

Tradition and Development of Mongolian Bibliography

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Since ancient times, the Mongols have been communicating with foreign countries, and this practice became the origin of the development of documents and books and the beginning of documenting valuable information not only in books, but also on wood, stone, skin, leather, as well as on cotton materials.

The Mongolians have a long tradition of their own scripts from the Khunnu period onwards (3rd–1st centuries B.C.). Under the Kidan dynasty, special printing houses existed where books were printed from wooden printing plates, both from manuscripts and translated works.¹ During the time of the Toba *aimag* (province) (4–6th century), thirteen lists of books including textbooks, a collection of songs, and a dictionary of the Syanbi language were published in the Nangiad history (“Sui Shu” or “Chronological document of the Sui state”).²

From the 224-volume “History of the Yuan Dynasty”, it is possible to get information about some books originating in the 13th Century, for example, the books “The State of Altan” (vol. IV), “Achlalt Nom” (vol. XXII)³ and the titles of other books are mentioned in this history.

The publishing of books in many copies was important from the point of view of respect and preservation of the cultural heritage of the Mongols and for passing on their contents to the younger generation, making them suitable to the readers and increasing their numbers and titles. Therefore, it was necessary to register books and inform about them. This practice was not only the basis for contemporary bibliography, but it is also of historical importance in searching for valuable books and studying in them the remarkable spiritual heritage of the Mongols. Since the time when manuscripts were used, the Mongols have developed their bibliography. The modern term “bibliography” in Mongolian contains the meaning of the words *bicheech* (scribe) and *bichigch* (writer), and there are different kinds of bibliographical items called *dans* (book), *burtgel* (registration), *garchig* (title), *tses* (list of titles), *ners* (titles), *lavlakh* (reference), *toli* (dictionary) and *devter* (book).

Bibliographical information considerably developed during the 17th–19th centuries when the Buddhist religion was widely introduced into Mongolia. Here are, for example, some of the titles of the books printed by different Mongolian blocks: “Ti-

1 Shuger, Ts.: The Mongolian method of book printing, Ulaanbaatar 1976: 25.

2 Ligeti, L.: The Tabgach language becomes one of dialects of Syanbi, *Studies of Language and Literature*. Ulaanbaatar 1970, vol. VII: 227.

3 Books of Mongolian xylography. Ulaanbaatar 1991: 64.

tles of the books including Mongolian letters” of the block printing house of Uizen gung, Sain noyon khan *aimag* (province), “Titles of the long block of the Mongolian book”, and “Titles of the books newly printed in the *agyn datsan*”. They were mentioned and registered as “Titles of the long block”, “Titles of the middle block”, “Titles of the short block” and “Titles of the inner sutra”. From this it becomes clear that books of medium and small sizes, except large books, were written and published according to the level of the knowledge of the readers. At that time, more than 700 printing houses⁴ operated in Khalkh Mongolia (Outer Mongolia), which registered their editions and informed about their printed books. Numerous famous block printing houses operated in Inner Mongolia and Buryatiya, as well. The largest printing houses and reading halls included e.g. “Ikh khuree”, “Zaya-yn Khuree”, “Monastery of Uizen Gun” in Khalkh Mongolia and “Beijing-Sun-Ju- Se-Sum”, “Shar sum” in Inner Mongolia, and “Onon Tsuugel Datsan” and “Atsgatun Datsan” in Buryatiyan Mongolia.

The titles of old prints included in the recently published overview⁵ of blockprints are the main representation of the bibliography of Mongolian wooden prints of the 17th–19th centuries. Under the prologue, epilogue and author’s and translator’s note, the Mongols gave detailed bibliographical information on newly printed books, including where, when and for what reason they were written, translated or copied, and for what reason and by whose assistance the book was created. Such notes had their established terms and were mostly written in verse, for example:

- Preface, introduction;
- Intermediate verse;
- Epilogue or common information;
- Different notes or clarification note;
- Note of hearings or index;
- Note of acceptance or *saniyag* etc.

These methods of registration are special features of the Mongolian bibliographical information system. The epilogue with some bibliographical information may consist of a verse of four and up to 100 lines.

One of the traditional characteristics of the transmission of Mongolian bibliographical information is the note given to a student by his teacher regarding the knowledge the student has acquired. This note is made in the bibliographical way. Although it is called note of “Knowledge through hearing” and “Knowledge

4 Maidar, D.: List of monasteries and temples in MPR in 1937. Three maps of Mongolian towns and villages. Ulaanbaatar 1970: 56–91.

5 Five titles of the books of Buryat Xylography. *Studia Mongolica* (Ulaanbaatar), 1959: F-16; Otgonbaatar, R.: Original titles of the books of Mongolian xylography. Tokyo 1998.

through acceptance" in Mongolian, it has also been known by the term *toviyog* (index) and *saniyag* (index) in Tibetan.⁶

Starting from the 17th century, it was widespread among the Mongols to write books in the Tibetan language. According to incomplete information, over 300 writers were active at that time and the collected works of some of them consist of approximately 30 volumes.

The bibliographical works and the collections of books from the palaces of the Mongolian khans and noblemen, as well in the possession of common people prove that the Mongols traditionally had libraries for many generations. For example, two bibliographical books from the monastery Giva-Lkhanravjaalin (now a museum), where Danzanravjaa, the famous Mongolian poet and philosopher of the 19th–20th centuries, lived and wrote his works, prove that in this monastery a large collection of books had been kept for seven generations. It seems that the books, kept from the time of Abtai Sain Khan, were registered in the bibliography of the private collection of Bogd Javzandamba Khutugtu VIII, the religious and political leader of Mongolia in the early 20th century.

Search for and research on the bibliographical works of the recent historical past, contemporary registration, information, recommendation, and bibliographical references for researchers have constantly been carried out since the beginning of the 20th century. Mongolian books are to be found not only in Mongolia, but also in the libraries of many cities of the world. Foreign and Mongolian researchers have published bibliographical works about them.

Bibliographical information on Mongolian books has also been collected and published in a number of libraries of different foreign countries. Major locations include those of the city of Kazan, Saint Petersburg (Institute of Oriental Studies, now the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts), Buryat Mongolia in Eastern Siberia (Russian Federation), and Inner Mongolia in the People's Republic of China.

Aleksey Bobrovnikov, teacher of the Mongolian language at Kazan University, compiled a bibliography of the Mongolian, Arab, Persian, Turkish, Tatar, and Kyrgyz manuscripts and books kept in the university library and published the results in 1848. In addition, he published a bibliography of the books written in the Mongolian square script in Saint Petersburg in 1870.

The scholar B. Ya. Vladimircov studied the books which were transferred from the collection of professor A. D. Rudneev into the Asian Museum of the Russian Academy of Sciences and in 1918, he published this list of over 160 Mongolian books under the title "Mongol'skie rukopisi i ksilografii, postupivshie v Aziatskoy Muzei

6 Clear Mirror, Note of acceptance of books of great tutors (Zaya List) by Luvsanprinlei, 17th century, SCL; Note of words of great deeds by Choiji-Avgaandagva, (19th century, manuscript, SCL).

Rossiyskoy Akademii Nauk ot Prof. A. D. Rudneeva" (Mongolian manuscripts and xylographs, accessed to the Asian Museum of the Russian Academy of Sciences from professor A. D. Rudneev).

The researcher L. S. Puchkovskiy wrote a monograph on the Mongolian books in the Institute of Oriental Studies in Saint Petersburg⁷, and the Hungarian mongolist G. Kara⁸, the Mongolian researchers J. Tsezen and Ts. Shuger are also authors of monographs on Mongolian bibliography and book-editing. The scholar Dorj Banzar, who started scientific research on the culture of the Mongolian book, became familiar with the Mongolian and Manchu manuscripts and books in the Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg and made a catalogue of the Manchu books in twelve classifications.

Bibliographical works related to the Kanjur and the Tanjur, valuable examples of Mongolian literary monuments, have been published not only in Mongolia, but also abroad.⁹ The Hungarian mongolist L. Ligeti made a list of the titles of the names of the Kanjur, kept in a library in Paris, and published it in Budapest between 1942 and 1944.¹⁰ The well-known Mongol scholar B. Rinchen compiled a bibliography of the first 75 volumes of the Tanjur which was published in New Delhi (India) between 1964 and 1974.¹¹

Ch. Bat-Ochir and B. Shagj, researchers at the Mongolian Institute of Letters, are the authors of a bibliographical reference of the Tanjur which is now kept as a manuscript in the State Central Library of Mongolia. In the 1950s and 1960s, the German mongolist W. Heissig, the British mongolist Ch. Bawden, and the Finnish researcher P. Aalto compiled bibliographies of Mongolian xylographic books in

7 Puchkovskiy, L. S.: *Sobranie mongol'skikh rukopisey i ksilografov. Uchenye zapiski Instituta Vostokovedeniya*, No. 9 (1954): 90-127; *Mongol'skie, Buryat-Mongol'skie i Oyratskie rukopisi i ksilografiy Instituta Vostokovedeniya. I. Istoriya i pravo*. Moskva / Leningrad 1957.

8 Kara, G.: *The Mongol and Manchu Manuscripts and Blockprints in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences*. Budapest 2000 (*Bibliotheca Orientalis Hungarica*; 47).

9 See also the bibliography on Mongolian printed sources and bibliographies in the review article by András Róna-Tas: *A historical source on the Mongolian catalogues. Acta Orientalia*, vol. 58, No. 4 (December 2005): 449–455.

10 Ligeti, L.: *Catalogue du Kanjur mongol imprimé*. Budapest 1942–1944.

11 Rintchen, B.: *Catalogue du Tanjur mongol imprimé*. 1–3. New Delhi 1964–1974 [unfinished] (*Śata Pitaka Series* 33:1–3).

Marburg (Germany),¹² Copenhagen (Denmark),¹³ and Bern (Switzerland) respectively, which the Beijing publishing house "Sun-Je-Se" (PRC) published.

In the United States of America, John R. Krueger (Indiana University) published the "Catalogue of the Laufer Mongolian Collections in Chicago" in 1966.¹⁴ The Western Washington University in Bellingham (Washington) has a very large collection of titles on Mongolia, and in 1955, D. M. Farquhar published an overview on these items.¹⁵

The works "Titles of the old Mongolian books kept in the libraries in Beijing" and "Titles of the old Mongolian books of the entire country" were compiled in the 1990s on the basis of the Mongolian books in the libraries in Beijing and of the Pedagogical University in Huhhot / Inner Mongolia (PRC) where a large collection of Mongolian books exists. These bibliographies comprise important information for scholars who carry out research on Mongolian books.

The tradition of the peculiar development and terms of the Mongolian bibliography will take its proper place in the historical periods of the Mongolian and world bibliographical development.

12 Mongolische Handschriften, Blockdrucke, Landkarten. Beschrieben von W. Heissig unter Mitarbeit von K. Sagaster. Wiesbaden 1961. (Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland; 1)

13 Catalogue of Mongol books, manuscripts and xylographs, by W. Heissig, assisted by Ch. Bawden. Copenhagen: The Royal Library 1971.

14 Krueger, John R.: Catalogue of the Laufer Mongolian Collections in Chicago. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 86, No. 2 (April–June, 1966): 156–183.

15 Farquhar, D.M.: A description of the Mongolian manuscripts and xylographs in Washington, DC. *Central Asiatic Journal*, No. 1 (1955): 161–128.