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Review of: Tumurtogoo, D. with the collaboration of G. Cecegdari (eds.). Mongolian monuments in Uighur-Mongolian script (XIII—XIV centuries). Introduction, transcription and bibliography. Taipei. 2006. (Language and Linguistics Monograph Series A—11) ISBN 200610110010001641

The material presented in this volume occupies a very special position in Mongolic linguistic history. While the period of the 13th—14th centuries belongs in the Middle Mongol period, the texts also form part of the Pre-classical Mongol sources. The term Pre-classical Mongol denotes the texts written in Uighur-Mongol script in the 13th—17th centuries. It is thought that, in contrast with the texts written in other scripts, those written in Uighur-Mongol do not always mirror the spoken language of that period in a trustworthy manner.

As mentioned in the «Preface» (p. i), the aim of the compilation was to present the available material, last summarized more than three decades earlier by Ligeti. The volume will be welcomed by everybody interested in this field, as a considerable amount of new material indeed has come to light since the publications of Ligeti. As sometimes this new material was published in quite inaccessible editions, the publication of the whole material in a single volume and a unified transcription creates a turning point in the history of the research field. It is reported by the author that further volumes are ready for publication, presenting the material in 'Phags-pa, Arabic and Chinese scripts.

Before the «Introduction» (p. 1—8), two lists of abbreviations are given, one of the pre-classical Mongolian texts (p. ix—xii), and one of the journals and series (p. xiii—xiv). In the case of the abbreviations of the texts, an alphabetical list would perhaps be more informative.

In the «Introduction», Tumurtogoo discusses the theory that Mongol literacy dates back to the 9th or 10th century. Although he admits that the first records appear only in the 13th century, he argues that the Mongol language mirrored by the texts written in Uighur-Mongol script is more archaic than those in other scripts. While it is true that the mentioned groups of monuments do differ from each other to a certain degree, and Ligeti also pointed out the fact that the Mongol language that appears in these texts might be 100—200 years older, it is clear that the differences are practically minor, and even explainable in terms of dialectal differences, so they do not inevitably serve as reasons for supposing a period of 2—3 centuries of evolution. In addition, it is a known fact that the texts in Uighur-Mongol script appear decades earlier than monuments in other scripts. Until further evidence comes to light, the theory about the earlier literacy of the Mongols should be handled with caution.

The texts are basically grouped according to the technique of visualization (the only exception seems to be the fourth group); thus, the following groups are listed: inscriptions (16 items), xylographs (34 items), manuscripts (70 items), paizi and seal letters (5 items).

The work features six appendices. For researchers of the material, the most valuable one is the «Word-Index of the Preclassical Mongolian Monuments» (p. 283—632). This lists the words that occur in different texts together with their inflectional forms, at the same time indicating the exact location of the occurrence. One regrets that no translation of the lexical material was given. A list of abbreviations indicating the page number where the given text begins would greatly simplify orientation in the volume. At this stage, if one checks a word in the index and wants to trace it in the text, it is first necessary to go to the list of abbreviations, to find out which text is meant by the abbreviation. This is sometimes not an easy task in a list which is not arranged effectively. One must then turn to the «Table of Contents» and search again for the given entry.

This index is followed by a «Selected Index Nominum» (p. 633—640). This part is grouped in personal and tribe names (p. 633—638), place names (p. 638—640) and year names (in Chinese) (p. 640). The first two are further divided, indicating Mongolian, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Turkic, European and Tibetan names. It would be interesting to know if Chinese names occur in these texts. There appears to be some inconsistency in this name index, since names that are clearly of Turkic origin appear under the subtitle Mongolian, e.g. *Alinbuq-a*, *Bolmiš*, *Buyanquli*, *Taš-temür*, *Uiyur*, etc. The names *Alinbuq-a*, *Bolad*, *Bolmiš* by the way appear under both Mongolian and (Arabic, Persian and) Turkic. The name *Bisqarun* ~ *Muskaril* is by no means of Arabic, Persian or Turkic origin, but comes from the name Buscarello de Ghizolfi, a merchant from Genoa. The name *Sočqul* does not exist: the word should be read as *qoyayul-a*. The emendation was proposed by Kara, whose paper appears in the bibliography referring to the given text («A loan contract from Qara Qoto»). Finding *Daidu* (listed among the Chinese names as well), *Sultaniya*, *Sümmür tay*, *Šandu* among the Mongolian place-names is striking. The name *Isigköl* belongs to those rare examples, in which the sequence *si* should not be read as *ši*.

The appendix entitled «Some Examples of Phrases and Expressions» (p. 641—650) has some subtitles, such as «Alliterating words Attr. + N.», «Alliterating words N. + N.», «Synonymous alliterating words» etc. It is not clear (at least for me) what alliterating means here, since these expressions alliterate only as members of this index. This appendix is followed by the «Bibliography» (p. 651—667).

The appendix that is quite misleadingly called «The List of Fragments and Their Original Photo Copies» actually lists the bibliographical data of the first text publications in a facsimile form. The volume ends with photo-reproductions of several texts, entitled «Plates» (p. 675—722). Although the majority of them are of high quality, some of them are merely reproductions of earlier publications, in a quality not appropriate for the 21st century.

According to the author, «While preparing the present volume, almost all the relevant scientific publications for the last over hundred years were reviewed in details. This volume includes a newly revised transcription of all the pre-classical monuments available, featuring both the careful check-ups of all the previous propositions and the compiler's suggestions based on the historical changes of the Mongolian sounds. The suggestions mostly concern such phonetic interrelationships in Mongolian like a formation of the long vowels and diphthongs, as well as a process of the vowel assimilation, differing the present version of the transcription slightly from the others in the past». All these statements would appear to refer to a critical edition of the texts, but the reader will find that this is not the case.

Each text is given in a transcribed form, followed by bibliographical references. The requisites of a critical edition, e.g. references to alternative readings, and problematic readings, are unfortunately omitted, and translation of the texts would also be desirable. In the same manner, a short description of the texts would be informative, indicating for example where they were found, or where they are kept now.

Although the transcription system used here differs only slightly from the traditional one used in scientific works on Mongolistic topics, I am not sure that the texts should be quoted according to the present transcription in the future. In contrast with the earlier transcriptions that followed the principle that one should be able to reconstruct the original text on the basis of the transcription, in this edition the special orthographical features peculiar to this period are completely omitted. Examples are the marking of initial *e* as ' ', the marking of *ö* / *ü* of the initial syllable as *w*, or the special use of letters marking the dental consonants; *ši* is marked instead of the usual *si*, regardless of whether a diacritical mark was used or not. In turn, *š* occurring in foreign elements, and especially in names, is not always marked, cf. *Satilmis* vs. *Bolmiš*. Throughout the work, the different forms of the verb **ügüle*- 'to say' are transcribed as *ögüle*-. This erroneous transcription unfortunately appears in many publications. The verb originates from the noun *üge* 'word', and thus the quality of the initial vowel is not questionable. In turn, this verb probably disappeared from the spoken language, and was reinvented in modern times, in a misinterpreted form with initial *ö*-, cf. Khalkha *ögülex* 'to say, to state, to recount', etc.

Marking long vowels with a colon in the transcriptions in the majority of the occurrences is quite arbitrary, and not confirmed by any written monuments.

To give an example, I will quote here the words transcribed with a long vowel in the first item, that is the Stele of Yisüngge, referred to by Tumurtogoo as Yisüngke: *Sartayu:l*; [*d*]ayu:liju; bayu:ju; jayu:d; ontud(u)lay-a:.

Of course, at the marked places, later stages of Mongolic languages show a long vowel, but their presence from the very beginning of the Middle Mongol period is doubtful. Most of all, the appearance of the long vowel is not preceded by the disappearance of the intervocalic guttural. On the other hand, it is not clear why the vowel *i* is long in every sequence *yi* except the initial ones, cf. the different derivations from the root **koyi*, e.g. *qoyi:na*, *qoyi:či*, or the word *sayi:n* etc. On the other hand, long vowels unmarked in the original, but probably present in the spoken language, do not appear in the transcription, cf. the noun *umda* in «The letter of Ilkhan Abaga» (p. 1267).

Other corrections include transcribing *minü*, *činü* and *inü* instead of *minu*, *činu* and *inu* of the former readings. Such corrections are not confirmed by their declension paradigm and contradict the data available from modern languages.

I hope that features similar to those given above will be taken into consideration during the preparation of the second edition and the volumes presenting the remaining part of the Middle Mongol material. In conclusion, although the volume does have great merits, as a reference book it should be handled with caution.