

On a Mongolian translation of the term “tianmo (天魔)” in the dance name “十六天魔舞蹈” : A word “dagini”

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1. Introduction

According to Zou Dailan (邹代兰 & 郑莉, 2008:104), a Great Siddha of India (also referred to as ‘The Red Tara’), who was an extraordinary Buddhist tantric meditator, achieved self-transcendence and superconsciousness, created the dance “十六天魔舞蹈”.

It was a genre of dances, performed as a tantric ritual of Buddhism and can be traced back to the ‘Zhang An’ Palace during the Tang Dynasty (王颢, 2005) (王景志.2009:285). Based on a historical record (王颢, 2005), this dance was originated in the western area and was later introduced to the central part of the country. It was then systematised and made famous and popular by Emperor Shundi of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), however, it exhibited varying manifestations at different periods during the fluctuating political fortunes of the Yuan Dynasty. Then, it progressively integrated with folk art and morphed into a local dance during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), and has continued to be extensively showcased at a multitude of occasions, including various ceremonies or religious services, after the Ming Dynasty. Even though many political factors led to the eventual disappearance of the dance from the stage under the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), “it might still be the dance performed by the Mongol tribes who adhered to the Buddhist teachings” according to Li Guotao (黎国韬, 2010).

2. Background

The Yuan Dynasty relinquished its control to the Ming Dynasty in 1368, that is, within about one century after it was officially established by Khublai, the grandson of Chinggis Khaan, in 1271. Togoontumur, the Last Emperor of the Yuan Dynasty has been accused of being responsible for this downfall which was allegedly affected by the dance named “十六天魔舞蹈”.

Scholars have been extremely intrigued by a question whether this is a form of ‘regular dances’ or ‘Buddhist rituals’, and by its term *tianmo* (天魔) which is recorded in the Chinese sources. There are two alternations of its Mongolian translation: one is *šimnu* (ᠰᠢᠮᠨᠠ)(Дэмчигдорж, 2015:IV–283), and another is *dagini* (ᠳᠠᠭᠢᠨᠢ) (Саранчимэг Х, 2014:108).

Most interpreters or readers in Chinese tend to convey this as the initial *šimnu* (ᠰᠢᠮᠨᠠ). When interpreting then translating as this alternation, the property and significance of the dance might get obscured, leading to a loss of its reality.

Therefore, this research aims to answer this controversial question on the translation of the term *tianmo* (天魔) in the dance name “十六天魔舞蹈”, as *šimnu* (ᠰᠢᠮᠨᠠ) or *dagini* (ᠳᠠᠭᠢᠨᠢ) into Mongolian, by examining this unexplained question whether this is a ‘regular dance’ or a ‘Buddhist ritual’.

3. Findings

The period between the late Yuan and early Ming Dynasties. The Caomuzi (草木子) authored by Ye Zi Chi has a notable fact that “In the Yuan Dynasty, there was a dance performed by sixteen skilled individuals who adorned in the attire embellished with pearls, just resembling the appearance of Bodhisattvas” (葉子奇, 1997:65). Scholars including Zou Dailan and Zheng Li (邹代兰 & 郑莉, 2008:104) agree that the dance “十六天魔舞蹈” in the myths related to the Great Bodhisattva - Buddha, resists the allure of beauties and plays a role opposing to Buddha. This perspective emerged from Tantric Buddhism which started in India and then extended into China, becoming a significant ritual of Chinese Tantric Buddhism.

Wang Ting suggests that the dance developed from a myth in which the ‘Bodhisattva’ withstood the temptation of allure (王颀, 2005). This perspective is endorsed by Zou Dailan and Zheng Li (邹代兰 & 郑莉, 2008) and also supported by Shijiu Dong and Qin-Yi Liu (董锡玖, 2010:45) and (王克芬, 2010:120), respectively. Saranchimeg.Kh emphasises that the dance “十六天魔舞蹈” has a clear connection to Buddhist cultures (Саранчимэг Х, 2014:106-110).

4. Hypothesis

When considering the dance as a ‘regular dance’, the term *tianmo* (天魔) can be translated as *šimnu* (ᠰᠢᠮᠨᠠ) or *čidhör* (ᠴᠢᠳᠬᠣᠷ) in Mongolian. Nevertheless, since this dance is intimately associated with Buddhism, particularly the Black (hat) Sect of Buddhism (henceforth, ‘the Black Sect of Buddhism’), it should be translated as *dagini* (ᠳᠠᠭᠢᠨᠢ) as a ‘religious ritual’ of the Sect.

Having scrutinised the name of this dance tying with not only its origin but also the dancers and their attires or instruments, we tentatively assume through the translation *dagini* (ᠳᠠᠭᠢᠨᠢ) in this article, that the decision the Emperor Togoontumur made to withdraw himself from the state and political affairs was not influenced by his attraction to the beauty of the young dancers, but by his aspiration for Buddhism particularly the Black Sect of Buddhism.

5. Sources

The subject on the dance “十六天魔舞蹈” has received little attention and only a few Chinese scholars have conducted studies on it. However, monographs on the subject have not been published so far today but a number of sources have been inherited us. The majority of these works are poetic and lyrical in nature, and serve as records about the relevant dance and primary sources for this research - those included *Chronology of Emperor Shundi* (Togoontumur) - the Chapter 43 and “History of Hama”¹ - the Chapter 205 of the “Yuan Shi”; a poem titled “Songs in Shangjing”² found in the 6th volume of “Yan Gate Collection” in another poetic work by Sadoula (萨都刺); “a Chant in the Yuan Palace”³ by Zhu Zhu (朱橚); “the Lyrics of the Dance team in the Palace” in the 2nd volume of “The collection of Tui An” by Zhangzhu (张翥); “A Dedicatory Poems composed by Scholars during the early Ming Dynasty”⁴; a poem titled “Traveling through the Forbidden city in autumn of the Black Mouse Year” and “Poems written, based on the feelings of the words by the passers through me when

¹ 元史》卷四三《顺帝纪》、卷二〇五《哈麻传》

² 萨都刺《雁门集》卷六《上京杂咏》

³ 朱橚《元宫词》

⁴ 张翥《蜕庵集》卷二《宫中舞队歌词》

traveling in Peiping” published in the 3rd volume “the Collection on the Western Secrets” by Songne (宋讷)⁵; “Qu You (瞿佑)” found in the 22nd volume of the “A Collection of Ming Dynasty Poems”⁶; and a poem titled “A Memory for Yan cheng”⁷ in the 6th volume of the “A collection of Liu Bing (刘炳)”.

In addition to them, research articles authored by Li Guotao (黎国韬, 2010) and Wang Ting (王颀, 2005) were used for the analysis and comparison of the facts on the dances.

6. Method and methodology

Chinese scholars, including Li Guotao (黎国韬, 2010) focus on the dance associating with the Black Sect (also known as ‘Garmava’ or ‘Gajudva’) of Buddhism. In order to understand and endorse this, it is essential to examine the concept of *dagini* (ཌག་ཇི་) within the Black Sect of Buddhism using hermeneutics. This entails collecting sources on the dance, deciphering and analysing the etymology of the relevant term, studying the perspectives of other scholars, and comparing original information in its proper context.

7. Result

7.1. On the Black Sect of Buddhism, spread in the Palace of the Yuan Dynasty

Several publications and books provide the facts about the spread of the Black Sect of Buddhism in the Palace of the Yuan Dynasty like that “Transformed by the Mahayana ideal, Buddhist philosophical scholasticism, and tantra's antinomianism, the Indian Buddhism inherited by the Kagyü school⁸ had undergone an astonishing process of evolution and assimilation since the lifetime of Siddhartha Gautama in the fifth century B.C.E”; “The Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorjé (1284-1339), established a Karma Kagyü canon of practice and study, introducing a number of teachings from other lineages. He performed the enthronement ceremony for the thirteen year-old emperor Togan Temur” (Thupten Jinpa, 2010); and “Numerous monks, like Karma Chos-kyi Paksi (1204-1283), belonging to the Tibetan Gajudva order, often known as the Black Sect of Buddhism, were held in great esteem and reverence by the Mongol Empire. ... in the year of 1255, he was bestowed with the benediction and admiration of Munk Khaan at the capital of the Empire. Traditionally, Munkh khaan designated him as the “State Teacher” and constructed a temple for him (Чойжи, 2003). Notably, the teachers like Ranjundorj (Rang-byung rdo-rje, (1284-1339) and Rolbiidorj (Rol-pa'i rdo-rje, (1340-1383)) held a significant influence in the Palace of the Yuan Dynasty, particularly during the reigns of Zayaat, Tugttumor, and Togoontumor, and were highly esteemed” (Идэр Д et al., 2019).

7.2. On the 十六天魔舞蹈- a ritual belonging to the Black Sect of Buddhism

The Chronicle of Emperor Shundi (Togoontumur) of the Yuan Shi (宋濂. 元史. 三纪. 顺帝六. 1976:918–919) designates certain facts that during the fourteenth year of Zhizheng, the emperor would abstain from engaging with the state and political affairs and instead indulging in lavish feasts. The dance “十六天魔舞蹈” features a group of sixteen exquisite young maidens, led by SanShen nu (三圣奴), Miaole nu (妙乐奴), and Wenshu nu (文殊奴). They perform a sequential dance one by one, collectively known as the dance 十六天魔舞蹈. In terms of the individual's appearance, she has her hair divided into multiple sections and is wearing an ivory headdress adorned with a depiction of Buddha on her head. Additionally, she is wearing a lace-cloak (referred to as ‘...wearing long tassels’ by D. Demchigdorj), a skirt with a scarlet degter (referred to as ‘... hanging some scarlet cheese-cloth ribbons’ by D. Undrakh), a cloud-shaped shoulder-strap with golden plaits, a luxurious garment with voluminous sleeves on her body, a pair of silk slippers embroidered with flowers on her feet. Also each person is firmly clutching a skull symbolising the teachings of dharma in one of her hands and one among them is holding a bell and a percussion instrument, and playing them. The eleven maidens in the palace have their hair cut in a style resembling alkhan pattern (also known as Greek pattern) or dragon horns and dress in modest attire, including Tang Dynasty hats (for women) and elegant blouses. For music, eleven musical instruments: the dragon horn (龙笛), head tube (头管), snare drum (小鼓), zither (箏), zhen (蓁(zhēn)), lute (or pipa (琵琶)), indocalamus pipe / or reedpipe (笙), huqin (胡琴) or fiddle (khuur, according to the explanation by D.Demchigdorj (Дандаа чинсан Дэмчигдорж, 2015:66)), castanets (响板), danginagch (拍(pāi)/板(bǎn)) are

⁵ 宋讷《西隐集》卷三《壬子秋，过故宫》、《客北平，闻行人之语，感而成诗》

⁶ 《明诗综》卷二瞿佑《天魔舞》

⁷ 刘炳《刘彦昂集》卷六《燕城怀古》

⁸ The Kagyü tradition inherited the higher yoga tantric tradition that had become widespread in northern India in the closing centuries of the first millennium, particularly those tantras known as the yoginī tantras or, more commonly in Tibet, the mother tantras. This esoteric Buddhism was quite different from the Buddhism that was preserved in the Pali Canon (Thupten Jinpa, 2010).

played during the performance. Andai Bukha, the Chief Eunuch, conducts all the performances which commence with a homage to Buddha in the palace, thereafter proceeding with sequential performances of the dance and music. The palace officials who have taken vows are permitted to attend the performances, while others are not allowed.

Based on the fact provided that “During the fourteenth year of Jizheng, the emperor would abstain from engaging with the state and political affairs, and instead indulging in lavish feasts”, the Era name of the Emperor, Togoontumur was changed to Zhizheng (至正) in 1341, indicating that the year of the dance rediscovered in the Palace of the Yuan Dynasty corresponds to 1354. This fact must be proved by the following evidence which is authored in the book “the Great Mongols known as the Great Yuan” by B. Ider, that “the officials including Hama and Turtumur reprimanded and dispatched a Tibetan monk to the Emperor in 1353. The Tibetan monk divulged the tantric technique to the Emperor. This is a method to move the energy throughout the body, referred to as “Andai therapy method” or “Buddhist tantra”. The monk persuaded that “You can experience a genuine delight that brings immense contentment by practicing the various meditation such as Samadhi, similar to what I have personally encountered” (Идэр Д et al., 2019). This proves that the dance “十六天魔舞蹈” was performed, and the specific individuals were granted permission to watch the dance in the Ming Dynasty, along with two historically significant facts that “They commence with a homage to Buddha in the palace, thereafter proceeding with sequential performances of the dance and music. The palace officials who have taken vows are permitted to attend the performances, while others are not allowed.” (宋濂, 1976b), as well as “In the Yuan Dynasty, there was a dance performed by sixteen skilled individuals who adorned in the attire embellished with pearls, just resembling the appearance of Bodhisattvas” in The Caomuzi (草木子) authored by Ye Zi Chi (葉子奇, 1997:65). As a result, all of the aforementioned facts can serve as an evidence that the “十六天魔舞蹈” is a genre of Tantric Buddhist dances.

8. Discussion

8.1. On the term “*tianmo* 天(魔)”

The term *tianmo* 天(魔) in the dance name “十六天魔舞蹈” is mostly recorded in Chinese sources, which is a combination of *tian* (天, meaning ‘sky’ or ‘heaven’ in English) and *mo* (魔, meaning ‘demon’ or ‘devil’ in English). This research examines and analyses various meanings of the term *tianmo* 天(魔) for the article as following:

1. The Sanskrit term of this is *mara* (魔罗 (also ‘demon’ in English)) which is translated to *malign* or *malignancy*, whereas the Buddhist texts mention Boxun (波旬), who is identified as the sixth celestial monarch of desire. Subsequently, this meaning has figuratively been transformed into all obstructive techniques acquiring a generic designation⁹ and it can also be used as the meaning of ‘crocodile’ and ‘lily’. According to the Ancient Chinese Dictionary (陈复华 & 楚永安, 2012:1082), this *mara* (魔罗) is the abbreviation of the Sanskrit word *mara* which means a demon that can stop someone from achieving Enlightenment, destroy Buddhism and kill people. Based on this, *mo* (魔) means a ‘demon’ consisting of elements such as beauty, enchantment and allure.
2. The *tianmo* (天魔) is commonly used as *tianzimo* (天子魔) in Buddhism that means it has a strong attachment to worldly happiness yet has feelings of hatred and jealousy towards all sages and the state of nirvana, that is, they frequently disturb any religious activities. Even in Taoism, it is viewed as a *cidhōr* (𑖅𑖀𑖄𑖅) which resides in the Heaven, of which term is *tianzimo* (天子魔) or *tianmo* (天魔). The demon in Heaven is a member of the quartet of demons, which is alternatively referred to as the Lord of Heaven, Karma Demon¹⁰, due to its manifestation as a consequence of karma from a previous life. In antiquated cultural concepts, the demons were employed as symbolic representations of several malevolent entities. Many people hold the belief that the demons in the Heaven are responsible for causing illness, calamity, and adversity. To counteract their malevolent impact, people engage in various rituals, including prayers and exorcisms.
3. Being a translation of the *tianmo* (天魔), the Mongolian word *šimnu* (ᠰᠢᠮᠨᠠ) expresses an unusual, mystical, repulsive being that inflicts evil upon both people and animals, according to the “Moᠩᠶ᠋ᠣᠯ ᠤᠰᠡᠭ-ᠦᠨ ᠶᠢᠵᠠᠶᠤᠨ ᠲᠣᠯᠢ” (Сэцэнцогт, 1988:1602). In Buddhist and Taoist philosophy, however, *šimnu* (ᠰᠢᠮᠨᠠ) (or ‘sky demon’) is viewed to be the same concept, as a representation of temptation and allure that symbolize many expressions of avarice, envy and wrath as well as seven emotions and six allures within the human heart and are obstacles and challenges that must be overcome through the power of meditation. In broad terms, the word ‘demon’ often denotes a malevolent entity and influence, or an inward inclination towards allures, avarice, or temptation.

⁹ 摩罗是什么意思_摩罗的拼音读音、繁体、翻译、造句、近义词和反义词 - 在线汉语词典 (tqzw.net.cn)

¹⁰ 天子魔_百度百科 (baidu.com)

8.2. On the term “*dagini* (ᠳᠠᠭᠢᠨᠢ)”

The authors briefly stated a proposal to translate the *tianmo* (天魔) in the name “十六天魔舞蹈” as *dagini* (ᠳᠠᠭᠢᠨᠢ) in the section of hypothesis of this article. By tracing the origin of the dance and examining the lyrics of the poems, it can be said that the dance is closely connected to a religious ritual, particularly the Black Sect of Buddhism. This proposal can also be developed by either the founder, movement, music of the dance, or the appearance, attire, instruments of the dancers, for instance, not only a headdress with a depiction of Buddha, a cloud-shaped shoulder-strap with golden plaits, a luxurious garment with voluminous sleeves, a pair of silk slippers with embroidered with flowers but also a skull symbolising the teachings of dharma or a bell and musical instruments: the dragon horn (龙笛), head tube (头管), snare drum (小鼓), zither (箏), zhen (藁(zhēn)), lute (or pipa (琵琶)), indocalamus pipe / or reedpipe (笙), huqin (胡琴), castanets (响板) and danginagch (拍(pāi) or 板(bǎn)) which might have been influenced by the Mongolian culture.

In general, Buddhism teaches a fundamental principle “Beings in six paths” which is followed by the concept that “all beings have their own mothers” or “there is no being that does not undergo the cycle of life or samsara as either a mother or a baby. Furthermore, Buddhism has a deep reverence for women in their role as mothers. Certain sects of Buddhism have sought to elucidate this concept via their religious rituals and artistic expressions, one of which is the dance known as “十六天魔舞蹈” focused in this article. According to this Buddhist concept and the third definition in the previous subsection *On the term tianmo* 天(魔), it is obvious that the Mongolians do not conceive the literal translation of the *tianmo* (天魔) in the name as *čidhōr* (ᠴᠢᠳᠬᠣᠷ) or *šimnu* (ᠰᠢᠮᠨᠤ). Consequently, there are definitions of the term *dagini* (ᠳᠠᠭᠢᠨᠢ) investigated from the following dictionaries like:

1. A Mongolian dictionary provides the meanings for the term *dagini* (ᠳᠠᠭᠢᠨᠢ) as a translation of *tianmo* (天魔) from the Chinese sources: a) an extraordinary enchantress in stories, also known as a sky dancer or a heavenly fairy; b) an anthropophagous sorceress; c) a supernatural power; d) a maiden of exceptional attractiveness (Норжин Ц & Мөрөн М, 1999:2510)
2. The “Explanatory Dictionary of the Mongolian Language” defines the term like: a) a maiden who possesses both magical powers and physical beauty, as depicted in fairy tales, legends, and epics; b) a ethereal celestial maiden with an ethereal quality (The Institute of Language and Literature, 2016).

Etymologically, this word *dagini* (ᠳᠠᠭᠢᠨᠢ), used as the term in this article, is borrowed into Mongolian by Tibetan from the Sanskrit origin *dakini*.

According to R.E. Buswell, “...the term *dākinī* derives from the Sanskrit root, *dai*, meaning ‘to fly’. The *dākinī* thus described is often understood as able to move freely through the space of reality, the Dharmadhatu” (Robert E. Buswell, 2004:192). And he added “In Tibet, *dākinī* can refer either to a living woman Buddhist teacher or to a spirit of ambivalent nature. Regarding the latter type, the idea has persisted that *dākinī* s are attracted by Buddhist practitioners, drawn in swarms to powerful meditators” (Robert E. Buswell, 2004:192).

In the “Explanatory Dictionary of Buddhism and its cultures”, the *dakini* (ᠳᠠᠬᠢᠨᠢ) in Tibetan) is the word which literally means ‘a sky goer who travels by billowy clouds or a traveller in the space’, but religiously means ‘an ethereal being who diligently safeguards sacred texts or teachings’ (Чоймаа Ш et al., 2015).

However, in order to provide a precise and conclusive elucidation for the term *dagini* (ᠳᠠᠭᠢᠨᠢ), it is necessary to discuss the origin and content of the dance at first, as well as meanings of the term *dagini* (ᠳᠠᠭᠢᠨᠢ) at second, here. Generally, this dance is a religious ritual - a ritual of Tantric Buddhism specifically, and is associated with Yese Tsoygel who was given by the Emperor, Trisong Detsen to the Tantric Guru, Padma Sambhava (also known as Lovon Badamjunnai) who spread Tantric Buddhism to Tibet, as one of his two supreme consorts.

Firstly, the origin and content of the dance, which can be traced back to the Zhang An’ Palace during the Tang Dynasty (王景志.2009:285), has thoroughly been scrutinised by scholars in several research articles and in sections of books or monographs.

Wang Ting effectively denied a view in his article that the origin of this dance is related to an allure of the beautiful demon girls, by analysing a number of historical sources and facts traced back from the 13th century to the Qing Dynasty, but submitted a proposal that the origin of this dance was based on the myth “Buddha and Bodhisattva” that is characterised by two distinct aspects: “the Daoist Way” which represents the resistance to temptation, and “the Exquisite Beauty” which represents the allure of temptation, and incorporates both the ancient civilization of Asia and the contemporary Tibetan religion Usi (董锡玖, 2010:79).

On contrary, Li Guotao proved that “this dance is associated with the esoteric practices of the Tibetan Black Sect of Buddhism” (黎国韬, 2010) and Dong Xijiu asserts that “the vibrant skirts and feather robes of the Tang Dynasty symbolise Taoist Immortal Thought” (董锡玖, 2010). Feng Shuangbai, Wang Ningning and Liu Xiaozhen said that “the dance was commonly performed during Buddhist rituals ... , and had a strong connection to a Tantric ritual” (Фөн Ш्यानбай et al., 2022:319, 322). Xiao-Li Hu assumed that the name “the sixteen sky

dancers” can refer to as the “Sixteen Offering Goddesses”¹¹ or is possible to include “Eight Goddesses of the eight Auspicious Symbols”¹², “Eight Goddesses of Endless knot”¹³, “Eight Offering Goddesses”¹⁴ in Buddhism (Hu Xiao Li, 2022:55).

The scholars stated above have assumed and proposed various different explanations regarding the origin of the dance, but concur that it is associated with Buddhism. However, they have not specified the particular sect with which the dance is associated, excluding Li Guotao’s proposal that this dance is associated with the tantric rituals of the Black Sect of (Tibetan) Buddhism.

The aforementioned studies strongly support our proposal submitted through this article, preferring the *dagini* (ལྷ་མོ) rather than the *šimnu* (ལྷ་མོ) for the translation of the term *tianmo* (天魔) in the name “十六天魔舞蹈”.

Secondly, the meanings of this *dagini* (ལྷ་མོ) are another key to prove the proposal.

Judging from “the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism” definitely illustrates that “Initially it seems that the term was used to refer to human women who gathered around sacred sites and rituals. Portrayed as typically low caste - prostitutes, washerwomen, and the like - these women would serve as consorts for the male tantric practitioners. These socially liminal women were held to have a mysterious and dangerous power, and before long *dākinīs* were cast as enlightened beings in their own right” (Robert E. Buswell, 2004:192), this *dagini* (ལྷ་མོ) referred to as *dakini* (མཁའ་འགྲོ་མོ) has contradictory meanings just like the concept that everything has two sides: yin and yang, advantage and disadvantage, similarity and dissimilarity, positivity and negativity, etc.

Like in other languages, the word *dakini* (མཁའ་འགྲོ་མོ) in Tibetan might be a conronym. It can also be demonstrated by the following two sentences “Tibetans further distinguish two kinds of *dākinīs*: gnostic (*ye shes*) and flesh-eating (*sha za*), also called ‘otherworldly’ and ‘worldly’—the former being helpful for one’s progress along the Buddhist Path, and the latter harmful. For followers of the Rnying ma (nyingma) school, this role has placed *dākinīs* at the center of the ‘treasure’ (*gter ma*) revelation process” (Robert E. Buswell, 2004:192).

After doing an etymological analysis on the word *dagini* (ལྷ་མོ) in Mongolian from the *dakini* (མཁའ་འགྲོ་མོ) in Tibetan as a potential translation of the term *tianmo* (天魔) in the name “十六天魔舞蹈”, it becomes an evidence that it refers to the physical or mental aspects of the word *dagini*.

Physically, the *dagini* (or *dakini*) is defined that “a maiden who possesses both magical powers and physical beauty, as depicted in fairy tales, legends, and epics; from which it has some figurative meanings: a) ‘*tengeriin dagini*’ - a ethereal celestial maiden with an ethereal quality; b) ‘*lusiin dagini*’ - a daughter of the Lord of Water and a symbol of an exquisite beautiful young lady; c) ‘*zurkh setgeliin dagini*’ - a young lady or maiden who attracts someone’s heart like a magnet, and from which it has an archaic that it is ‘*ehe dagini*’ - an honorific title given to the Consort of the Bogda” in the Mongolian explanatory dictionary (The Institute of Language and Literature, 2016)¹⁵. Therefore, all the aforementioned definitions constitute an articulation of aesthetic appeal. Mentally, the *dagini* is defined that “the *dagini* sees all men as her Gurus; it is the sexual metaphor describing her lack of discrimination and her willingness to unite with all men that gives her a reputation for promiscuity” and “In so far as Tantra takes sexual processes as analogous to spiritual processes and relates sexual principles to mystical principles, if the essential nature of woman’s anatomy and of her sexual response is receptivity, then receptivity can define the female principle. Receptivity is a condition of awareness of empty form” (Keith Dowman, 1996:307).

According to Tantric philosophy, the Gurus selflessly dedicated their bodies and hearts to all beings in six paths as an act of their virtue and service which is expressed in the following passages:

“... I appeared as sons or daughters, bringing them happiness; to men desiring women I appeared as attractive girls, bringing them happiness; to women desiring husbands I appeared as handsome men, bringing them happiness; to those who wished to perform miracles I granted the eight great siddhis, bringing them happiness; to those afflicted by disease I appeared as medicine, bringing them happiness; to those afflicted by anxiety and frustration I appeared as their inner needs, bringing them happiness; those tormented by the law I brought back into the land of harmony and loving fellowship, bringing them happiness; to those paralysed by fear of wild beasts and spectres I appeared as the various deterrents of their persecutors, bringing them happiness; ...” (Keith Dowman, 1996:196).

¹¹ https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Sixteen_offering_goddesses

¹² https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Eight_auspicious_goddesses

¹³ One of the Eight Goddesses that is holding the Endless knot. https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Eight_auspicious_goddesses

¹⁴ The Eight Female Bodhisattvas who are the consorts of the Great Bodhisattvas or Gurus. https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Eight_offering_goddesses

¹⁵ <https://mongoltoi.mn/dictionary/detail/30144>

In addition to them, “a bodhisattva (or ‘Guru’) dedicates his or her existence throughout all rebirths to the attainment of enlightenment in order to liberate other beings who are suffering in samsara” in the Mahayana tradition¹⁶.

Based on these facts, it must be inferred that the Emperor’s engagement with the dance and its attractive dancers, notably their exceptional and extraordinary beauty, did not result in his withdrawal from the state and political affairs. Instead, it is likely that he was drawn to and embraced Buddhism, specifically the Black Sect of Buddhism.

Finally, this article concludes with a reference from Keith Dowman that “The language Tsogyel uses to describe the mechanics of her initiation is called ‘twilight language’ or ‘intentional language’. We do not know whether Tsogyel and her Guru are engaged in actual sexual dance and consummation or whether the sexual content is metaphor describing the symbiosis of polarised spiritual qualities and a subsequent blissful catharsis and inner transformation” (Keith Dowman, 1996:307).

Therefore, this article discusses the term *tianmo* (天魔) in the “十六天魔舞蹈 (which should be rendered as ‘Arvan zurgaan Tengeriin Daginiin büjig’ in Mongolian and ‘the Dance of Sixteen Dakinis’ in English¹⁷) and serves as a significant and substantial subject waiting for more studies from different points of view, in further.

9. Conclusion

This article focuses on the term *tianmo* (天魔) in the name “十六天魔舞蹈” and proposed a potential version of translation *dagini* (ᠳᠠᠭᠢᠨᠢ) into Mongolian, tying with some peripheral studies on history and religion to the article. Based on the study some relevant historical sources, linguistic facts and religious concepts, the article concludes as the following:

- Based on the relevant historical sources or facts, it can be viewed that this dance was rediscovered in the Palace in the period of the Yuan Dynasty, definitely in the year of 1354, as a significant performance. So, when choreographing the dance for the Mongolian Emperor and others, it is quite possible to include not only cultural also religious characteristics particularly the Tantric rituals at that time.
- Regarding the translation of the term *tianmo* (天魔) in the name “十六天魔舞蹈”, it is important to note that the *šimnu* (ᠰᠢᠮᠨᠤ) is solely linked to a negative meaning, while the *dagini* (ᠳᠠᠭᠢᠨᠢ) generally has good connotation, but it can occasionally have negative overtones as well.

Therefore, the term *dagini* (ᠳᠠᠭᠢᠨᠢ) is a quite potential translation of the term *tianmo* (天魔) into Mongolian because it accurately represents the Tantric rituals in the Black Sect of Buddhism which reject any temptation from the exquisite beauty.

Thus, when translated as the *šimnu* (ᠰᠢᠮᠨᠤ), the dance is classified as a type of ‘regular dances’ that symbolised both temptation and allure on the one hand. When viewed as *dagini* (ᠳᠠᠭᠢᠨᠢ), the dance can be considered a kind of the Tantric rituals, on the other hand.

- Based on the Tantric rituals in the Black Sect of Buddhism and a potential translation as the *dagini* (ᠳᠠᠭᠢᠨᠢ), it can be inferred that this dance was not merely responsible for the downfall of the Yuan Dynasty. However, it is likely that the Emperor Togoontumur adhered to the Black Sect of Buddhism.

To put it differently, the Emperor might have attempted to liberate himself from suffering and cycle of rebirth in the real world, known as samsara. Engaging in the Tantric rituals, this dance was a means for him to achieve Enlightenment. As a result, it is highly improbable to precisely ascertain his culpability for the downfall of the Yuan Dynasty only caused by a lot of his enjoyment from the exquisite dancers and his allure for them during the splendid dance held at the Palace.

10. References

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¹⁷ Incidentally, there can be some alternative translations of the *dagini* (ᠳᠠᠭᠢᠨᠢ) into English: the first is ‘Sky Dancer’ which is commonly found in many relevant English books such as (Robert E. Buswell, 2004) and (Keith Dowman, 1996); the second is ‘(Heavenly) Fairy’ which is a literal translation and is used in Chinese folklore and mythology, ‘the Seven Fairies’; and the third is ‘Heaven Maiden’ which is found in the translation of a Korean folktale ‘The Heavenly Maiden and the Woodcutter’, etc. Even though these English versions typically convey the meaning of the *dagini* (ᠳᠠᠭᠢᠨᠢ) to some extent, they cannot be absolutely precise and accurate for the Tibetan origin borrowed from the Sanskrit.

Thus, we suggest using the term *dakini* as its transliteration for keeping the Tantric rituals of Buddhism. That means there is no need to translate every word or term of other languages - one of which is the *dagini* (ᠳᠠᠭᠢᠨᠢ) into English in order to prevent any isolation from their original concept - the Tantric rituals.

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