ROCZNIK ORIENTALISTYCZNY, T. LXX, Z. 2, 2017, (s. 29–59)

BRIAN BAUMANN

Oyin-i Geyigülügci – the Illumination of the Mind[1]

Abstract

In 1982 the Indian scholar Lokesh Chandra published in facsimile a collection of early Mongolian texts which had been cordoned off for censure in the Beijing Palace Library during the reign of the Manchu Qing emperor Qianlong in the 18th century. A team working for Lokesh Chandra's father, Raghu Vira, had microfilmed the texts and returned with them to India where the West German scholar, Walther Heissig, realized their significance. Among these revealed texts is a unique and valuable specimen of Mongolian Buddhist literature, a Sa skya pa Buddhist treatise on salvation in pre-classical Mongolian verse, its title, *Oyin-i geyigülügčü* [The illumination of the mind]. The present article discusses the text, its provenance, content, and prosody and the extent of my work with it to date.

Keywords: Mongolian Buddhist literature, Sa skya, *Oyin-i geyigülügčü*, treatise on salvation, pre-classical Mongolian

In 1955 the Indian scholar, Raghu Vira, together with a team of assistants, was busy at work in the Imperial Summer Palace Library in Beijing microfilming Buddhist literature when something unusual turned up: they found a cordoned off section of the library with a set of forty nine Mongolian Buddhist texts which had been placed there under censure. With the permission of the Chinese government, Raghu Vira's team photographed the shelves and microfilmed the texts before returning to New Delhi where all Summer Palace Library microfilm was added to the already wide holdings of the International Academy of Indian Culture.[2] In 1959 the German scholar Walther Heissig visited the

[1] I would like to thank Agata Bareja-Starzyńska and Marek Mejor for inviting me to give this paper in Warsaw and to remember our friend and teacher, Elliot Sperling, who was with us.

[2] Lokesh Chandra, *Early Buddhist Texts in Mongolian*, Sharada Rani, New Delhi 1982.

International Academy in New Delhi bent on making a comparative study of alternate versions of the Mongolian Buddhist canon. The canon includes the actual scriptures themselves, the *Kanjur* (Tib. *Bka' 'gyur*), pronounced today by Mongols *Ganjur*, and their commentaries, the *Tanjur* (Tib. *Bstan 'gyur*) – *Danjur*. One version, held in what was then the Soviet Union's Institute for Oriental Studies in Leningrad, is hand-written, while the version Raghu Vira had microfilmed in Beijing was block-printed.[3] In overviewing the Beijing microfilm Heissig came across the forty nine censured texts, realized their significance, and in 1962 published a thin monograph, *Beiträge zur Übersetzungsgeschichte des mongolischen buddhistischen Kanons*, which, as part of a larger discourse on the canon, briefly discusses them. Upon Heissig's discovery, in 1982 Raghu Vira's son, Lokesh Chandra, redeemed all forty nine works in facsimile as volumes 300–301 in the *Śata-Piṭaka Series* with the title *Early Buddhist Texts in Mongolian*.

The censure of these manuscripts, Heissig informs us, formed one part of a master plan to issue a new xylograph edition of the Mongolian *Tanjur*. The plan was mandated by the Qing dynasty's Qianlong emperor (Man. Abkai Wekiyehe; Mong. Tngri-yin Tedkügsen, r. 1736–1795) and carried out by the Second Janggiya (Tib. Lcang skya) qutuγtu Rolbidorji (Tib. Rol pa'i rdo rje, 1717–1786) together with Dga' ldan siregetü qutuγtu Blo bzang bstan pa'i nyi ma (1689–1746). This issuance of the *Tanjur* was intended to bring final completion to a canon project that had begun when, under the direction of the Thu'u bkwan Ngag dbang chos kyi rgya mtsho, 1680–1735), the Mongolian *Kanjur* was block-printed in 1717–1720 by mandate of Qianlong's grandfather, Kangxi (r. 1662–1722). A lengthier endeavor than the Kangxi *Kanjur*, Qianlong's *Tanjur* project would run almost ten years, from 1741 to 1749.[4]

Ostensibly, publication of the *Tanjur* was meant to purify the dharma with new, orthodox translation. As Heissig notes, the Qianlong *Tanjur* mentions no previous translator nor copies any earlier colophon.[5] "Purification" meant improving, or aiming to improve, translation through use of a more perfect transcription system, one with correct diacritics, getting rid of loan words, and updating the idiom. Yet, at the same time, purification of the dharma meant expunging aberrant and errant text through confiscation of previous translations. Heissig notes that in 1742, as the project was getting underway, Qianlong ordered the Janggiya qutuγtu to sweep Mongolian manuscripts from the Mongolian nobility and bring them to the capital in Beijing.[6] Heissig sees Qianlong's politics of revisionism as a prelude to a more ambitious literary inquisition years later.[7] Beginning in the 1770s,

---

3 Walther Heissig, *Beiträge zur Übersetzungsgeschichte des mongolischen buddhistischen Kanons*, Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Göttingen 1962, p. 5. Since Heissig's groundbreaking work on the Mongolian canon other canons have been discovered. For a recent study of the Ganjur, see Karenina Kollmar-Paulenz, *The Transmission of the Mongolian Kanjur: A Preliminary Report*, in *The Many Canons of Tibetan Buddhism*, Helmut Eimer and David Germano, eds., Brill, Leiden 2002, pp. 151–176.

4 Ibidem, pp. 43–44.

5 Ibidem.

6 Ibidem.

7 Ibidem.

Qianlong will commission a standardization of all important works of Chinese culture, the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書.

Recognized today as a monumental contribution to Chinese culture, the *Siku quanshu* project will nonetheless go hand in hand with a reign of oppression. Within its purview, texts will be deleted, modified, banned, and burned. As with the Cultural Revolution centuries later, under the campaign's propaganda, political opponents will be attacked. Silenced through exile and even execution, victims will often be made to suffer death by a thousand cuts, a ghoulish way to kill someone that takes several days.[8] In the case of Qianlong's confiscation of the forty nine texts here, one might surmise that the act was intended to remove objects of veneration attributed to Mongol patrons of the Yuan dynasty such as Ligdan Khan (1588–1634) and quell support for reactionary elements within Gelugpa hegemony.[9]

The number 'forty nine' in the Buddhist world is symbolic of the soul's duration in an intermediate state between death and life and leaves one to wonder if perhaps these Mongolian texts were ransomed as representative of the whole or if perhaps numerous texts were destroyed and but these few were spared. At any rate, the screening of manuscripts had netted these forty nine by the end of 1743. When Raghu Vira's team found the texts, they saw that inserted into each was an oblong strip of paper that tagged it for censure. These tags, written in Manchu, state the title of the work, indicate that it has been recognized for censure by the staff of the Janggiya qutuγtu Rolbidorji as mandated by imperial edict; and give a date, the 17th day of the 11th month of the eighth year in the reign of Qianlong (January 1, 1744).[10]

Of the forty nine texts, nineteen belong to the *Kanjur*. Two treatises belong to the *Tanjur*, *Naran-u gerel neretü šastir* (Tib. *Chos kyi rnam grangs brjed byang*) and the *Dara eke-yin tayilburi*, translated by Toyin güisi and Ücüken oyutu toyin coγtu respectively. The remaining twenty eight works are non-canonical.[11] A common characteristic of all forty nine texts is their relative antiquity. Heissig notes that many of the censored texts are early 17th century translations by the likes of Siregetü güsi corjiva, one of which being his translation of the *Vajracchedikā* [Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra] (Mong. *Vcir-iyar ebdegci*) made in Kökeqota in 1612 and written down by Acirai erdeni mergen ubasi (Kanjur, No 771).[12]

Although each of the forty nine texts is valuable in its own right, in their midst, hidden as it were in plain view, is a rare jewel of Mongolian Buddhist literature. Numbered among the collection's twenty eighth non-canonical works is an anonymous, undated text titled *Oyin-i geyigülügci neretü šastir* "The Illumination of the Mind."[13] The title of

---

[8] Luther Carrington Goodrich, *The Literary Inquisition of Ch'ien-lung*, Paragon Book Reprint Corp., New York 1966 (first ed. 1935); Alexander Woodside, *The Ch'ien-Lung Reign*, in: *The Cambridge History of China*, Volume 9, Part 1: *The Ch'ing Empire to 1800*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 289–293.

[9] Ibidem.

[10] Heissig, *Beiträge*, pp. 44–45; Lokesh Chandra, *Early Buddhist Texts*, *passim*.

[11] Heissig, *Beiträge*, pp. 45.

[12] Ibidem, pp. 46–47.

[13] Microfilm 06.21.

the text is rendered in Chinese *Kaimingxin zhi jing* (開明心志經).[14] Up to his neck in a veritable ocean of Mongolian Buddhist literature, Heissig describes the text perfunctorily as a didactic work (*Lehrschrift*) with an oft-used title.[15] Upon closer examination, however, the text proves to be something more, a pre-classical Sa skya pa versified treatise on salvation, a one-of-a-kind text with no other known version, and a true masterpiece, simply as fine as any work in all of Mongolian literature.

Attracted like a bug by the *Śata-Piṭaka Series*' distinctive forest-green color, I found *Early Buddhist Texts in Mongolian* towards the end of the last millennium in what was then the Rifias Library in Bloomington, Indiana. I read a considerable portion of the text under the supervision of Prof. György Kara, who at that time introduced me to the pre-classical Mongolian language. Years later in 2008, verily the day after completing a study in Mongolian Buddhist astral science, I returned to the text, prepared a transcription, lexical analysis, and translation, and have since been working on a detailed commentary.

The commentary is informed by my previous study of astral science and involves explicating the text's language term by term in light of the science's first principles. The need for such a study came in realization that the text's subject in Buddhism, soteriology, was interrelated with that in external traditions through its use of common terms derived from astral science. Reference to "heaven" and "hell" are but two examples of this usage. The implications of this realization were significant to me. I knew already that, because it is that which brings humanity orientation in space and time, the Humanities begin with the study of astral science. Now I saw that Buddhist soteriology could not be meaningfully studied without knowledge of this science; moreover, that with knowledge of astral science Buddhist soteriology could be meaningfully studied in comparison with external world orders; and indeed that the distinctive politics to Buddhist tradition could not be understood without such comparison; that "salvation" was once the byword for a worldwide political movement that made its aim the transcendence of aristocratic world order; that its success in bringing about its "new world order" made rule predicated upon soteriological principles the predominant form of government in the world, such that much of what one knew, or thought one knew, was engendered by it; and that soteriological world order itself gave rise to world order predicated upon democratic forms of government and modern thought which now impinges upon it by circumscribing it within the purview of "religion" as discrete from "science."

A question of *Oyin-i geyigülügci* concerns its provenance. Being anonymous and undated the text itself hides its origin. These uncertainties are compounded by the apparent absence of a Tibetan original, which, if it existed, might provide telling context. These problems aside, that the text comes from the Sa skya pa is explicit. The text cites Sa skya masters and their works. Lineage gurus mentioned include Sa skya Paṇḍita, himself,

[14] Neither under this title nor, substituting *kaiming* (開明) with *kaiyan* (開眼) 'enlightenment', under the alternate title *Kaiyanxin zhi jing* (開眼心志經) have I found a parallel Chinese text.

[15] Heissig, *Beiträge*, p. 49.

Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251 [68v]) and his predecessor, Rje btsun grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147–1216), whose treatise titled *Erdini-yin erike* is also mentioned (80v-81r).

In keeping with its Sa skya heritage, the text's language belongs to the pre-classical era of Mongolian literature.[16] Whereas Mongolian Buddhist texts frequently or generally bear intermittent traces of the pre-classical language,[17] *Oyin-i geyigülügci* is pre-classical on whole. As shown by examples given below, this is evinced by its grammar and vocabulary. Additionally, the text shows striking similarity with texts translated into Mongolian under the school of Chosgi Odsir (Chos kyi 'od zer, fl. 1305–1321) in the early decades of the 14th century. This similitude carries over to both its lexicon and style, which are particularly comparable with Chosgi Odsir's own commentary on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, made in 1312.[18]

Also noteworthy is *Oyin-i geyigülügci*'s treatment of hell (Mong. *tamu*). This treatment follows a composition typical of other Sa skya works on the subject similar to that of the *Shes bya rab tu gsal ba*.[19] Since the structuring of hell in the Sa skya pa tradition accords with that established in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*, it does not come as a surprise that the *Oyin-i geyigülügci* follows the same orthodox composition.[20] Telling, however, is that its nomenclature and phrasing correspond to that found in the 14th century Mongolian translations.[21]

In sum, this evidence suggests that this text was translated from Tibetan sometime during the 14th century prior to the expulsion of the Mongols from China in 1368. Perhaps this text was translated in Chosgi Odsir's school or even by the master himself. It might subsequently have been copied, perhaps in Ordos or Kökeqota, during the flourishing of literary activity that stemmed from Altan Khan's conversion to the Gelugpa Buddhist tradition in 1578. We have an example of such a text in the tetraglot *Mañjuśrī-nāma-saṅgīti* completed in 1592. In terms of the history of its redaction, a comparable text would be the *Medegdekün-i belgetey-e geyigülügci neretü šastir* ('Treatise titled Sagaciously Elucidated

---

[16] By "pre-classical language" is meant the written form of Middle Mongolian spoken during the era of the Mongol Empire.

[17] Kara notes this quality, for instance, to the 1721 Golden Beam Sutra. See György Kara, *Books of the Mongolian Nomads*, Indiana University, Bloomington 2005, p. 275.

[18] For discussion of Chosgi Odsir and his translation work, see Dalaitai Cerensodnom and Manfred Taube, *Die Mongolica der Berliner Turfansammlung*, Berliner Turfantexte XVI, Akademie Verlag, Berlin 1993, pp. 9, 75ff.; Igor De Rachewiltz, *The Mongolian Tanǰur Version of the* Bodhicaryāvatāra, Harrasowitz, Wiesbaden 1996; and György Kara's review of de Rachewiltz in JAOS 117 (1997): 704–706.

[19] Cf. Constance Hoog, *Prince Jiṅ-gim's Textbook of Tibetan Buddhism: The* Śes bya rab gsal *(*Jñeya-prakāśa*) by 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan dPal bzang po of the Sa skya pa*, Brill, Leiden 1983, pp. 23–27.

[20] Vasubandhu, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam*, Louis de La Vallée Poussin, transl., Leo M. Pruden, transl., vols. 4, Asian Humanities Press, Berkeley 1988, pp. 365–550.

[21] For fourteenth century Turfan-text fragments with poetry on the consequences of sin similar to that in *Oyin-i geyigülügci*, see Herbert Franke, *Bruchstücke einer buddhstischen Schrift über die Sündenfolgen aus den mongolischen Turfan-Fragmenten*, in: *Studies in South, East, and Central Asia*, New Delhi, 1968, pp. 37–44. See also Cerensodnom and Taube, *Mongolica*, pp. 131–136.

Epistemology') studied by V. Uspensky.[22] This *pothi*-style manuscript is a Mongolian translation of the well-known Buddhist primer composed in 1278 in Tibetan as the *Shes bya rab tu gsal ba* ('Thoroughly Elucidated Epistemology') by Qubilai Khan's Imperial Preceptor, 'Phags pa bla ma Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1235–1280), for Qubilai's son, the heir-apparent, Cinggim (Ch. Zhenjin 真金 [1243–1286]).[23] Now kept in a collection of the St. Petersburg University Library, the manuscript originally belonged to the private library of Prince Yunli, the seventeenth son of Kangxi.[24] According to Uspensky, the text was most likely copied for Prince Yunli in the 1720s or 1730s, but Uspensky also notes that the text was redacted from what must have been a very old text, most likely dating from the pre-1368 Yuan dynasty. He bases this view on errors found in the text caused by misinterpreting the archaic language of the original, which he demonstrates to be clearly the pre-classical. He compares this text to that of the *Arban qoyar jokiyangγui* ('The Twelve Deeds [of Buddha]') which was also copied for Prince Yunli from a very old Mongolian text.[25] G. Kara corroborates the authenticity of the St. Petersburg manuscript studied by Uspensky by using it to identify a 'Phags pa square-script text-fragment from Qaraqota as a pre-1368 Yuan dynasty, Mongolian translation of *Shes bya rab tu gsal ba*.[26] As for *Oyin-i geyigülügci*, being that the *ductus* of the text is like that of the 1721 *Golden Light Sūtra* block-printed in Beijing,[27] perhaps the xylograph itself was not old when it was taken in 1743 and had not travelled far from the time of its creation to the place of its detention in the Summer Palace Library.

The strength of this assessment must be weighed, however, against the fact that, although Sa skya influence among the Mongols was at its apogee prior to the expulsion of the Yuan in 1368, the publishing of Mongolian texts continued in Beijing during the Chinese Ming dynasty. Moreover, although supplanted by the Gelugpa after Altan Khan's conversion in 1578, Sa skya pa influence among the Mongols endured at least until the fall of the Yuan dynasty to the Manchus following Ligdan Khan's death in 1634. Likewise, pre-classical Mongolian was written roughly from the 13th to the 17th century and gave way to the dawn of the "classical" era only with the ascendancy of the Qing dynasty

---

[22] Vladimir Uspensky, *"Explanation of the Knowable" by 'Phags-pa bla-ma Blo-gros rgyal-mtshan (1235–1280): Facsimile of the Mongolian Translation with Transliteration and Notes*, Tokyo, 2006.

[23] Ibidem, p. IX.

[24] Ibidem.

[25] Ibidem, p. X.

[26] György Kara, "Reading the Middle Mongol Translation of 'Phags-pa's *Shes-bya rab-gsal* in the St. Peterburg Manuscript and in a Print Fragment from Qaraqota", *Central Asiatic Journal* 59 (2016): 43–60. For further history of translating *Shes bya rab tu gsal* into Mongolian, see Agata Bareja-Starzyńska, *Brief Study of the Mongolian Transmission of the Buddhist Treatise 'Śes bya rab gsal' by 'Phags pa bla ma Blo gros rgyal mtshan*, in: *Tractata Tibetica et Mongolica. Festschrift für Klaus Sagaster zum 65. Geburtstag*, Karenina Kollmar-Paulenz and Christien Peter, eds., Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2002, pp. 13–20. I would like to thank Dr. Bareja-Starzyńska for making her article known to me and for suggesting the relevance of this interesting case of textual transmission for the case of *Oyin-i geyigülügci*.

[27] For a study of the *ductus* in the Uygur-Mongolian script orthography in general and for that of *The Golden Light Sūtra* in particular, see Kara, *Books of the Mongolian Nomads*, pp. 78, 119–121, 272, 275.

ca. 1636. To this must be added the fact that I have seen nothing of *Oyin-i geyigülügci* but its facsimile reproduction. Thus, I imagine it is possible – though not likely – that this treatise was translated from Tibetan after the 14th century during a closing era of the pre-classical period.

Pre-Classical Language

In the *Oyin-i geyigülügci* a pre-classical Mongolian language is evident in the text's grammar and word-stock.

As for its grammar, the plural is marked with ancient suffixes *-d*, *-s*, and *-n*. For instance, in the phrase *merged onuγtun* "the sages ought to know" we have a plural *-d* in *merged* 'sages.' In *aγulas-un qaγan* "king of mountains" we have a plural *-s* in *aγulas* 'mountains.' In *aran gergen nökör següder terigüten* "men, wives, companions, retinue, and so forth" we have a plural suffix *-n* in *gergen* 'wives.' Note that in this same phrase, whereas in classical Mongolian the singular form *aran* is obsolete and the plural form *arad* comes to be used in the singular to denote a 'common man,' here the pre-classical term *aran* 'man' is a singular form used in the plural sense to denote 'men, people, or commoners.' Also in the way of plural forms, whereas in classical Mongolian the third person possessive pronouns *inu* and *anu* are used indiscriminately as subject markers, here they – tend to – maintain their original distinction, *inu* marking the singular, *anu*, the plural, e.g. *ücüken ber amuγulang inu ügei bui* "without even a lit bit of rest" (53v); versus *ayul jobalang-ud-i anu neng olan* "dangers and sufferings are extremely many" (45r). The text also uses plural forms of verbal nouns. The *nomen perfecti -γsan/-gsen* takes a plural *-d*, e.g., in the word *kökegülügsed* "those that have been suckled at the breast" (12r). And the *nomen futuri -qui/-küi* takes a plural suffix *-n*, e.g., in the word *kemegdekün* "those who are said to be" (16r).

The dative-locative case is marked with the typically pre-classical forms *-a*/*-e* and *-da*/*-de*//*-ta*/*-te*. For instance, in *balai mungqaγ aduγusun-a töröjü jobamui* "being born a dumb beast they will suffer" the *-a* suffix is used to mark a dative-locative form of *aduγusun* 'beast.'

The typically pre-classical combined dative-locative-ablative suffix *-daca*/*-dece* is also attested, e.g., in the phrase *tere yirtincü-dece maγad aldaraqu* "all will be lost from that world."

A late pre-classical form *-gi* is sometimes used to mark the accusative case, e.g., *γabiy-a-gi abqui yosun* "the custom for receiving merit" (8v). When it comes to the accusative case, whereas the classical language tends to use accusative case endings only to designate definite objects, here the accusative case marks any direct object whatsoever, even an object of an indefinite nature; e.g., *daγusqal-i ügei jobalang-ud-i üjen bui* "[they will] experience suffering that is without end" (39r).

In keeping with the accusative case example, as typical of the pre-classical language, inflection is used pervasively for grammatical forms in general. That is, word forms are

much more apt to take declensional suffixes than in the classical language. For instance, in the phrase *tere metü-dür sedkil-i ayul-un cidabasu* "if one is able to contain the mind in that way" the conditional converb *cidabasu* "if one is able to" is used in the manner of a verbal noun such that its actor *ayul* 'to contain' takes a genitive suffix *-un*. Note that this actor *ayul*, comprised of *a-* 'to be' and a deverbal noun suffix *-yul*, itself functions as a deverbal noun. So functioning, as a noun it takes a case ending, the genitive *-un*, and as a verb takes an object, *sedkil-i*. Note too that as the object of *ayul*, *sedkil* 'mind,' though indefinite, nonetheless takes the accusative case ending *-i*. Pressing further, this process of being able to control the mind is qualified by the phrase *tere metü-dür* "in that way" wherein the postposition *metü* 'like' is declined in the dative-locative case as a noun.

As for verbal conjugations, the *converbum praepartivum -r-un/- r-ün* is used without restriction. Whereas in classical Mongolian this form tends to be used only in a few stock phrases such as *eyin kemen ügülerün* "said thusly ...", *jarliy bolurun* "made the following edict ...", and so on, here it may be used with any verb stem. For instance, it is used with the verb *orci-* "to go around" in the passage *basa basa törön ükün orcir-un: barasi ügei jobalang-i üjejü* "due to going around again and again being born and dying, [they] experience endless suffering" (13r).

Typical of the pre-classical, the optative form *-dqun*/*-dkün* is used, as in the phrase *yayca sedkil-iyen ögcü sonosudqun* "please give your full attention and listen" (2v).

The typically pre-classical benedictive or mild imperative form *-ydaqui*/*-gdeküi* is used as well, e.g., *buyan-tu sayin üiles-i ö[d]terlegdeküi* "[one] ought to hasten to do meritorious good deeds" (92v). Note here too that, whereas in the classical language the *nomen futuri* suffix *-qui*/*-küi* is no longer used as a predicate, here this usage is attested.

The verbal stems *a-* 'to be' and *bü-* 'to be' are not defective. In the classical language the auxiliary verb and copula *a-* 'to be' is used in only certain conjugations, but here it takes any of numerous forms, the conditional, *abasu*; the passive, *ayda-*; the causative *ayul-*; the present tense, *amui*; the *nomen futuri*, *aqu*, *aqui*, and more. In *aqun-i* we have the accusative case ending (*-i*) to the plural form (*-n*) of the future verbal noun (*-qui*) functioning as a substantive form of the verbal stem *a-* 'to be'. As for *bü-*, here we find its forms frequently attested in the classical language, *böged*, *bögesü*, and *bögetele*, but also *bükü*, *bükü*i, and *bür-ün* as typical of the pre-classical.

In certain cases the text's orthography reflects late Middle Mongolian pronunciation. Instead of the familiar form *busu*, we find *büši* 'different, other,' a form attested in the tetraglot dictionary *Muqqadimat al-Adab*, our main source for the western dialect of Middle Mongolian. Likewise, instead of the classical form *oyun* we find *oyin* 'mind, intellect' as in our title, *Oyin-i geyigülügci*. This form is attested in the pre-classical Turfan texts.[28]

Interrogative prowords include arcane forms. One finds the term *kejiy-e* 'when' denoting a certain time or occasion as it does in classical language but also the pre-classical forms *ejiy-e* 'this time' and its counterpart *tejiy-e* 'that time.'

[28] Cerensodnom and Taube, *Mongolica*, p. 11.

As for word-stock, the text relies heavily on Uygur. Found frequently throughout the text is the Uygur conjunction *taki* 'and, also.' Other Uygur terms include *ada* 'danger; demon;' *ed tavar* 'possessions;' *jad* (< Uy. *yad*) 'stranger, alien;' *kilinca* (< Uy. *qïlïnč* 'deed, action; sin;' *öd* 'time'; *yeründeg* (Uy. *yöründek*) 'antidote;' *yelvi* 'magic, illusion;' as in *qamuγ-i jegüdün yelvi kemen uqaju* "understanding all as illusory (lit. 'a dream illusion')" (65r); and *tetürü* (Uy. *tetrü*) 'inverse, illicit, perverse' for Skt. *anavanirvṛtta*. Tib. *bzlog*, as in *tetürü kilincas-un kücün-dür tögeri-* "to be lost under the power of illicit deeds" (14v).

One also finds here numerous rare terms which, if elsewhere attested, tend to be found only in pre-classical sources. One such term is *jilmaγan* 'callow' as in the phrase *jilmaγan nicügün joljaγan* "callow, naked fledgling" (109v). Likewise, in the phrase *qomoryan-dur qaγaγdaγsan göröged metü* "like wild game enclosed within the circle of hunters" (21r) the word *qomoryan* 'circle of hunters' is the term for a royal hunt used during the imperial time. The classical term is *aba* 'battue.'[29]

Prosody

Assuming that the text has been translated from Tibetan, whoever the translator was, he appears to have been a true master – in the medieval sense of the term – and this translation, a masterpiece. The exceptional quality of the work is evident from its lexicon, the richness to which shows the translator's deep knowledge of Mongolian, and also from its prosody. The 114 folio text is set in quatrains, approximately 226 four-line stanzas. Lines are linked through stave-rhyme alliteration, known in Mongolian as *toluγai qolbaqu* "the joining of the heads." Stave- (or head-)rhyme, as opposed to end-rhyme, is the common verse form of Mongolian prosody, because, unlike the Chinese language – where rhyme springs eternal – Mongolian syntax uses but a limited set of finite verb forms at the end of a sentence, making end-rhyme tedious. With stave-rhyme as a foundation, the translator plays off of this basic structure in various ways using, for instance, forms of repetition, parallel structure, and the inversion of word order.[30]

In stave-rhyme, each quatrain has its own alliterative tone, as, for example, in *Oyin-i geyigülügci*'s opening stanza:

---

[29] Thomas T. Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2006, p. 26.

[30] For a study of stave-rhyme alliteration in Mongolian prosody, see György Kara, *Stave-Rhyme, Head-Rhyme, and End-Rhyme in Mongolian Poetry*, in: *Altaic Affinities: Proceedings of the 40th Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference (PIAC)*, Indiana University: Bloomington, 2001; see also G. Kara, "Mongolian Verses without Alliteration", *Annales universitatis de Rolando Eotvos nominatae*, Budapest 1972, pp. 161–168; and Peter Zieme, "Zur buddhistischen Stabreimdichtung der alten Uiguren", *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 29 (1975), pp. 187–211.

Γayiqamsiγ nigülesügči tere naran: Wonderful compassionate one, that sun,
γangγ-a ümürigüldegsen kümüd ceceg: Lotus flower that blooms from the abyss
γar-un alaγaban oroi deger-e: With the palms of my hands turned upward
qamuγ-aca kündülen mörgüjü bür-ün I bow down before you in full respect.
(1v)

Note that in the final verse of the stanza the initial *qa-* in the word *qamuγ* is orthographically the same as the initial *γa-* in the preceding three verses but phonetically different, the *q* being unvoiced whereas the γ is voiced. This distinction shows a typical quality of Mongolian stave-rhyme alliteration, which is more literary than oral, orthographic but not necessarily phonetic, more for the eye than for the ear.

In addition to stave-rhyme, the text uses internal rhyme from time to time as in the verse: *jilmaγan nicügün joljaγan inu ber* "as for the callow, naked fledgling" (109v). In the verse *daγutay-a tas tus dongγoduγad gilbeljü* "thundering with a rumble and flashing" (18v) we have cacophonous internal alliteration in imitation of the sound of rolling thunder. In the first couplet of one stanza: *bariy-a-dur inu basa basa bariγdaju // basa basa törön ükün orcir-un* "Bound up in fetters again and again // they live and die going round and around" we find strong *ba-* alliteration throughout. Together with the repetition of *basa* 'again' these verses create a dizzying sense of infinite regress characteristic of the physical world's ceaseless turnings and constant "becoming."

The incidental repetition of words that we see in this example gives way to repetition as a verse feature of its own. Note the repetition of the first two verses below:

olan ügülejü ber yaγun kereg: What's the use of much talking? Ask freely
olan ülü taγalaγdaqun üiles-i: About those things that cannot be surmised,
ulam-aca asaγuju sonosuγad saca: But the moment that the answer is heard,
oγorcu mün deger-e gejü talbiγdaqui Immediately refrain from speaking.
(94v)

Repetition of individual words gives way to the repetition of phrases and to parallel structure, as in the four quatrain passage below:

taγalaqun sayid-aca qaγacaqui ba: There's suffering in being separated
daki qaγacaqui bolbasu kemen eriküi From one's loved ones and, once separated,
jobalang:
dayisun maγud-luγ-a uciraquy-a ba: In seeking them; there's suffering in meeting
daki uciraqui bolbasu kemen ayuqui Enemies, evils and in fear of them.
jobalang::

öri sadun kemegdeküi olan bolbasu: When one has many friends and relatives
üküleng γasiγun jigür-dü jobalang: Their deaths bring swift and bitter suffering.
öri sadun terigüten ügei bolbasu: When one has neither friends nor relatives
üjen yadaqui dayisun ola-tu jobalang:: One suffers many hateful enemies.

adal qar-a ed tavar ügei bolbasu: When one has no livestock or possessions,
aγuy-a asuru berke qoq-a jobalang: There's the suffering of great hardship and dearth.

adal qar-a ed tavar yeke bolbasu: When livestock and possessions are many
asaran quriyan yadaqui uliγ jobalang: There's the nuisance of looking after them.

oqor nasulabasu ödterken ükükü̈i: If one lives a short life, he dies too soon.
urtu nasulabasu öteljü ükükü̈i kiged: If one lives a long life, he dies grown old.
ücüked-e ba daki yekes-e ba: These sufferings that herewith have been told
ügülegsen edeger jobalang-ud bolun bui:: Befall both the least and greatest alike.
(51r–52v)

As a form parallel structure, the text also makes use of parable, that is, the juxtaposition of analogous terms side by side. Note the following stanza:

yeke nigüleskü̈i sedkil-i ködölgegdejü: Moved by his greatly compassionate mind,
yerü qubitan-u bodi linqu-a-yi: Awakening lotus of those so fated,
yekede delgeregülür-ün burqan naran: In order that it might greatly flourish,
yirtincü-dür nigen nigen-de uryuyu:: The Buddha sun on earth at times will rise.
(5r)

In verse two in the phrase *bodi linqu-a* 'awakening lotus' the abstract concept *bodi* 'awakening' is made concrete in metaphor by juxtaposition with *linqu-a* 'lotus' (Ch. *lianhua* 蓮花), such that awakening is a lotus. In verse three the structure is repeated in *burqan naran* 'Buddha sun' such that Buddha is the sun. Thus, through the ambiguous verbal stem *delgere-* 'to blossom, flourish' a latent analogy emerges such that as Buddha causes awakening to flourish among those who have a share, so the sun causes the lotuses to blossom. In verse four the analogy is extended into a full-fledged parable such that as bodhisattvas appear one after another in the world, the sun rises time after time upon the earth.

In verse four it is the ambiguous verbal form *uryu-* that sustains the parable. The term *uryu-* can mean 'appear' in a general sense as in the case of a bodhisattva, or it can refer specifically to the rising of the sun. In sum, because the parable is latent in the text its effect comes indirectly and apart from the words themselves. The effect of the parable comes, rather, as revelation when one beholds lotuses blooming in the sun and suddenly calls to mind the flourishing of awaking among those who have a share. And in this way, by making possible the revelation of awakening through the mere sight of common lotuses, the text also makes apprehensible in the same moment the qualities of character that exemplify awakening – beginning with the mind of compassion.

On the whole stanzas show either of two opposing characteristics. Some verses show syntactic unity, be it at the level of phrase, clause, or sentence, and so express what is

known in Western poetics as ‘cloture’ or ‘semi-cloture’. Other verses show syntactic disunity. That is, the syntactic units are broken between one verse and the next. This is known is Western poetics as enjambment. In the example of syntactic unity below note that each verse constitutes as complete phrase:

tergen-ü kürdün metü orciγad:	Going around like the wheels of a cart,
tengcircü basa basa orcin amui:	Grown confused as round and around they go,
tetürü kilincas-un kücün-dür tögerijü yabuγad:	Lost to the power of their perverse sins,
tegsi orčilang-un kinaγan-tur ele jobamui:: (14v)	In the cycle’s control all suffer the same.

Here is an example of a stanza with enjambment:

asanggi galab-ud-tur qataγujiju:	Enduring innumerable eons,
ariγun qoyar čiγulγan-i dügürgejü:	Filling the two pure accumulations,
asuru ariγun nom-un töb-dür edüge:	Now at the center of the great pure law
amurliju nuta saγumui tere boγda:: (3v)	Resides unshakably blissful, that saint.

Note in line four how the imperfect converb *amurliju* ‘being blissful’ carries over from verse three.

We see in verse four another common feature of prosody, the inversion of normal syntax or anastrophe. Enjambment and anastrophe are often used for the sake of sustaining stave-rhyme – as we see in the example above. But at the same time they are also used for emphasis. Frequently verses begin in rather jarring fashion with the imperfect converb. Doing so forces the reader to think of the subject of the sentence, which, often omitted, becomes all-inclusive and so refers to oneself, the reader, affecting him or her in a visceral way. The first couplet of a stanza which we have already studied gives:

tergen-ü kürdün metü orčiγad:	Going around like the wheels of a cart,
tengčirčü basa basa orčin amui:	Grown confused as round and around *you* go,

Although I have cited these lines as an example of cloture, one might also cite them as an example of enjambment and anastrophe in that the imperfect converb *tengcircü* ‘being confused’ seems to fit in verse one before the word *orciγad* ‘having gone around’. There, however, it muddies the metaphor *tergen-ü kürdün metü* “like the wheels of a cart”. At the head of verse two, on the other hand, the act of being confused follows causally from the act of having turned around, the word itself suits the stanza’s alliterative tone, and, to my point, its syntax pulls the reader directly into what is happening.

Genre

The lexicon of the text is not only rich in rare words, but its word-stock also shows a remarkable diversity. A sign of this diversity is that the text is rife with terms that occur but once. As mentioned, the text's rich lexicon shows the translator's deep knowledge of Mongolian, but too this high frequency of *hapax legomena* in particular shows that the text treats – what proves to be an extremely broad subject – succinctly. As noted above, Heissig has deemed *Oyin-i geyigülügci* a didactic work or *Lehrschrift*, and this designation is not incorrect. The aim of the text, however, is rather more explicit. It teaches a way to salvation, freedom from the physical world or *saṃsāra*, liberation from the cycle of endless transmigration from being to being, world to world, from the damned in hell, to the hellish realm of insatiable hungry ghosts, to the beasts of the water, land, and air, to the various walks of mankind, to demi-gods, and to the gods in heaven. Salvation comes with *nirvāṇa*, extinction in the darkness of the void.[31]

A soteriological aspect is ubiquitous in Buddhist teaching. One finds it not only in scripture of every sort but as a major subject of iconography. Canonical literature expressly dedicated to salvation is found in treatises such as the *Karmaśataka* and *Avadānaśataka* and in the *Smṛtyupasthānasūtra*. This emphasis on soteriology shows continuity with early Buddhist works such as the *Mahāvastu* and Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*. What is more, Buddhist tradition shows affinity with the greater post-Vedic Indian tradition. Its *topoi* one finds in works such as *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇa*s. Indeed certain passages of *Oyin-i geyigülügci* mirror the *Purāṇa*s almost verbatim.[32]

Yet beyond Buddhism the notion of salvation is not unheard of. The genre's distinctive *topoi*, heaven, hell, judgment, rebirth, and so on, belong to other traditions as well. Comparing traditions, however, has historically proven problematic. In a bygone era scholars did often make comparisons, but these tended to be made under a prevailing Christian orthodoxy which defined Buddhist tradition in Christian terms. In recent years the tendency in scholarship has been not only to deny comparison but also to emphasize the non-compatibility of different traditions. For instance, whereas Christian "hell" is held to be everlasting, because Buddhist hell is held to be merely of very long duration, when it comes to Mongolian tradition, Lessing's dictionary goes out of its way to define Mongolian *tamu* 'hell' as "purgatory (not 'hell')."[33] In *Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism*, Stephen Teiser stains his study of a Sino-Buddhist treatise on salvation with comparison to Christian tradition at one point and one point only, the English translation of the Sanskrit term *naraka* 'hell, place

---

[31] For *nirvāṇa*, see Robert E. Buswell, Jr. and Donald S. Lopez, Jr., eds., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 2014, pp. 589–590.

[32] See, for instance, *Bhāgavata-Purāna* (3.30) on "Samsāra and Sufferings in Hell" in: Ganesh Vasudeo Tagare (transl.), *The Bhāgavata-Purāna*, Part I, *Ancient Indian Traditions and Mythology*, Vol. 7, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1970, pp. 397–408.

[33] Ferdinand Lessing (ed.), *Mongolian-English Dictionary*, Bloomington, 1982, p. 1185.

of torment.'[34] Here Teiser says, "The subject is sufficiently analogous to the medieval European situation to merit the label 'purgatory'."[35]

Impeding comparison has been the tendency to see soteriology strictly as a matter of belief or speculation into questions unknown or unknowable – in particular, the question of what happens when you die. Questions of this nature have come to be understood as falling under the purview of "religion" as opposed to "science." Ironically, the tendency to see soteriology in this way is the product of soteriological rhetoric, itself, which asks to be taken at face value by positing the answers to these sorts of questions as revealed truth, obtained through visions, dreams, revelations, magical journeys, or the like.

Doing so, however, creates a fundamental divide between scholars of soteriology and their subject. Scholars have no knowledge of what happens when you die. Yet by taking soteriological rhetoric at face value scholars allow that creators of the literature either knew something about death that they do not, or, more typically, scholars surmise that those whom they study held some irrational, imaginary, superstitious, or subjective view of death that they need not share or even that the authors in question merely fabricated answers to unanswerable questions unscrupulously as a means to govern ignorant masses. Again, such assumptions about the purport of soteriology have come to influence how people understand "religion."

To take this "religious" view of soteriology strictly, no comparison of any sort is valid. To compare Mongolian versions of *tamu* 'hell' with either the *inferno* or *purgatorio* of Dante, one finds that, although the Buddhist subject appears similar to that of Dante, the appearance seems merely coincidental. Further, when one recognizes that, when it comes to Chinese Buddhist soteriology, the operative term for the place of suffering after death is not Sanskrit *naraka* but Chinese *diyu* (地獄) 'earth prison,' then these two concepts have little in common, for "earth prison" means nothing like "hell" or "purgatory."

From this point of view one cannot but judge the making of comparisons of any sort to be specious or even duplicitous. Should one venture to make a comparative study in this mode one must be willing to forego logical rigor. Alan Bernstein, for instance, prefaces his *The Formation of Hell* with a strong remonstrance against facile comparison:

> Facile comparisons between (...) very different traditions can only be misleading. I propose no direct relationship or literary influence, nor do I invoke the universal structure of the human mind, whereby individual religions necessarily draw from a standard core of archetypes or mythic building blocks. Nonetheless (...).[36]

---

[34] See Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1899, p. 471.

[35] Stephen F. Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 1994, p. 1.

[36] Alan E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996, p. 11.

He then goes on to make comparisons anyway. The rationale for doing so is that one cannot but draw comparisons, for the coincidences between traditions are too compelling not to.

However intriguing coincidences may be, that which is true for other subjects is true for soteriology as well: substantive comparison cannot be made in the absence of a valid standard by which to judge. Due to soteriology's apparent attention to unanswerable questions, no such standard may be applied to it. With no valid means by which to assess it, soteriology becomes an accidental subject studied not as if it were essential but subjectively by those who, for whatever reason, find it interesting. Ironically, here again it is soteriological tradition itself that impedes how observers perceive it. Soteriology projects a future-oriented, faith-based view of a world governed by immutable order as if such a world were status quo. In so doing, the worldview that soteriology engenders leaves those who live by it to forget that for the time being nature is in truth or apparently void and that the worlds created against the void are mutable, imperfect, and given to a conventional order. In leaving those under its thrall to so forget, soteriology obscures the standard by which its own existence is to be understood because it obscures the scientific first principles that govern the here and now.

These scientific first principles begin in realization that there exists in nature an abiding, ever-looming void, a one-and-undifferentiated state absent of orientation. For those who face nature directly, the void is an ever-present reality. Those who live within an established order created for them by others might not readily perceive it but should they momentarily fall outside of the established order the void instantly becomes all too real. One meets it when navigating in wilderness, when lost, caught in a blinding storm, or fallen into a state of panic. Given the void's ever-looming presence, the genesis of any given world lies in the use of science to overcome it. In the face of the void, science begins with the fixing of an arbitrary point of reference.[37] From a point of reference emerges a horizon. The horizon separates heaven above from earth below. Upon this horizon heaven reveals four cardinal directions. With these cardinal points as foundation, it is possible to create conventional systems of orientation by correlating or synchronizing the four directions with the four seasons, such that at the solstitial and equinoctial nodes great arches, known as colures, emanate from the four directions and intersect at right angles at – for peoples in the Northern Hemisphere – the celestial North Pole. These arches form heaven into a metaphysical "vault" or "firmament" which may be further reticulated into a matrix consisting of lines of latitude and longitude. Within the heavenly vault the positions of celestial bodies may be used to indicate occasions in time and

[37] Note carefully that the fixing of this point typifies that which is quintessentially scientific. That one finds orientation by doing so holds true irrespective of any one person and the passing of time. The act is universal to human experience. Note as well that, whereas the act of fixing an arbitrary point of reference defines that which is quintessentially scientific, the point that is fixed, being arbitrarily chosen, is conventional. The discipline to maintaining this arbitrarily chosen, conventional point epitomizes that which is quintessentially religious. Thus, in any first point of orientation, these two things, science and religion, are inextricably linked. One cannot separate them.

positions in space such that any place or season on earth has its corresponding sign in heaven. Orientation thus begets symmetry between heaven and earth such that the order to a given government is reflected in the order it imposes on the sky and vice versa.

Historians recognize the primacy of this symmetry to aristocratic government but tend to forget that when symmetry between heaven and earth is the mode of knowing, knowledge cannot but be expressed poetically as allegory such that seemingly mundane terms in actuality refer to celestial phenomena. The word "dog" might refer to Sirius; "pitcher", Aquarius; "river" the ecliptic; or what have you. Worth mentioning for their relevance to the discussion below are allegorical tropes of hell. The term "hell" itself refers to the unseen or hidden aspect of the sky. When it comes to hell, celestial bodies that set below the earth's horizon "die" in the west and are "reborn" or "resurrected" on the horizon in the east. In symmetry, human dead abide sympathetically beyond the western horizon on an island where the sun sets.[38] Other tropes of hell include the sun setting into water as a "lake of fire,"[39] the mire of earth into which celestial bodies descend and out of which they rise as "human filth,"[40] the upside down vault of sky through which the sun makes its nightly journey as a "boiling cauldron,"[41] and the determination of time at night as a "Great Judgment" of souls.[42]

Though poetic in expression, order so wrought is fraught with imperfection. It is subjective, relative, irrational, conventional, static, contradictory, imprecise, esoteric, created and maintained by force, and so on.

In the face of this abiding imperfection, a teaching gained acceptance that salvation might occur through faith in the possibility of achieving a new world order in the future. Salvation meant eschatology, the destruction of the contemporary world order, and apocalypse, the dawn or revelation of a government, infallible in its conformity with an immutable order in nature. This government was to rule the world, the entire sphere of the earth, irrespective of any one person, in peace and justice forever. For the sake of making progress towards this order, peoples acted in like ways. They repudiated the physical world itself and the knowledge and wisdom that govern it as mundane and inherently imperfect. They supported institutions dedicated to penetrating the mysteries of nature through specific disciplines of inquiry. And they altered their vision of the world to accord with the order they sought to make manifest by socially re-engineering the mores that govern human behavior. In this they made perfection of moral virtue the measure of salvation over noble birth-rite or allegiance to any earthly person or thing.

---

[38] Marchall Clagett, *Ancient Egyptian Science*, vol. 1, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia 1989, pp. 355–358.

[39] Raymond Faulkner, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead: The Book of Going Forth by Day*, Chronicle Books, San Francisco 1991, pp. 49, 51, 89.

[40] Jan Assmann, *Death and salvation in ancient Egypt*, David Lorton (transl.), Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2005, p. 130.

[41] Faulkner, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, p. 102.

[42] Clagett, *Ancient Egyptian* Science, pp. 454–482.

How new-world soteriological government supplanted the aristocratic order of the old world is clear. For one, they transcended the amoral vault of heaven with higher heaven, an empyrean beyond the sky, comprised of abstract concepts such as omniscience, everlasting light, everlasting duration, morality, righteousness, compassion, and common humanity. For another, they took the ancient celestial tropes and refashioned them one by one to reflect the order they sought to make manifest. Likewise, as the means to fight the fires of propaganda with a fire of their own, soteriologists refashioned its tropes and internalized hell away from the hidden aspect of the sky and symbolic locus of the souls of the dead to a conscious state of long-lasting or everlasting duration wherein undead souls are tortured for their sins and heresies so that one day new world order might be realized.

Soteriological teaching appears to have coalesced into a discernable political movement during the Persian Empire (550–330 BC) among peoples in the Aramaic world, that is, among the hosts of nations for whom Aramaic was *lingua franca*. During the Greco-Roman era (332 BC–AD 395) soteriological teaching was taken up by various groups, ethnic and political, who used it to espouse "world religion" in the promulgation of their own respective orders, philosophical, national, and state. These groups include (but are not limited to) the Zoroastrian, Judaic, Platonic, Buddhist, Mithraic, Gnostic, Christian, Manichean, and Islamic. And these vehicles spread soteriological teaching throughout Eurasia.

From this perspective, Buddhist soteriology shares with other traditions an expressly political function. Its literature draws from a deep, wide pool of *topoi*, which, as a rule, have an antecedent in astral science, that is, the science of creating a semblance of orientation in space and time through allegory signifying symmetry between heaven and earth. In its politics and use of *topoi* Buddhist soteriology appears to bear the influence of the greater Greco-Aramaic world into which Buddhism was immersed. And in this context, the study of a Sa skya pa treatise in pre-classical Mongolian verse becomes telling beyond parochial Buddhist limits.

In terms of its scientific foundation, astral *topoi* are spread evenly throughout the text such that *Oyin-i geyigülügc* is taut, stretched tight from stanza to stanza, in allegory. Consider the following:

degedü nom-un üiles-ece ele anggida:	Cut off from the works of the supreme law,
ḏaki kedüi ber kiciyebesü yirtincü-dür:	No matter how hard one strives in this world,
tegerm-e-yi tataɣuluɣsan eljigen metü:	Just like a donkey forced to turn a mill,
tengcirejü mün ɣajar-a orcin amui	Tormented in his place, one goes around.
(8v)	

While the image of a donkey put to labor turning a mill makes for a vivid metaphor, in the greater *saṃsāra*, the scene might allude to the turning of the heavens around the celestial pole. In astral science the standard representation of this phenomenon was the figure of a mill-wheel. Greek *polos* and the Arabic term for the pole, *al-ḳuṭb*, refer to

a pivot around which turns a millstone.[43] Dante in *Purgatorio* (4.64) mentions the *Zodïaco rubecchio*; *rubecchio*, though usually translated 'red, ruddy, or glowing', refers to an indented mill-wheel.[44] Likewise, the year's lead star is said to be "yoked" to the pole and pull the stars through the heavens.[45] The allegory of heaven as a wheel pulled by beasts of burden yoked to the pole was a commonplace and known in Indian tradition.[46] Across traditions and throughout history numerous stars as various beasts of burden are in some way "yoked" in heaven. However, the most prominent and widely known of these yokes were placed at the colures among stars of the Western zodiac, which was well known in India and to Buddhists.[47] In that system, for traditions that begin reckoning from the summer solstice, the body that pulls the celestial wheel around the pole is the constellation Cancer. In Cancer are two stars well named for this purpose. These are the delta and gamma stars of Cancer respectively, known in Greek astral science as the *Onoi* 'Asses,' popularly known as "donkeys."[48]

As for its relationship with foreign literatures, consider the following stanzas from *Oyin-i geyigülügci*:

kedün kedün-de ba daki tamu-dur:	In Hell however so very many
geskegsen siremün toγoγan γaγca burtaγ ömekei-gi idegsen:	Suffer ever torment upon torment
gedesün kebeli keseg keseg tülegdejü:	Bowels and bellies burned bit by bit eating
kelkü jobalang-iyar aburida jobamui::	Filth and rot from a molten copper pot.
qamtudqaju nigen nigen-e γutuγalabasu:	United to be one by one defiled
Qaltud-un qaγan-ača ber ai öndür:	In a city made of searing fire, oh,
qalaγun γal-iyar bütügsen balγasun-dur:	[With flames climbed] higher than the Lord of the Heights
qatatala tülegdebei kilincas-un siltaγabar (9v-10r)	How dry one's burned on account of his sins!

And compare these stanzas to a passage from the Book of Ezekiel (24.1–14), what is known as the "Allegory of the Cauldron:"

> Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose rust is in it, and whose rust has not gone out of it! Take out of it piece after piece, without making any

[43] Paul Kunitzsch, *The Arabs and the Stars: Texts and Traditions of the Fixed Stars, and their Influence in Medieval Europe*, Variorum Reprints, Northampton 1989, XVIII, p. 1

[44] See the Longfellow (1886) translation and commentary; see also Richard A. Allen, *Star Names, their Lore and Meaning*, Dover New York 1963, pp. 4–5.

[45] For "yoke" as term of astral allegory, see Allen, *Star Names*, p. 4, 71, 83–85.

[46] In Indian tradition it is kine in particular that reside in heaven as stars that turn the wheel of heaven. See Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s.v. "*go*", p. 363.

[47] Allen, *Star Names*, pp. 364, 431.

[48] Ibidem. p. 111.

> choice. … Woe to the bloody city! I also will make the pile great. Heap on the logs, kindle the fire, boil well the flesh, and empty out the broth, and let the bones be burned dry. Then set it empty upon the coals, that it may become hot, and its copper may burn, that its filthiness may be melted in it, its rust consumed. (Ez. 24.6–13)

In both passages the damned are rounded up to be one by one burned dry in a city of searing flame and boiled alive in a molten copper pot on account of sin. The passages are not verbatim but the correspondence between them goes well beyond coincidence. Yet, if these passages are all one has to go by, judging the nature of the relationship between the two cannot but be subjective and speculative, for who can tell who cooked up (as it were) the idea of using the figures of a boiling cauldron, a burning city, and defilement to chastise people? Notice too how a literal reading of the passages influences one's perception of their authors and the world the authors not only inhabited but sought to govern. The terms that these authors proffer appear to possess no science whatsoever and the governments they uphold appear to be propagated through nothing more than fanciful figments of the imagination.

However, when one reads these passages from the point of view of astral allegory, the question of the relationship between the two becomes objective and verifiable. The terms they share, hell, the burning of intestines, defilement, a pot of molten copper, and a city of searing fire, all refer to observable, celestial phenomena. Each bears science and history. For this science and history the relationship between the two passages can be demonstrated to be one of influence and the transmission of this influence can be traced. Moreover, when one reads these passages as astral allegory one's perception of their authors and their worlds changes dramatically. Rather than fanciful imagination, the terms referenced in these passages are the products of erudition; the employment of the terms for the purpose of propagating a certain order is very carefully calculated; and the governments of the two world orders in question, the Jewish and the Buddhist respectively, are both firmly grounded in science. Think too what this change in point of view means for the interpreter. Rather than remaining aloof from one's subject and making interpretation based on subjective perception or, more profitably, cliquish consensus, the interpreter must engage with the subject and seek to win the erudition necessary to know not only to what tropes such as "cauldron" or "city" or "defilement" refer but also how the authors who use these tropes came to know them and what they intended to accomplish through their use.

Although a thorough explication of any of these tropes (let alone a comparative analysis of the two passages) is beyond the scope of this essay, since the celestial antecedents to the "cauldron" and "defilement" tropes have already been cited above, a brief study of the term "city" might serve to demonstrate something of how the tropes of soteriological literature can be explicated in terms of astral allegory. When it comes to celestial antecedents, there are many kinds of cities. For one, the presence of the "city" as a *topos* in astral allegory reflects its significance as a political center on earth. Because

certain cities serve as centers for constructing great kingdoms or entire world orders, they might be considered more reflective of heaven than others. In ancient Egypt a number of cities served as fixed points of observation from which to apply astral science so as to found order over chaos. One cosmogony was promulgated from Heliopolis, Egyptian Anu, City of the Sun, where falcon-headed Horus was the demiurge and the pharaoh his incarnation.[49] The geneses Egyptian cities such as Heliopolis, Memphis, and Thebes provided served not only to govern the local environs but were exported to nations near and far and have continued to influence government and its literature for millennia. From these city-centered cosmogonies one learns the *logos* to the geography of heaven and hell. Geographical terms of the cosmogonic city's local environment, such as a desert in the west, a river in the east, marshes and islands of the sun, the valley of the dead, and mountains in the east and west, all conform to a specific celestial orientation and season. Historically, these features of local Egyptian environment take on significance everywhere Egyptian influence spread and for soteriological literature especially.[50]

Another city that is particularly reflective of heaven is Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a celestial city to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. The blueprint for the celestial Jerusalem is given in *Ezekiel* 40-43 where on the tenth day of the first month of the 25th year (573 BC, April 28) Ezekiel has a vision of the new temple. He is set down on a high mountain whereupon he finds a structure like that of a city. He sees a man whose appearance is like bronze with a line of flax and measuring reed in hand standing at the gateway. The man shows him the temple. It is modeled as a reflection of heaven with outer and inner courts, four gates, seven steps leading to each gate, thirty chambers, Janus-faced cherubs, man and lion, and so on. A central motif to apocalyptic literature is the founding of "New Jerusalem" at the cosmic center of a new world order governed by the messiah or second Adam.[51] Ibn Sīnā (L. Avicenna, d. 1037) in his *Recital of Hayy Ibn Yaqzān* sings of "Celestial Jerusalem" in an extended allegory.[52] *The Apocalypse of St. Paul* gives an extended allegory of Jerusalem as the "City of Christ." The city is made of gold and encircled by twelve walls. Around it flow rivers of the honey of the Ganges, the milk of the Euphrates, oil of the Nile, and the wine of the Tigris. Twelve towers and twelve thrones stand within its walls. On high in the middle of the city is erected the altar of the Most High.[53] In *City of God* Augustine represents celestial Jerusalem as the "shining city on a hill." This epithet he draws from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5.14) wherein Jesus tells his disciples, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden." From the "city on a hill" *topos* one sees that the "city" has come to function much in the way of, or merely replaced a "mountain summit" *topos* as

---

[49] Clagett, *Ancient Egyptian Science*, pp. 263–327.

[50] Ibidem. pp. 355–370.

[51] Matthew Black, *The Book of Enoch or I Enoch*, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1985, p. 20, 81, 278; 2 Esdras 7.26, 13.36; 2 Baruch 32.3; and Revelation 21.2, 10.

[52] Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, W. R. Trask, transl., Bollingen Foundation, New York 1960, pp. 137–150.

[53] Eileen Gardiner, ed., *Visions of Heaven and Hell before Dante*, Italica Press, New York 1989, pp. 30–35.

the point of observation from which the world is ordered. As the center of the cosmos, the corresponding place in heaven for these world-order founding cities is – for worlds created in the Northern Hemisphere – the celestial North Pole. There celestial cities abide for all eternity beyond the lines of separation that bind the mundane realm below to time and space. And there these cities' rulers reign on high looking down over all of creation as "Lord of the Heights."[54]

Besides the celestial North Pole, the "city" trope may refer to other regions and aspects of heaven. Regions of heaven likened to cities might be referred to by a host of analogous terms including the "palace", "citadel", "fortress", "prison", "temple", "church", "monastery", "garden", "orchard", "field", and so on as well as by various natural toponyms such as "mountain", "sea", "valley", "forest", "grove", and so on. Of these, the city makes for a pleasing, elegant metaphor because the view of its torchlights, shining against the dark of night, whether on a hill above or in a dale bellow, so aptly mirrors the stars twinkling in the sky. Celestial cities often come in sets, the numbers to which indicate certain celestial phenomena. The trope of the "Seven Cities" is especially prominent. Dante in *Inferno* (27.38) discusses seven cities of infernal Italy, the first associated with an eagle, the second with a lion that changes alliances between winter and summer, and so on. Thomas Heywood in *Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels*[55] writes of Homer:

> Seven cities warred for Homer, being dead,
> Who, living, had no roof to shroud his head.

Analogously, John in *Revelation* (1.4, 11) refers to the "Seven Churches of Asia." In the *Recital of Hayy Ibn Yaqzān* Ibn Sīnā tells us that the celestial bodies are the cities of each manner of heaven.[56] Proceeding from clime to clime he describes the distinctive qualities of each land and people he visits in symmetry after the manner of the stars that mark it.[57] From the Persian commentary we learn that Ibn Sīnā's climes conform to the nine celestial spheres. These range through the respective spheres of the seven wandering stars to the eighth sphere of the fixed stars to the ninth sphere of the fixed, immovable firmament, known as equatorial heaven. Under this scheme the sphere of the moon is swift in gait; slight in nature; and possessing of nine cities. Mercury's sphere is slighter but with a slower gait; its cities ten. The sphere of Venus is ruled by a woman; its cities nine. The sun has five cities; and so on. In a note we find that the "cities" in question indicate a term of astronomical observation necessary to explain the motion of each planet. Whereas the term "kingdom" designates each planet's principal or enveloping

---

[54] See the discussion of Mt. Zaphon below.

[55] Thomas Heywood, *Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels*, 1635, see http://www.azquotes.com/author/19746-Thomas_Heywood.

[56] Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, p. 99.

[57] Ibidem. p. 143.

sphere, the "city" designates secondary orbs which since Aristotle's time had been used to calculate planetary motion.[58]

The trope of the "city of burning fire" cited in the passages above might refer to a region of heaven, likened to a "city", into which the sun has entered. In ancient Egyptian astronomy the passage of the sun through the night to its rising in the east at the New Year is likened to a king's journey through seven cities. It travels on to the Field of Rushes where those who are blessed live eternal. During this passage the sun passes through three sets of seven stars, watchers, heralds, and guardians. These bodies belong to the Egyptian decan system of 36 stars. In that system at any one time there are nine stars in the west, eight in the east, twelve "alive" and working in the middle of the sky, and seven "dead" in hell, that is, in the netherworld or *duat*.[59]

When in reference to the sun passing through the netherworld at night, the trope of the "city" is analogous to that of the "boiling cauldron" such that the two refer to something of the same thing and might be used interchangeably.[60] In another reference to Jerusalem, Ezekial (11.1–4) would appear to equate the two terms as follows:

> The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to east gate of house of the Lord, which faces east. And behold, at the door were twenty-five men; and I saw among them Ja-azani'ah the son of Azzure, and Pelati'ah the son of Benai'ah, princes of the people. And he said to me, "Son of man, these are the men who devise iniquity and give wicked counsel in this city; who say, "The time is not near to build houses; this city is the cauldron and we are the flesh." Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man."

Note here and in the Allegory of the Cauldron how, in equating the "city" with the "cauldron", Ezekiel alters the terrestrial city's position or status by shifting its celestial reflection from symmetry with highest heaven to that of deepest hell. In so doing Ezekiel has taken the terrestrial Jerusalem and magically turned it from the world's epitome of that glorious city on a hill into an infernal abomination. Isaiah (14.12–15) uses analogous terms to do the same thing in an oracle against the city of Babylon. Here Isaiah refers to the city by an epithet, Day Star, after the city's celestial sign, the planet Venus, as follows:

> How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north;

---

[58] Ibidem. p. 336 n. 1.

[59] Otto Neugebauer and Richard A. Parker, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts, Volume One, The Early Decans*, Brown University Press, Providence 1960, p. 58. See also Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell*, p. 11.

[60] Faulkner, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, p. 102.

> I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High." But you are brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit.

The mountain here, the mount of assembly in the far north, refers to Mt. Zaphon.[61] A terrestrial Mt. Zaphon is located in northern Syria on the border with Turkey. In the Old Testament the toponym is used primarily as an allegorical trope in reference to the greater cosmos.[62] Its summit rises to the very top of the world, the celestial North Pole. The trope of Mt. Zaphon as the world mountain was assimilated in Hebrew tradition from the Ugaritic. In Ugaritic tradition the peak of Mt. Zaphon is known as *mrym ṣpn* 'heights of the Ṣapānu.'[63] Upon this summit stands the palace of the throne of Baal. This once widely venerated and well known deity was the god of the city-state of Ugarit.[64] The word *ba'al* itself is of Semitic derivation and means 'lord'.[65] In the Old Testament Baal is referred to variously as Baal-zebub 'Lord of the Flies' and Baal-zabul 'Baal the Prince' but also was conceived of as Baal-zebul 'Lord of the High Estate'.[66] As the world order he personifies is overthrown, the cult of Baal is rejected by the Hebrews,[67] and he is cast out of highest heaven, left to reside in Sheol as ruler of the dead, and, as Beelzebul, will come to be known as the adversary to righteousness.[68]

This act of turning the world upside down as it were is a common characteristic of soteriological literature across cultures. From one world order to another not only are the same astral tropes transformed in similar ways they are put towards similar political ends as well. In Christian tradition, for instance, the fallen "Lord of the Heights" or Beelzebul becomes prince of darkness, Satan and/or Lucifer.[69] As for the "city" as the infernal "cauldron", in *Confessions* (3.1) the Christian advocate Augustine uses the trope in the manner of *Oyin-i geyigülügči* and Ezekiel's Allegory as follows:

> I came to Carthage, where a cauldron of illicit loves leapt and boiled about me. I was not yet in love, but I was in love with love, and from the very depth of my need hated myself for not more keenly feeling the need. ... My longing then was to love and to be loved, but most when I obtained the enjoyment of the body of the person who loved me. Thus

---

[61] See commentary on the passage in Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger, eds., *The Oxford Annotated Bible*, Oxford University Press, Inc.; Reprint. edition (1977), Isaiah 14. See also Karel van der Toorn et al., eds., *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)*, 2nd ed., Brill, Leiden 1999, s. v. Zaphon.

[62] DDD s. v. Zaphon.

[63] DDD s. v. Baal, p. 133.

[64] Ibidem.

[65] Ibidem. p. 132.

[66] Ibidem. pp. 154–156.

[67] See 1 Samuel 7.3–4.

[68] DDD s. v. Beelzebul, 239; s. v. Devil, pp. 244–248; and s. v. Satan, pp. 726–732.

[69] DDD s. v. Satan, p. 731.

> I polluted the stream of friendship with the filth of unclean desire and sullied its limpidity with the hell of lust.[70]

Notice how Augustine internalizes the celestial *topoi* "city", "cauldron", "defilement", and "hell" as living within himself. Note too that in so doing he is about transforming world order away from its foundation in astral allegory to a foundation based on moral law. Over time, as Western Civilization evolves into increasingly faith-based world orders, the consistency of this turn in Christian rhetoric will all but erase the scientific basis to tropes. Even so, there is no reason to doubt Augustine in his own time knew perfectly well their natural history. Through the ages, sages such as Dante retained knowledge of the natural history to astral tropes. In *Inferno* (3.1–3) he uses the "city" trope when standing at the gates of hell as follows:

> Through me the way is to the city dolent;
> Through me the way is to eternal dole;
> Through me the way among the people lost.[71]

In India the "city" is also known as a *topos* in various terms of astral allegory. In one system the world is divided into three elemental cities or citadels (*tripura*) of gold, silver, and iron respectively.[72] The *Garuḍa Purāṇa* (2.38) mentions seven upper worlds, seven lower worlds, and seven cities that confer salvation.[73] In the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* (5.21.7–8) the world, being comprised of celestial Mt. Meru, is divided into four valleys each containing its own respective city. Of these four, to the south of Meru is the celestial city of Samyamani, capital of Yama.[74]

Yama is an ancient Hindu deity whose representation comes to be inverted with the advent of soteriological literature.[75] In soteriological literature Yama is the Lord of Death. He embodies the notion of time as that which delimits and separates and is frequently figured in the Buddhist Wheel of Life as the Demon of Impermanence holding the entirety of the material world within his clutches. Yama is also known for his red eyes, green complexion, and blood-red robes. He keeps two broad-nosed, four-eyed spotted dogs that guard the passageway of souls at death. He also keeps two attendants and with

---

[70] Augustine, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, Edward B. Pusey, transl., Modern Library, New York 1949, p. 35.

[71] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri. Inferno*, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, transl., Pennsylvania State University, 2005, p. 14.

[72] For these three "cities", see *The Garuḍa Purāna*, 3 vols., *Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology*, vols. 12–14, J.L. Shastri, (ed.), Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1970, p. 1051; *Brahma Purāṇa*, 4 vols., *Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology Series*, vols. 33–36, J. L. Shastri, (ed.), Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1985, p. 174; and A.B. Keith, (transl.), *Rigveda Brahmanas: The Aitareya and Kauṣītaki Brāhmanas of the Rigveda*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1981, pp. 125, 396.

[73] *The Garuḍa Purāna*, p. 909.

[74] *The Bhāgavata-Purāna*, Ganesh Vasudeo Tagare, (transl.), p. 746.

[75] Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s. v. Yama, p. 846.

them a host of minions. He rides a buffalo or bull.[76] Governing the southern part of the world, he resides in a city of his namesake (*Yamapura*) atop a mountain of copper or iron in the center of manifold regions of hell. This city is wholly adamantine, divine and impenetrable to deities and demons alike. It is square-shaped with four entrances and seven outer fort walls. Within the city confines stands Yama's palace, ornately ornamented with lapis lazuli, thousands of pillars, and studded with pearls.[77] Here Yama judges the dead by weighing their souls in a balance. To those found wanting he metes out punishments to be administered by his fearsome minions in accordance with the severity of sins committed during life. Among the numerous and creative tortures in store for sinners is being tossed into a cauldron of burning fire.[78]

This representation of Yama as the severe ruler of hell develops in India in the period of a century or two preceding and following the turn of the Common Era. During this period Yama begins to assume his familiar form in works such as the Hindu epic *Mahābhārata*, early Buddhist literature, particularly Mahāyāna tracts, and in the *Purāṇa*s. In the *Mahābhārata* Yama holds the title Dharmarāja 'King of justice' and exhibits his characteristic fearsome countenance, dark green complexion, glowing red eyes, and blood-red robes.[79] According to B. Cuevas, one of the earliest Buddhist references to Yama standing in judgment appears in *Devadūta-sutta* from the Pāli *Majjhimanikāya*. The text, he says, is dated to the fourth century AD but was likely extant before the Common Era.[80] Cuevas further notes that the Buddhist theme of the weighing of the soul as a part of the trial of the dead in Yama's court can be traced to Mahāyāna sutras going back to the fourth century AD. The trope first appears, he states, in a passage from the *Bhaiṣajyaguru-sūtra* ('King of Medicine Sutra') which was translated into Chinese in the seventh century and into Tibetan in the late eighth century.[81]

This representation of Yama is not only different from, but antithetical to, that in ancient Hindu tradition. In Vedic literature Yama is a beneficent earthly king. Akin to

---

[76] For general descriptions of Yama's attributes, see Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s. v. Yama, p. 846; and Alice Getty, *The Gods of Northern Buddhism*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1914, pp. 152–154. For Yama's association with time, see Shyam Ghosh, *The Hindu Concept of Life and Death*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi 1989, pp. 1, 36, 238. And for Yama clutching the Wheel of Impermanence, see Stephen F. Teiser, *Reinventing the Wheel: Paintings of Rebirth in Medieval Buddhist Temples*, University of Washington Press, Seattle 2006, p. 10.

[77] For Yama's city and palace, see *The Garuḍa Purāna*, p. 814, 885-88; see also *The Brahma Purāṇa*, pp. 543–545; Ghosh, *The Hindu Concept of Life and Death*, p. 199; Samuel Beal, *A Catena of Buddhist Scriptures from the Chinese*, Ch'eng Wen, Taipei 1970, pp. 56–57; and Karl S.Y. Kao, ed., *Classical Chinese Tales of the Supernatural and the Fantastic: Selections from the Third to the Tenth Century*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1985, pp. 166–171.

[78] In the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (1.41) the damned are tossed into a burning cauldron where they are cooked as they bob up and down. See Daigan Matsunaga and Alicia Matsunaga, *The Buddhist Concept of Hell*, Philosophical Library, New York 1972, pp. 41–42. In the *Garuda Purāṇa* (2.1.41–45) sinners are thrown into a cauldron of burning fire by Yama's attendants, who stir them with a ladle as they liquefy; see *The Garuḍa Purāna*, pp. 732–733.

[79] Matsunaga and Matsunaga, *The Buddhist Concept of Hell*, pp. 19–20.

[80] Bryan J. Cuevas, *Travels in the Netherworld: Buddhist Popular Narratives of Death and the Afterlife in Tibet*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008, p. 45.

[81] Cuevas, *Travels in the Netherworld*, p. 46.

biblical Adam, he is known as the first man to have lived and died. With his twin sister and consort, Yamī, he sires humanity. As king of the dead, like Baal, he reigns on high in the highest or third of three heavens. He keeps two "four-eyed" dogs. In the later soteriological literature these canines will be turned into fearsome beasts which, like Cerberus, drag the damned down into hell. In the Vedas, however, these two dogs are faithful helpers to the souls of the departed. They guard the way to the realm of the Fathers, the Paradise of Light, in the highest heaven.[82] In *Mahābhārata* Yama's palace is described by the divine seer Nārada as being bright as the sun, neither cold nor hot; a place where there is no aging, grief, or hunger. Here one finds all desirable things, food, drink, and flowering trees. It is a place free of, or beyond the constraints of, separation. It is the place where the soul finds eternal peace in death.[83] And as for the city in general, in early sources the trope of a city of blazing fire is taken to be a good thing, a protection against the darkness of the void. In *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 2.11 in order to protect their animal sacrifices from marauding Asuras, the gods erect three fortress citadels to keep the offerings safe. As protection the citadels are kept ablaze and shining by Agni, god of fire.[84]

From this brief sketch of the "city" one sees that with knowledge of astral science the stanzas of *Oyin-i geyigülügci* cited above can be read in a meaningful way. With this knowledge one sees how the "city" interrelates with other tropes such as "cauldron", "defilement", "hell", "mountain", and so on; how astral tropes were held in common across cultures; how these tropes were refashioned away from their previous propaganda; and how this refashioning of tropes was put towards the creation of a new world order. It is in recognizing that a host of manifold tropes were refashioned in this way that one sees that soteriological literature was a vehicle for propagating a global political movement that resulted in Zoroastrian, Jewish, Buddhist, Christian, Manichaean, and Islamic world orders transcending national aristocracies.

---

[82] For Yama as the good king, see A. B. Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, 2 vols., Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1925, p. 408; Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism. Volume One: The Early Period*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989, p. 116. For Yama as the first man, see Rig Veda (10.14.2); Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 77, 408; Matsunaga and Matsunaga, *The Buddhist Concept of Hell*, p. 14); Cuevas, *Travels in the Netherworld*, p. 44. See also the later *Saṁhitā* literature cited in Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 408. For Yama and his sister / consort Yamī, see Rig Veda 10.10. For Yama as lord of the dead, see Rig Veda 9.113.7. 10.58; Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 404, 408; Matsunaga and Matsunaga, *The Buddhist Concept of Hell*, p. 14. For Yama's reign in highest heaven, see Rig Veda 1.35.6; 10.135.7; Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 77, 406–408; Boyce, *The Early Period*, p. 116. For Vedic cosmography and its 'three heavens', see Willibald Kirfel, *Die Kosmographie der Inder*, K. Schroeder, Bonn–Leipzig, 1920, p. 65; Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 77. For Yama's two "four-eyed" dogs, see Rig Veda 10.14. 10-12; Matsunaga and Matsunaga, *The Buddhist Concept of Hell*, p. 14; Boyce, *The Early Period*, p. 116; Cuevas, *Travels in the Netherworld*, p. 44; For these two dogs in the *Atharvaveda* (8.1.7–10; 18.2.12) see William D. Whitney, transl., *Atharva-veda-saṁhitā*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1971. See also the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* (1.6) where they are named Śabala and Śyāma; Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 406; and Matsunaga and Matsunaga, *The Buddhist Concept of Hell*, p. 16.

[83] Ghosh, *Hindu Concept of Life and Death*, p. 199.

[84] Keith, *The Rigveda Brahmanas*, p. 142.

Concerning the dissemination of this political movement, consider another passage:

jaγun költi od-tur ber kürtele:	Enduring throughout many *költi*.
jabsar ügei teyin jobaγuldabasu ber:	Though forced to suffer so without reprieve,
jayaγan maγui kilinča anu ese ariltal-a:	Until your predestined sins are cleansed,
jaγ-a amin niduraqui ülü boloyu	Your life most certainly will not be ceased.
(37r)	

Here the term used in reference to the duration in years of souls in hell is *költi* 'ten million.' The term comes to Mongolian by way of Uygur *koldi* from Sanskrit *koṭi*. The Sanskrit derives ultimately from Aramaic by way of Persian. The Persian numerical system to which it belongs was transmitted via *kharoṣṭhī* and is attested in the edicts of Aśoka (3rd c. BC). During the Gupta era (AD 320–550) the astronomer Āryabhaṭa ca. 500 AD replaced this system with the one which, through Central Asian Islamic influence, we use today.[85] Yet *koṭi* was retained in India for special astronomical functions and in literature to express periods of long duration. In *Mahābhārata, koṭi* is used in reference to the period of souls in hell.[86] In an Ethiopic version of the *Book of Enoch* (21.6) one finds the number used in the context we see in *Oyin-i geyigülügci* as follows:

> These are among the stars of heaven which have transgressed the commandments of the Lord and are bound in [hell] until the completion of ten million years, (according) to the number of the days of their sins.[87]

And as for *Oyin-i geyigülügci*'s politics, consider the following:

aγulas-un qaγan-u orgil deger-e:	On the summit of the king of mountains
amuγulang-<u>d</u>u töröl-<u>t</u>ür töröjü:	Being born to a life of quietude
asuru qanul ügei jirγaγsan jirγalang:	Pleasures enjoyed greatly without surfeit
aγui örgen dalai ber ünen üjügülügdekü::	Unto the vast wide ocean should be seen.
temečeldüküi bulγalduqui dayisun bolulcaju:	[But] struggling vying enemies conflict
terigüben esergü tesergü cabcilalduγsan:	Tit for tat lopping off each other's heads
tegüni γutuγalabasu degedü Širu-a-yin:	Until when so they dishonor themselves
tere yirtincü-dece maγad aldaraqu::	All from the supreme Zurvan's world is lost.
(11r–11v)	

[85] Karl W. Minninger, *Number Words and Number Symbols: A Cultural History of Numbers*, Paul Broneer (transl.), M.I.T Press, Cambridge 1969, p. 394.

[86] Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s. v. "*koṭi*", p. 312.

[87] Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell*, p. 185. Bernstein cites E. Isaac's translation of the Ethiopic Enoch in James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudoepigrapha*, Volume 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments, Doubleday, 1983, p. 24. The number value in the passage varies from one translation to another. See also Black, *The Book of Enoch or I Enoch*, p. 37; George W.E. Nickelsburg (comm.), *1 Enoch: A Commentary on the Book of I Enoch*, Klaus Baltzer (ed.), Minneapolis 2001, p. 297.

Here the king of mountains might refer to the trope of the cosmic world mountain whose summit reaches to heaven at the celestial North Pole. In theory, one such mountain exists, but in history, with every government a world unto itself, each nation had its own. The ocean might refer to the world ocean, a metaphor for the horizon that limits each and every world no matter how great or small.[88] Mongolian *Siru-a* refers to the Zoroastrian deity Zurvan.[89] Zurvan is Father Time, the primogenitor of all things. The cult of Zurvan preached new world order soteriology. According to Mary Boyce Zurvanism emerged as the dominant form of Zoroastrianism in Iran during the reign of Artaxerxes II (404–358 BC). Likely by way of Eudoxus it came to influence Plato and the Greeks.[90] If not earlier, Buddhists would assimilate it sometime in the Common Era through Manichaeism.[91] The theme to the passage above one finds in Christian tradition where the Tempter, Satan, magically transports Jesus to the peak of this same mountain where he shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me", he says (Mt. 4.9). It was the goal of any man who would be king to reach the summit of this mountain and bring order to the world. Turning to the Mongolian tradition one may remark that Chinggis Khan knew this mountain. He climbed it. On its summit he made reverence to the four directions and the sun, for in them lay the foundation of his power.[92] Through his power he elevated this mountain higher and drew the ocean wider than any man before him. Yet Buddhist soteriology looks upon his life's work as folly and threatens all who carry on in such a manner with hell.

Salvation

In closing, here is a summary of *Oyin-i geyigülügci*'s teaching on salvation. Liberation, we are told, comes from meditation on the void and detachment from the physical world of the senses, the burning away of passions and renunciation of self as the center of the world (57v, 58r). In choosing to know freedom one must reject the heresy of those who claim all things are dual and one must follow the right teaching of the Buddha which is perfectly detached from both what is and what is not (61r). Buddha, through his love, revealed two vehicles by which to reach salvation: one, lesser; the other, great. The

---

[88] Brian Baumann, "Whither the Ocean? The *Talu dalai* in Sultan Öljeitu's 1305 Letter to Philip the Fair of France", *Archivum Eurasiae Medii aevi* 19 (2012), pp. 59–80.

[89] A. van Tongerloo, *Middle Iranian in Old Uygur: Remarks on Selected Specimens in the Buddhist and Manichaean Texts*, in: *Medioiranica: Proceeding of the International Colloquium Organized by the Latholieke Universiteit Leuven*, W. Skalmowski and Alois van Tongerloo (eds.), Leuven 1993, pp. 175–176.

[90] Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism,* pp. 152, 231–260.

[91] van Tongerloo, *Middle Iranian in Old Uygur*, pp. 175–176.

[92] In the *Secret History of the Mongols* (§103) Chinggis Khan venerates the cosmic world mountain by ascending Mt. Burqan Qaldun. See Igor de Rachewiltz, transl., *The Secret History of the Mongols: A Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century*, Brill, Leiden 2006, p. 33. See also Thomas T. Allsen, *Spiritual Geography and Political Legitimacy in the Eastern Steppe*, in: *Ideology and the Formation of Early States*, H.J.M. Claessen and J.G. Oosten (eds.), Brill, Leiden 1996, pp. 118–121.

people, however, must proceed by the Great Vehicle, the Mahāyāna way. All who do so, in time will achieve the sanctity of Buddhahood (64r–67v). At the outset one must submit to a righteous, qualified teacher, perform the necessary rituals, make offerings, meditate, read scripture, and strive to perfect virtue – always with a mind of compassion for others (75r–84v). Though you may possess the perfective virtue and compassion of the awakened, liberation can still be impeded by a skeptical, empiricist mind (85r). Although all things in the conventional world are seen, all that is seen is merely illusion (85v). Make your deeds for the benefit of others, treating all with kindness, all as one, as you would treat yourself (87v–88r). For the benefit of others you may reside amongst people in their cities, but if you cannot do them benefit, seclude yourself and meditate (89r–90r). Though it does not serve to be totally without renown or achievement, once a task has been completed, remove yourself from the worldly world immediately (89v–90r). Give away the fruits of your labor (91r). When beset with sufferings, understand them as the purification of previous sins and rejoice (91v). Revere those who possess knowledge and wisdom; respect your elders (93r). Care for the lowly and the afflicted (93r). Guard your words and examine your thoughts (93v). Recognize the good in others and ignore their failings (94r). Speak in a way that hides your own virtue but cleanses iniquity (94r). Spread the love of the one who is to come, Maitreya (95r). Put on robes of meekness and humility (95r). Know that the body of the Buddha is threefold (96r). There are five supreme Bodhisattvas (97r). Know the aspects of wisdom and knowledge and work to accumulate merit (98v–103r). And to begin, confess your sins and ask for forgiveness (111r).

References

Allen, Richard A., *Star Names, their Lore and Meaning*, Dover New York 1963.

Allsen, Thomas T., *Spiritual Geography and Political Legitimacy in the Eastern Steppe*, in: *Ideology and the Formation of Early States*, H.J.M. Claessen and J.G. Oosten (eds.), Brill, Leiden 1996, pp. 118–121.

Allsen, Thomas T., *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2006.

Assmann, Jan, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, David Lorton (transl.), Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2005.

Augustine, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, Edward B. Pusey, transl., Modern Library, New York 1949.

Bareja-Starzyńska, Agata, *Brief Study of the Mongolian Transmission of the Buddhist Treatise Śes bya rab gsal' by 'Phags pa bla ma Blo gros rgyal mtshan*, in: *Tractata Tibetica et Mongolica. Festschrift für Klaus Sagaster zum 65. Geburtstag*, Karenina Kollmar-Paulenz and Christien Peter (eds.), Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2002, pp. 13–20.

Baumann, Brian "Whither the Ocean? The *Talu dalai* in Sultan Öljeitu's 1305 Letter to Philip the Fair of France", *Archivum Eurasiae Medii aevi* 19 (2012), pp. 59–80.

Beal, Samuel *A Catena of Buddhist Scriptures from the Chinese*, Ch'eng Wen, Taipei 1970.

Bernstein, Alan E., *The Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.

Black, Matthew, *The Book of Enoch or I Enoch*, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1985.

Boyce, Mary, *A History of Zoroastrianism. Volume One: The Early Period*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989.

Brahma Purāṇa, 4 vols., *Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology Series*, vols. 33–36, J.L. Shastri, (ed.), Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1985.

Buswell, Robert E., Jr. and Lopez, Donald S., Jr., (eds.), *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 2014.

Cerensodnom, Dalaitai and Taube, Manfred, *Die Mongolica der Berliner Turfansammlung*, Berliner Turfantexte XVI, Akademie Verlag, Berlin 1993.

Chandra, Lokesh, *Early Buddhist Texts in Mongolian*, Sharada Rani, New Delhi 1982.

Charlesworth, James H. (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudoepigrapha*, Volume 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments, Doubleday, 1983.

Clagett, Marshall, *Ancient Egyptian Science*, vol. 1, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia 1989.

Corbin, Henry, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, W.R. Trask, (transl.), Bollingen Foundation, New York 1960.

Cuevas, Bryan J., *Travels in the Netherworld: Buddhist Popular Narratives of Death and the Afterlife in Tibet*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008.

Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri. Inferno*, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, (transl.), Pennsylvania State University, 2005.

Faulkner, Raymond, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead: The Book of Going Forth by Day*, Chronicle Books, San Francisco 1991.

Franke, Herbert, *Bruchstücke einer buddhistischen Schrift über die Sündenfolgen aus den mongolischen Turfan-Fragmenten*, in: *Studies in South, East, and Central Asia*, New Delhi, 1968, pp. 37–54.

Gardiner, Eileen (ed.), *Visions of Heaven and Hell before Dante*, Italica Press, New York 1989.

Garuḍa Purāna, 3 vols., *Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology*, vols. 12–14, J.L. Shastri, (ed.), Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1970.

Getty, Alice, *The Gods of Northern Buddhism*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1914.

Ghosh, Shyam, *The Hindu Concept of Life and Death*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi 1989.

Goodrich, Luther Carrington, *The Literary Inquisition of Ch'ien-lung*, Paragon Book Reprint Corp., New York 1966 (first ed. 1935).

Heissig, Walther, *Beiträge zur Übersetzungsgeschichte des mongolischen buddhistischen Kanons*, Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Göttingen 1962.

Heywood, Thomas, *Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels,* 1635, see http://www.azquotes.com/author/19746-Thomas_Heywood.

Hoog, Constance, *Prince Jiṅ-gim's Textbook of Tibetan Buddhism: The* Śes bya rab gsal *(*Jñeya-prakāśa*) by 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan dPal bzang po of the Sa skya pa*, Brill, Leiden 1983.

Kao, Karl S.Y. (ed.), *Classical Chinese Tales of the Supernatural and the Fantastic: Selections from the Third to the Tenth Century*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1985.

Kara, György, "Mongolian Verses without Alliteration", *Annales universitatis de Rolando Eotvos nominatae*, Budapest 1972, pp. 161–168.

Kara, György, "Review on Igor De Rachewiltz, *The Mongolian Tanjur Version of the Bodhicaryāvatāra*, Harrasowitz, Wiesbaden 1996", JAOS 117 (1997), pp. 704–706.

Kara, György, *Stave-Rhyme, Head-Rhyme, and End-Rhyme in Mongolian Poetry*, in: *Altaic Affinities: Proceedings of the 40th Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference (PIAC)*, Indiana University, Bloomington, 2001.

Kara, György, *Books of the Mongolian Nomads*, Indiana University, Bloomington 2005.

Kara, György, "Reading the Middle Mongol Translation of 'Phags-pa's *Shes-bya rab-gsal* in the St. Peterburg Manuscript and in a Print Fragment from Qaraqota", *Central Asiatic Journal* 59 (2016): 43–60.

Keith, Arthur B., *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, 2 vols., Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1925.

Kirfel, Willibald, *Die Kosmographie der Inder*, K. Schroeder, Bonn–Leipzig, 1920.

Kollmar-Paulenz, Karenina, *The Transmission of the Mongolian Kanjur: A Preliminary Report*, in: *The Many Canons of Tibetan Buddhism*, Helmut Eimer and David Germano (eds.), Brill, Leiden 2002, pp. 151–176.

Kunitzsch, Paul, *The Arabs and the Stars: Texts and Traditions of the Fixed Stars, and their Influence in Medieval Europe*, Variorum Reprints, Northampton 1989, XVIII.

Lessing, Ferdinand (ed.), *Mongolian-English Dictionary*, Bloomington, 1982.

May, Herbert G. and Metzger, Bruce M. (eds.), *The Oxford Annotated Bible*, Oxford University Press, Inc.; Reprint. Edition 1977.

Matsunaga, Daigan and Matsunaga, Alicia *The Buddhist Concept of Hell*, Philosophical Library, New York 1972.

Minninger, Karl W., *Number Words and Number Symbols: A Cultural History of Numbers*, Paul Broneer (transl.), M.I.T Press, Cambridge 1969.

Monier-Williams, Monier, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1899.

Neugebauer, Otto and Parker, Richard A., *Egyptian Astronomical Texts, Volume One, The Early Decans*, Brown University Press, Providence 1960.

Nickelsburg, George W.E. (comm.), *1 Enoch: A Commentary on the Book of I Enoch*, Klaus Baltzer (ed.), Minneapolis 2001.

De Rachewiltz, Igor, *The Mongolian Tanǰur Version of the* Bodhicaryāvatāra, Harrasowitz, Wiesbaden 1996.

de Rachewiltz, Igor (transl.), *The Secret History of the Mongols: A Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century*, Brill, Leiden 2006.

Rigveda Brahmanas: The Aitareya and Kauṣītaki Brāhmanas of the Rigveda, A.B. Keith, (transl.), Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1981.

Tagare, Ganesh Vasudeo (transl.), "Samsāra and Sufferings in Hell" in: *The Bhāgavata-Purāna*, Part I, *Ancient Indian Traditions and Mythology*, Vol. 7, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1970, pp. 397–408.

Teiser, Stephen F., *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 1994.

Teiser, Stephen F., *Reinventing the Wheel: Paintings of Rebirth in Medieval Buddhist Temples*, University of Washington Press, Seattle 2006.

van der Toorn, Karel et al., eds., *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)*, 2nd ed., Brill, Leiden 1999.

van Tongerloo, A., *Middle Iranian in Old Uygur: Remarks on Selected Specimens in the Buddhist and Manichaean Texts*, in: *Medioiranica: Proceeding of the International Colloquium Organized by the Latholieke Universiteit Leuven*, W. Skalmowski and Alois van Tongerloo (eds.), Leuven 1993, pp. 175–176.

Uspensky, Vladimir, *"Explanation of the Knowable" by 'Phags-pa bla-ma Blo-gros rgyal-mtshan (1235–1280): Facsimile of the Mongolian Translation with Transliteration and Notes*, Tokyo, 2006.

Vasubandhu, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam*, Louis de La Vallée Poussin, (transl.), Leo M. Pruden, (transl.), vols. 4, Asian Humanities Press, Berkeley 1988.

Whitney, William D., (transl.), *Atharva-veda-saṁhitā*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1971.

Woodside, Alexander, *The Ch'ien-Lung Reign*, in: *The Cambridge History of China*, Volume 9, Part 1: *The Ch'ing Empire to 1800*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 289–293.

Zieme, Peter, "Zur buddhistischen Stabreimdichtung der alten Uiguren", *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 29 (1975), pp. 187–211.