

The Word Pieh-ch'i 別乞 *Beki* and Mongol Shamans

By Hirosato IWAI

As I am not at all a specialist in linguistics I wonder whether I should take up this sort of subject; however, I have done some research into the inherent beliefs of the Mongol tribes and I wish to put forward my opinion and invite criticism on an episode in the process of this research.

Dr. G. J. Ramstedt, while sojourning in Japan as Finnish Minister, published an Esperanto article entitled "The Altai Tribes and Their Languages," which was rendered into Japanese by Mr. Masae Hasegawa, executive committee of the Japan Esperanto Society and reprinted in a Japanese language journal *Minzoku* 民族 (Folklore Journal).⁽¹⁾ In writing the present article, I have made use of this translation. In the article, Dr. Ramstedt says as follows:

"Modern Tunguse, Mongol and Turkish languages and their respective dialects, like streams issuing from a fountain and a new tribe branching off from a common ancestor, have branched off and have gradually developed from this archaic Altai language."

Similarly, "The Tunguse, Manchus, Mongols, Turks and Tartars have all come from one ancient people and they exist as its successors. Their languages, when viewed in the light of history, are related to the archaic language their forefathers spoke and to their primitive culture."

Again, "The original tribe, or their common forefathers, once lived in a body, forming a formidable nation. It was the Altai people with inherent culture and ancient convention."

(1) Masae Hasegawa 長谷川理衛 tr. *The Minzoku* 民族, vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 9-28, Tokyo. May, 1926.

The idea that the Mongols, Turks, and Tunguse have all branched off from the same Altai people speaking the archaic Altai language has somehow given me a good suggestion in the present study. Dr. Ramstedt further says that "chief, or headman of a tribe" or "master, sir, mylord" is *begin* in the several Tunguse dialects, though pronounced *bögin* by the Negidals and *bei-le* by the Manchus. This comes from *begi-le*. The Mongols employed *bei-le* and *bei-se* as titles for princes, and the Ancient Turks the word *beg* meaning the chief of tribe headmen. As similar titles, there are now-a-days *bej* used by the Ozmans and *bii* by the Kirghiz."

With the foregoing at hand as preliminary information, the reader is now asked to examine the following material.

Basa Čigryis-qahan Usun-ebügen-e ügüleriin, "Usun, Qunan, Kököšüs,
 And Chingis-khan Usun, old man-to says, "Usun, Qunan, Kököšüs,
Degei, ede dörben üjgesen-iyen sonosuqsan-iyän ülü ni'un
 Degei, these four what they had seen what they had heard without hiding
qabčün jī'an aqun böle'ei. Uqaqsan sedhigsen-iyen
 concealing told (me). what they had meditated what they had thought
kelelen aqun böle'ei. Monggol-un tör-e noyan mör beki bolqui
 (they) spoke. Monggol-of convention-by official system *beki* to become
josun aju'ui. Ba'arin aqa-yin uruq böle'ei. Beki mör
 habit existed. (You) Ba'arin tribehead-of descendant are. *beki* system
bidan-u dotora de'ere-eče beki Usun- ebügen bol-tuqai. Beki ergü'ed, čaqa'an
 us -of amongst above-from *beki* Usun, old man be! *beki* elevated white
de'el emüsčü, čaqa'an aqta unu'ul-ju, sa'uri de'ere sa'ulju, takiju, basa
 clothes clad white horse mounting, rank above seated, honoured, and
hon sara sata-ju, teyin atuqai." ke'en jarliq bol-ba.
 year month divining, so be!" saying edict was.

The same phrase in Yeh Te-hui 葉德輝 Ming translation reads:

成吉思再對兀孫老人說，兀孫，忽難，闊闊搠思，迭該，這四箇人，但

(1) *Monğol-un niyuča tobčaran* 忙豁侖紐察脫卜察安, *Yüan-chao-pi-shih* 元朝秘史, "The Secret History of the Mongols" (216, Chap. IX, 19r-20r)

聽見得，心內想起的事，不曾隱諱，都對我說，如今達達體例裏，以別乞官爲重，兀孫你是巴阿鄰爲長的子孫，你可做別乞，做別乞時，騎白馬，着白衣，坐在衆人上面，棟選箇好年月議論了，敬重者。

The first half of the foregoing Mongol text, when literally rendered into English on reference to Prof. Hänisch's German translation,⁽¹⁾ would read:

“And Chinggis-khan said to Old Usun. ‘Usun, Qunan, Kōkōšūs and Degei, these four told [me] what they had seen and heard, neither concealing nor being silent. They informed me of their meditation and thought. According to the Mongol convention, there is the official system to become *beki*.’”

The latter half beginning with Ba'arin in Vladimircov's translation⁽²⁾ reads:

“‘You are the eldest descendant of Ba'arin, you must be the *beki*; in your quality of *beki* you shall ride a white horse, dress in white clothes, and in every company take the first place; it shall be your duty to find out which year and which moon is auspicious’”.

Concerning this pieh-ch'i 別乞, it is written voiceless as *beki* in the Secret History of Mongols,⁽⁴⁾ while in Ho Ch'iu-t'ao's Ch'in-chêng-lu 何秋濤編親征錄,⁽⁵⁾ it is written voiced as *begi* 別吉. In D'Ohosson's “L'Histoire des Mongols” it is written *begui*.⁽⁶⁾ In fact, unless I explained in full detail the problems of Qorči Usun-ebügen *beki* 豁兒赤兀孫額不堅別乞 and the coming

(1) Erich Hänisch: Die Geheim Geschichte der Mongolen, erste Ausgabe, ch. 216. s. 105. Leipzig, 1941.

(2) Boris Jakovlevic Vladimircov. Chingis-Xan. Berlin, Petersbur. Moskwa. Str. 8. L. 3-16. 1922. Vladimirtsov. B. J., Prince D. S. Mirsky, tr. The Life of Chingis Khan, Book I, Chap. 3, p. 77. London, 1930.

(3) Dr. Michiyo Naka comments on this as follows: “別乞 was a title for the chief of a tribe. In Mongolia, tribe heads were often called *beki*.” He cites various instances. Note, p. 361. *beki*. Jingsis Kan Jitsuroku, Chuan IX. 成吉思汗實錄, 卷九. 那珂通世譯註. 19.

(4) The Secret History. *op. cit.* Chuan 9. p. 20. a. etc.

(5) Ch'in-chêng-lu. p. 21. b.

(6) D'Ohosson, M. Le Barcon C.: L'Histoire des Mongols, Tomé I, 2nd ed. La Haye et Amsterdam, Chap. 3, p. 69, etc. 1834.

to the throne of Chingis Khan, I thought it would be difficult to understand my conclusions, but as I have since done this in Haneda Hakushi Shōju Kinen Tōyō-shi Ronsō 羽田博士頌壽記念東洋史論叢,⁽¹⁾ please refer to it there.

In Vladimirtsov's "Life of Chingis Khan" he explains it as follows:

"To complete the organization of military and civil administration Chingis-Khan instituted the post of *beki*, who was to be the State's priest, vested with power and officially recognized. As the reader will recall, the title of *beki* was known from antiquity and was borne more particularly by the leaders of forest clans or tribes. Such leaders added the secular power of a prince to the spiritual authority of the Shaman, which rested on his relation with the clan's ancestor and with its protecting spirits. Chingis now established the post of State Shaman. The first *beki* to be appointed was Usun, an old man who was the eldest member of the Ba'arin clan, the senior branch of descendants of the legendary Bodunchar."⁽²⁾

Now I remember that, about this subject two opinions were given, one is a lecture at the 33rd annual meeting of the History Society 史學會, "On the Origin of the Jurchin Words Pe-chin 勃堇 and Pe-chi-lieh 勃極烈" by Dr. Kurakichi Shiratori,⁽³⁾ and the other an essay in the Shigaku-zasshi 史學雜誌 "Concerning the Tu-pe-chi-lieh 都勃極烈 and the Prime Minister or Kuo-hsiang 國相" by Dr. Hiroshi Ikeuchi.⁽⁴⁾ According to Dr. Shiratori the Jurchin word 勃堇 was pronounced *bōkin*, corresponding to the Manchu *beki*, and the Tunguse *bāki*; the word 勃極烈 was pronounced *bōkile*, corresponding to the Manchu *bekile* and the Tunguse *bākile*. This word is a noun develop-

(1) Hiroato Iwai, Chings Qakhan's Enthronement and Shamans, Asiatic Studies in Honor of Dr. Tōru Haneda on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday May 15, MCMXLII, p. 107-130, Kyoto University, 1950.

(2) Vladimirtsov. B. J., Prince D. S. Mirsky: tr. The Life of Chingis Khan, Book I, Chap. 3, p. 77, London, 1930.

(3) Dr. Kurakichi Shiratori 白鳥庫吉, Shigaku-Zasshi vol. 43, July number, p. 125, 1932.

(4) Dr. Hiroshi Ikeuchi 池内宏, ditto, vol. 43, June number, p. 64-96, 1932.

ed from the verb meaning "to control strictly." The word *pei-tzu* 貝子 *beise* and *pei-le* 貝勒 *beile* were used as titles under the Manchu dynasty, and they were softened from the Manchu *beki* and the Tunguse *bäki*. *Beise* 貝子 is the plural form. In the Jurchin and Mongol languages nouns and adjectives change verbs by the addition of *-le* to the end of the word, while still remaining nouns, as in the case of the Manchu *bei-le* 貝勒 and the Jurchin *böki-le* 勃極烈. . . . The Jurchin *bökin* 勃堇, the Mongol *beki* 別乞, and the Turkish *bek*, *bik* (meaning "hard") *bäkil* (to tie hard) have the same origin as the Jurchin *böki-le* and the Turkish *beg*, *bäg*, *bey*, *bi* meaning "chief". This *bik* or *bi* was written 靡 *mi* or *pi* in the article on this subject, on which Dr. Shiratori has already explained in full.⁽¹⁾

Furthermore, in the History of Mongols or Yuan-chao-pi-shih 元朝秘史 shamans are given as *böye* 孛額 or *böyes* 孛額思. In the Ming translation there are translated as *shih-kung* 師公 "sorcerer" or *shih-p'o* 師婆 "sorceress", while Dr. M. Naka translates it with Chinese characters 師巫 and Japanese characters かむなぎ *Kamnagi* "sorcerer". This *kam-nagi* is a kind of vocal change *kam-negi* and *negi* (ねぎ) 禰宜 is a noun originating from the verb *negu* 祈, ねぐ "to pray". The *negi* is a priest who is called *kamu-nushi* 神主 in Shintoism. He always serves God. He has various functions, besides praying, divining, and dancing, etc. In this he is exactly like the Mongolian *beki* or *böye*.

The following interesting report comes from Mr. S. Murayama:—

"The ancient Japanese *wake* わけ, 別, 和氣, "ruler" or "governor" < *baqi is a back variant of the Mongolian *beki* "strong", Chagatai *bek* < **beki* "id". The Tunguse *bakim* "strong" is also a back variant of this *beki*."

Mr. Murayama also says: "The ancient Japanese *kami* < *qami "God" corresponds, from the phonetic and semantic viewpoints, to the ancient Tur-

(1) Dr. K. Shiratori, U-sun nitsui-te no Kangae. 烏孫に就いての考, (A Study of the U-sun Tribe) p. 59 Tokyo 1941 Sai-iki-shi Kenkyu. 西域史研究上所收

kish *qam*. We know from the Turkish-Mongolian comparison that the end-vocal of the Turkish disappears, e. g.

Mongolian		Turkish	
<i>aqta</i>	horse	<i>at</i>	id.
<i>jata</i>	rainstone	<i>yad < *jada</i>	id.
<i>saɣa</i>	to milk	<i>saɣ</i>	id.
<i>oki < *oqi</i>	arrow	<i>oq</i>	id.
<i>sayin < *sayi-n</i>	healthy	<i>saɣ</i>	id.
<i>beki</i>	strong	<i>bek</i>	id.

The Turkish verb *qam-la-* "to offer sacrifice to God", "to divine" is a denominal. This verb entered (from the north-eastern dialect) into Russian, where it appears in the form of *Kamla-tj* "id". *Kamlanie* is the nominal form of this verb."

Then I was reminded of the following material under the Kirgis tribe in the Hsin T'ang-shu 新唐書. They call a *wu* 巫 (shaman) *kam* 甘.⁽¹⁾ *Wu* 巫 is a Shamanist priest or a mediator between God and man. Is'nt there some relation between this *kam* and the ancient Japanese *kami* < **qami*? I rather think that the "kam" form in the Hsin T'ang-shu is one which has dropped some suffix meaning "serve" or "attend", because there is no instance found elsewhere in this Hsin T'ang-shu or the other Chinese materials that *kam* is a shaman.

孛額 is pronounced as *boɣe* or *boɣes* in Mongolian. As you know, in Manchu and Mongolian voiced and unvoiced sounds are written with the same characters. With vowel adjustment or vocal harmony it becomes *böki* or *bögi*. As I have already written about it, a special proof of this is to be found in the Secret History where it is *beki* 別乞 (unvoiced) and the Ch'in-

(1) Sung Ch'i, Hsin T'ang-shu, K. 217, B. Uigur-lich-chuan. K. 142. B. under Kirgis, Leaf 11. back; Po-na-pen. ed. 宋祁等撰新唐書卷二百一十七下, 回鶻列傳第一百四十二下, 黠戛斯條, 十一葉ウラ, 「祭無時, 呼巫爲甘」百納本。

chêng-lu where it is *begi* 別吉 (voiced). But in Mongolian *böge*, *bögä*, *bügä*, has the meaning of "dancing", designating shamans. It seems at first glance that this has no connection with the *bäki* or *beki-le*, mentioned above, which means "to tie hard." But I think that the two words may have had the same origin in the ancient Altai language. In ancient times the Altai peoples, as many other tribes, made no distinction between religious and secular institutions. In primitive society the head of religion is also the head of government as it is even now in the South Sea Islands and the Malay Peninsula. The Sultan, while holding the highest religious office, being at the same time politically and socially of the highest religious rank, is the leader of the masses. Therefore *böge*, *böki*, *bügä*, having the same origin, when used in the political sense remains in Turkish as *beg*, *bäg*, *bey*, *bi* or *mi* 靡 in the Manchu sense of chief, ruler of the tribe, king, sir and mylord. In the Jurchin language also the words *bökin* 孛堇, *böki-le* 孛極烈, *bei-le* 貝勒, *bei-se* 貝子 came to designate high officials, ministers and aristocrats. But I think in Mongolian these words became *beki* 別乞 or *begi* 別吉, and when used in the religious sense they became *böge* 孛額, *böyes* 孛額思 meaning the shaman himself.

If my suggestion is accepted there is further material. In the *Chin-shih-yü-chieh* 金史語解⁽¹⁾ it is said that in the *böki-le* 勃極烈 office of the Chin dynasty there was an office in charge of *Yin-yang* 陰陽—fortune-telling by means of astronomical observation, calendar studies, etc.—just as there was an office named *On-yo-ryo* 陰陽寮 in Hei-an period 平安朝 of the ancient Japanese history. This is a remainder from the time when religious and secular offices were not yet separated. This *böki-le* 勃極烈 was a political office, but within it there remained a section which was in charge of prophesy, divination

(1) T'o-t'o 脱脱: *Chin-shih* 金史, Chap. 135, Biography 73, leaf 9, Back, Supplement at the end of the chapter, Po-na-pen 百衲本 ed. 「孛勒極烈陰陽官」金史卷百三十五, 列傳七十三, 九葉ウラ.

and astronomy, and I am very pleased to think that this is proof of my theory.

If we go one step further, it is interesting to note that the Mongol word for a shaman also means "to dance", and that the Chinese character 舞 (dance) and 巫 (sorcerer) are now both pronounced *wu* or *bu*, while formerly they were pronounced *vo*, *vu*, *mu*, *bo*, *bu*, *fu*, *u*. It may be that they are the initial part *bo* of the word *böge*. But I cannot say decisively whether this is so or not. Formerly Abel Rémusat said in his study of the Tartar language⁽¹⁾ that the origin of *beki* was the Chinese 伯 *pê*, but I think this is untenable. In the Hua-i-i-yü 華夷譯語 preserved at the Paris Société Asiatique, under the section Kao-chang-kuan :Tsa-tzŭ Jen-shih Chien T'ung-yung-mên 高昌館雜字人事兼通用門, 舞 is written in the centre, with *bukci* in Uigur characters at the right, and *pu-ti* 卜的 in Chinese characters at the left. In the version of the Hua-i-i-yü 華夷譯語 copied during the Ming dynasty and now preserved at the Toyo Bunko, section Ta-tan-kuan Tsa-tzŭ Jen-wu-men 鞑靼館雜字人物門⁽²⁾, *iduryan* is written in the centre in Uigur characters, with *shih-p'ò* 師婆 at the right, and *i-tu-yan* 亦都罕 at the left, moreover, on the same page *böye* is written in the centre in Uigur characters, translated at the right as *shih-kung* 師公 and given the pronunciation of 孛額 at the left. It seems that a distinction was made between male and female shamans, 覡, 師公 being male and 巫, 師婆 female.⁽³⁾

As Dr. Kobayashi points out in his recent work,⁽⁴⁾ it is unsuitable that in Dr. E. Hänisch's translation⁽⁵⁾ this word *böye* is rendered "der Gaukler".

(1) Abel Rémusat: Recherches sur langues tartars, Tome I, p. 303, Paris, 1820.

(2) Ta-tan-kuan-tzu. upper, p. 64. Haneda Hakushi. . ., *op. cit.* Note 47.

(3) Those desirous of the full detail may refer to "Shaman to iu go no genji ni tsuite" シャマンといふ語の原義に就いて (On Original Meaning of the Word Shaman) The Minzoku 民族 vol. II, Nos. 1, 2 and 4, Nov., Jan., May, Tokyo, 1926-27.

(4) Takashirō Kobayashi, Genchō-hi-shi no Kenkyū 元朝秘史の研究 (A Study of Yüan-chao-pi-shih) p. 40, Tokyo, 1954.

(5) Erich Hänisch: *op. cit.* Chap. 181, p. 74.

I am of the same opinion. It could never be an exact translation, because the *börye* or shaman has not the only function as a sorcerer, but a number of functions, that is to say, he is a priest, medicine man, fortune-teller, diviner, palmist, astronomer, etc.

While this discourse has been somewhat digressive, my conclusion is simple enough. The languages of the three tribes, Turks, Tunguse, and Mongols, have all developed from a language with one and the same origin. So the word *beki* too has retained its political and religious meaning in different places up to the present. May I not say that the study of the word *ibeki* 别乞 would help us to understand ancient theocratic society?