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THE TIBETAN AND MONGOLIAN COLLECTIONS IN THE ASIAN DIVISION, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Susan Meinheit

Reference Specialist, Asian Division, Library of Congress

Introduction

The Library of Congress began its Tibetan collection in the early twentieth century. Currently the Asian Division's Tibetan collection, consisting of more than 10,000 volumes, is considered one of the largest and most accessible Tibetan collections in the United States. Our Mongolian collection also began in the early twentieth century. Included in our rare book collection are 80 Mongolian books in traditional script and format, many of which are Mongolian translations of famous Buddhist sutras. The two collections owe their origins to several distinguished American scholars and diplomats, primarily William Woodville Rockhill (1854-1914), Joseph Francis Charles Rock (1884-1962), and Berthold Laufer (1874-1934). This article provides highlights of these two collections and describes our efforts in recent decades in collecting modern publications and in acquiring digital Tibetan.

For the convenience of those not familiar with precise Tibetan and Mongolian transliteration, popular spellings for many well known proper names have been used, i.e. Kanjur (Bka= >gyur), Tanjur (Bstan >gyur) and Derge (Sde-dge). The transliteration scheme for Tibetan, when used, is Wylie.

I. Tibetan Collection

Tibetan Buddhism played a central role in all of traditional Tibetan culture and society, and as such the majority of books in the collection are classified under the subject heading of Buddhism. However, among the books classified as Buddhism we can find books on Tibetan history, biography, medicine, poetry, geography and many other subjects.

Tibetan literary tradition relies on a ten-fold classification of knowledge, adopted from classical Indic systems. These are the five major sciences: medicine, visual arts, logic, grammar, and Buddhist philosophy, and five minor sciences: poetry, synonymics, composition, drama, and astrology. For any scholar's collected works to be complete they must include works on each of these ten subjects.

Buddhism entered Tibet in the mid-7th century when the Tibetan king, Srong-brtsan-sgam-po married a Chinese princess and a Nepalese princess, both of whom were Buddhist. The King then sent one of his ministers to India to devise a new script capable of translating Buddhist texts into Tibetan. The Tibetan script was the result. Large numbers of Buddhist Sanskrit manuscripts began to be brought to Tibet for translation. This period of translation lasted for several centuries, and the translations made formed the basic foundation for Tibetan literature.

During the early 9th century standard Sanskrit/Tibetan dictionaries of Buddhist terminology were developed to facilitate these vast translation activities, for example the *Mahavyutpatti* (compiled in 801 or 812). These original texts formed the basis for centuries of commentary upon commentary by Tibetan scholars, and by the twentieth century a vast literary corpus had been assembled, studied, and expanded upon by a rich tradition of scholarly exegesis based on a complex contemplative tradition. This Tibetan classical literature became the liturgical language of Mahayana Buddhism for much of Central Asia, including Mongolia, China, Russia, India, Nepal, and Bhutan.

Naturally as Tibetan culture modernizes, new areas, such as modern creative writing, sociology, economics and science, are also being published. But the standards of traditional writing are still evident even in these.

The traditional Tibetan book is printed on long narrow folios from carved wooden blocks such as one example found in our collections and acquired in 1931. The format of the Tibetan book was copied from Indic palm leaf manuscripts with long loose folios wrapped in cloth and tied together between boards.

The Tibetan Canon: *Kanjur* and *Tanjur*

By the early 13th century so many Buddhist texts had been translated and assembled that the need for classifying them was clear, and the great scholar, Bu-ston Rin-chen-grub, did so by assembling the first *Kanjur* in the early 14th century. The Tibetan Buddhist canon consists of two parts, the *Kanjur*, which are the direct teachings of the Buddha and the *Tanjur*, which are translations and original commentaries to the *Kanjur*. The Library is fortunate to have three original xylograph sets of the canon, all of which were printed in the eighteenth or nineteenth century at famous monastery printing houses.

Derge Kanjur

The *Derge Kanjur* was acquired by William Woodville Rockhill in 1908. Rockhill was the American Minister in China at the time and America's first Tibetologist. His 1901 donation contained 57 xylographs and 8 manuscript books and marked the beginning of the Library's Tibetan collection. Several years later he also purchased for LC a complete set of the *Derge Kanjur* in 103 volumes.

In Tibet nearly every monastery had its own printing house, where carved wooden blocks of essential texts were kept and printed on demand, but only a few included complete redactions of the *Kanjur* and *Tanjur*. Several of these were the most famous, known for the quality and accuracy of their texts, and the printing house of Derge was one of these. The Derge printing house was established in 1729 in eastern Tibet, now northern Sichuan Province. Blocks for printing the *Kanjur* were completed in 1733. It took 500 scholar/carvers over four years to complete the 65,000 blocks. The set of *Derge Kanjur* in our collection is in quite good condition, and was probably printed in the late nineteenth century, using vermilion ink as was the rule at Derge.

Narthang Tanjur

The *Narthang Tanjur* was originally acquired by Berthold Laufer for the Crerar Library in Chicago and was transferred to the Library of Congress in 1928. It consists of 228 volumes.

Narthang was also among the largest printing establishments in Tibet, and is known to have kept the first manuscript of the Tibetan canon. The blocks for printing the *Narthang Tanjur* were carved in 1730. Laufer states that this copy was carried by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama to Beijing in 1908. It is in very good condition.

Choni Kanjur

The third original redaction of the canon in our rare book collection is a complete set of the *Choni Kanjur* and *Tanjur* in 317 volumes. It was acquired by Joseph Rock, the famous botanist explorer in 1926, and reached the Library in 1928 after a two-year journey. The Choni is considered extremely rare and precious, since the entire monastery and printing house were destroyed in local wars in 1929. The *Kanjur* blocks were carved between 1721 and 1731, and the *Tanjur* blocks between 1753 and 1773.

The Choni paper is extremely durable, as it is made of 8 very thin sheets laminated together, and the print is very clear. Because of the rarity we have microfilmed the entire set, including the volumes which had never been opened since 1928 and had grown together like bricks. Copies are available from the Library of Congress Photoduplication Service.

Several noteworthy individual titles

The Rockhill and Laufer collections also include about 300 individual texts, of which a few representative samples are presented below:

Guide to Wutai Shan (Rockhill #38) *Ri bo rtse lna=i dkar chag*

This is a history and pilgrimage guide to the holy mountain Wutai Shan, written by Lcang-skya Rol-pa=i rdo-rje (1717-1786), a great lama responsible for translating and printing of Tibetan and Mongolian texts in Beijing. It is printed on Chinese paper, and Rockhill notes that it was probably printed at Wutai Mountain.

Life of Tsongkhapa (Rockhill #51) [No title, folio or margin title]

This is a short biography in 10 folios of the great fourteenth century reformer Je Tsongkhapa, printed at Ganden Monastery, Lhasa, which he founded. Rockhill's handwritten note on the cover says "Acquired from Uрга 1885, @ which means that although the text was printed in Tibet, he acquired it from Mongolia. Traditional wooden boards cover the folios.

The gradual path to Enlightenment (Rockhill #8) *Lam rim chen mo*

The famous work of Je Tsongkhapa describing the path to enlightenment in clearly defined steps. Rockhill's pencilled note on the cover tells us it was "Bought in Peking, Sept. 1884. @

Sutra of the Perfection of Wisdom in 100,000 verses: *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa stong phrag brgya pa*

The most ornate among the individual titles of the rare book collection is this eighteenth century manuscript volume of the Sutra of the Perfection of Wisdom in 100,000 verses. It is one of 12 volumes explaining the merger of perfect compassion and wisdom into a view which penetrates beyond appearance to ultimate reality. The sides are painted with the triple gems, and the cover page has five layers of silk representing the five Buddha families. The opening folios show two of the thirty-five Buddhas of confession, and two of the sixteen Arhats. It most likely dates to the eighteenth century and was a gift from an individual donor.

Modern publications: PL-480/New Delhi Office

Although these rare collections are very unique and special, it was in the 1960s that the Library started to acquire the collections for which we gained attention in the hearts of Tibetans and Tibetan scholars worldwide. When Tibetans began to flee the destruction in their homeland during the 1960s, the Library's New Delhi Office was actively acquiring books in India under the PL-480 program. E. Gene Smith (later to become LC Field Director in the New Delhi, Jakarta, and Cairo Offices before retiring) was then a young Tibetologist on contract with the New Delhi Office who began working with refugee scholars to preserve and publish the special texts which they had carried out with them over the Himalayas to India.

These reproduced texts became the core collection by which most of the current generation of scholars

were trained and formed a large body of primary source material which had previously never been available outside Tibet. Gene Smith also had the wisdom to make the literature accessible to Western libraries by writing English title pages, contents, and/or introductions and cataloging them by the AACR rules, complete with name authorities. Two examples, which also give an insight into the very nature of Tibetan literature, are as follows:

A Tibetan Encyclopedia of Buddhist Scholasticism : the Collected Writings of >Ba=-ra-ba Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang. Reproduced by photographic process from the unique manuscript collections belonging to Gra sku-zhabs Bstan->dzin-nor-bu. Published in Dehrdun, India, 1970
The short introduction reads:

>Ba-ra-ba Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang is one of the great luminaries in the history of Tibetan scholasticism. His collected works (*gsung->bum*) in 14 volumes contains his *Thar par >jug gru bo*, a verse treatise whose intention is to present a systematic exegesis of the whole of Buddhist thought. To explain his verse shastra he was led to write a number of auto-commentaries which constitute the greatest part of his *gsung->bum* and represent an extraordinary compendium of Buddhist thought. >Ba=-ra-ba represents the first of the great Tibetan compilers. He is several generations earlier than Bo-dong Pan-chen Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal (1376-1451), who conceived the *De nyid bsdus pa* in over 110 volumes. While the interests of >Ba=ra-ba=s great predecessor, Bu-ston Rin-chen grub (1290-1364), ranged over the entire field of scholastic thought, he never arranged his commentaries into a unified structure. Each of his treatises remains isolated.ⁱ

Another example, in traditional format, is the reproduction of the fourteenth century historical work, *Bka= than sde lnga*, by O-rgyan-gling-pa, published in Bhutan in 1976.ⁱⁱ The title page reads AAn account of the gods and demons, kings, queens, scholar saints, and ministers of the past, Revealed from its place of concealment by Gter-ston O-rgyan-gling-pa.@ So it is a *gter-ma*, a special type of literature, written centuries earlier, but hidden until someone rediscovers it. O-rgyan-glin-pa was a famous fourteenth century tantric practitioner who revealed many *gter-ma*, some of which no longer exist, or have not yet been located.

Between 1965 and the present about 6,000 volumes were published and acquired under this program, and the New Delhi Overseas Office is still acquiring and cataloging Tibetan works published in India, Nepal, Bhutan and China. Most are now in Western format, but traditional formats are also acquired.

Recent xylograph collections

The Library is also actively acquiring xylograph prints from original blocks in monasteries in Tibet. In the 1980's it seemed that all available texts in exile had been located and published, but just then access to Tibet and Tibetan scholars in China improved and led to increased awareness of new collections being located and published and the re-establishment of several original printing houses. Interestingly, some monasteries in Tibet were re-carving lost wood blocks using the Library=s photo-reproduced texts of the PL-480 collection, and others were reconstructing their printing libraries. Due to special efforts and enthusiastic cooperation of Tibetan scholars in Tibet and China, who were already well aware of our strong collections, we have acquired several large collections of newly printed xylographs from original blocks kept in various monasteries/printing houses in Tibet. For example, in 1999, after several years of effort, we acquired 300 volumes specially printed for the Library of Congress at the Derge printing house in northern Sichuan Province. Derge was thought to have been totally destroyed in the 1950s, but had in fact been saved by a local leader and began printing from the original eighteenth century blocks in the early 1980s. In many cases these volumes contain folios or sections which had not been found for

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the reprint volumes, or entire missing texts. One of them is a large oversized collection of illustrations used during special initiations of the *Rin chen gter mdzod*, a collection of Nyingma tantras, which has recently been housed by our Conservation Department, while others are still bound together with a special yak hair braiding used during transit.

Special format items

Our Tibetan rare book collection also contains several special format items, such as the *Tibetan Elemental Divination Paintings: Illuminated manuscripts from the White Beryl*, published in 2001 by Sam Fogg, London. This is a reproduction of two rare eighteenth century manuscripts on the practice of elemental divination which had been commissioned to illustrate the famous seventeenth century White Beryl of Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, regent of the Fifth Dalai Lama. The manuscripts had rarely been seen outside of Tibet before this limited edition was produced. Elemental divination was used in Tibet since at least the seventh century and makes predictions based on the relationships between the five elements and their symbolic representations.

The Heinrich Harrer Limited Edition Portfolio. World famous Austrian mountain climber Heinrich Harrer is probably best known for his book *Seven Years in Tibet*, which tells of his life in Lhasa 1944-1951. In 1990 a photographer, Leslie Di Russo, worked with Harrer to select 10 of his rare historic photographs of traditional Tibetan life for this limited edition portfolio of 50 copies. These archival photos were printed from Harrer's original negatives, signed and numbered by Harrer, and accompanied by original essays. The caption information was carefully compiled over a ten-year period, and presented in the format of a traditional Tibetan book. It is a fitting tribute to the richness of traditional Tibetan culture.

Digital Tibetan

Gene Smith, since retiring from the Library, has been preserving Tibetan literature by his tremendous project to create a digital *Tibetan Research Library of 12,000 volumes*. Now the Director of the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center at the Rubin Museum of Art in New York,ⁱⁱⁱ he directs a massive scanning project which includes nearly all of the Library's entire PL-480 collection plus additional texts from his own or other collections worldwide. The scanned texts are available on external hard drives, each containing about 1,000 volumes, and have so far been acquired by several libraries, such as the British Library and Harvard University. We have now three installments in our collection, consisting of over 3,000 volumes.^{iv} In addition, several individual collections are available on CD's, such as the complete *Derge Kanjur* on 10 CD's.

As the above examples illustrate, our Tibetan collection has really evolved full circle, from original eighteenth century xylographs to reprint editions, and back to new xylographs printed from original blocks, now captured in digital technology. Tibetans and Tibetan scholars, however, still wish to see the originals because in Tibetan culture books themselves are considered to be holy objects and symbols of all that is precious in their rich literary heritage.

II. Mongolian Collection

The Mongolian collection also owes its early twentieth century origins to Rockhill and Laufer. The first Mongolian books, two manuscripts and one xylograph, came to the Library in 1901 as a gift from Rockhill, who had acquired them in his travels to Mongolia in 1888- 1892. An account of this journey appears in *Diary of a Journey Through Mongolia and Tibet in 1891 and 1892*, published by the Smithsonian in 1894.^v

Our early twentieth-century collection of 80 Mongolian books are represented by a 1955 list compiled by David Farquhar, *AA Description of the Mongolian Manuscripts and Xylographs in Washington, D.C.*,” published in the *Central Asiatic Journal*, 1955.^{vi}

Because Tibetan became the liturgical language of Buddhism in Mongolia, and Tibet was considered the spiritual center, large collections of Tibetan texts can be found in most Mongolian libraries and monasteries.

Mongolia and Tibet have had a very special relationship since the thirteenth century when the Emperor Kublai Khan (1216-1294) invited the Tibetan lama, >Phags-pa, to teach Buddhism in Mongolia. >Phags-pa (1235-1280) created a national script for the Yuan dynasty, known as >Phags-pa script, which was used until 1368. Although Buddhism declined in the fifteenth century, it was again revived in the sixteenth century when Altan Khan (1507-1581) reintroduced Buddhism and invited a Tibetan lama, Gyalwa Sonam Gyatso, to teach in Mongolia. In 1578 he named him Dalai Lama. The lineage of reincarnated Dalai Lamas began with this lama being designated as already the third in the line, and the fourth Dalai Lama was actually a Mongolian.

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries there was a strong Buddhist revival in Mongolia and a flourishing translation activity sponsored by the Manchu emperors. Many block prints and Mongolian translations were produced and printed in Peking, of which our collection is representative. It was also during the early eighteenth century that the famous lama Lcang-skya Rol-pa=i rdo-rje (1717-1786) compiled the Mongolian version of the *Mahavyupatti* to standardize translation terminology, as Tibetans had done in the ninth century. Many of our rare books were printed during this period, and are well known Buddhist texts with both Tibetan and Mongolian title pages. The following are a few examples from the collection.

Sutra of the Great Liberation (Div.O, Ex-Div. MSs.)

Yekede Tonilgagci

>Phags pa thar pa chen po mdo

This lovely manuscript copy of the Sutra of the Great Liberation in Mongolian translation was a gift from Rockhill in 1901. It is written in red and black ink in silk brocade covers, and each of the three chapter folios has two miniature paintings of Bodhisattvas. An illustration of this sutra is featured on the Mongolian collection description on Asian Division homepage.^{vii}

Prayers for the 21 Taras (M251D)

Ilagusan qutug-tai dara eke-yin qorin nigen moerguel orosiba.

Rgyal yum >phags ma sgrol ma=i phyag tsa! nyi su rtsa gcig bzo

This special text was acquired in 1917 with over seventy other works transferred from the Crerar Library, which had been acquired by Berthold Laufer. Each contains his handwritten notes such as the one which reads AOn the 21 forms of the goddess Tara.@ It is a good example of the so-called Apocket books@ popular at the end of the eighteenth century printed for religious purposes to be carried when traveling. Tara is one of the principal female Buddhas in Tibet and Mongolia, and this prayer is known by almost all Buddhists in those areas.

Episode of the Geser epic (M208)

Arban jueg-uen ejen geser qagan tuyuji orosiba

This consists of 7 chapters of the great Central Asian epic of Gesar, which was printed in 1716 by order of the Kangxi Emperor.

Saddharma-pundarika Sutra (M207)
Cagan lingqu-a neretue yeke koelgen sudur

This is an excellent copy of the famous White Lotus Sutra printed with large red print and clear illustrations on the first folio. It can be dated to 1711 or perhaps later, and is included in the Mongolian Kanjur.

Bhadrakalpa Sutra (M214)
Qutug-tu sayin cag-un yeke koelgen sudur
>*Phags pa bkai pa bzang po mdo*

This is the well known Sutra of the 1,000 Buddhas of the Auspicious Age in two large volumes. It is a Peking wood block print which was translated from Tibetan into Mongolian by an aristocrat of the Chinggis Khan family in 1666.

We are also fortunate to have reprint editions of both the Mongolian Kanjur and Tanjur. These are translations from the Tibetan, and copies were always quite rare.

Mongolian Kanjur

This is a reprint edition of the Mongolian Kanjur, in 108 volumes, which was published by Dr. Lokesh Chandra, the great Indian scholar, in 1973-74.^{viii} Lokesh Chandra visited Urga in the 1950s and had special access to rare collections in the Mongolian Academy of Sciences. The edition which he reproduced here was originally prepared from the handwritten Ligden Khan Kanjur of the early seventeenth century, which was subsequently xylographed in 1720.

Mongolian Tanjur

Our reproductions of the extremely rare *Urga Tanjur* (226 volumes) also came from Dr. Lokesh Chandra. This edition had been translated from Tibetan into Mongolian under the direction of Lcang-skya Rol-pa=i rdo-rje in the mid-eighteenth century. Dr. Chandra obtained permission to microfilm this set located at the Mongolian Academy of Sciences. The microfilm was stored in his home in New Delhi, under far from ideal environmental conditions, and was given to the Library of Congress in 1991, along with a complete set of photocopy enlargements made from the film. The microfilm was made on nitrate and after being evaluated could only be converted to motion picture film stock. It is now available through the Library=s Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division=s reading room. The original Tanjur is still in Ulaanbaatar, and efforts are underway to either re-film or digitize the extremely fragile original. Until then ours is one of few copies, imperfect as it is. The photocopies and Dr. Chandra=s eight-volume catalog are available in the Asian Reading Room.^{ix}

Modern collections

The Mongolian collection also includes modern publications in both Cyrillic and classical vertical script. The latter were largely acquired by our exchange relationship with the National Library of China during the 1970s and 1980s. In 1992 the LC New Delhi Office launched a cooperative acquisitions program for Mongolian publications and began to actively acquire and catalog recent publications through the use of a bibliographic representative in Ulaanbaatar and temporary hires of Mongolian students in New Delhi. Through this program nearly 3,000 monographs, 160 serial titles, and over 2,000 microfiche, as well as microfilm holdings of 7 newspapers have been added to our collection. Unfortunately, this cooperative program was suspended in January 2005, but we were permitted to transfer the services of the bibliographic representative directly to the Library in Washington, D.C. so we continue to receive new

books averaging 30-40 per month. We are also continuing to microfilm newspapers in the New Delhi Office.

Mongolian publishing has expanded greatly in the past decade of democracy. New histories, bibliographies, literature, and resources are of very high quality. Some of our recent acquisitions, not yet cataloged, include:

History of the Yuan dynasty (Yuan shi), a translation from Chinese to Mongolian by great scholar Dandaa. This is a reproduction of Dandaa's original 1928 translation found in manuscript from the National Library of Mongolia. An important source for thirteenth and fourteenth century history of Mongolia, this version corrects many previous errors in the Chinese version.

Stupas of Greater Mongolia was published in 2005 by Lama Purevbat, founder of the Mongolian Institute of Buddhist Art, Ulaanbaatar. This lavishly illustrated volume was written by a lama who is actively involved in the current revival of Buddhism in Mongolia.

The bibliographical guide of Mongolian writers in Tibetan language and Mongolian translators, published in three volumes in Ulaanbaatar, 2004, is the work of Ragchaagiin Byambaa. It provides biographical and bibliographical information on some 89 scholars, who authored 4,139 texts.

Other new titles recently received include an album of Mongolian medals with historical background; a work on ancient nomadic artifacts; a beautifully illustrated book on the history of traditional embroidery, an illustrated *Coins of the Mongol Empire - 13th - 14th c*; an anthology of famous modern poems; research on the horse headed fiddle, a history and guidebook to Shambala in Tibetan and Mongolian; an anthology of articles by the famous scholar Rinchen; a novel called *Flood of Tears* based on the hardships of the repression of 1937, and a nine volume set of research on Mongolian geographic names. In addition, there are an especially large number of works, both scholarly and popular, devoted to Chinggis Khan. These are being published in honor of this year's celebration of the 800th anniversary of Mongolian statehood, as Mongolians take special pride in their history and culture, which are well represented in the Library's strong and growing Mongolian collection.

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