

Mongolian Personal Names

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ALTHOUGH MONGOLIAN STUDIES have made good progress in recent decades, so that the history and literature of this people have become well investigated, very few studies touching on Mongolian names have yet appeared. Some names and titles occurring in the oldest work of Mongolian history, an imperial chronicle called the *Secret History of the Mongols* (1240), have been treated by Vladimirtsov¹ and Poucha.² Father H. Serruys has discussed Mongolian names used in the Yüan and Ming periods of Chinese history,³ and Schubert, who recently spent some months traveling in the Mongolian People's Republic (formerly Outer Mongolia, now a political satellite of the Soviet Union), has stated that he is preparing for publication his collection of several thousand modern Mongolian names.⁴ The subject of Mongolian names is a large one, to which a full-scale work should be devoted. In this brief article, only a survey of the chief facts of greatest interest can be given. I restrict myself here to personal names, leaving a similar survey of Mongolian place-names for later treatment. In the old chronicles, one can still find purely Mongolian descriptive names on the order of *Yeke Nidün* 'Big Eyes,' but many of them are difficult to analyze, and require one to have a knowledge of Ancient Mongolian and of related Altaic languages. Names of Mongolian origin are still wide-spread, of course,

¹ Boris Ya. Vladimirtsov, *Le Régime social des Mongols* (Paris, 1949) [French translation of his earlier Russian work, *Obščestvennyi stroi Mongolov*. Leningrad, 1931].

² Pavel Poucha, *Die Geheime Geschichte der Mongolen als Geschichtsquelle und Literaturdenkmal: ein Beitrag zu ihrer Erklärung* (Prague, 1956).

³ Henry Serruys, "Some Types of Names Adopted by the Mongols during the Yüan and Early Ming Periods," *Monumenta Serica* (Japan), vol. 17 (1958), pp. 353 to 360.

⁴ Johannes Schubert, "Über mongolische Personennamen," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung*, 7, 3 (1960), pp. 395-401.

such as *Checheg* 'flower,' *Baatar* 'hero,' *Bayan* 'wealthy,' *Gerel* 'beam, light,' and many others. The Sun Yat-sen of Mongolia, the revolutionist *Sūke Bator* (Axe Hero) had a Mongolian name, as did the former Minister of Education, *Batu-khan* (Firm Ruler). The practice of naming the new-born after the first thing seen by the parturient mother accounts for many names rooted in natural phenomena, flora and fauna. Just as few persons in this country are conscious of the foreign origin of many common American names, Mongols are rarely aware that some ordinary Mongolian names are really Sanskrit in origin. *Erdeni* 'jewel' is from Skt. *ratna*, and *Ochir* (also *Vachir* and even *Bazar*) is from Skt. *vajra* 'thunderbolt, Indra's weapon.' *Badma* is Skt. *padma* 'lotus,' and *Garma* is Skt. *karma* 'destiny.' Recently I read the name *Banzaragch*, a distortion of *Pañcaraksha*, Sanskrit name of a Buddhist *sūtra* or sermon, the "Five Rakshas (Saints)." Another is *Maidar*, from Skt. *Maitreya*, the Buddha of the coming world, and also the name of an important festival. Hybrid compounds of Sanskrit and Tibetan morphemes are also found today, such as *Mangaljab*, from Skt. *mangalam*, a kind of blessing or benediction, plus Tibetan *-jab* 'protection.' Finally, when the owner of such a Sanskrit or Tibetan name becomes Russified through education or his desire for advancement, he frequently adopts the Russian *-ov/-ev*. This yields such common last names as *Ochirov*, *Badmayev* and others.

When the Slavs were converted to Christianity by the apostles Cyril and Methodius in the 9th century, the new religion led to the extensive adoption of personal names of Greek ecclesiastical origin. Thus, beside old Slavic names such as *Boris*, *Igor* and *Svetoslav*, one finds many names of Greek origin, as *Aleksandr*, *Georgii*, *Dmitrii*, *Ivan* (*Iohannes*), *Fyodor* (*Theodore*), *Vasilii* (*Basil*) and others. A rather similar circumstance accounts for the presence in Mongolian of many names of Tibetan origin. After Buddhism began to take definite hold among the people in the late 16th century, names became closely tied to this religion, which among the Mongols uses Tibetan as its sacred language. Thus, the position of Tibetan is rather similar to that of Latin in Western Europe. Further, as many Latin words have Greek predecessors, so do Tibetan names often have Sanskrit forebears as models.

Hence, Tibetan names and morphemes are extremely common in Mongolian personal names, some of the most frequent men's and

women's names deriving from this language. It should be mentioned before giving any examples that the classical Tibetan spelling differs considerably from the colloquial pronunciation, so that the two versions seldom look alike. Some common names of Tibetan origin are *Gombo* (Tib. *mgon-po* 'protector, lord'), or *Gombojab* (*mgon-po-skyabs*), *Dorji* (Tib. *rdo-rje* 'diamond, thunderbolt,' itself a translation of Skt. *vajra*), *Damba* (Tib. *dam-pa* 'holy'), *Ishi* (Tib. *ye-shes* 'wisdom'), *Agvan* (Tib. *ngag-dban* 'eloquent'), and others. Many of these names arise from words used in the Lamaist rituals. Others are translations of famous Sanskrit names, as *Damdin* (Tib. *rta-mgrin* 'horse-neck'), from Skt. *Hayagrīva*, or *Pakva* (Tib. *hp'ags-pa* 'noble, reverend'), translating Skt. *ārya*. Additional names of Tibetan origin are *Sodnam* (Tib. *bsod-nams* 'good fortune, happiness'), *Dondub* (Tib. *don-grub*, the personal name of Buddha), *Senge* (Tib. *seng-ge* 'lion', cf. Leo), *Shirab* (Tib. *shes-rab* 'wisdom, intelligence'), *Tsereng* (Tib. *ts'e-ring* 'long life') and *Sanji* (Tib. *sangs-rgyas* 'Buddha, enlightened one,' Russianized to Sanzheyev).

Another popular Mongolian name-bestowing practice is that of christening according to the days of the week. This may be done in two ways: according to the cycle of the day, or according to the day's name. By the first, the name *Dorji* is given to children born on the days 1, 6, 11, 16, 21 or 26; the name *Rinchen* is given to those born on the days 2, 7, 12, 17, 22, or 27; and *Badma* is for those born on the 3, 8, 13, 18, 23 and 28th days of the month. *Liji* is for days 4, 9, 14, 19, 24 and 29, and *Sanji* for the days 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30.⁵ The second possibility is to give the name of the week-day to the child. These names are *Nyama* (Tib. *nyi-ma* 'sun, day'), Sunday; *Dawa* (Tib. *zla-wa* 'moon, crescent'), Monday; *Myagmar* (Tib. *mig-mar*, *mig-dmar* 'red-eye, Mars'), Tuesday; *Lhagva* (Tib. *lhag-pa* 'Mercury'), Wednesday; *Pürev* (Tib. *p'ur-bu* 'Jupiter'), Thursday; *Basan* (Tib. *pa-sangs* 'Venus'), Friday; and *Bimba* (Tib. *spen-pa* 'Saturn'), Saturday. From these names, last names are often made in the Russianized form, as *Bimbayev*, *Basangov*, etc. In spite of the long enforced association of Mongols and Chinese, there are few Chinese elements to be found in Mongolian names, but many titles derive from Chinese words. Among these are Mongolian *ong* (Chin.

⁵ A. M. Pozdneyev, *Očerki byta buddistskikh monastyrei v Mongolii* (St. Petersburg, 1887), pp. 417-419.

wang 'prince'), *taiji* (Chin. *tai-tzu* 'prince, heir apparent'), *jinong* (Chin. *cheng-wang*), and others. The Mongolian emperors of China had Chinese reign titles, and individual Mongols have always found it expedient to adopt a Chinese name for purposes of dealing with Chinese. When this is not the case, and Mongolian names are transcribed with Chinese characters according to their sound-value, it often becomes difficult to reconstruct the original. This is a major problem of research in such chronicles as the *Yüan-shih*, a dynastic history of the Mongols.

There are a few Mongolian names of Turkic origin, mostly stemming from Kazakh, a Northwestern Turkic language spoken in the western regions of Mongolia. An example is the name *Elbek*, from *il/el* 'people,' plus *bek* (Mongolian *beki*) 'ruler,' the same element found in 19th century Ottoman names such as *Mustafa Bey*, *Pasha Bey*, and others. The name *Nominkhanov* is interesting as an example of loan-translation. In the classical spelling of the old vertical script (officially abandoned in 1946 to a Cyrillic alphabet, but still widespread in private use), this would be *nom-un qagan*, literally 'King of the (Buddhist) law or doctrine,' a translation of Tibetan *chos-rgyal*, itself made on the model of Sanskrit *dharmarāja*, both of similar meaning. Finally, the owner of this name has Russified it with the Slavic family suffix *-ov*. The morpheme *nom* is ultimately a loan from Greek *nómos* 'law, discipline,' as in *astro-nomy*, *Deutero-nomy*, and other words. In recent times, many new names have been made up by freely compounding Tibetan morphemes with Mongolian or even Sanskrit bases. These elements include *-jab* (Tib. *skyabs* 'protection, help'), *-süren* (Tib. *srung* 'guard, heed'), *-bal* (Tib. *dpal* 'glory, splendor,' an equivalent of the Skt. *-shri*), and *-san* (Tib. *bzang* 'good, fair'). Two-syllable elements are *-luwsan* (Tib. *blo-bzang* 'good sense'), *-jaltsan* (Tib. *rgyal-mts'an* 'victory, trophy'), *-jamtso* (Tib. *rgya-mts'o* 'sea, ocean'), *-rinchen* (Tib. *rin-č'en* 'valuable, precious'), *-lodoi* (Tib. *blo-gros* 'intellect'), and *-punsug* (Tib. *p'un-ts'ogs* 'perfect'). A knowledge of these and other elements makes it possible to analyze many names of persons famous in Mongolian history and in contemporary affairs. The rulers *Ligdan* (1592–1634) and *Galdan* (1645–1697) have Tibetan names (*dga-ldan* and *legs-ldan*). The name of the former political and theocratic ruler of Outer Mongolia, the *Jebsun Damba Hutuktu*, is Tib. *rje-btsun dam-pa*, to which Mongolian *qutuqtu* 'holy' has been added.

The name of his cohort, the head of the religion, the *Janja Hutuktu*, comes from Tibetan *lcang-skyä*. The famous historian *Rashipungsug*'s name is from Tib. *bkra-shes p'un-ts'ogs*, the first element of which is also seen in the name of the famous *Tashi-lumpo* monastery of Tibet (*bkra-shes lun-po*). The great collector of Mongolian folklore, the Buriat *Zhamtsarano*, had a Tibetan name, *lcam-srang*, as does the leading literary figure in Mongolia today, *Damdinsüren*, Tib. *ria-mgrin-srung*. Last may be mentioned the late Premier of the Mongolian People's Republic, *Choibalsan*, from Tib. *chos-dpal-bzang*. The State University in Ulan Bator (*ulagan bagatur* 'Red Hero') is named after him.

Many names may be borne by both men and women, but a few are used chiefly by girls, since they denote goddesses of the Lamaistic pantheon. Such are *Dolma* (Tib. *sgrol-ma*, name of a Tara goddess), *Dugar* (Tib. *gdugs-dkar*, another form of Tara), and *Lhamo*, which is simply Tibetan *lha* 'god' plus the feminine suffix *-mo*, hence 'goddess' (cf. *Lhasa*, from *lha+sa* 'place, country').

The names of the great Mongolian emperors and conquerors known to the West, including those of Genghiz Khan and his sons, have become more or less standardized in Western books in forms arising from the spellings of Persian historians. Thus *Genghiz* is properly *Chinggis*, to which his title Qagan is added. The names of his sons may be given as *Jochi*, *Ügedei*, *Chagatai* and *Tolui*. Other important rulers and leaders were *Güyük*, *Möngke*, *Qubilai* and *Togon Temür*. Some of the strange spellings seen for them arise from the impressionistic recordings of Marco Polo and other early travellers to the Orient. The *Kubla Kan* of Coleridge's famous poem is clearly for *Qubilai Qan*, and his *Xanadu* is the well-known Chinese phrase *shang-tu* 'upper capital,' conveyed through a Portuguese spelling with the characteristic *x* for *sh*.

In spite of the fact that the Mongolian hordes could have easily conquered Europe in 1240, and thus have had profound influence on the history of Western European civilization, very few Mongolian words are found in English or European languages, and they are of later origin. The best known is *dalai* 'ocean,' occurring in the title of the Tibetan theocratic ruler, the *Dalai Lama*, or "Oceanic Priest," that is, he who is as broad and illimitable in his knowledge as the ocean itself. This title was conferred on him in 1577 by the Mongolian ruler, *Altan Khan* ("Golden Emperor"). In Tibet, curi-

ously enough, this title is not used. There he is called *rgyal-ba rin-po-che* 'precious ruler,' or simply *Kundün* (spelled *sku-mdun*) 'presence.'

Other Mongolian names in English are *mogul* 'an imposing official or tycoon,' deriving from the grand Moguls of the Mongolian dynasty in India (*mogul* is simply *Mongol* with loss of *n*); and the common yard shrub *Caragana*. This is Mongolian *qara* 'black, dark' plus *-gana*, a suffix denoting plants.

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ANS Notes

First Annual Names Institute

A NAMES INSTITUTE was successfully organized by Professor E. Wallace McMullen on the beautiful Florham-Madison Campus of Fairleigh Dickinson University on May 5, 1962. The generally acclaimed success was brought about by an array of outstanding papers presented in two sessions, morning and afternoon, presided over by Professor Robert W. Lowe (Georgetown University) and Professor Alfred Senn (University of Pennsylvania) respectively. Many practical problems were discussed by three representatives of Government agencies, namely, "The Problems of Eskimo and Indian Geographic Names in Alaska" by Donald Joseph Orth (U.S. Geological Survey), "Current Practices in Names Work in the Coast and Geodetic Survey" (illustrated by charts and aerial photographs) by A. J. Wright (U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey), and "The Nature of Named Geographic Entities" by Meredith F. Burrill (Office of Geography, U.S. Department of the Interior). Harlan L. Umansky of Union City, N. J., spoke on "The Names of God in Judaism," P. Burwell Rogers of Bucknell University on "Virginia Place Names from Early Modes of Travel and Commerce," Arthur F. Beringause of Queens College on "Faulkner and Names," Julius L. Rothman of N. Y. City College on "Three Favorite Sources of Cabell's Fictitious Names." Allen Walker Read of Columbia University showed, on the basis of documentary evidence, how the term "Far West" changed its reference, as the American frontier moved westward.

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