

## EARLY MONGOLIAN BUDDHISM AND RECORDS ON CHINESE SOURCES

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It is very nice to meet Shanghai and Shandong University scholars and professors on this conference and as Head of the Department of Religion Studies of NUM, *I would like to express my gratitude for all delegates from China, all organizers and participants of the conference.*

In spite of the limitations of the historical resources available to us, we try to analyze the first spread of Buddhism among ancient Mongolians. The Huns of Mongol origin used to pasturing around the Bor tolgoi (Brown Hill), near the Ordos lands in the valley of Yellow river and afterward they settled near the valley of Orkhon, Ongi and Tuul river during the Tumen Zasagt khan's reign. During Tang Dynasty (a late Neolithic culture in China 3000 BC) period Chinese people called them "Hsiung-nu", Zhou Dynasty (2127-247 BC) time they called "Xīōngnǚ", Qin Dynasty (246-206 BC) Huns were being called Xiongnu and researchers' give information about Chinese sources mentioned them in more detailed clarified terms such as 'Hu', 'Hun', 'Hunnu'<sup>141</sup>.

Even though the current discovered archeological items belong to the Xiong-nu history gives us crucial information, Chinese historical scriptures still playing a great role in the research field of Xiongnu study. Our historians valued that a famous Russian Sinologist N.Ya. Bichurin has studied through enormous amount of resource material about Chinese political history, encyclopedia and published an important Records about Central Asian nations in Russian language, which was made a huge contributions toward the Xiong-nu study<sup>142</sup>. Later on many research scholars from various countries are submitting new reports to the Xiong-nu study.

Due to limited knowledge of Chinese language of our present Mongolian Buddhist researchers, we have very rare opportunity to study Chinese resource materials.

Hence our most important aim of the article is to highlighting acknowledged Chinese manuscripts for us connected with the first spread Buddhism in Mongolia or the Buddhist historical accounts linked with Xiong-nu period and which resource materials should be studied for clarifying the vague issues on the early introduction of Buddhism into Mongolia.

It is a very clear that Buddhism first spread into Mongolia during Xiong-nu period, but there are some disputable research issues existing on the extension of Buddhism in Xiong-ni state. For example:

First: According to Mongolian historical source, Buddhism was spread into ancient Xiong-nu state through Li land, therefore it is very necessary to define where its' present territory. (Is it Han Dynasty's capital Loyang or North, Later and South Liang land etc..?)

Second: Researchers have to identify a three meter high Golden men statue belong to either Buddhism or another religion. (*Chinese murals in Dunhuang portrays Emperor Wu of*

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<sup>141</sup> Researcher M.Dalaikhuu

<sup>142</sup> Собрание сведений о народах, обитавших в Средней Азии в древние времена, Собрание сведений по исторической географии Восточной и Средней Азии

*Han* (r. 141–87 BCE) worshiping statues of a golden man; "golden men brought in 120 BCE by a great Han general in his campaigns against the nomads")

Third: How religion influenced on the trade, economical and cultural relation between Xiong-nu and Chinese Han dynasty? We have focused on the above issues and prepared our paper for the symposium.

First part: Research scholars of various countries express their ideas about there was a mutual link between India and Central Asia in the end of 3 century BCE. King Ashoka of Mauryan Empire (206-231 BC) made a crucial effort to propagate Buddhism into other Asian countries and from 259 BC he was start sending Buddhist missionaries to transmitting Buddhist teachings into Kashmir, Gandhahar and Bactria. Thus Buddhism was start spreading into Afghanistan, Persia and East, West Turkestan in the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.

Our historians mentioned that Buddhism spread through various destinations of Central Asian Sartuul (Turkestan), China and Tibet into Xiong-nu ancestors of Mongolians in their works. Scholars are illustrating Xiong-nu's territory was very vast and it reached into Khotan of Eastern Turkestan, therefore they are should not keep out from wide Buddhist transmission circle in Central Asia.

According to study of Academician D.Tserensodnom<sup>143</sup>, the most of historical scriptures of Mongolian Buddhism such as "the History of Buddhism originated in India, China, Tibet and Mongolia" written by Sumbe Khanbo Ishbaljor, "Mongolian Buddhist chronicles" by Darmadala, Tsembe Guush, "Lamp of Wisdom" by Lhundev Bandida, "Cristal mirror" of Jamdaldorj, all of those woks accounts of the first spread of Buddhism into Mongolia from Chinggis Khaan's period. In spite of the above idea, Zava Damdin Gabju has different point of view on early propagation of Buddhism into Mongolia, he has mentioned the starting point of Mongolian Buddhist history should be accounted from Xiong-nu period and revealed it in his work "History of Mongolian Buddhism" and its' commentary "The Golden Book". The Author has proved his idea with reference of "Prul kyi melon" (Mirror of Lock) and revealed sayings of Chinese people such as "they used to tell that there are many foundations and lands of Mongolian monasteries" during Han dynasty period (206-220 BC).

Zava Damdin Gabju indicated that there is no doubt of Buddhism first spread into Mongolia before its' transmission into China and Tibet in "the History of Mongolian Buddhism" and its' commentary "The Golden Book".

A Historian A.Amar said: "At first Huns believed in Shaman and they worshiped spirits of father sky and mother earth, sun and moon, but later on they had converted into Buddhism and established many Buddhist temples in the southern part of Ordos land, valley of Yellow river. When Han dynasty soldiers found Buddha statue worshiped by Huns, they also converted into Buddhism, from this evidence Huns were Buddhists" <sup>144</sup>.

Academician Sh. Bira has revealed that Li Land is Khotan and expressed his opinion in his monograph called "Analyses of 'The Golden Book' by Sh. Damdin". Academician D.Tserensodnom has also indicated that blessed virtues pure Li Land is situated in the valleys of Yellow river, in the Ordos loop. He suggested that, if researchers would like to locate the position of Li Land should carefully study through manuscripts such as "The revealed sutra of Ox Mountain", "The revealed sutra of Li Land" and "Pure Goddesses' revealed sutra".

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<sup>143</sup> D.Tserensodnom A short records of Li country which was existed during the First spread of Buddhism in Mongolia, Lamas' Journal, №3

<sup>144</sup> D.Tserensodnom "Mongolian Buddhist Literature" УБ., 1997, x.59

Thus our study requires for clarifying significances of the history of Buddhist transmission into the subjected lands to the Hun state need to be study Chinese and Tibetan resources, which are belong to the particular time.

Second Part: Mongolian Buddhist historical records mentioned that when Chinese Han Dynasty soldiers found the Golden Sakhya Muni statue from Xiong-nu state, they converted into Buddhism and the Buddhist teaching spread into China.

Xiong-nu's three meter high 'Golden Statue' mentioned in the Chinese historical scriptures, on the basis of that sources Doctor. G.Sukhbaatar<sup>145</sup> has described the statue as following; in 121 BC Chinese General Huo Qubing attacked a Xiong-nu tribe and captured a Golden statue which they used it for worshiping sky, Emperor Wu di of Han dynasty (140-87 BC) placed it in his palaces not performing rituals for it but praying and burning incense for it.

Ancient Chinese interpreter Chyan Yan (Чжан Янь 3 century AD) and Yan Shigu (581-654) illustrated it as Buddha's statue<sup>146</sup>. Basis on the "Book of Wei Shou", Mongolian scholars such as Zava Damdin, Sumbe Khanbo and Gun Gombojav are described the statue is Buddhas<sup>147</sup>. Japanese researcher Nakai Sekitoku also disclosed it as Buddhas' statue. But there is no records of recognition of Buddhas' statue in Shiji and Hanshu scriptures.

Japanese researcher G. Siratori neglected ancient Chinese interpreters' opinions and suggested the statue was from Chinese origin<sup>148</sup>. Our famous historian G.Sukhbaatar considered his explanation, "only on the basis of "Shiji" and "Hanshu", if one think it is wrong record, it would be scientifically unproved fact. There is only records about the captured statue in "Shiji" and "Hanshu", but on the other hand there are lots of information about Xiong-nu state mentioned in the other sources, which is not existing in the above scriptures. There is also some possibilities that "Book of Wei Shou" and other records didn't inherited our period. Anti-Buddhist Tsui Hao Цуй Хао (361-450) considered it as Buddhas' statue<sup>149</sup>. He said that, If it is shamanistic spirits and deity, it should be worshiped, therefore it would be non-shamanistic deity".

Although Head of Medieval Mongolian History Department, Institute of History, Mongolian Academy of Sciences (Ph.D) A. Punsag has different ideas as following; The Description of "Shakya Muni's Golden Statue" is based on resources of "Grand scribes" by Sima Qian and "Book of Han", "Story of Emperor Wu" and "Scripture of Xiong-nu" written by Ban Gu (32-92) but indeed the statue was Xiong-nu's "Golden Men for Sky Ritual" should not be confused with "The Golden Buddha Statue"<sup>150</sup>.

Hence we should study Chinese resources carefully for clarifying some uncertain issues related with early spread of Buddhism during the Xiong-nu period.

Third Part: An inscription of bronze pot belong to the 11<sup>th</sup> century describes Chinese invaded Guifang tribes and captured their cow, sheep and chariots. Thus historians approved, from this ancient time Guifangs were nomads<sup>151</sup>.

Due to harsh climate and lack conditions of soil cultivation Xiong-nu unable to develop agriculture<sup>152</sup> and they considered unpredictable climatic changes, natural disasters and

<sup>145</sup> G.Sukhbaatar "A study of Ancient History of Mongolia" (I volume. Ancestors of Mongols UB. 2000)

<sup>146</sup> J.R.Ware, Wei Shou on Buddhism, TP, 1933, pp. 100-181, 110

<sup>147</sup> Sh.Bira "A Golden Chronicles by Sh.Damdin" UB 1964, x.32

<sup>148</sup> K.Shiratory. On the territory of hsiung-nu prince Hsiu-t'u Wang and his metal statues for heaven worship, - Memoires of the research department of Toyo Bunko. Tokyo, 1930, pp1-77, 34

<sup>149</sup> J.R.Ware, Wei Shou on Buddhism, TP, 1933, pp. 100-181, 109

<sup>150</sup> A.Punsag "Knight Khuden and Mongolian Buddhism" // Lamas' Journal, №3

<sup>151</sup> G.Sukhbaatar "A study of Ancient History of Mongolia"(I volume. Ancestors of Mongols, UB. 2000)

geographical conditions Mongols choose livestock breeding for their primary life source and they have developed their own significant technology, social-cultural aspects.

Ancient traditional relation between Chinese and Mongolians was collaboration between farming culture and livestock breeding culture and it was also alliance between sedentary people and nomadic people. A historical source tells us that nomads were always lack of products such as flour, rice, vegetables which were produced by sedentary people, other hand Chinese people needed horses and ox for their army supply and land cultivating from the nomads.

When Xiong-nu's trade with Han Dynasty they export livestock especially horse, livestock product, wool, leather, gold, silver, brass and other natural recourses. "Yan te lun" (View on Salt, Iron) a Chinese historical scripture describes about trade between Xiong-nu and Han dynasty in 80 BC<sup>153</sup>.

In 198 BC Han dynasty and Xiong-nu made agreement between two states, in that agreement Chinese Emperor declared that "people who are armed with arrow and bow and living in the north of the Great wall should follow Xiong-nu king's order, people who are living in the south of the White wall should accept my authority". Thus Xiong-nu and Han Dynasty established diplomatic relation between two states.

Through between Xiong-nu and Chinese political, trade and economical relations' there were also spiritual and cultural influences in the both nations. During Chinese Zhou Dynasty (11-13<sup>th</sup> century BC) period Chinese Emperor thought himself he has got order from Divine Heaven should control everything under sky, honored himself "Tian Zi" (the Son of Divine Heaven).

Mongolian and Turkic tribes also respect and believe that their Khaan's originated from "Divine Heaven". There are some similar religious aspects both in Mongolian and Chinese traditional beliefs related on worshipping "Celestial Heaven" power<sup>154 155</sup>.

When Buddhism spread into Asian nations Buddhism has adapted local custom, culture and traditional beliefs and made its own significant aspects. Thus some researchers suggested a special term for the Mongolian Buddhism: "Buddhism adjusted in the northern Mongolian steppes." However Mongolian Buddhism, the western part of Central Asian (Khotan) Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism is belong to the Mahayana tradition but indeed Mongolian Buddhism has its own distinguishing significance from the above Buddhist traditions. Our future study requires the collaboration with Chinese Buddhist research scholars to signify those distinguishing features of Mongolian Buddhism from the other Buddhist tradition.

Fourth Part: Zava Damdin Gabju explained the historical accounts related on the first spread of Buddhism in Mongolia from Xiong-nu state (3-2BC) to Great Mongolian Empire (1206-1270 AD). According to Mongolian historical sources, the main religious activities during Xiong-nu period were praying for well being, succeeding in the war, removing obstacles ones' life, free from natural disasters. Their main object of the worship was "A Golden Statue", as I mentioned before.

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<sup>152</sup> С.И.Руденко, Культура населения Центрального Алтая в скифское время, М-Л., 1960, стр. 112

<sup>153</sup> Ying Shi. Yu, Trade and expansion in Han China. A Study in the structure of sino-.barbarian economic relations, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1967, x.12

<sup>154</sup> Liu Mau-tsai. Die chinesischen Nachrichten zur Geschichte der Ost-Turken, Buch I, II. Weisbaden 1958, p.752

<sup>155</sup> Ying Shi. Yu, Trade and expansion in Han China. A Study in the structure of sino-.barbarian economic relations, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1967, x.382

Xiong-nu state was succeeded by the state of Hsien-pi of Mongol origin. Mujung (282-333 AD), head of Hsien-pi state was adherent of Buddhism. Historical sources mentioned that Mujung's descendents supported the dissemination of Buddhism and promoted its' teaching.

The rulers of the pre-Mongol states such as Jujan (4-6<sup>th</sup> century), Turkish states (6-8<sup>th</sup> century), Uighur (8-9<sup>th</sup> century) and Kitan (9-11<sup>th</sup> century) received Buddhist scholar monks and built temples for them.

During the Turkish state (573-581AD) king Tabo accepted Buddhism, built Buddhist temples and sent an envoy to the Northern Qi Dynasty (550-577AD), asking for such sutras as "Vimalakirti nirveda", "Nirvana sutra", "Avatamsaka sutra" and "Sarva-stivada vinaya".

Li Shihching of Northern Qi Dynasty, who knew 4 languages, translated the "Nirvana sutra" into Turkish language by the decree of the sovereign to be sent to the Tabo King.

Historical scriptures mentioned that Jinagupta, together with his 11 colleagues from the Qi Dynasty stayed in the Turkish Mongolian state and translated many Mahayana sutras into local languages.

We hope that our academic and research cooperation will flourish in the future. I would like to express my best wishes for all participants of the symposium.

#### **НОМ ЗҮЙ**

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