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## THE MARVELLOUS LAMA IN MONGOLIA: THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF A CULTURAL BORROWING

CHRISTOPHER ATWOOD (Bloomington)

The early modern period in Mongolia—from the late sixteenth century to the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912—began with two overlapping trends.\* The first was the “second conversion” of the Mongols to Tibetan-rite<sup>1</sup> Buddhism, which followed the thirteenth–fourteenth century conversion and subsequent apostasy, while the second was the gradual extension of Manchu Qing sway over all of Mongolia. From 1586 on, Buddhism rapidly became the religion, at least nominally, of all the Mongols and exercised a profound effect on their philosophical, literary and artistic, as well as religious life. The extension of Manchu rule over Mongolia, however, at first had few intellectual or cultural consequences; the early Manchu elite tried very hard to assimilate elements of Mongolian culture and to present themselves to the Mongols as not fundamentally different from them. After the Manchus conquered China and migrated in large numbers to metropolises like Beijing, Hangzhou, and Xi’an, though, their civilization began a process of acculturation to the Chinese norm that culminated, by the twentieth century, in the essentially complete extinction of Manchu culture. As many Mongols had joined the Manchus in the garrison banners in China, and many throughout Mongolia were knowledgeable in Manchu (far more than in Chinese), this Manchu acculturation resulted in the growth in Mongolia of an alternative culture to that of the Tibetan dominated Yellow Church (*sira šasin*). The intellectual history of early modern Mongolia, then, consists in the growth, elaboration, and eventual conflict of these two competing world views: the Tibetan Buddhist one and the secular Sino-Manchu one.

\* I would like to thank Robert Campany and György Kara for reading drafts of this paper and giving many valuable criticisms and suggestions.

<sup>1</sup> I use this term to distinguish the mixed Mahayana-Vajrayana Buddhist tradition based on the Tibetan-language scriptures and commentaries found in Inner Asia, from the likewise doctrinally mixed Buddhist tradition based on Chinese-language ones found in East Asia. Contrary to common belief, these two great traditions are little different in formal doctrines, which makes it inadequate to characterize one as Vajrayana or Tantric and the other as purely Mahayana. Both in turn contrast to the Pali-rite, doctrinally Theravada, Buddhism of Southeast Asia.

One curious illustration of this dual tradition lies ironically in the literature found in Mongolia about a purely Chinese subject, the Tang monk, Xuanzang. The story of this Chinese scripture seeker was known in Mongolia from at least the early seventeenth century on. The Chinese version of this story, however, came in not one but two versions: the historically accurate one, being based on the account of the journey published by Xuanzang himself (*Datang xiyu ji* or “Record of the Western Regions during the Great Tang Dynasty”), as well as a biography by his disciples Huili and Yancong (*Da Ci'en Si Sanzang fashi zhuan* or “Biography of the Master of the Law, Tripitaka, of the Great Temple of Motherly Love”), while the other was a version that had circulated as a magical narrative of the monks’ trials and culminated during the Ming dynasty in the *Xi you ji* (literally “Record of a Journey to the West”, but henceforth called *The Journey to the West* following the title of the English translation). This novel used the story of scripture seeking as a vehicle for a profound reflection on the path of self-cultivation, and the nature of emptiness. Notably, in view of the fact that the historical Xuanzang was a Buddhist monk, and had several times come into conflict with Daoist priests, for whom he had scant respect,<sup>2</sup> the author of *The Journey to the West* merged Daoist, Buddhist, and Confucian concepts to form what may be considered a charter for the kind of syncretic religion widespread in China at the time. The difference of the novelistic version from the historical version thus goes far beyond merely adding magical and, to a rationalist mind, impossible events, but lies most essentially in the presence of a radically different way of looking at religious truth.

Both of these versions did circulate in Mongolia, and more importantly, the Mongols in general clearly understood the religious import of both the historical and the novelistic versions. In general, the historical version was favored by those writers and intellectuals who adhered to the world-view of Tibetan Buddhism. To them Xuanzang’s act of going to India to find the true scriptures, taking them back to China, translating them, and thus spreading “the” religion in his native China, recalled the arduous efforts of the great pioneers of Mongolian Buddhism, who likewise had to seek the true scriptures in a foreign land (here Tibet), translate them, and spread the faith. Thus, although Xuanzang was Chinese, his presence in history testified to the universality of Buddhism, as well as furnishing a model and example for the activities of the Mongolian Buddhist missionaries and translators.

Those Mongols, at first concentrated among the Mongolian banner garrisons in China, whose world-view was profoundly influenced by the

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Waley, *The Real Tripitaka and Other Pieces* (London: George Unwin and Allen, 1952), pp. 91–93.

Sino-Manchu culture adopted the novelistic version whose non-canonical and philosophical approach seemed more convincing to those dissatisfied by the prevailing orthodoxy. Later, in the second half of the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth century, the Mongolian translation of the novel spread so widely that it largely replaced the historical version as the main version of the story of Xuanzang. But while in most of Mongolia, this translation was read as only another sacred Buddhist text, in East Mongolia (modern Kingyan, Juu Uda, and Jirim ayimays), with its still vigorous oral and pagan culture, the syncretist world view of the novel was embodied in literature which, while not always based on the novel, adopted its characters, and its message of guardianship and salvation. In this sense the novel's spread was a mark of all those circles in Mongolia which were unconvinced of the universality of the Buddhist message.

### The Historical Xuanzang in Inner Asia, up to the Kangxi Reign

The earliest predecessor of the historical Xuanzang story in Mongolia, was the Old Turkish translation undertaken among the Uygur Kingdom of Qočo (Turpan), in the tenth century. The translation of Chinese texts into Uygur, including Sinqo Sali Tutun's tenth century translation of the biography of Xuanzang, was a common phenomenon, and a substantial amount of the vocabulary of Uygur Buddhism was borrowed from Chinese (thus *Molon* > *Mulian* > *Maudgalyāyana*; *Qomsim/Kuan ši im* > *Guanshiyin*; *Bišman/Višman* > *Bishaman* > *Vaiśravaṇa*, etc.).<sup>3</sup> The Uygurs of Turpan were the first teachers of the Mongols and formed the large majority of their scribes possibly into the sixteenth century. Even some of the famous fourteenth century translators from Tibetan into Mongolian were ethnically Uygurs. Thus virtually all the Uygur Buddhist terminology, as well as many formulas (including all the Chinese derived terminology above), were then passed on from them to the Mongols. However the Uygur translation of Xuanzang's biography, the *Da Ci'en Si Sanzang fashi zhuan*, does not seem to have achieved great

<sup>3</sup> See Hans-J. Klimkeit, "Buddhism in Turkish Central Asia," *Numen* Vol. 37 (June, 1990), fasc. 1, pp. 61–64. On the translator see Peter Zieme, "Šinqu Sali Tutung — Übersetzer Buddhistischer Schriften in uigurische," in Walther Heissig, ed., *Tractata Altaica* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1976), pp. 767–775 and Robert Finch, "The Sri Parivarta' (Chapters XVI and XVII from Šinqu Sali's Uighur translation of I-tsing's version of the *Suvarṇaprabhasottama-sūtra*)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1976). The most extensive bibliography of Old Uygur philology is in Klaus Röhrborn, *Uigurisches Wörterbuch: Sprachmaterial der vorislamischen türkischen Texte aus Zentralasien* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1977), pp. 17–28, while the Klimkeit article also has a useful, more current, bibliography.

popularity and it is unknown whether it served as a direct textual source for the Xuanzang story in Mongolia.<sup>4</sup>

Another source which the Mongols more certainly drew on was the Tibetan histories of Buddhism. During the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), Tibetan monks travelled throughout China and began to acquire an interest in Chinese history. Several selections from Chinese historical works were translated into Tibetan and these works were collected and edited by Rin-chen Grags-pa in 1325. These works concentrated on political history, and especially on China's relations with Tibet, but also contained occasional notes on Chinese Buddhist luminaries. These notes on Chinese history were copied into later histories such as the *Deb-ther dmar-po* ("The Red Annals", 1346) and the *Deb-ther sngon-po* ("The Blue Annals") completed in 1478 by Gzhon-nupal.<sup>5</sup> The latter work includes Xuanzang, whom he calls Tang Sanzang ("Tang Tripitaka"), as one of the only three episodes it records about Chinese Buddhist history.<sup>6</sup> The other figures mentioned are Zhu Falan or Dharmaratna of the Han, and a sandalwood image of the Buddha imported in the Jin dynasty.<sup>7</sup> Thus, although the Tibetan scholars seem to have considered Tripitaka and Tang Taizong to be China's most important Buddhist priest and patron, respectively, the subject was clearly of no great interest to them.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The translation is reproduced in Huili, *Huihu wen pusa Datang Sanzang Fashi zhuan* (Beijing: 1951). There are many partial studies of this translations now available, including Annemarie von Gabain, "Die uigurische Übersetzung der Biographie Hülen-Tsangs. I. Bruchstücke des 5. Kapitels," *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philologische-historische Klasse*, 7 (1935), 151–180, and "Briefe der uigurischen Hülen-tsang Biographie." *SPAW, Ph.-Hi. Kl.*, 29 (1938), 371–415; Anthony Thomas Arlotto, "The Uighur text of Hsüan-Tsang's biography" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1966); L. Yu. Tugusheva, "Uygurskaya versiya biografiy Syuan' Tszana (fragmenty iz gl. X)," *Pis'mennyye pamyatniki vostoka: Istoriko-filologicheskoye issledovaniya*, 74 (1971), 253–296; Semih Tezcan, "Uygurca Hsüan tsang biyografisi. X. bölüm" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Ankara University, 1975); John Claver Toalster, "Die uigurische Xuan-Zang-Biographie. 4. Kapitel mit Übersetzung und Kommentar" (Ph.D. Dissertation Gießen, 1977). Kahar Barat, a Uygur student at Harvard University is preparing a complete annotated translation into English of this work (oral communication, 13 December, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> George N. Roerich, trans. and ed., *The Blue Annals* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1979), p. 47; Joseph Kolmaš, "Tibetan Sources" in Donald Leslie et al., eds, *Essays on the Sources for Chinese History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1975), pp. 132–133.

<sup>6</sup> Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, p. 55. The account of Chinese history takes up pages 47–60.

<sup>7</sup> Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, pp. 47–60.

<sup>8</sup> In the 1980s Tibetan monks at Sku-'bum made butter images for the Festival of Lights of, among many other things, the four scripture seekers of the novel *Journey to the West*. The style, though, seems to be clearly influenced by modern cartoon and television representations of the characters. See Li Zhiwu and Liu Lizhong, *Ta'er si/Gdan-*

By the early seventeenth century the Mongols too were certainly aware at least of the Chinese pilgrim's translation activities. One of the works in the Tibetan scriptures, the Bka'-'gyur (Mongolian Panjuur) was originally translated into Tibetan from Chinese, not Sanskrit, and the Mongolian colophon noted that the work was translated by the "incarnation of the Buddha, the Chinese (*nanggiyad*) interpreter named Tang Sanzang".<sup>9</sup> The figure of Tang Sanzang probably occupied a greater part of Mongolian thinking than this one colophon might suggest. Ligdan Qayan, the last emperor of the Latter Yuan Dynasty (1368–1634) adopted among his many sonorous titles, that of Tang Taizong, which presumably symbolized his role as the patron of the team of translators who completed the Mongolian Panjuur.<sup>10</sup> The Mongolian translators and their imperial patron presumably saw the activity of the Tang emperor and the incarnation of the Buddha, Tang Sanzang, as a prototype for their own translation and publication of the dharma. Thus although the story of Xuanzang is not directly mentioned, we may surmise that it was fairly well-known to the high Mongolian lamas of this period.

The other indication of pre-eighteenth century knowledge of the Xuanzang tale comes from the translation of his name used in the 1721 translation of the *Journey to the West* by Arana (on which, see below). Significantly, although all the other characters' names were simply transcribed from Chinese into Mongolian, the name of Xuanzang was always given as *Tangsuy Lama*, meaning "The Marvelous Lama", a distortion of his Chinese nickname, *Tang Seng*, or "The Tang Monk".<sup>11</sup> This distortion shows that Tripitaka had by the time of Kangxi become more than a bookish curiosity, and was already fairly

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*sa chen-mo Sku-'bum byams-pa-ling* (Beijing: Wenwu Publishing House), pls. 140 (caption), 157. On this festival and its butter statues at Sku-'bum monastery, see Thubten Jigme Norbu, with Heinrich Harrer, *Tibet is my Country* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1986), pp. 129–132.

<sup>9</sup> Louis Ligeti, *Catalogue du Kanjur Mongol Imprimé* (Budapest: Société Kőrösi Csoma, 1944), p. 294; F. A. Bischoff, *Der Kanjur und Seine Kolophone*, vol. 2 (Bloomington: Selbstverlag Press, 1968), p. 530.

<sup>10</sup> Ligeti, pp. 102, 109; Bischoff, pp. 193, 204–5. Also David M. Farquhar, "Emperor as Bodhisattva in the Governance of the Ch'ing Empire," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 38 (1978), pp. 5–34.

<sup>11</sup> This transformation is easily explainable by Mongolian phonetic laws. Since in colloquial pronunciation the second vowel of both *tangseng* and *tangsuy* would become -a-, an alteration in the written form can occur easily. In the word-final position, the alteration of -y and of -ng is also found in both loan-words and native Mongolian words, for example *bodisung*~*bodisuy*, "Bodhisattva," a loan-word (B. Ya. Vladimirtsov, *Sravnitel' naya grammatika mongol'skogo pis'mennogo yazyka khalkhaskogo narechiya: vvedeniya i fonetika* (Leningrad: Oriental Institute of Leningrad, 1929—reprinted Moscow: 'Nauka', 1989), p. 395) and *dabusang*~*dabusay*, "bladder", a native word (*BNMAU daxi mongol xelnii nutgiin ayalguiñ toli bičig*, vol. 1, *Xalx ayalgui*, A–W (Ulaanbaatar: Institute of Language and Literature, Academy of Sciences of the MPR, 1988), p. 99.

well-known figure. To this day Xuanzang is always known to the Mongols as the “Marvelous Lama”.

What version had the story of Xuanzang become so well known in? The fact that the Mongols called him “Tangsuy Lama”, a derivative of “Tang Seng”, and not “Tang Tripitaka” or a derivative thereof, as did the Tibetans, suggests the story was not transmitted through Tibetan histories. If the medium was the one-hundred chapter version of *The Journey to the West* or something similar, then the name might well represent a pun; *tangsuy* means not only “marvelous”, but also “tasty”, an appropriate name for a monk whom demons constantly threaten to eat. Moreover the name “Tangsuy Lama” later became closely associated with Xuanzang as found in the novel, while the lamas enamored of the great translator often preferred to call him “Tang Seng Heshang”, or “Tang Sanzang” (see below). Thus it is most likely the Mongols had already become familiar with the novelistic version.

By 1688, the one-hundred chapter version of the novel had been translated into Manchu, with the Chinese subtitle transcribed into Manchu, *Tang Siyang jiu jing* (i.e. *Tangseng qu jing*). So before the end of the eighteenth century, the novel was already known in the bannermen communities of China, with Xuanzang called Tangseng.<sup>12</sup> We may speculate that this Manchu translation played a large role in the entry of this novel into the Mongolian literary consciousness. If the novel version was so well known, however, it is hard to explain why there were not current nicknames for Monkey and the other pilgrims for Arana to use. They are certainly as prominent as Xuanzang in the novel, and in the nineteenth century acquired their own Mongolian names. Thus the question of the origin of the name “Tangsuy Lama” cannot be definitely decided yet.

### The Entry of *The Journey to the West* into Mongolia: Arana’s annotated translation of 1721

The first clear indication of knowledge of the novel *The Journey to the West* comes to Mongolia in the form of a full annotated translation of the one-hundred chapter text. As we have seen above the tale of the Marvellous Lama was probably already familiar in one form or another, and the Manchu translation must have made the task of adaption into Mongolian that much easier. It seems obvious, moreover, that detailed knowledge of the work,

<sup>12</sup> Martin Gimm, “The Manchu Translations of Chinese Novels and Short Stories — An Attempt at an Inventory,” in Claudine Salmon, ed., *Literary Migrations: Traditional Chinese Fiction in Asia (17–20th Centuries)* (Beijing: International Cultural Publishing Corporation, 1987), p. 183. The continuation of the *Xi you ji*, *Hou xi you ji*, was also translated into Manchu at some point (Gimm, pp. 156–7.)

while not necessarily widespread, must also have existed before then, in the bannerman circles that eventually gave rise to the annotated translation. The translator, a Mongolian bannerman named Arana (c. 1650–1724), wrote in his preface:

The old man Arana on the far frontier, official of the first grade in the all-yellow banner of the Great Qing dynasty, and a Assistant General and Senior Assistant Chamberlain of the Imperial Bodyguard (*dorgi amban*), began from the Chinese scripture on the auspicious two blue mouse days, in the beginning of the first month of spring, the white tiger month, of the sixtieth year of Kangxi, a female white ox year, and finished the Mongolian translation on the two female white rabbit days, in the beginning of the last month of summer, the female blue sheep month in the same year.<sup>13</sup>

In other words he completed the translation in a period of about five months from January 29–30 to June 25–26, of the year 1721. Now we may be sure that the task of translating this hundred chapter novel took a far longer time than that, especially when Arana tells us that the translation was undertaken during free moments while serving with the Qing's Barköl army in modern Xinjiang.<sup>14</sup> Arana must have been familiar with the novel, and most likely the Manchu translation as well, for years, or more likely decades, beforehand, and been preparing various draft translations long prior to the preparation of the final version in spring and summer of 1721.<sup>15</sup>

The Mongolian bannermen consisted of those Mongols who had been taken from their own Mongolian territorial banners and been enlisted in the military banners garrisoning China proper and Manchuria. These Mongolian bannermen preserved their mother-tongue at least through the eighteenth century, but also participated in the flourishing Chinese-language banner

<sup>13</sup> B. Gereltü, *Mongyol jokiyal'id—un sigümfi ögüel-üd 1721–1945*. (Höhhöt: Inner Mongolia Educational Publishing House, 1981), p. 23; E. Tümenjargal, "Tansan lamın baruun etgeeded jorčsonıg temdeglesen tüüx gedeg joxiolıg mongol xelnee orčuulsan ni," in C. Damdinsüren, ed., *Mongolin uran joxiolın toım*, vol. 3, *XIX juunı üye* (Ulaanbaatar: State Publishing House, 1968), pp. 209. The original 1791 blockprint version which Tümenjargal used and on which Gereltü based his anthologized version, has "the sixth year of Kangxi," which must be a mistake, as the sixth year is a female red sheep year, while only the sixtieth is the requisite female white ox year. Both critics emends the text accordingly, and I have followed their emendation. The "two days" refers to auspicious days which were doubled in the Mongolian calendar.

<sup>14</sup> Gereltü, p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> This translation is called the "first edition" in the discussion of Tümenjargal, pp. 200–210. Walther Heissig, *Geschichte der mongolischen Literatur*, vol. 1, *19. Jahrhunderts bis zur Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harassowitz, 1972), p. 271, claims that the translation was done by several Čaqars, a claim which is obviously mistaken. These Čaqars are either the sponsors and scribes for the printed edition of 1791 discussed below, or the translators of the second translation mentioned by Tümenjargal.



culture that produced, among other monuments, *The Story of the Stone*.<sup>16</sup> At the same time Beijing was also a major center of Tibetan-rite Buddhism and the Qing dynasty's Tibetan—Manchu—Mongolian—Chinese tetraglot publishing and translating activity. The Mongols living there thus became a major conduit of entry for elite Chinese culture into Mongolian life; out of sixty-two Mongolian poets writing in Chinese during the Qing, thirty-two certainly belonged to Mongolian garrison banners and seven to Manchu garrison banners, while three were probably bannermen. Only four came from the territorial banners of Mongolia itself.<sup>17</sup>

What little we know of Arana shows that he well exemplified this highly civilised hybrid culture. His family was originally of the Umi lineage in Čaqar. After Ligdan Qayan's defeat, Arana's grandfather Balayidur Mangnai surrendered to the Qing, and gradually achieved a high position. His son and Arana's father, Qadai, participated in the great Qing campaigns to conquer China, as well as in battles against Qalqa Mongolia and the pirates along China's eastern coast. He died in 1680 with the prestigious title of Senior Assistant Chamberlain of the Imperial Bodyguard; Arana took up his inherited ceremonial duties, at first as Junior Assistant Chamberlain of the Imperial Bodyguard, ten years later.<sup>18</sup>

From 1708 to 1720, he worked on several imperially-sponsored translation projects, such as the *Qorin niġetü tayilburi toli* ("Mongolian Dictionary in Twenty-One Parts"), a translation of a textbook of astronomy, and a reprinting of the Mongolian Bka'-gyur.<sup>19</sup> The language of his translation of *The Journey*

<sup>16</sup> See Jonathan D. Spence, *Ts'ao Yin and the K'ang-hsi Emperor: Bondservant and Master* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

<sup>17</sup> Wang Shupan and Sun Yuzhen, *Gudai Mengguzu hanwen shi xuan* (Höhhhot: Inner Mongolia People's Press, 1984), pp. 218–423; Bayannamur and B. Temürbaġan-a, *Dumdadu Ulus-un mongġol ġokiyalġi-yin namtar* (Höhhhot: Inner Mongolia People's Press, 1986), pp. 39–245.

<sup>18</sup> Ertai [Ortai], *Ba qī tongzhi* (Changchun: Northeast Normal University, 1985), vol. 6 (juan 170), pp. 4165–6; cf. Kanda Nobuo, *Hakki tsūshi retsuden sakuin* (Tokyo: Toyo Bunko Seminar on Manchu History, 1965), pp. 16a, 109b, 151b. The date of his succession to his father in the Table of Inheritances of this work (vol. 4 (juan 99), p. 2319) is erroneous, being actually the date when Arana's father, Qadai, succeeded his father, Balayidur Mangnai. On the Imperial Bodyguard see H. S. Brunnert and V. V. Hagelstrom (A. Beltchenko, trans.) *Present Day Political Organization of China* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1912), p. 26. Both Arana and his father also held the Manchu titles of *ġingġini hafan*, "upright official".

<sup>19</sup> Tūmenġargal, pp. 209–210; Rinčingawa, *Mongġol orčiyulġ-a-yin teūke-yin quri-yangġyui toyġimu* (Höhhhot: Inner Mongolia People's Publishing House, 1986), pp. 92–93; Inner Mongolian Institute for Mongolian Language, Literature and History, ed., *Qorin niġetü tayilburi toli* (Höhhhot: Inner Mongolia People's Publishing House, 1977), p. 1. This dictionary was augmented and partially published in Ulaanbaatar as *Fučin ġiryuyatu tayilburi toli*, *Corpus Scriptorum Mongolorum*, vol. 1 (Ulaanbaatar: 1961).

to the West shows his mastery not only of Chinese, but also of the Tibetan-influenced Mongolian then prevalent. From 1715 on, though, his participation in the work of these translations must have been more in name than in fact for he was campaigning with the Qing armies against Čéwangrabdan in the Kumul, Turpan, and Barköl areas. In the first year of Yongzheng (1723) he was promoted to the position of Lieutenant-General of the Mongolian Bordered Yellow Banner. He died at his post in the third moon (March 25–April 22) of 1724.<sup>20</sup>

In the preface to his translation, Arana identifies the text as an exercise in *upāya* (skillful means). He claims that as the novel's comedy and satire was of profound import it was the same as a Mahayana text:

Since, in my opinion, the allegorical and comic passages in this sutra, *The Journey to the West*, are all both profound and exact, they have the same nature as the Mahayana scriptures. Thus, hoping to perform some small contribution, like adding motes of dust to Mount Sumeru . . . I have translated this Chinese scripture (*sudur*) into Mongolian. If the wise now take a fancy to one word or another, and spread it far and wide to benefit all living beings, the merit thereof will be as large as the number of the sands in the Ganges river.<sup>21</sup>

This preface identifies the *Journey to the West* as a Buddhist scripture by a whole series of means. First he explicitly calls it a *sudur*, the Mongolian term for scripture, derived from Sanskrit *sūtra*, which he earlier used in the phrase “Mahayana scriptures” (*yeke kölgen-ü sudur*). The term *sudur* was used primarily for religious works of Buddhist inspiration; Confucian classics when translated into Mongolian were called “*nom*”, or “book”. The imagery of the adding motes to Mount Sumeru, and the merit being as large as the number of the sands in the Ganges, of course, is Buddhist, the latter being used in the Diamond Sūtra to describe the merit that come from spreading the Perfection of Wisdom message.<sup>22</sup> Even the language takes on a scriptural cast; the use of *üiledbesü* as a complement for a verb (*delgeregülün üiledbesü*, “spread far and wide”) is a calque from Tibetan commonly found in Mongolian translation of Buddhist scriptures from that language. Finally by referring to “Tangsuy” as a lama in the very title of the work the translator was implicitly asking Mongolian Buddhists to accept him as one of their own; later when writers wished to draw a line between Chinese and Mongolian Buddhism they would call Xuanzang a *quušang* (see below).

<sup>20</sup> Ertai, *Ba qi tongzhi*, vol. 6 (*juan* 170), p. 4166.

<sup>21</sup> Gereltü, pp. 22–23; Tümenjargal, p. 209.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Edward Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Texts: The Diamond and Heart Sutra* (London, George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1958), pp. 49–50. The Mongolian translation is published in Nicholas Poppe, *The Diamond Sutra: Three Mongolian Versions of the Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā: Texts, Translations and Notes* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1970), pp. 18, 105, 166 (Mongolian texts), and 56, 132, 191 (English translations).

Thus the reader of this preface might expect the text to bear the familiar message of saving living beings through the propagation of the Buddhist message found in the historical Tang Tripitaka story. Arana strengthens this impression by beginning his preface with two sentences that recall the justification given in the novel for the scripture seeking:

I recall that the Buddha, in his mercy, pitied all living beings, and preached the Mahayana scriptures (*yeke kölgen-ü sudur*) to liberate them from the three evil incarnations, and lead them out from this world. As these sutras of the Great Vehicle can carry anyone, they may certainly transport one beyond the sea of Samsara.<sup>23</sup>

In the novel the Buddha and Guanyin send monk Tripitaka to go to the West to find Great Vehicle scriptures precisely in order to save the damned from hell and lead them beyond this world.<sup>24</sup> By thus echoing this aim in his preface Arana implicitly equates the translating of the novel with Xuanzang's mission to India.

In his commentary on the individual chapters, however, Arana shows himself very responsive to the syncretistic message of the novel, and rather contemptuous of the organized religion of his day. In the commentary to the first chapter we see again the same idea that the allegorical profundity is comparable to that of the scripture:

Those readers of the scripture *Journey to the West* who do not understand its meaning will certainly consider it a comedy. . . . If you grasp its true meaning, however, it is more penetrating even than the whole Fanjuur.<sup>25</sup>

Whereas in the preface he claimed that, despite being a comedy, the work was profound, and hence the same as the scriptures, here he phrases the idea differently, and claims that only the unperceptive reader would take it as a comedy in the first place, and that properly understood, it is more penetrating, more salvific, even than the Fanjuur, the Tibetan Buddhist canon. He thus introduces the idea of exoteric and esoteric readings, as well as the hint that the novel may not be a conventional Buddhist text after all, but something yet more profound. Arana later stresses this necessity to read for the esoteric meaning, and elevates it to a general principle:

<sup>23</sup> Gereltü, p. 22; Tümenjargal, p. 209.

<sup>24</sup> Wu Cheng'en, *Xi you ji* (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1961), vol. 1, chapter 8, p. 80, and chapter 12, pp. 138–139; Anthony Yu, trans., *The Journey to the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977–1983), vol. 1, pp. 184, 276.

<sup>25</sup> Gereltü, p. 24. See also the Chinese translation of Arana's commentary in *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu gudai meixue sixiang ziliao chubian* (Chengdu: Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House, 1989), p. 98.

<sup>26</sup> Gereltü, p. 28; Tümenjargal, p. 207; *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu gudai meixue*, p. 100.

In this sutra there are many comic and humorous episodes, as well as many that transmit the esoteric teaching. The readers must be aware of this. Not only when reading this sutra, but when reading any sutra, one must understand this.<sup>26</sup>

Once again he couples the idea of the necessity of esoteric interpretation, with the fear that his readers have not done it, not only in their reading of *The Journey to the West*, but in their reading of the sacred texts themselves.

He makes clear that this inadequacy is part of a widespread problem. In many instances he points out that the actions of people in this world truly resemble those that they laugh at in the novel. Thus in chapter sixteen, when the monks of Guanyin Dhyâna Hall try to steal Xuanzang's treasures, and in the end burn down their own monastery, Arana sadly concludes, "In general people of the world are all like this",<sup>27</sup> and when speaking of the "wondrous transformations" of the pilgrims, he says, "The transformations of Man's mind are even more wondrous. If people considered this and understood it, they would come to laugh at themselves".<sup>28</sup>

This widespread incomprehension of the nature of one's acts is by no means restricted to such common sense ideas. In fact it is just as widespread if not more in the ideas that both monks and lay people have of religion. In chapter ninety-six, there is an episode where a wealthy man of India (which in the novel is identified with the Western paradise) hopes to gain merit by feeding monks. Arana reflects:

Others may ask, 'Now people all wish to be born in the Western land. This rich patron already lives there, so what more does he need to do?' I say, 'The people in the Eastern land wish to be born in the Western land, while the people in the Western land always wish to be born in the Eastern land. All those in that place are sick of it, but having left it they will once again come to like it. Now people all wish to be monks, and those monks want to be a layman. The people in the world are all generally sick of where they are and prefer some other thing.'<sup>29</sup>

To Arana, then, the average person's desire for religious salvation represents nothing more than the restless itch for change. Nor do people understand the profound mystery of non-completion: "Heaven and Earth are not complete. One must understand when it is said that the dharma is broken, and can never be complete. Although this is clear, the people of the world in their greed will complete it. How truly laughable!"<sup>30</sup> The average monk and layman's comprehension of religion are both so low that they really represent two interchangeable states. Just as the novel portrays India as not substantially different from China, so being a "son of the Buddha" and a monk is really no different from being a common layman.

<sup>27</sup> Gereltü, p. 28.

<sup>28</sup> Gereltü, p. 29.

<sup>29</sup> Gereltü, p. 34; *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu gudai meixue*, p. 102.

<sup>30</sup> Gereltü, p. 35; *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu gudai meixue*, p. 102.

In many places Arana makes very clear his dissatisfaction with the Buddhists of his time. In the commentary to chapter forty-three, where Monkey explains the true meaning of the Heart Sūtra to Tripitaka, Arana laments: "Nowadays, there are many people who talk about the dharma who cannot even equal a monkey".<sup>31</sup> Arana reveals the full extent of his contempt for the present-day representatives of Buddhism, in the commentary on chapter eighty-four:

One must agree that the killing of monks in the Dharma-destroying Kingdom is truly odious. But now, we can see that the ones who really destroy the Dharma are the monks. These monks too ought to be killed. Why are they spared?<sup>32</sup>

We can thus see that although Arana finds the doctrine of Buddhists to be something precious, so precious that those who degrade it are guilty of a capital offence, he feels the enemies of the doctrine are precisely those who claim to uphold it — the monks.

Not only does Arana thus despise the representatives of organized Buddhism, he also shows great sympathy with the novel's spirit of toleration. In chapter forty-four, where Sun Wukong has to subdue a Daoist fiend who has deluded the king of Cart Slow kingdom into oppressing monks, Monkey concludes by demanding that the king henceforth respect all the Three Religions (Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism). Arana writes in his commentary:

Monks, do not despise the Daoist priests. Priests, do not despise the monks. Even though you are a monk, be an honest one, and even though you are a Daoist priest, be an honest one — both have their own good points. If you are a good monk or a good priest, you will not quarrel with each other. Alas! who now speaks thus?<sup>33</sup>

Thus Arana not only validates the syncretic message of novel, but goes on to contrast that profound understanding to the infirm comprehension of his own time.

Arana did not merely advocate the mutual toleration of Buddhists and Daoists, but was also actively interested in the latter's theory of the five phases in the body, and their use for self-cultivation. In particular, he saw the fire of the heart (represented by Sun Wukong in the novel) as the source of both transformation, but also, if unchecked by water, the source of disease.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Gereltü, p. 31; *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu gudai meixue*, p. 101.

<sup>32</sup> Gereltü, p. 34.

<sup>33</sup> Gereltü, pp. 31–32.

<sup>34</sup> Gereltü, pp. 25–26, 30–31; *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu gudai meixue*, pp. 98–99, 101. This theory that health depends on the proper tempering of the fire phase in body with the water phase was also held by Arana's contemporary, the Kangxi emperor—see Jonathan D. Spence, *Emperor of China: Self Portrait of K'ang-hsi* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1974), p. 111.

To him, this meant that the great puzzle was, if as the novel says “Anyone with nine orifices can achieve the ability to transform . . . Why is it that people are many but transformations are few?”<sup>35</sup> The author may have intended an anti-clerical pun here; “transformation”, *qubilyan* in Mongolian, is the same word as that used to refer to incarnate lamas, who were very common at the time. The implication would thus be that the present day incarnate lamas are not real transformations. Although his answer is vague and allegorical, Arana seems to lay this responsibility on those clerics who have spread the fear of hell. He writes:

In plain words [the novel] says that however fierce the demons be, they fear people. Now, when we see how the ten kings of hell fear Wukong, this is no lie. Nowadays, many are the people in this world, however, who fear demons. Those who fear demons become demons of the demon.<sup>36</sup>

Who are these demons? Although Sun Wukong justly has no fear of hell, Arana feels stupid beings ought to fear it: “No matter how false what is said here is [the journey of Tang Taizong to hell and his view of the punishments of sinners there], the word ‘hell’ is a very useful tool with which to warn foolish beings.”<sup>37</sup> thus we may surmise that the demons in question, which people fear, but Wukong does not, are those who warn people of hell fire. Stupid people should fear them and their words, but to realized immortals a belief in hell can only be an obstacle. Arana here employs the Buddhist idea of *upāya*, or skill in means; one must adapt the teaching to the level of comprehension of the listener. The idea that only we crude and evil creatures require the harsh, punitive doctrine of actual Buddhism, which to refined beings is superfluous, originates in the canonical Buddhist texts, and is reflected in *The Journey to the West* as well.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Gereltü, p. 26; Tümenjargal, p. 206. Note Tümenjargal has mistranscribed *yisün*, “nine”, as *jisü/jüs*, “color, appearance”. The reference here to the nine perforations may be found in Wu, *Xi you ji*, vol. 1, chapter 3, p. 34 (cf. chapter 1, p. 2), and in Yu *Journey to the West*, vol. 1, p. 114 (cf. p. 67). Curiously, Arana translated “perforation” (*qiao*) as “color” (*öngge*). This could be mistake for the graphically similar “hole” *nöke*, but as both Gereltü and Tümenjargal have read it as *öngge*, that is most likely the consistent reading of the manuscripts and block prints.

<sup>36</sup> Gereltü, p. 26; Tümenjargal, p. 206.

<sup>37</sup> Gereltü, p. 27; Tümenjargal, pp. 206–7; *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu gudai meixue*, p. 99. Tümenjargal for *qudal*, “false,” has misread *qota*, “city,” which makes no sense.

<sup>38</sup> On this theme in scriptural literature see, for example, Robert A. F. Thurman, *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti: A Mahayana Scripture* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), pp. 81–83; G. Kara, ed., *Vimalakīrti en Mongol* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982, vol. 1, pp. 95–97, and vol. 2, pp. 113–115. In the novel, see Wu, *Xi you ji*, vol. 1, chapter 8, p. 80, and vol. 2, chapter 98, pp. 1107, 1111; Yu, *Journey to the West*, vol. 1, p. 184, and vol. 4, pp. 387–388, 393. In the Daoist polemics about Laozi converting the barbarians, this originally Buddhist idea is turned against its originators; Buddhism is seen as the kind of harsh law appropriate to savage

In an earlier section, Arana comments on the episode where Monkey studies under the Patriarch Subhūti.<sup>39</sup> Eventually the simian is exiled by his teacher for being too public about his powers. In his commentary Arana quotes again what Subhūti says: "When you open your mouth your vital force is dissipated, and when you move your lips strife arises."<sup>40</sup> Arana then states that if one performs the right five-phases self-cultivation then all the one hundred diseases will disappear. Continuing, he writes, "there is no difficulty in this world, only the fear of evil-minded people".<sup>41</sup> Thus the main obstacles to self cultivation are the evil minded "demons", who by speaking always of hell, seek to stifle the true way of self-cultivation. Thus, Arana hints, the novel's esoteric message of self-cultivation will run into the jealous opposition of the benighted hell-fire preachers.

In another instance he comments on how, in chapter thirty-nine, Sun Wukong uses a golden pill to bring back to life the king of Black Rooster Kingdom. Here Arana phrases the problem of the rarity of self-cultivation thus: "The golden pill lies within everyone. This pill can bring people back to life, so why is it that people in the world die? Readers consider this deeply and you will know!"<sup>42</sup> Perhaps he left the question unanswered to preserve the secrecy of the esoteric teachings. Moreover Arana himself accepted that hell and its demons are necessary to check the foolish beings, so that the truth of the matter—that there is no hell—can not be bruited about openly.

In general, then, for Arana the real truth of religion is one that can only be known to a small coterie. The books and scriptures that the ordinary people always rely on cripple true insight:

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Westerners, while Daoism is appropriate to the more refined Chinese. See Eric Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaption of Buddhism in Early Medieval China* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959), pp. 298–299, 305.

<sup>39</sup> Chinese, *Xuputi zushi*, see Wu Cheng'en, *Xi you ji*, vol. 1, chapter 1, p. 9. Although Yu's translation as Subodhi is possible as a word by word transcription of the Sanskrit into Chinese, it is unlikely to be the form intended by the novel's author, as "Xuputi" is exactly the standard transcription of the name of Subhūti, the well-known disciple of Buddha. See William Edward Soothill and Lewis Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner Q Co., 1937), s. v. Hsü, p. 394b.

<sup>40</sup> Gereltü, p. 26 and *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu gudai meixue*, p. 99. Cf. Wu, *Xi you ji*, vol. 1, chapter 2, p. 19, and Yu, *Journey to the West*, vol. 1, p. 92.

<sup>41</sup> Gereltü, pp. 25–26; *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu gudai meixue*, pp. 99. The Chinese translation seems to take this phrase as a quotation from the Patriarch Subhūti's aphorism "Nothing in the world is difficult, only the mind makes it so" (*shi shang wu nan shi, zhi pa you xin ren*). I have, however, translated it according to the Mongolian text, which seems to reflect a different understanding of the phrase.

<sup>42</sup> Gereltü, p. 30; *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu gudai meixue*, p. 101.

Now the reader must understand when it is said that after this emperor who was sick while alive died, became a sick ghost, and after being brought back to life, again became a sick man. Nowadays, as there are very few people in the world who have no disease, they must all soon try to find a cure. Tangsuy's asking Xingzhe, 'What classic on pulse have you studied? What do you know of medicine's properties? When have you cured people?' shows he is a very silly monk. The doctors in the world today are all ones who know about pulse, classics, and the nature of medicines.<sup>43</sup>

Clearly Arana means sickness and doctors to be a metaphor for spiritual sickness and religious teachers. The great mass of people, both monks and laymen, have already grossly misunderstood their Buddhist scriptures and will no doubt do the same with *The Journey to the West*. Only the select few readers who can penetrate to the profound meaning will realize the truth of the novel's philosophy.

Arana put many blinds in the way of unobservant readers catching his esoteric message. In the preface, as we have seen, the work is presented as another sutra, measured against the already existing ʻanjuur, and not found wanting. Many superficial readers, who merely skimmed the preface, must have been deceived into believing the translation was a philosophically unremarkable, if rather extravagant, piece of Buddhist biography. Also Arana never set forth the actual esoteric interpretation he believed the text contained, contenting himself with allusions and pleas for the reader to "consider deeply". Clearly he felt the allegorical guise of the novel had been adopted for a reason, and it would not be appropriate for him to put its message within the reach of every ignoramus who might read the work in Mongolian. It may well be for these reason that Arana never published his work in his own lifetime. The danger that, as with Sun Wukong in the garden of the Patriarch Subhūti, ill-considered words might lead to disaster was too great to risk. This contempt for the crude and uncultivated certainly fit the attitudes of the elite bannermen schools in the Manchu capital.

### From the Kangxi Era through the Early Twentieth Century

As the Mongols, both garrison bannermen and those from Inner and Outer Mongolia, gathered in Beijing, their awareness of the Chinese-rite Buddhist tradition also grew. Many inscriptions from Chinese temples in Beijing were translated into Manchu and Mongolian for the edification of patrons more comfortable in those languages. The tale of the sandalwood image (*jandan juu*) kept in Beijing's Hongrensi, which was also known in

<sup>43</sup> Gereltü, pp. 32–33. *Xingzhe*, "pilgrim," is a common name in the novel for Sun Wukong, the monkey king.



Tibet (see above), was translated in 1721, and was later published in a manuscript and blockprint during the Yongzheng and Qianlong reigns.<sup>44</sup>

Fifteen years after Arana's translation, the historical and Buddhist Xuanzang also received his most thorough treatment in Mongolia. Duke ʾombojab, originally from Üjümüčin banner on the border of Inner and Outer Mongolia but living in Beijing as the director of the Beijing Tibetan school, published in Tibetan *Rgya-nag chos-'byung* ("The Spread of Religion in China"), a monograph on the history of Buddhism in China that gave much attention to the role of the early translators and pilgrims to India.<sup>45</sup>

The work seems to also have been the first written in the Tibetan-rite Buddhist tradition to have discussed the non-Buddhist religions and philosophies of China. His view of them, however, was sketchy at best. He quoted the old phrase that likened Buddhism to the sun, Daoism to the moon, and Confucianism to the stars, and wrote how it showed that, in China, Buddhism was the most important of the three religions. That may indeed have been the intent of Li Shiqian who coined the phrase, probably in the Song dynasty, but was hardly true of Qing dynasty China.<sup>46</sup>

Although in his discussion of the Xuanzang, ʾombojab studiously avoided any contamination of his historical, Buddhist, Xuanzang by the novel's character, he showed his awareness of the novel when he introduced the topic as "The ācārya, Xuanzhuang Fashi,<sup>47</sup> known as Tangseng Lama", *Tang-zing bla-mar grags-pa'i slob-dpon śān-ḍvang fa-shi*.<sup>48</sup> The biography of Xuanzang always used the style Sanzang, or "Tripitaka", for him, and the Tibetan histories followed suit. Only in the novel is he called *Tang Seng*, or "Tang monk", and while ʾombojab did not use exactly the Mongolian "Marvelous Lama", which indeed relied on a pun untranslatable in Tibetan, his reference to Xuanzang as Tangseng Lama, indicates not only that he was

<sup>44</sup> On the temple inscriptions, see Rainer von Franz, *Die unbearbeiteten Peking—Inscriben der Franke—Lauferischen Sammlung* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984), pp. 163–202, and on the block prints see Walther Heissig, *Die Pekinger lamaistischen Blockdrucke in mongolischen Sprache: Materialien zur mongolischen Literaturgeschichte* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1954), pp. 93, 135.

<sup>45</sup> Mgon-po-skyabs, *Rgya-nag chos-'byung* (Chengdu: Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House, 1983), pp. 129–152. On this work, see Sh. Bira (trans. Stanley Frye), *Mongolian Historical Literature of the XVII—XIX Centuries Written in Tibetan* (Bloomington: The Mongolia Society and the Tibet Society, 1970), pp. 32–40, and Walther Heissig, *Die Familien- und Kirchengeschichtsschreibung der Mongolen*, vol. 1, 16–18. *Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1959), pp. 194–198.

<sup>46</sup> Bira, *Mongolian Historical Literature*, pp. 37. On the metaphor of the sun, stars, and the moon, see Judith Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 201.

<sup>47</sup> That is, "The Master of the Law, Xuanzhuang." — *Zhuang* is the more common pronunciation of the character usually read in this name as *-zang*.

<sup>48</sup> Mgon-po-skyabs, *Rgya-nag chos-'byung*, p. 129.

aware of the novel and probably of Arana's work, but that he thought such awareness widespread among his readers. Such an awareness on ʾomboʾab's part would not be surprising as the learned duke worked on many translation projects with Arana and they undoubtedly knew each other personally.

ʾomboʾab's section of Xuanzang in the *Rgya-nag chos-'byung* was distributed separately in manuscript under various titles, and achieved great popularity.<sup>49</sup> Upon completing his history of Buddhism in China, ʾomboʾab also compiled a larger work on Xuanzang, titled *Chen-po Thang-gur dus-kyi Rgya-kar zhing-gi bkod-pa'i kar-chag bzhugs-so*, or "Herein is Contained an Outline Delineating the Area of India in the Time of the Great Tang Dynasty". Based not on Huili and Yancong's hagiography, but on Xuanzang's own work, the *Datang xi yu ji*, it does not seem to have achieved such wide circulation.<sup>50</sup> In both of these works, the Mongolian writer focused primarily on Xuanzang's journey as a record of pilgrimage in the Holy Land of India, rather than on Xuanzang as a monk or on the geography of Central Asia. While the Tang sources on the journey focused as much on the Western Region (*Xiyu*), that is modern Central Asia, ʾomboʾab had little interest in what they had to say about these areas, even though he did believe the nomadic khans Xuanzang met there were Mongols.<sup>51</sup> Thus, it is not surprising to find that his work was in turn used by the writers of the genre *gnas-yig* (Tibetan, "writings about places"), the description of holy places and how to get there.<sup>52</sup>

Later works, such as ʾimbadorji's *Bolor toli*, or "Crystal Mirror", a history of Buddhism in Tibet, China, and Mongolia written from 1846 to 1849, and Dharmatāla's *Padma dkar-po'i phreng-ba*, or "Rosary of White Lotuses", an encyclopedic history of Mongolian Buddhism completed in 1889, devoted sections to the historical Xuanzang.<sup>53</sup> These notices, like their accounts

<sup>49</sup> Bira, *Mongolian Historical Literature*, p. 39, Gereltü, p. 23 n. 3, and Rinčingawa, *Mongyol orčiγyul-a*, p. 89.

<sup>50</sup> Reprinted with preface by S. Bira, ed. "'Da Tan si yui tsi' Syuan' Tszana v tibetskom perevode Guna Gombozhava," in *Mongol ba Töv Aziin ornuudın tüüxend xolbogdox xoyor xowor surbalʾ bičig* (Ulaanbaatar: Academy of Sciences, 1974), pp. 141–209.

<sup>51</sup> Mgon-po-skyabs, *Rgya-nag chos-'byung*, pp. 128–9.

<sup>52</sup> S. Bira, 'Da Tan si yui tsi,' p. 144.

<sup>53</sup> ʾimbadorji, *Bolor toli* (Beijing: Nationalities Press, 1984), pp. 255–262; Damchö Gyatsho Dharmatāla (trans. Piotr Klafkowski), *Rosary of White Lotuses, Being the Clear Account of How the Precious Teaching of Buddha Appeared and Spread in the Great Hor Country* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1987). The *Bolor toli* was composed over a period running from a horse year to chicken year. L. S. Pučkovskij, "The Date of the Composition of the Bolor Toli", *Acta Orientalia*, vol. 16, n. 2 (1963), pp. 217–223, has argued, on the basis of a manuscript found in South Gobi province by Perlee, that this is Törü Gereltü (Daoguang) year fourteen to year seventeen, i.e. 1834–1837. But in a manuscript in the Inner Mongolia library a date equivalent to Törü Gereltü twenty six

of China in general, were almost entirely derived from Ōmbojab's *Rgya-nag chos-'byung*, to which Dharmatāla, at least, explicitly refers his readers.<sup>54</sup> Ĵimbadorĵi also included Ōmbojab's account of the non-Buddhism religions and philosophies of China, with only a little updating (he added Catholicism to his discussion of the religions of China).<sup>55</sup> Like Ōmbojab, he also exaggerated the similarity of these religions to Buddhism, claiming that Mozi, for example, believed in reincarnation and had predicted the coming of the Buddha.<sup>56</sup> Thus, both Ōmbojab and Ĵimbadorĵi tended to deal with Chinese religion and philosophy as a sort of pale reflection of those in Tibet and Mongolia. Though some later authors, like Dharmatāla, might honor some of the achievements of the Chinese monks even above those of the Tibetan clergy, this tendency to evaluate Chinese Buddhism entirely within the framework of Tibetan-rite Buddhism continued.

By this time, however, the novel had become well known. Manuscripts of Arana's translations were copied several times in the eighteenth century; one manuscript now in Ulaanbaatar records being copied in 1730, 1746, 1752, and again in 1843.<sup>57</sup> The lesser number of manuscript copies in the eighteenth century signified no lessening interest in the novel, but rather that the translation was finally printed. The White Mountain Temple blockprint publishing house in Čaqar brought out a printed version of Arana's text in 1791, seventy years after the author had completed it. No other translated Chinese novel was considered worthy of being printed by the Mongols and its Buddhist appearance must have played a large part in this,<sup>58</sup> but even so, the publishers felt obliged to print what amounted to a disclaimer above Arana's preface. The publishers said:

Although the message (*nomlal*) of this biography is not the same as that of the biography translated into Tibetan by Ōmbojab of Ūĵümüčĳin named *Tang Seng Heshang who in Ancient Times Went from China to India to Study Wisdom, and Greatly Propagated the Religion in China*, still a wise and clever man has composed

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to twenty nine (1846–1849) has been written in; see *Bolor Toli*, pp. 6–7. The original appears to have had no reign date, only the animal cycle date, in which case the work must be dated by its contents, not by reign dates added into later copies. The discussion of Catholicism, which he says “has become extremely common recently”, (p. 264) supports a post-Opium War (1840–1842) date.

<sup>54</sup> Damchö Gyatsho Dharmatāla, *Rosary of White Lotuses*, pp. 23–24.

<sup>55</sup> Ĵimbadorĵi's account of the religions of China in *Bolor toli*, pp. 263–266. He repeated Ōmbojab's interpretation of the primacy of Buddhism in China.

<sup>56</sup> *Bolor toli*, p. 264.

<sup>57</sup> Tūmenĵargal, p. 209.

<sup>58</sup> Claudine Salmon, ed., *Literary Migrations: Traditional Chinese Fiction in Asia (17–20th Centuries)* (Beijing: International Culture Publishing Corporation, 1987), pp. 34–35.

it so that the deeds and passions are called demons, and the Thought of Enlightenment and Skill in Means are given the name Tang Seng and Xingzhe respectively, even though it does combine the Dharma (*nom*) and the Dao (*yosu*), and the episodes can be seen as merely stories. Thus, as it is helpful to those who care for either the literal or the deeper meaning, it has been printed as a sutra at the White Mountain Temple in the fifty sixth year of Qianlong, a female white pig year.<sup>59</sup>

The convoluted “on the one hand, on the other hand” reasoning of the note testifies to the publishers’ ambivalence about the text. They feel it does clearly put forth a Buddhist message, but they can’t seem to fathom the business of combining the Dao with Buddhism, or why the author put it in the form of a story. One can guess the sort of comments Arana might have made about these earnest and literal-minded Buddhists. They could not even bring themselves to use the name “Tangsuṃ Lama”, but insisted on the Chinese term “Tang Seng”.<sup>60</sup>

Whatever their misgivings, the printers undoubtedly contributed to the growing popularity of the Tangsuṃ story. In the course of the nineteenth century, Chinese culture became wider and wider spread in Mongolia. Even in Qalqa Mongolia, translations of Chinese novels were widely available in either oral or written forms;<sup>61</sup> they formed part of the earliest literary education of D. Načuydorji (1906–1937), the most famous revolutionary author in Outer Mongolia, among others.<sup>62</sup> By the 1830s and 1840s *Journey to the West* was spreading in many printed and manuscript editions, both complete and more or less abridged, and often with illustrations. The rise and fall of the Handsome Monkey King (Sun Wukong) and his challenge to heaven, and the birth and early life of Xuanzang seem to have been two episodes which cir-

<sup>59</sup> Gereltü, pp. 24–25 n. 3. *Yosu* is Arna’s fixed translation of the Chinese *dao*. See for example the translated chapter titles quoted in Gereltü, p. 24 n. 1, and p. 25 n. 1.

<sup>60</sup> The author of this disclaimer was clearly highly literate in Chinese. He writes “fifty-six” as *tabin bolultai jiryuduyar*, a clear calque on the Chinese *wushi you liu*.

<sup>61</sup> On the novel, and especially the Chinese novel in Mongolia, see Françoise Aubin, “A Note about the Spread of Chinese Literature amongst the Mongols” and Boris Riftin, “Mongolian Translations of Old Chinese Novels and Stories—A Tentative Bibliographic Survey”, both in Claudine Salmon, ed., *Literary Migrations: Traditional Chinese Fiction in Asia (17–20th Centuries)* (Beijing: International Culture Publishing Corporation, 1987), pp. 209–262, and Heissig, *Geschichte der mongolischen Literatur*, vol. 1, pp. 265–345. On Mongolian translations from Chinese in the nineteenth century, in general, see Rinčingawa, *Mongyol orčiγuly-a*, pp. 103–110.

<sup>62</sup> P. Qorlo, et al., *Mongyol-un orčin üy-e-yin uran jokiγal-un tobči teüke (1921–1965)*, vol. 1 (Höhhhot: Inner Mongolian People’s Press, 1985), p. 234. This work was originally published in the Cyrillic script in Ulaanbaatar, in 1967. Typically, the biography of Načuydorji in the later, revised, edition of this standard textbook, C. Damdinsüren, *Mongolın orčin üyeiin uran joziolın tüüx* (Ulaanbaatar: State Publishing House, 1985), vol. 1, pp. 78 ff, drops any hint of Chinese influence.

culated independently.<sup>63</sup> The tale thus spread widely in the provinces of Qalqa Mongolia, and among the Ordos Mongols, as well as among the Oyrads in Xinjiang and the Qobdo region.<sup>64</sup> The work also seems to have crossed the border into the Tsarist empire; at least one abridged copy can be found among the Buryats of Russia.<sup>65</sup> It was even transcribed from the Uygur Mongolian script into the Clear Script of the Oyrads and published in that form.<sup>66</sup>

As the story of the Marvellous Lama spread beyond the multilingual banner environment which had given rise to it, the three guardians of Xuanzang had also become thoroughly at home in the Mongolian context. Their names were translated into Mongolian, as Monkey, Earth, and Pig with the title Teacher added to each (*Beč'in, Siroi, Taqai Bayši*), and these names appeared often in the titles of the manuscript versions. At the same time, those more familiar with the novel found some features of Arana's pioneering translation unsatisfactory. Arana had translated virtually all the names and places, and had not cast the chapter titles in proper Mongolian poetic form. At some point a second anonymous translation, preserved in a sole copy now in the library of Gandan Tegčingling monastery of Ulaanbaatar, was printed as a sutra; in this translation most of the names were left in transcribed Chinese, while the chapter titles were cast in fluent alliterative verse.<sup>67</sup> This version, however, never seems to have ousted the original translation of Arana from its pre-eminent position in the hearts of the Mongols.

Moreover the printing of it as a sūtra may well have resulted in it being taken as more literally true than the author, or Arana, intended. In a history of the Oyrad Mongols, *Dörben Oyrad-un teüke tuyuži kemen orosiba*, or, "Herein is Contained the Story of the History of the Four Oyrads" probably written in the early nineteenth century, we find the description of the four continents given in chapter eight of *The Journey to the West*, which is *not*

<sup>63</sup> A. G. Sazykin, *Katalog mongolskikh rukopisey i ksilografov Insituta Vostokovedeniya Akademii Nauk SSSR*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Nauka, 1988), p. 99; Tümenjargal, p. 200.

<sup>64</sup> See Heissig, *Geschichte der mongolischen Literatur*, vol. 1, 271, and vol. 2, p. 862; Tümenjargal, pp. 200–201.

<sup>65</sup> A manuscript, entitled "The Biography of Tängsuy Lama's invitation of the dharma from the Western Region: an abridgement," *Tängsuy-un blam-a-yin barayun oron-ača nom jalaysan namtar bolai, tobči temdeg*, can now be found in the library of the Historical Institute of the Buryat filial of the Academy of Sciences. I am grateful to Galina (Yeshen-khorlo) Dugarova, for this information, contained in a letter dated Dec. 12, 1990.

<sup>66</sup> See the illustrated edition pictured in György Kara, "Blockdrucke und Handschriften," in Walther Heissig and Claudius Müller, ed., *Die Mongolen* (Innsbruck: Penguin Verlag, 1989), p. 251, the catalogue to an exhibition of Mongolian culture held in Munich, 1989.

<sup>67</sup> Tümenjargal, pp. 205–206. These changes parallel some general trends in translation literature. Thus early Mongolian translations of Sanskrit poetry into Mongolian generally did not make them alliterative, while later ones did.

the same as the canonical one, is quoted directly by the anonymous historian as a preface to the spread of Buddhism among the Mongols, and the Oyirads in particular.<sup>68</sup> The rest of the history is realistic and of a fairly high standard. We can only speculate about what led the author to consider this magical novel to be a reliable geographical source. We have noted however that Ōm-bojab's works on Xuanzang focused on the geography of the holy land, India, and it is possible that the Oyirad historian, not realizing that, as the publishers said, "the message is not the same", read it in the same way, a possibility amplified by the fact that the *Journey to the West* was the only Chinese novel commonly circulated among the Oyirad Mongols.<sup>69</sup> With no other indigenous or imported fictional texts, then, the Oyirad historian, somewhat at a loss as to how to read the novel, took it as an example of the genre of pilgrim literature (*gnas-yig*).<sup>70</sup>

More common than taking the translated novel as a geographical text, was to treat it as a means of merit building. As we have seen Arana's caution about pointing up the unorthodox message of the text may well have contributed to this understanding of it as a genuine Buddhist sutra. Many copyists felt that, as with a canonical text, they would gain religious merit by copying it and left notes at the end of the manuscript copy they had copied. Simply to add these colophons, moreover, had significance in itself for the way the work was being read. Like a usual Chinese text, Arana's translation had a preface but no colophon, whereas Tibetan or Mongolian texts usually had no

<sup>68</sup> Luwsanbaldan, *Tod üsgiin dursgaluud*, Corpus Scriptorum Mongolorum, vol. 19, fasc. 14 (Ulaanbaatar: Academy of Sciences, 1976), pp. 331, 349–350; Badai, Altan-Orgil, and Erdeni, *Oyirad-un teiken surbulji bičig* (Höhhhot: Inner Mongolia People's Publishing House, 1985), pp. 265–266. Cf. Wu, *Xi you ji*, vol. 1, chapter 8, pp. 80–81; Yu, *Journey to the West*, vol. 1, p. 184.

<sup>69</sup> A. G. Sazykin, "Rukopisnaya kniga v istorii kul'tury mongol'skikh narodov", in O. F. Akimushkin, ed., *Rukopisnaya kniga v kul'ture narodov vostoka (očerki)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1988), vol. 2, p. 452.

<sup>70</sup> There is one more possible example of the Xuanzang tale in Oyirad literature, but this seems so far-fetched as to be most likely a coincidence. In the *Ĵangyar* epic, the maternal or paternal uncle of *Ĵangyar* is stated to have Emperor Tanguq Bumba. See Ce. Damdinsüring, ed., *Mongyol-un uran žokiyal-un degeži ĵayun bilig orosibai*, Corpus Scriptorum Mongolorum, vol. 14 (Ulaanbaatar: Academy of Sciences and Higher Education of the Mongolian People's Republic, 1959), p. 211, and the Inner Mongolian reprint (Höhhhot: Inner Mongolia People's Press, 1979), vol. 2 p. 705; Buyankesig and To. Badm-a, eds, *Ĵangyar* (Höhhhot: Inner Mongolia People's Publishing House, 1982), vol. 1, p. 1; Institute for Research on Philological and Economic Studies, ed., *Ĵangyar: Xal'img baatrlg epos*, vol. 1 (Elista: Kalmyk Books Publishing House, 1985), p. 11; *Byangyar* (Ürümčī: Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 1985), vol. 1, p. 13. This character is found not only in the Xinjiang version but also among the Kalmyks on the Volga and it is hard to envision how knowledge of the novel could have spread so far. On the other hand Tanguq's identification as Bumba or "Daoist" is an intriguing reflection of the novel.

preface but rather a colophon. Thus those who added their comments to the end of both manuscript and printed versions of the novel were, in effect, adding a colophon, making the text similar in form to a Mongolian Buddhist one. One wrote:

This wondrous scripture which contains the myriad-fold good fortune of all the Buddhas that are seen, and all the scriptures that are read, and spreads the good fortune,<sup>71</sup> is very profound. The merit of those who read it and have it read, who write it and have it written, will accumulate like a limitless mountain.

while another writes:

Having prostrated, sacrificed, and seen for a moment the Buddha, now through rejoicing in him, encountering him, recalling him, praying to him, and testifying to him, may I collect my merit, however little it be, and aim towards the great blessedness of bodhi which has crossed beyond all.<sup>72</sup>

In 1913, the noted Ordos poet Kesigbatu (1849–1916) closed his manuscript “A Summary of the Various Biographies of Tangsuy Lama” with the following lines:

Such like marvels of the perfection of patience  
Of those who have kept the vows with wisdom inherent,  
I, the common foolish Kesigbatu in my sixty-fifth year,  
Have from beginning to end written in brief abridgement.<sup>73</sup>

Thus, although by the turn of the twentieth century the Marvellous Lama had quite outstripped the Buddhist Tang Sanzang in popularity, many readers apparently did not see the message of the two as being fundamentally different. The subversive novel and its even more subversive commentary was taken in a way consistent with the orthodoxy of Tibetan-rite Buddhism. We may attribute this partly to Arana’s prevarication and misdirection, but more significantly because the majority of Mongols outside the Beijing bannermen community did not possess the intellectual background which Arana expected readers would bring to the work. Thus they placed the work within the context of gathering Buddhist merit through the honoring of sacred texts. This facet of religious practice is, indeed, by no means absent from the novel, although Arana did not emphasize it. Thus the anxiety of the printers over its syncretist message never materialised, as these anonymous readers concentrated on

<sup>71</sup> *kei mori*, literally “wind horse”, the name of the flag which symbolizes good fortune and hence metonymically means that good fortune itself.

<sup>72</sup> Tümenjargal, p. 208.

<sup>73</sup> Damdinsürüng, ed., *Degeji jayun bilig*, p. 567, and the Inner Mongolian reprint, vol. 4, pp. 1852–3.

facets of the work that its translator had passed over.<sup>74</sup> In these circumstances it is not surprising that by the early twentieth century even high clerical figures were thoroughly familiar with the episodes of the tale of the Marvelous Lama, and even relied on them for protection from evil.

One striking indication of this familiarity was the depiction of the four pilgrims along with an episode from the novel above the main portal of the Gate of Quiet Peace (*Amuyulang engke-yin qayaly-a*) of the Green Palace of the Eighth Jībjuṇḍamba Qutuγtu (r. 1874–1924). The gate, built from 1912 to 1919 showed episodes from the Mongolian epic *Geser*, as well as the famous scene from chapter fifty-eight of *The Journey to the West* where Sākyamuni Buddha had to distinguish between two identical Sun Wukongs, one false and the other real. Two guardian spirits painted in a thoroughly Chinese manner stared ferociously out from the doors below this scene.<sup>75</sup> Clearly the four pilgrims painted above the door are also exercising the function of guarding against evil-minded visitors while the Buddha is demonstrating his supreme power of protection by distinguishing the real and the false. Although the episode depicted affirmed the dominance of Sākyamuni—Laozi couldn't distinguish the true Monkey from the false, but the Buddha could—it affirmed that dominance precisely in a syncretistic context, where Buddhism had to co-exist with other creeds, rather than in the mono-religious environment which the old Buddhist translators like ᠮᠣᠮᠪᠣᠵᠠᠨ had taken for granted.

How did this tremendous popularity of the Marvellous Lama affect the reading of the Buddhist monk of ᠮᠣᠮᠪᠣᠵᠠᠨ's biographies? Some clerical writers seem to have sought to dissociate the historic Tang San Zang from the "Marvelous Lama" by changing ᠮᠣᠮᠪᠣᠵᠠᠨ's name, "Tang-zing Bla-ma", to something less reminiscent of the figure from the novel. The preface to the 1791 printing of the novel referred to ᠮᠣᠮᠪᠣᠵᠠᠨ's work as *Tang Seng Heshang who in Ancient Times Went from China to India to Study Wisdom, and Greatly Propagated the Religion in China*.<sup>76</sup> The Mongolian transcription (*quušang*) of the Chinese term *heshang*, "monk", was used by Mongolian writers and translators as an ethnic marker to dissociate the monks of Chinese Buddhism from the Mon-

<sup>74</sup> The Soviet scholar Riftin, too, confused the wrapping for the package inside, saying the novel was translated early on because the translator saw it as "the story of a man's (Xuanzang) grasp of Buddhist doctrine". See Riftin, "Mongolian Translations", p. 235.

<sup>75</sup> Tümenjargal, p. 211; the pamphlet "Bogd Xaani Ordon Muzéi: Amgalan En-xiin Xaalga"; D. Mairdar, *Pamyatniki Istorii i Kul'tury Mongolii*, vol. VIII (Moscow: Mysl', 1981), twelfth plate between pp. 22–23; N. Tsultem, *Arkhitektura Mongolii/Mongolian Architecture* (Ulaanbaatar: State Publishing House, 1988), pl. 71. Other photos of palace are in Mairdar and Tsultem, but in general a whole volume would not exhaust the interest of this palace from either the artistic or the historic point of view.

<sup>76</sup> Gereltü, p. 23 n. 3.



golian lamas of Tibetan-rite Buddhism.<sup>77</sup> Dharmatāla, in his *Rosary of White Lotuses* (1889), went back to the term the classic Tibetan authors had used, *Thang sam tshang*.<sup>78</sup> In both cases we can see a process in which greater familiarity with the Chinese culture and its Buddhist tradition led the Mongolian clerics to make a firmer separation of the Buddhist Xuanzang from the figure of the novel.<sup>79</sup> At the same time, these terms marked the great pilgrim more definitely as a Chinese monk; this meant that respect for him implied a greater respect and familiarity for the Chinese Buddhist tradition.

This respect can be seen in the works of Dharmatāla, who seems to have been rather extreme among Mongolian monks in this regard. He glossed the term for Chinese monks, *heshang*, as follows: “Hwa-shang [= Heshang] means ‘venerable essence of wisdom’. No matter whether they had visited India or not, they had all been masters of the unimaginable wisdom of the Scriptures and Observance.” He even noted that “It is said that altogether they [the Chinese scholar-monks] translated (even) more dharma than the Tibetans did.” This great respect for the Chinese Buddhist monks also influenced Dharmatāla’s assessment of Mongolia’s secular history, where he claimed that “From time immemorial, the sentient beings of Hor and Sog [Inner and Outer Mongolia] have been included under the rule of the Chinese kings, and since the (two) countries are adjoining, it can be said that they (= Hor and Sog) are parts of China”.<sup>80</sup> Even so, though, Dharmatāla’s information about Chinese Buddhism seems to have come entirely from Tömbojab’s various translations; neither he nor any other Mongol in this period became a master of Chinese Buddhist literature. Nor did his admiring references to Xuanzang and the other Chinese Buddhist saints alter the basic structure of the work, which revolved around the propagation of the orthodox tradition from Tibet to Mongolia.

### The Pilgrims in Oral Poetry and Drama

Parallel to the spread of the novel in its translated form, the story of *The Journey to the West* also spread in other literary genres, particularly drama and oral narrative poetry. This change in genres marked a distinct change in

<sup>77</sup> See Farquhar, “Emperor as Bodhisattva,” *HJAS*, vol. 38, pp. 27–28. Farquhar, however, has mis-transcribed *quušang* as *goošang*; see Ya. Cewel, ed. *Mongol xelnii towč tailbar toli* (Ulaanbaatar: State Publishing House, 1966), s.v. *xuūšan*, and Mongolian Language Research Office of Inner Mongolia University, ed., *Mongyol Kitad toli/Meng Han cidian* (Höhhöt: Inner Mongolia People’s Publishing House, 1976), s.v. *huuxang*.

<sup>78</sup> Damchö Gyatsho Dharmatāla, *Rosary of White Lotuses*, pp. 23–24, 56, 375, 430.

<sup>79</sup> Dharmatāla noted, apropos the royal lineages of China, that it begins with the three Huangs and five Di, “as everyone knows” (*Rosary of White Lotuses*, p. 54).

<sup>80</sup> Damchö Gyatsho Dharmatāla, *Rosary of White Lotuses*, pp. 24, 375, and 37. cf. p. 44, where Mongolia is counted as one province (*mufi*) of China.

the dynamics of interpretation; these public art forms simply could not function as the vehicles for the sort of esoteric message of individual cultivation that drove Arana's reading of the novel. Nor did they lend themselves to the monastic view of Xuanzang as a sort of patron of translators; such a view emphasised the written word and the merit to be gained thereby too much to be have much meaning in an oral medium. Eventually as the story became widespread in drama and ballad songs, the protagonists of *The Journey to the West*, always under their Mongolian names of the Marvellous Lama, and teachers Monkey, Pig, and Earth, achieved the status of divinities unattached to any particular text. In this fashion they became building blocks for a distinct religious world-view, which showed strong similarities to that of the novel, without being in any sense an exegesis or interpretation of that, or any other, written text. It was in this community-centered reincarnation that certain fundamental features of the novel, notably its humor and its concern for salvation of all beings, finally found expression in a Mongolian context.

One of the areas most affected by this trend was East Mongolia, the region of Inner Mongolia east of the Kingyan mountains. There, as the pressure of Chinese immigration increased, growing numbers of Mongols took up agriculture. Moreover due to the frequency of intermarriage with the Qing imperial clan, whose daughters always came with a human dowry of servants and craftsmen, a significant number of East Mongols were actually Mongolised Manchus or Chinese.<sup>81</sup> Just as important was the fact that in East Mongolia the Buddhist culture had never been as firmly implanted as it was in the steppe regions, so that phenomena either frowned on or ignored by the Buddhist monks, such as shamanism, epic singing, and ancestor worship, flourished. In this rich cultural mixture, the *čuyurči* (a kind of fiddle) singers who put Chinese and Mongolian literary tales to music and made them into epic songs played an outstanding role.<sup>82</sup> We know that *The Journey to the West*, *The*

<sup>81</sup> Tayama Shigeiru (trans. Buyandelger and Odqan), *Čing ulus-un- üy-e-deki mon-gyolčud-un neyigem-ün bayijulal* (Qayilar: Inner Mongolia Cultural Press, 1988), pp. 235, 246. Lu Minghui, ed. *Taoketaohu shiliao ji* (Höhhhot: Inner Mongolian Historical Association, 1965), pp. 3–6, contains an interview with one such man, Öljei, whose father came from Shandong in the train of a Manchu princess.

<sup>82</sup> Heissig, *Geschichte der mongolischen Literatur*, vol. 2, pp. 835–895; Cerensodnom, “Xyatad bičgiin joxiol mongol gajar aman ulamjlalaar delgersen ni”, in C. Damdinsüren, ed., *Mongolın uran joxiolın toim*, vol. 3, XIX juunı üye (Ulaanbaatar: State Publishing House, 1968), pp. 228–236; Rinchen, *Zhanr bengsen-ü üliger v mongol'skom fol'klor*, *Studia Mongolica*, vol. 1, fasc. 19 (Ulaanbaatar: 1959), 16 pp., continued in vol. 11 fasc. 31–36 (Ulaanbaatar: 1961), 53 pp. *The Journey to the West* is said specifically to have been sung also in the Solon Ewenki Banner in Kōlön Buir in Heissig, *Geschichte*, vol. 2, p. 862. Gamala, a Mongolian poet of the early twentieth century, composed a long denunciation of these unscholarly works, which mentions most of the songs transmitted; see Daraq-a and Na. Dongrobdamba, ed., *Gamala-yin silüg-üd* (Höhhhot: Inner Mongolia People's Press, 1987), pp. 122–128.

*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, and *The Water-Margin*, as well as the numerous other romances of the Han, Tang, and Song dynasties, were all sung by these *čuyurči* singers, who often used written translations as promptbooks. Unfortunately the only published examples are an excerpt from Pajai's version of *The Water Margin*, and even shorter excerpts from his *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.<sup>83</sup> Thus we cannot say yet how these singers understood *The Journey to the West*.

The development of *The Journey to the West* in dramatic form is also poorly documented. The Qalqa region and especially the Gobi was a center of Mongolian dramatic culture, and it is there that we hear of theatrical representations of the *The Journey to the West*. Such plays are known to have been performed in the banner of the Gobi Mergen Prince (now in East Gobi province), as well as in Uliyasutai city, and Qan Kökei-yin Kūriy-e (in modern Uws province). Nor was this theatrical tradition immediately broken by the revolution of 1921; in spring, 1922, three members of the Youth Congress, Buyannemekü, Nasunbatu, and Amuγulang composed and performed a play directed at the youth audience, based on the history of Tangsuγ Lama.<sup>84</sup> Unfortunately the nature of the performance is unknown, but there is no indication that the figures in the novel achieved the same degree of popular veneration in Qalqa as they did in East Mongolia.

The three protectors of the Marvellous Lama, Monkey, Pig, and Earth teachers, however, do appear in a published play first performed in Auqan banner of East Mongolia during the Guangxu era (1875–1908). The play, entitled *Qodoγočin*, or “Clowns”, is of all the works discussed so far perhaps the closest in spirit to the novel. The play, like the Buddhist *čam* theater, from which it may stem, featured the antics of the White Old Man (*Čayan Ebügen*), who bestowed wealth and fertility. Unlike the *čam* drama, however, the play “Clowns” did not embed these worldly frolics in any canonical context.<sup>85</sup> The legend behind it, though, like that of *The Journey to the West*,

<sup>83</sup> For *The Water-Margin*, see Damdinsürüng, *Degeři jayun bilig*, pp. 491–519. The corresponding chapter of the Mongolian translation is given in the same work, pp. 486–491. The equivalent pages in the Inner Mongolian reprint are vol. 4, pp. 1579–1695. A selection from this is transcribed in Rinchen's *Zhanr bengsen-ü üliγer*, pp. 9–15 (equals Damdinsürüng, pp. 510b–514a, and reprint, pp. 1662–1676). For a Mongolian adaption of the *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, see G. Kara, *Chants d'un Barde Mongol* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1970), pp. 80 ff (text), and 139 ff (translation).

<sup>84</sup> Tümenjargal, p. 210. This “Youth Congress” ought to be the Revolutionary Youth League, but it is impossible to be sure.

<sup>85</sup> Aleksei M. Pozdneyev (ed. John Krueger), *Religion and Ritual in Society: Lamaist Buddhism in Late 19th-Century Mongolia* (Bloomington: Mongolia Society), 1978, pp. 505–521, especially, pp. 518–519. See also the movie “Tsam”, shown at the Young Mongolist's Summer School, August 1989, in Ulaanbaatar.

was an extraordinary concatenation of religious figures from diverse traditions. The duke of Auqan banner seeking to cure his wife's barrenness, was sent by his lama to the "Northern Holy One" (*Aru Boyda*, the Jibjündamba Qutuγtu of Qalqa Mongolia). The latter told the duke he must bring the White and the Black Old Man to Auqan, but the former was unwilling to go. However, Holy Mi-la-ras-pa (a Tibetan poet and lama of the eleventh century) had long ago told the White Old Man, "Bless the poor man with riches, and the childless man with children! On your way, bring the Black Old Man into subjection to your dharma-power!" He had also commanded Monkey, Earth, and Hog teachers "On your way there, do the good deed of eliminating enemies!" So the White Old Man had no choice but to go, and once he arrived in Auqan, the people grew steadily more prosperous.<sup>86</sup>

In the actual play itself, the three figures from *The Journey to the West* have only small roles. Having escorted the White Old Man to the house of Te-gülder, the Mongolian Everyman, they stand guard outside the house, while the White Old Man enters.<sup>87</sup> The bulk of the piece consists of comic exchanges between the White Old Man and those who have invited him; the humor revolves around the differences in lifestyle and dialect between the Qalqa Mongolia of the White Old Man and the half-farming region of Auqan.

The structure of the story, however, bears more than a chance similarity to that of the novel. Once again a human seeker is dispatched to a far land, to bring back, for the benefit of both himself and his people, a talisman of magic power. As in the novel, even when the pilgrims arrive at the place where the sacred power to be invited resides, bringing back the talisman, the scriptures in the novel, and the White Old Man in the play, proves, to be difficult. Thus in the novel, the disciples of the Buddha first give Tripitaka empty scriptures and only give him ones with words after the Buddha commands them to, so too, the White Old Man is at first unwilling to go, and only sets forth after Mi-la-ras-pa reminds him of his task to bless mankind. Mi-la-ras-pa plays the inspiring and protecting role of Guanyin in the novel. And just as in the novel the pilgrims seem hardly to lose their boisterous original personalities in their mission, just so neither the White Old Man nor the family that invited him seem more solemn on the great occasion. As in the novel itself, the play becomes the charter for a cult which gives prosperity, protection on far journeys, and children.<sup>88</sup> The play thus reflects a cultic interpretation of the novel, one which emphasizes the pilgrims' role in purifying

<sup>86</sup> Dorongγ-a, ed., *Mongγol ündüsüiten-ü udq-a jokiyal-un matériyal-un emkidkel*, Vol. 8: *Si jüčüge* (Chifeng/Ulaγanqada: Inner Mongolia Social Science Academy, 1980), p. 5.

<sup>87</sup> Dorongγ-a, pp. 54–55, 59.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Wu, *Xi you ji*, vol. 2, chapters 99–100, pp. 1121–1123, and Yu, *Journey to the West*, vol. 4, pp. 409–412.

the world of evil and rescuing kingdoms in distress.<sup>89</sup> It thus represents a community-centered, this-worldly interpretation in contrast to the individual-centered message of self-cultivation that so impressed Arana.

### Conclusion

We thus can see how the assimilation of certain Chinese cultural ideas in the context of East Mongolia's agricultural communities led to a social interpretation of the novel in contrast to the occult, esoteric understanding of Arana. Both mix Tibetan Buddhist and Chinese motifs, but while for Arana these are conceptual motifs, for the people of Auqan, a provincial region, they articulated this syncretic religion not by abstract concepts but by characters drawn from the religious pantheon of their neighboring peoples. At the same time, however, the professional Buddhists, while showing a degree of interest in Xuanzang and his Chinese background that their Tibetan preceptors had never before evinced, interpreted it in such a way as to embody precisely those values which they as Tibetan-rite Buddhists respected.

The Mongolian interest in and understanding of the story of Xuanzang thus does not just illustrate the common observation that the nature of cultural borrowings depends as much on the world-view of those people doing the borrowing as on the things borrowed. It also demonstrates how the historically contingent interpretations of the novel each expressed moments of the religious world-view which originally lay bound up in the Chinese text. Arana's emphasis on individual self-cultivation, the anonymous colophon writers' stress on the cultivation of merit through the honoring of sacred texts, and the trust in the personal protection of Monkey, Hog and Earth teachers shown by the East Mongolian communities are all themes with undoubted resonance in the novel itself. At the same time, the readings of both the novel and the canonical, Buddhist works by and about Xuanzang, when set in their concrete historical context shows us a taxonomy of the response of a profoundly monolithic and religious society to an on-going syncretist and philosophical challenge.

<sup>89</sup> On this interpretation, see Christopher Atwood, "Self-Cultivation and World-Cultivation in *The Journey to the West*" (unpublished paper).