic developments we are dealing with? Sometimes this will surely be the case, but sometimes a closer inspection of the individual instances of these deviations will reveal different reasons for them.
So, you look at the table, you'll see that both the "past tense" markers *–ba* and *–lu'a* seem to be diachronically quite stable, in other words, in most instances where one or the other of these morphemses occurs in the SH, Lubsandanjin found no reason to deviate from this usage and copied his source (mostly) verbatim, but in some them, he did introduce variations, which may lead us to a certain diachronic statement.
The grammars of Classical Mongolian describe the unit *-lu'a* as a morpheme which more or less has the functional force of a true *perfect (*not in the Latin, but rather in the Greek, Sanskrit or Georgian sense), or better a *resultative* perfect – that is a form depicting an action or some other verbal content, the result of which holds true, or is observable, at the time of the utterance. This explanation is, then, often mechanically extended to pre-classical or Middle Mongolian, but a closer look at the following examples does, I think, raise some doubts on this:

The SH uses the "simple", non-resultative, past in *-ba*, whereas Lubsandanjin uses the "perfect" form in *-luga*:

(8)

SH 2102 (57)

sayin nökör-e tusa bol-su (#) ke'en nököce-jü ire-ba bi #

good companion-DAT helpful be-OPT saying help-CONV come-PST I

I came, saying: "I want to be of assistance to a good companion"

AT tusa bol-su (#) kemen ire-lüge bi #

Also in (note that the *–bi* of the SH is the "feminine" form of *–ba*, the speaker is "Mother Qo'aqcin)):

(9)

SH 2307f. (57)

qoyin-aca bosu-'at ire-bi bi #
back-ABL set-out-CONV come-PST I

AT qoyina-aca bosu-gad ire-lüge bi #

Both cases can be interpreted to the effect that Lubsandanjin here felt the need to emphasize the resultative nature of these events, which, given that the verb is "to come" in both cases, can be rendered straightforwardly as: *I have come, and I am now there/here*" – and this "being there" is the important message in the respective contexts.

Now compare the opposite case:

(10)

SH 2403f. (71)

qalqasun ger gerle-n qaldun de'ere qaru-la'a bi #
twig hut make_house-CONV Q. top climb-PST I

AT qalgasun ger gerlen Qaldun-a degere gar-ba bi #

I made a hut from twigs and climbed the Qaldun.

Here the SH uses *–la'a* (a variant of *-lu'a*), whereas Lubsandanjin replaces this by the "unmarked" past tense *–ba*. If we want to understand this usage, we need to have a look at the overall pragmatic context of this sentence, and there we find that it is a mere part of an enumerative chain of related actions (I did this, and I did that, and then that...). Perhaps the most important observation is that Chinggis Khan (the speaker of this sentence) has, at the time of uttering this, already *descended* from the mountain, so that, for Lubsandanjin, any justification for using the *perfect* form here, vanishes altogether.
For Lubsandanjin, I say, and this is the diachronic lesson these and similar examples have to teach us: *-lu'a* was a *perfect* form for Classic Mongolian, and certainly also already for L., but this was obviously not the case for the language of the Secret History.
The general practice of Mongolistics, to use functional labels found valid in Classical and later stages of the language also for its earliest stages, proves not viable at this (and also at other) points, and we will have to rethink the function of *–lu'a* in the 13th century anew. No, I have no solution for this at this point, my objective here can only be to point out that the problem exists.
So far, our explanations of L.'s usage have been exclusively diachronic, but I promised to look, whether other possibilities exist. The next observation will be partly diachronic as well, but it may open up a different perspective, which I'd then like to pursue a bit further.
The table reveals a surprizingly high number of substitutions of the finite verbal marker *-ju'ui* by the non-finite converb marker *–ju*.
Generally, there *is* a tendency in the later, especially the Classical language, to form longer and increasingly longer sentences by means of concatenating them with converbs (or gerunds, as they are sometimes referred to in the grammatical literature) – this is a stylistic-rhetorical tendency in Mongolian, certainly the nightmare of every student of the language, which basically is an imitation of similarly long periods in Tibetan, which, in turn, react to the monstrously long nominal compounds found in classical Sanskrit prose). This may well be at work here, but there might be another aspect to these 11 cases, a quite significant number, of which I only give one on the HA:

(11)

SH 1623ff.

niken gege'en soqosun oro-ju'ui # temüjin qasar qoyar-aca bekter belgütei
one shiny S.-fish enter-PST T. Q. two-ABL B. B.
qoyar buli-ju abu-ba#
two steal-CONV take-PST

(T. and Q. sat fishing:) One shiny dace (?) came onto the line. Bekter and Belgütei snatched it away from Temüjin and Qasar.

AT nigen gegegen soqosun oro-ju Tömüjin Qasar qoyar-aca Begter Belgetei qoyar buliya-ju yabuba #

The functional description of *–ju'u(i)* given for Classical and later Mongolian is close to that of *–lu'a*, with the added quality of a pluperfect (which cannot hold here), and also the

element of "surprise", which may or may not hold here ("suddenly" a fish was caught ?). It may be the case that L., here as with *–lu'a*, cannot use a form which, for him, has a function which didn't fit the context, whereas thinmgs stood differently in the 13th century – although the examples I found in the text are less clear on this as in the preceding case. A functional explanation of the 11 instances of *–ju* for *–ju'ui* and the 9 cases of *–ju'ui* for *–ju* is, thus, not so easily achievable, but there is possibly more to learn from this. For, if we have a look at what happened to these affixes *phonetically* in the course of time, down to modern Mongolian dialects, we find that they are mostly kept distinct; for example, in Khalkha the finite suffix is today *–zhee* (which is a successor of the feminine variant *–ji'ai*), whereas the converb is *–zh* (with a hypershort vowel). Only in *one* described modern Mongolian dialect both verbal forms, regardless their functional difference, have collapsed into one surface form, *-zhI*, and this is the Southern Mongolian *Ordos* dialect.

I might, at this point, mention the fact that the Mongolian historian Perlee in 1958, based on entirely non-linguistic information and data, already hypothesized that Lubsandanjin's home might indeed have been the Ordos salient. The observation made here is innocent enough, and as such certainly not distinctive enough to allow the conjecture that the linguistic facts corroborate this hypothesis, but we might keep our eyes peeled whether there could be more of this.

If there is, and I will remain open to criticism to the effect that I might be overinterpreting the data, we will be able to add a second dimension for the variations between our two texts, the *diatopic* dimension – in other words: some variations may point to the geographic or dialectal provenance of the author Lubsandanjin.

A word of caution is in order: there is of course no *strict categorical* difference between a diachronic and a *diatopic* variance – though diatopic, or dialectal, differences are usually plotted on a synchronic pane, and indeed what makes them diatopic in nature *is* that they are found *simultaneously*, or, better, *contemporaneously*, in different geographical pockets of the area occupied by a language community. Nevertheless, in the grand overall picture of comparative linguistics, they are, of course, also *diachronic* in nature, albeit in the realm of *relative* chronology, rather than *absolute* chronology. The merger of the two originally distinct forms is of course, first and foremost, a *diachronic* phenomenon, differentiating a later stage from an earlier one, but it is *also* a diatopic one, since it is typical, in modern times, for a certain geographical/dialectal pocket of the Mongolian dialect continuum only - in this case the South.

There is another set of instances, where Lubsandanjin quite often substitutes a converb for a finite form, and this involves the past tense marker *–ba* of the SH, represented by *–basu* in the later text. *–basu* is the so-called *conditional* converb, often to be rendered as *if*, but, in sentences with overall past reference, it usually has a *temporal* force, best translatable as *when* (this and that happened). Lubsandanjin uses this substitution 25 times, which is a record figure among all deviations in this table, so something is going on here. Again, we cannot deny the possibility that the reason is simply the irresistible urge to form longer, more "Classical" sentences (L. rarely uses the opposite subsitution), but again, there might, be a kind of conspiracy of different factors.

First of all a simple example for this (there are many of them, and they all show, besides this substitution, little which could be regarded as spectacular:

(12)

SH 838 (65)

basa	mün-gü	üge	ügüle-ba #
again	same-PT	word	speak-PST

He spoke the same words again.

AT basa mün üge-ben ügülebesü ...

The three dots at the end indicate that the sentence is, by means of the converb, syntactically concatenated with the next one (when this happened...).
When we look at the history of the conditional/temporal converb *–basu* in Mongolian languages and dialects, we find it, today, almost everywhere gone. Usually, it got replaced by a form *–bala*, so in Khalkha and elsewhere – while, where the Uighur script is still written, *-basu* is still used, only in writing, as a bookish and archaic form. Now, it was Vladimircov, who already in 1921 observed a formal merger of *–basu* with *–ba* in some dialects – and these are, again, dialects of the south, namely the *Abaghanar* dialect in the Ulancab region. The same phenomenon was observed by Nikolaus Poppe in 1926 in the late (19th century) text of the Mongolian Geserkhan epic, which, as Poppe convincingly showed, is, just as the Mongolian version of the Pancatantra studied by Vladimircov, clearly of South Mongolian provenance.
If Lubsandanjin, already in the 17th century, spoke such a dialect (whether we refer to it as "early Ordos" or, with a bit more caution, as "Early South Mongolian"), that is a dialect, in which *–basu* was already obsolete and *–bala* not yet formed, and thus the conditional converb and the simple past in *–ba* were homophonous, it is relatively easily understandable that, whenever he encountered *–ba* in the SH, he *could* interpret it as either form and, whenever he thought it might be the converb, substitute the bookish *–basu* for it (and concatenate the two distinct sentences into one, which is rarely a problem).
This, then, could be a second hint at *diatopic* variation in this pair of texts, but we still should look for more, until we might, in good conscience, venture the hypothesis that L.'s text really gives away much about his possible homeland.
But I will try.
The best dialectal markers, here as elsewhere, are of course phonological phenomena.
Now, the nature of the Uighur-Mongolian script is not very cooperative in easing the historical linguist's task in this respect, since it is notorious for its underdifferentiation of certain phonological oppositions, which do however play an important role in the language.
The Uighur script does not differentiate *a* from *e* in many cases, *o/u* are never differentiated, nor are *ö/ü* (and, in the absence of a clue from vowel harmony, which some consonants may give, all four round vowels are not differentiated), *t/d* are written alike and so on.

Thus, some of the phonological peculiarities of Middle Mongolian, which the Chinese script gives away rather lavishly, are simply not discernable in Uighur script – was there a hiatus, or was intervocalic –g- still pronounced?
Was initial *h*-, another hallmark of Middle Mongolian, still pronounced? There is no sign for this in the Uighur script – later one is formed for Sanskrit and other loanwords, but Lubsandanjin doesn't know or use this.
But there are some giveaways, if only few, which might, again, corroborate the southern-ish provenance of Lubsandanjin's language, possibly its identification with some early form of Ordos.
First, there is the *general* non-differentiation of *c* and *j* in Lubsandanjin's text - these phonemes *are* usually differentiated by the Uighur script. True enough, Turkic Uighur, from which the Mongols adopted this script around 1206, does not differentiate them either, but Mongolian begins to do so in preclassical times, so there is no real excuse not to do so for Lubsandanin – if it weren't for the fact that his speech had lost this distinction.
Now, Ordos, the dialect we suspect Lubsandanjin to have spoken (or, again to be more cautious: the 17th century southern Mongolian dialect he might have spoken), did not exactly lose this distinction, but it restructured it to a system (which encompasses also the stop consonants), which could as well be dubbed „Grassmann's Law" for Mongolian. If there are Indoeuropeanists among you, this will be a household term for you, and I'm willing to explain the nature and implications of this famous soundlaw mainly for Sanskrit and Greek after my talk, please allow me here only to mention that it deals with aspirated and non-aspirated stops and affricates, whose distribution over the different positions of a word or morpheme (in the beginning or in the middle) is governed by this rule or law. The rule basically states that there can only be *one* aspirated element in one word at a time, and that, should two of them happen to end up in one word, one of them, usually the first one, loses its aspiration. This makes, in the case of *c* and *j* (which in Mongolkian are really and originally differentiated by the parameter of aspiration, rather than voice), *most* occurrences of them allophonic in nature, i.e. predictable by looking at the overall word structure, hence Lubsandanjin, if he spoke such a dialect, didn't feel the need to differentiate them in writing at all. *Most* occurrences, not necessarily *all* of them – but then, Lubsandanjin is neither a phonologist, nor a writer who plays particular attention to his use of diacritics in the first place – and we must mention the fact that later copyists might have made things even worse – another pending philologists' task on this text is the careful comparison between the text used here, the "Harvard-Yenching text" published by Mostaert in 1952 and a reportedly better text in UB, which is more disciplined on the diacritics, but which I so far have not been able to consult.
But, diacritics aside, one further observation on this is the rather unexpected use of some *vowel signs* instead of others – these might not exactly indicate that Lubsandanjin wanted to represent different vowel qualities (the centralization of vowels in non-first syllabes in Mongolian begins quite early, and the vocalism of such syllables shows a checkered picture throughout the transmission of the language in Uighur script), but rather to a different quality of the preceding consonant. Again, *c* and *j* are involved, but this time not tehir aspirated/unaspirated, unvoiced/voiced or strong/weak nature, but rather their place of articulation.

Some examples of unusual ("unorthographic") writings of L.:
(13)

Classical, normalized orthography	Lubsandanjin	Khalkha Mongolian
gajar "earth, place"	gajir	gadzar
تيسدن	تيسدن	газар
cerig "soldier, warrior"	cirig	tsereg
عسدحا	عسدحا	цэрэг
ugulja "ram"	ugulji	ugaldz
ـمشمبم	ـمشمبدن	угалз

Why does Lubsandanjin use this strange orthography, here and in quite numerous other cases?
Well, while the original, alveolar, quality of the affricates has been preserved in most dialects of eastern Mongolian (not in Buryat, for example, but this is outside of our scope), something happened to them, but this time in the more northerly dialects, or, more precisely, in Khalkha. Here, *c* and *j* were preserved in front of the vowel /*i*/, whereas in other positions the pronunciation is dental-alveolar, i.e. *ts*, *dz*, respectively. If you had any exposition to spoken Mongolian this will more likely than not have been Khalkha, and then you will have learned to pronounce the words given here the way I transliterate them in the right column: *gazar*, *cereg*, *ugalz*, whereas, when in Inner Mongolia, you will only hear *gajar*, *cerig* and so on.
I do think that this is what Lubsandanjin does here: he seems to know that, in the North, this phonemic split has occurred, and he might even have been aware, though certainly not a linguist, that a following /*i*/ prevented it. So he uses orthographic /*i*/-s to indicate that these words should be pronounced "right", even by Northern speakers, not the *ts/dz* way, but rather according to the old (and southern) way, as *c*, *j* – without a "Northern Accent", that is.
We may thus have found a third giveaway for the Southern (and *possibly* Ordos) provenance of Lubsandanjin and his language, but I hasten to add that this is, so far, all we can say about this, and if one feels that it isn't much at all, I must again point to the character of the Uighur Mongolian script, which does a great job to conceal dialectal peculiarities, rather than exposing it, as an alphabetic script would do.
Leaving morphology and the little we could say on phonology aside, we haven't had a look at syntactic phenomena so far. There are some observations in this realm as well, and these will bring us mostly back into the field of diachronic developments, but with them we will also be able to at least scratch the surface of a third dimension of the "diasystematic approach" I promised you in the title of this presentation, that of *literary rhetoric*.
But first some syntax. One of the hallmarks of Middle Mongolian in general and the Secret History of the Mongols in particular is its word order, which is full of phenomena which are barely studied until this very day – the only relatively thorough study of it being the 1954 doctoral dissertation of the late Altaicist Gerhard Doerfer, which, however, rests unpublished and collects dust in the archives of the Free University of Berlin.

Middle Mongolian word order is quite unlike everything we are used to from later stages of the language, or, for that matter, from "Altaic" languages at large. While these usually show rather strict Subject Object Verb, or Verb-final, word order, where the determinans strictly precedes any determinatum, the subject will always precede the verb and, if present, any direct object will be placed between these constituents, all these ironclad rules do not hold for the language of the Secret History (other phenomena peculiar to this stage of the language are the widespread use of number and case agreement between qualifying adjectives and their heads, and, as I already mentioned, widespread gender-differentiating affixes, especially on verb forms).

These phenomena, as I may add in parentheses, have, for my way of thinking at least, some rather drastic implications for the so-called "Altaic" hypothesis, which basically holds that most of the Central and Eastern Asian language families with this typological makeup are members of one language family. Now, to be fair, this hypothesis (though it did in its beginnings) does not rest on the syntactic-typological uniformity of these languages, but nevertheless, typology, if viewed historically, may have a minor voice in this debate as well. I alluded to this at the beginning of my talk, speaking of a process of "Altaicization", or rather "Turkicization", which Mongolian obviously underwent, part of which we can still observe in the very texts we can read from its history. Altaic aside, I will have an opportunity to speak about this a bit more next week, let us have a look at some examples for Lubsandanjin's way of coping with the strange and, for him as an almost (but not *quite*) "Classical" Mongolian writer, certainly rather outlandish word order of the Secret History.

Needless to say, in most cases (again, poetical passages somewhat apart, where he coudn't allow himself the same leeway as with prose) he adapts the sentences to the more familiar, more "correct", more "Altaic" word order, which rules supreme in all of post-Middle Mongolian literature up to the present day.

There are quite trivial cases, like the following one, where L. can "heal" the strange word order, in this case the postponed subject pronoun *bi* "I", by simply omitting it, leaving the disambiguation of the referent of the verb "come" to the context of the scene (but, as you have seen in some of the preceding examples, he does not always do so, so this word order, though it later disappears from central and Classical Mongolian, is perhaps not so outlandish for him):

(14)

SH 1913 (107)

yekin ire-ba ci #
why come-PST you

AT yekin ire-be

"Why did you come?"

There are other cases, however, where this is not so easy, and in some of these, Lubsandanjin has to show some creativity to strike a balance between his different aims, namely: to render his text as faithfully as he can (for that **is** his objective, without doubt)

and to produce a text which is not (too much) at variance with the linguistic norms of his times and those his prospective readership will expect from his text. This leads him, when confronted with "strange" word order phenomena, to use different techniques, which are difficult to summarize under a few handy labels, and I would like to illustrate this with only a few examples, beginning with a rather famous and often quoted sentence from the opening passages of the SH:

(15)

SH 521 f.

niken qara'utai tergen-ü öljige-de niken ökin sayin buyu #
one black cart-GEN front-DAT one girl beautiful was

At the front part of a black cart, there was a beautiful girl.

AT nigen qaragutai tergen-ü öljige-de sagu-gsan nigen ökin-ü öngge ger-e endece
sit-VN girl-GEN colour light from_there
üje-gde-mü #
see-PASS-PR

The problematic word order here is that of "*ökin sayin*" – literally a "girl beautiful". Everything he **would** have to do to heal this, would have been to merely reverse these two words, but apparently this was not enough for Lubsandanjin. Instead, he paraphrases the semantic content of the sentence to say, literally: *The beauty of a girl, which was sitting at the front part of a black cart, can be seen from here.* Thus, not familiar with the possibility to postpose *qualifying* nouns (or adjectives) he obviously interprets *sayin* as an abstract noun "beauty" (which is lexically possible), which he then paraphrases with different lexical means and performs some more adaptations (since, obviously, it is not really "good" to say something as lapidary as "there was beauty" – "beauty" can, if anything, be *seen*), to make a sentence which fits with his sense of style.

In another example, where L. had to find a solution for what he had to see as "incorrect" word order, he actually acts a bit like a modern philologer, in that he seems to "correct" his text by inserting a single word, which, then, "heals" the syntax completely:

(16)

SH 5537ff. (106)

bidan-u'ai eke'er-cü quyildar-i una-qsan yaratu-yi abu-'at qari-ju...
our-ones turn-CONV Q.-Acc. fall-VN wounded-ACC. take-CONV come_back-CONV

Our ones returned and took Quyildar, fallen and wounded, and came back...

AT bidanugai eger-cü Quyildar-i una-gsan gajar-aca yaratu-yi abu-gad gar-cu qari-ju
place-ABL

Our ones returned, took Q. *from the place he had fallen* as a wounded one and...

The unusual word order here is "Quyildar-i unaqsan yaratu-yi", "healed" by the insertion of *gajar-aca* → from the place where Q. had fallen. There is one little snag: a *perfect* healing would, for *my* way of thinking, have required to change the case of Quyildar from accusative *–i* to genetive *–un*, and I am unable to offer a really good explanation for Lubsandanjin not doing it.
So, when dealing with the syntax of the SH, our later author usually does more to the text he attempts to render, in fact exchanging one morpheme by another one simply will not do, but a simple "correction" of the word order itself will obviously also not do for him. Lubsandanjin often wants more, and this brings me to the - promised - third realm of the *diasystematic* approach, and on which I so far had little to say, that of *literary rhetoric*.
By this, I understand instances – and there is quite a lot of them, needless to say – in which Lubsandanjin's deviations from the wording of his medieval source cannot be motivated by straightforward diachronic change, and also not (at least not as far as we can tell) by his (possibly) South Mongolian language peculiarities, but rather by his own and individual wish to distinguish himself as a writer of Written Mongolian. These are instances of his individual *style* and his willful use of stylistic means to create stylistic effects. I will give only one example to illustrate this, although only a full study of all "common passages" of these two works will and does reveal that the sober and clinical figures of the little statistical exercise I showed you in my table reveal many more instances of this kind, when looked at not with a statistician's, but with a philologer's eys..
But first my example:

(17)

SH 5032ff.	AT
südütü moqai-a	sidütü mogay-a
södürte'esü	sitürtebesü
södürgen-tür bu oroya	sidürgen-tür buu oroy-a
südü'er ama'ar ügüleldüjü büsireya	*sidüber amabar* olulcaju bisirey-e
ara'atu moqai-a	aragatu mogay-a
adarda'asu	adartabasu
adarqan-i inu bu abulcaya	adurgan-tur inu buu oroy-a
ama'ar kele'er olulcaju büsireye	*amabar sidüber* olulcaju bisirey-e

By a snake with teeth
when we are incited (to quarrel)
let us not enter the quarrel
with tooth and mouth we want to communicate and be honest#
By a snake with molars
when we are slandered
let us not take the slander
with mouth and tongue (AT: tooth) we want to communicate and be honest

This is, as can be easily seen from the careful alliteration, or stave-rhyme, in the two parts, consisting of four lines each, a poetical, versified passage, and I said earlier that Lubsandanjin very often takes these over verbatim, without any change, even though he might find in them some Middle Mongolian pecularitiy which he couldn't allow to enter his text. Here, though, we have a special instance – in fact, as far as the grammatical makeup of the text is concerned, it does not contain anything, which Lubsandanjin couldn't have simply taken over without raising anybody's linguistic eyebrows in his monastery and beyond. And yet he changes a few things, here marked by underlining and by italics. And if we sit down to think what may have made him do so, the only answer one finds is that this is an exercise in literary rhetoric, or ornate style, Lubsandanjin allows himself here.

He changes two verbs and one noun to achieve the following effects. First, he changes *ügüleldü-* of the SH to *olulca-* in line four. Semantically, this does little or no damage, we can render both verbs roughly as "to communicate" or "to reach an agreement" or the like. By doing so, he achieves a *parallelismus membrorum*, a parallelism of elements, between line four and line eight, which was not so before – both lines now end in the same verb form, which we can, to use another term from classical rhetoric, also refer to as a *homoioteleuton*. The same is done in line seven, where L. uses *oroy-a* "let us not enter into" instead of *abulcaya* "let us not participate in", again, little semantic damage done, but another rhetorical figure gained. In the last line, however, L. *does* sacrifice semantic content, although with little pragmatic consequences (the *idea* of the stanza remains basically intact), when he replaces the SH's *kele'er* "with tongue" by his *sidü-ber* "with tooth". *Tooth* and not "tongue" had been used in line four, and, due to L.'s emendation, it is also found in the last line of *his* text – with a remarkable effect, since now "mouth" and "tooth" changed places. This is, nothing less I should see, not without some admiration, the rhetorical figure of *chiasmus*, named after the form of the Greek letter /chi/, in which two constituents simply change places in consecutive parts of a poetic text, sometimes with, sometimes without a change in meaning, a rhetorical feature widespread in classical literature and scripture in the Old World, and found in this corpus only once, at this place.

Lubsandanjin was, thus, besides being a Buddhist clergyman from the 17th century, who wrote a chronicle of his people on the basis of various sources, the most impotant one of which was the Secret History of the Mongols, and who, in all likelihood, was of Southern Mongolian, possibly Ordos, provenance, first and foremost, a man of letters, who took pride in his means as a writer and, given the opportunity, liked to show it off.

To wrap it all up: The comparison of these two versions revealed, as could be expected, some very straightforward instances of simple *language change* along the axis of time – cases, where the later author was forced to change his source in order to adapt it to the language of his times lest his text becomes incomprehensible for his readers. In a few cases, I have, somewhat boldly, mentioned th e possibility, that some peculiarities of Lubsandanjin's text might show some signs, two from verbal morphology, one of them involving a sound change, and one observation from his orthography, which might point to his possible regional/dialectal home. I cannot emphasize strongly enough that, while I personally am and remain inclined to think that, indeed, Lubsandanjin's language gives away the more southern, and *possibly* Ordos provenance of this author, this can of course

not be taken as definite proof. Mongolistics, despite its already quite impressive history from Isaak Jakob Schmidt to our day, which now spans almost two hundred years, is in many respects still in its infancy. Questions like the ones posed here, questions of the possible dialectal provenance of a pre-modern author, and whether such questions may be answered with the help of linguistic observations in texts written in a script which does a much better job in concealing such differences than in exposing them, questions for the internal layering of such texts, which reflects their different sources and, more important, the respective author's *use* of those sources, are rarely being asked at all. What is more, the *historical grammar* of Mongolian, as it unfolds in the texts at our disposal, may also be described in such unhappy terms. Yes, very often we can tell which historical input, an old or middle Mongolian form, resulted in which modern Mongolian output, but, also, very often this is all we can say, since the *history*, in the narrower sense of this term, has – with exceptions of course - not been studied with the scrutiny, which is the hallmark of other, more established philological disciplines, as, I say this with a great deal of envy, for example Japanese philology, which I keep learning from each and every conversation with Sasha Vovin.

And so the research should go on, which might well – and I will be happy to acknowledge this when presented with such a study – prove nothing else that my innocent ideas about, to coin a term, *ordosisms* in the Altan Tobci are but "daggers of the mind, proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain". As in every scholarly discipline, losing a pet idea because it has been shown that it is not viable, should not be seen as a nuisance, but always as a gain.

What I wanted to show here is much less than the possible provenance of some 17th century Mongolian chronicler, or, then, perhaps much more:

The Lubsandanjin Altan Tobci is, I might be allowed to say, a wonderful example of a text which shows different strata – an emerging „classical standard“, impacted by highly archaic language and colloquial variants, which already point, in time, much beyond the „petrified“ norm which in the 16th century is about to emerge and which is from then on to dominate the written standard for centuries to come.

In using Altan Tobci for the history of Mongolian, the first and last task is, however, still a philological one, and these tasks have to be carried out before a meaningful and comprehensive *history of the Mongolian written language* can be written.

Philology does much more than I could show here.

Philology tells us, what the words and morphemes we are comparing, really mean or do in live contexts, philology shows us how the language (its words, affixes, meanings, constructions rules and so on) changes over time, and it also shows us whether deviations between successive stages are really manifestations of language change along the time axis, or rather manifestations of other drivers of variation (diatopic variance, style and rhetoric, do name only those I could touch upon here) – our dictionaries and grammars *ideally* reflect all this and do give the relevant information – *ideally*, I have to say, because all too often they don't. For Mongolian, the language I dealt with today, it has to be said that our handbooks and dictionaries *rarely* do this. Apart from very specialized studies and papers, which *do* exist of course, the information-seeker who consults a dictionary of Written Mongolian will be presented with an essentially a-historical view – and, by and large, this holds also for the grammars we have at our disposal today.

This is a state-of-affairs, which Mongolistics will have to gradually overcome, and it remains to be seen whether this discipline will have the stamina and the long breath to continue along this path, rather than using Mongolian (or other) data, taken from the pages of some dictionary or some grammar, to convince us of some sweeping hypothesis about the origins of half the languages of Asia.

But lest I end this with a lament, I still owe you the promised shorthand definition of philology, and here it comes. I find it in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, who for many people is many different things, and I want to maintain a neutral stance on this here, but who, before becoming all this, for better or worse, was, of course, a classical philologist. In one of his early, pre-insanity, writings he defines a philologist as a teacher of, and consequently, philology as the art of

slow reading.