

A Note on Multilinguality in China Under the Mongols: The Compilers of the Revised Buddhist Canon 1285-1287

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Under the dynasties of conquest established after the disintegration of the T'ang empire, multilinguality within the state administration became a common feature.

In the state of Liao, the Khitan language was used along with Chinese and was written in two different scripts. The so-called "large script" was invented in 920 A.D. and the "small script," which seems to have been a kind of alphabet, in 925.

The Jurchens in the Chin state also developed two different scripts for their language--in 1119 (the "large script") and 1135 (the "small script"). For a long time, three scripts and languages were in use in the Chin state: Chinese for the Chinese and Po-hai population, Khitan for the Khitans and Jurchen for the Jurchens. After 1191, the use of the Khitan script was abolished so that until the end of the Chin in 1234 only Chinese and Jurchen were used concurrently.

Under Chinggis Khan, the Mongols, who were originally illiterate, had already adopted the Uighur script for their language, and this is still used in Inner Mongolia and the Mongolian People's Republic. An additional alphabet for Mongolian was promulgated in 1269, the so-called "square script" invented by the Tibetan lama 'Phags-pa (1235-1280). This script was called "national script" (*kuo-shu*) and was used throughout the Chinese Yüan state. It is by far the most accurate script system for rendering the phonetics of Middle Mongolian. Nevertheless, it never did fully displace the Mongol-Uighur writing system.

The bilinguality of the Yüan period is also demonstrated by many documents in the administrative handbooks, such as the *Yüan tien-chang* and the *T'ung-chih t'iao-ko*. They are written in colloquial Chinese, but have retained the Mongolian word order

because they are derived from interlineary Chinese versions of a Mongolian original text.¹

A different type of language problem can be seen in Chinese Buddhism. Many scriptures are translations from Indian languages, above all Sanskrit. It was evidently a difficult task to translate from a totally unrelated language into Chinese, but these difficulties were overcome with the help of foreign (mostly Central Asian) monks who served as informants. The translation activities were already well organized at an early date.²

An interesting case of multilingual cooperation in the Buddhist sphere occurred under the Mongol Yüan dynasty. This was the compilation of a new and revised catalogue of the Chinese Tripitaka,³ the *Chih-yüan fa-pao k'an-t'ung tsung-lu* [至元法寶堪同總錄] in ten *chüan*. This catalogue is important for several reasons. For each Sanskrit title, a careful transcription in Chinese characters is provided, which allows the reconstruction of the Indic original. It was also the first catalogue where the Chinese versions have been compared with those in another Buddhist religious language, in this case Tibetan. Altogether the Chih-yüan catalogue must be regarded as a careful and meticulous work which, moreover, can show which Buddhist scriptures were current in Tibetan at that time. The following remarks are based on the modern reprint of the catalogue in vol. 2 of the supplements to the Taishō canon, *Shōwa hōbō sōmokuoku* (Tokyo 1929, pp. 179/I-238/II).⁴

¹ There exists an abundant literature on these problems in many languages, western, Chinese and Japanese. A superb modern description of Mongol administrative practices in China is Elizabeth Endicott-West, *Mongolian Rule in China. Local Administration in the Yuan Dynasty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989). This book includes an excellent bibliography. On language problems, see pp. 83-85 and 118-122.

² See e.g., Walter Fuchs, "Zur technischen Organisation der Übersetzungen buddhistischer Schriften ins Chinesische," *Asia Major*, 6 (1930), 84-103.

³ For a succinct survey of cataloguing the Buddhist scriptures, see Paul Demiéville in *Choix d'Etudes Bouddhiques* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), 186-190. Although first published over one hundred years ago, Bunyiu Nanjio's *Catalogue of the Chinese Translation of the Buddhist Tripitaka* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1883) is still useful for the non-specialist. It includes on pp. XII-XXIII a detailed account of the various catalogue compiled in China.

⁴ For other editions of the catalogue, see the bibliographical guide to Buddhist scriptures by Ono Gemmyō, *Bussho kaisetsu daijiten*, vol. 4 (Tokyo, 1933), 242/II-243/IV.

The scholarly importance of the Chih-yuan catalogue was noticed in the west for the first time over 140 years ago by the French sinologist Stanislas Julien.⁵ Since then relatively little attention has been paid to this catalogue, apart from occasional brief references in buddhological literature. The catalogue is preceded by two prefaces, one written in 1306 by the Chinese monk K'o-chi [克己] and one by Ching-fu [淨伏], dated 1289. These prefaces, together with the introductory remarks by Ch'ing [慶], the editor-in-chief monk, tell of the compilation of the catalogue which was sponsored by emperor Qubilai, and most important, a list of the 29 scholars and monks who took part in the compilation. This list will be summarized below; a full study with translations of the prefaces and full annotation has been prepared by this author and will be published as volume four of the series *Studia Tibetica* (Bavarian Academy of Sciences).

The members of the committee to which the compilation of the catalogue was entrusted could, in some cases, be identified from other sources. In many cases, however, no identification was possible, chiefly because in conformity with Buddhist usage the list gives only the second part of the Chinese monks' names. The temple from which the Chinese monks came is, however, always indicated. The committee worked from spring 1285 to summer 1287 in Ta-Tu (Peking) in the temple of Ta hsing-chiao ssu. Interesting information on the compilation procedure is given in the introduction: each committee member used his own language, which necessitated the use of interpreters.

A simplified roster of the committee members and their functions will show their different origins and nationalities:

⁵ "Concordance sinico-sanskrite d'un nombre considérable de titres d'ouvrages bouddhiques recueillie dans un catalogue chinois de l'an 1306," *Journal Asiatique* IVe série tome XIV (1849), 353-446.

1. Name: Monk Ch'ing
 Origin: K'ai-yüan ssu in Shun-te Prefecture
 Religious Function: Lector for Śāstra
 Committee Function: Compilation
 Nationality: Chinese. No further data available.

2. Name: Monk En
 Origin: Shui-yen ssu in P'ing-luan lu
 Religious Function: Lector for Śāstra
 Committee Function: General redactor
 Nationality: Chinese. No biographical data available.

3. Name: Monk Hai
 Origin: Ta pao-chi ssu (Ta-tu)
 Religious Function: Lector for Sūtra
 Committee Function: Director of clerical work
 Nationality: Chinese. No biographical data available.

4. Name: Monk Wen
 Origin: Hsing-hua ssu in Chen-ting Prefecture
 Religious Function: Lector for Sūtra
 Committee Function: Director of clerical work
 Nationality: Chinese. No data available.

5. Name: Ya-shih-han yang-a
 Office: Supervisor (*lang chung*) in branch office of
 Ministry of Works (*kung-pu*)
 Civilian Title: Feng-hsüan ta-fu
 Committee Function: Director of clerical work
 Nationality: Uighur. The name renders uigh. Yašqan
 Yanga.

6. Name: Monk T'uan
 Origin: Ta min-chung ssu in Ta-tu
 Religious Function: Lector for Sūtra
 Committee Function: Collation
 Nationality: Chinese. No data available.

7. Name: Monk Hsi
 Origin: Ta hao-t'ien ssu in Ta-tu
 Religious Function: Lector for Sūtra
 Committee Function: Collation
 Nationality: Chinese. No data available.

8. Name: Monk Wen
 Origin: Huang mei ssu in Shang-tu
 Religious Function: Abbot of Huant-mei ssu
 Committee Function: Collation
 Nationality: Chinese. No data available.

9. Name: Monk Ch'eng
 Origin: Hung-fa ssu in Ta-tu
 Religious Title: T'ung hsien mi erh chiao yen-pi ta shih
 (Expert in exoteric and esoteric Buddhism)
 Nationality: Chinese. No data available.

10. Name: Monk Yen
 Origin: Ta-ch'ung-kuo ssu (Ta-tu)
 Religious Function: Altar Priest
 Committee Function: Comparison of Texts
 Nationality: Chinese. Monk Yen is probably Ting-yen,
 born 1237, who entered the Ta ch'ung-kuo
 Temple as a novice in 1243 and was
 ordained in 1271. After having served in
 several other temples he died in 1309 an
 abbot of the Ta ch'ung-kuo Temple.

11. Name: Monk Ting
 Origin: Ta sheng-shou wan an-ssu in Ta-tu
 Religious Function: Altar Priest
 Committee Function: Comparison of texts
 Nationality: Chinese. No data available.

12. Name: Chia-lu-na-ta-ssu
 Origin: Pei-t'ing tu-hu fu (Uighur Supreme Court)

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| Religious Function: | Knew the languages of both countries (China and Tibet), expert in exoteric and esoteric Buddhism. |
| Committee Function: | Translator of Tibetan |
| Nationality: | Uighur. The Chinese transcription of his name renders the Uighur term. Karandas which in turn is derived from Sanskrit Karunadāsa. He has a biography in <i>Yüan shih</i> , ch. 134, where his linguistic competence is praised. In addition to Uighur and Chinese, he knew Tibetan and Sanskrit. Pei-t'ing is the Chinese name for Be balīq, where the Uighur court was located. In spite of his monastic status Karunadas was married and had sons who held high offices in the Yüan administration. He died in 1312. An Uighur translation of the <i>Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti</i> by Karunadas was printed in 1302. |
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13. Name: T'o-yin tu-t'ung
 Origin: Han-lin scholar
 Civilian Title: Chia-i ta-fu
 Committee Function: Translator of Uighur
 Nationality: Uighur. Chin. T'o-yin renders uigh and mong. Toyin "Monk." Tu-t'ung is an Uighur title frequently conferred on laymen and monks. The name is quite frequent under the Yüan so that a reliable identification was not possible.
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14. Name: Monk Ch'ing
 Origin: Chin-shan Temple in Chi-ning lu
 Religious Function: Lector for Śāstra
 Committee Function: Collation
 Nationality: Chinese. No data available.
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15. Name: Monk Li
 Origin: Ta sheng-shou wan-an ssu (Ta-tu)

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| Religious Function: | Transmitter of Mahāyāna monastic rules, altar priest. |
| Committee Function: | Investigation of meanings |
| Nationality: | Chinese. No data available. |
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16. Name: Monk Hsing
- Origin: Supervisor of Buddhist teachings in Chiang-Huai
- Committee Function: Investigation of meanings
- Nationality: Chinese but of Jurchen descent. It can be shown that Monk Hsing is identical with Monk K'ang who became general supervisor of Buddhism in Chiang-nan (i.e., the recently conquered Sung state) in 1277. Another of his names was Hsing-yü. He was a lector in the famous Pai-ma "White Horse" monastery near Lo-yang in ca. 1270 and died shortly before 1300 as abbot of the Pai-ma ssu.
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17. Name: Monk Chien
- Origin: Ta sheng-shou wan-an ssu (Ta-tu)
- Religious Function: General supervisor (*tu tsung-t'ung*)
- Committee function: Investigation of meanings
- Nationality: Chinese. Monk Chien is mentioned for 1281 as taking part in the burning of proscribed Taoist scriptures.
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18. Name: Monk Chao
- Origin: General supervisor of Buddhism for all provinces
- Committee Function: Investigation of meanings
- Nationality: Chinese. No data available.
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19. Name: Yüan-tan-pa
- Origin: General supervisor of Buddhism for all provinces
- Religious Function: Tibetan lector
- Committee Function: Investigation of meanings

- Nationality: Tibetan. The Chinese name probably renders tib. Yon-tan dpal. He held the same office as No. 18 Monk Chao, which illustrates the Yüan practice of appointing Tibetans and Chinese jointly to offices in the Buddhist official hierarchy.
20. Name: An-tsang
Origin: Chancellor of Han-lin Academy
Civilian Title: Cheng-feng ta-fu
Committee Function: Translation and investigation of meanings
Nationality: Uighur. An-tsang is a well-known personality distinguished by polyglot competence. He translated into Uighur, Mongolian and Chinese and vice-versa. An-tsang was an early follower of Qubilai, whose protection he enjoyed throughout his career. His Buddhist inclinations are well known. A Buddhist exegetical treatise of his in Chinese was even included in the Chih-yüan catalogue. An-tsang died in 1293.
21. Name: Ha-t'ai sa-li
Origin: General supervisor of Buddhism
Civilian Title: Tzu-te ta-fu
Religious Title: Cheng-tsung hung-fa ta-shih
Committee Function: Translation and investigation of Meanings.
Nationality: Uighur. The name must be reconstructed as Qatay Sali, where Sali is an Uighur title for Buddhist dignitaries. The name also occurs alternatively as Ch'i-t'ai sa-li, in Uighur, Kitay Sali. He came from Beš Balıq (Pei-t'ing) where he received a thorough Buddhist education. His appointment as General Supervisor was in 1275. In 1281 he took part in collecting the documents on the Buddhist-Taoist controversies. He was also responsible for the Chinese translation of Nos. 1904 and 1905 of the Chinese Buddhist Canon

(Taishō edition), dated 1270 and 1271. The original of Nos. 1904 and 1905 was in Tibetan; their author has been the famous 'Phags-pa Lama (1235-1280).

22. Name: Tany-ya-sun
 Origin: Chancellor of Han-lin Academy
 Civilian Title: Chung-feng ta-fu
 Committee Function: Translator of Tibetan language
 Nationality: Uighur. It can be shown that chin. Tan-ya-sun is a rendering of uigh. Tanyazīn which goes back to Sanskrit Dhanyasena. He was a native of Qamul (modern Ha-mi) and is already attested for 1270 as Chancellor of the Han-lin Academy. He might be identical with a certain Mr. Tan-ya who is mentioned for 1296 as councillor (*ts'an-i*) of the Office for Buddhist and Tibetan Affairs (*hsüan-cheng yüan*). A woodcut on the fragment of a printed Uighur text in the Museum für indische Kunst (Berlin) shows his portrait as a monk. He took part in the translation of Buddhist scriptures from Tibetan. I have prepared a detailed study on this learned Uighur monk and scholar to be published in the *Festschrift* for Annemarie v. Gabain on the occasion of her 90th birthday.
23. Name: Chai-ya-ta-ssu
 Origin: Pei-t'ing tu-hu fu (Uighur Supreme Court)
 Religious Function: Expert in exoteric and esoteric Buddhism, Lector for Sūtra, Vinaya and Śāstra, recipient of a robe.
 Committee Function: Translation of Indian language.
 Nationality: Uighur. The name is derived from sanskrit Jayadāsa; the Uighur form is Ĵayadas. It is possible that he is identical with Cha-ya-ta-ssu, who is mentioned in the *Yüan-shih* biography of An-tsang (above, Number 20). Some scholars have regarded Cha-ya-

ta-ssu (Ĵayadas) as an additional name of Antsang which, however, does not seem convincing.

24. Name: Monk Su-tuan-jan
Origin: Tibet
Religious Function: Expert in exoteric and esoteric Buddhism, Lector for Sūtra, Vinaya and Śāstra, recipient of a robe

Committee Function: Collation and investigation of meanings.
Nationality: Tibetan. The first two syllable of the name could be a transcription of tib. *ston* "teacher." No identification possible. The gift of a monk's robe to Buddhists was a distinction frequently bestowed by the court (see also above No. 23 and below No. 25).

25. Name: Monk Chan-yang-i-ssu
Origin: Tibet
Religious Function: Transmitter of exoteric and esoteric teaching, Lector for Sūtra, Vinaya and Śāstra, recipient of a robe.

Committee Function: Collation and investigation of meanings
Nationality: Tibetan. No reconstruction of the original name has been possible.

26. Name: Monk Ko-lo-ssu pa tsang-pu
Origin: Tibet
Religious Function: Transmitter of exoteric and esoteric teaching, Lector for Sūtra, Vinaya and Śāstra,.

Committee Function: Investigation of meanings
Nationality: Tibetan. The Chinese transcription renders tib. Grags-pa bzan-po. No biographical data available.

27. Name: Wei-ma-lo-shih-li
Origin: Indian Pandit

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| Religious Function: | Master of the Five Teachings |
| Committee Function: | Clarification of evidence |
| Nationality: | Indian. The Chinese transcription renders Sanskrit Vimalaśrī. No data available. The Five Teachings in Indian Buddhism were grammar, mathematics, medicine, logic and philosophy. |
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28. Name: Yeh-lien
- Origin: Tibetan Pandit and prominent disciple of the Imperial Preceptor 'Phags-pa
- Religious Function: State Preceptor (*kuo-shih*)
- Committee Function: Clarification of evidence
- Nationality: Tibetan. The name Yeh-lien is an abbreviation of Ye-šes rin-čhen. He came from the Šar-pa family and was born in 1248. He is also attested for 1277 as a leading monk at the court. In 1286, he was appointed as Imperial Preceptor and held this office until 1291. He died in 1294 on the Wu-t'ai shan.
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29. Name: Ta-li-ma-pa-lo a-lo-ch'i-ta
- Origin: Pandit and nephew of the Imperial Preceptor 'Phags-pa
- Religious Function: Imperial Preceptor
- Committee Function: Clarification of evidence
- Nationality: Tibetan. The name is, however, derived from Sanskrit and renders Dharma-pālarakṣita. He is a well-known personality. In January 1283, he was appointed as Imperial Preceptor and resigned in 1286. He died in December 1287 on his way back to the Sa-skya monastery in Tibet .

Short Analysis Of The Data

Of the twenty-nine members of the committee, fifteen were Chinese, seven Uighurs, six Tibetans and one Indian. As it is most improbable that the Chinese monks could speak or understand Tibetan and vice versa, they had to rely on interpreters. These were certainly the Uighurs. Karunadas (Number 12) and Tanyazīn (Number 22) are expressly mentioned as translators for Tibetan, and Toyin Tutung (Number 13) served as translator for Uighur.

Mongolian does not seem to have been used, and no Mongol was a member of the committee. Many Mongol aristocrats and their families, not to mention the imperial court, were devout Buddhists who attended the ceremonies and donated large sums for monks and temples, but Buddhist scriptural studies were not so much their concern, a fact which is abundantly attested in other sources.

Three committee members, all three Uighurs, came from the highest scholarly state office, the Han-lin Academy. The Chinese monks all came from monasteries in northern China, mostly located in the winter capital Ta-tu, and not a single one had been based in the recently conquered former Sung empire, with the exception of the author of the preface dated 1289. He did not, however, belong to the committee.

It should also be noted that the state agencies for the administration of Buddhism in China were represented by four members: Number 16 (Monk Hsing), Number 18 (Monk Chao), Number 19 (the Tibetan Yon-tan dpal) and Number 21 (the Uighur Qatay Sali). The group of these dignitaries was multinational, including Chinese, Tibetan and Uighur.

The role of the Uighur Yašqan Yanga (Number 5) is not defined in the list of committee members. It can, however, be assumed that his duty was to provide the necessary technical infrastructure for the committee meetings, because he came from the Ministry of Works which had, it seems, established a branch office for this purpose.

That the highest Buddhist priest in the Yüan Empire, the Imperial Preceptor Dharmapālarakṣita (Number 29) was a member of this committee is only natural. The same can be said for 'Phags-pa, Lamas's pupil, the State Preceptor Ye-šes rin-čhen (Number 28) who was to eventually succeed the acting Imperial Preceptor.

Altogether, one cannot but admire the judicious balance which has been achieved in selecting the committee members. The major nationalities as well as the different schools of Buddhism were equally represented. This might have been due to the Uighur Qatay Sali who appointed the committee on Qubilai's command.

The cooperation of these twenty-nine experts resulted in a scholarly catalogue which lists 1,440 different texts in 5,586 *chüan*. These are the figures as given in the original text; the modern Japanese edition, however, uses a different way of counting and arrives at 1,644 texts.

In closing, it can be added that the Chih-yüan catalogue was translated from Chinese into Tibetan in the 18th century. The translator was Gombojab (mGon-po skyabs), a nobleman of the Mongol Ujümüčün clan, who had been appointed by the emperor in 1722 as head of the Tibetan school in Peking, and the title is *rGya-nag čhos-byun* ("The spread of the Dharma in China").⁶ It is accessible in a modern copy, but the use of this version is limited as far as the list of committee members goes because most of the personal names are distorted beyond recognition.

⁶ Namgyal Dorje Dalama (ed.), *The Penetration and Spread of Buddhism in China* (Berkeley, 1969).