SOME LANGUAGE TRAITS IN THE LADWAGS VERSION OF THE GESAR EPIC

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Asia is a land of traditions belonging to different ethnic groups. Each ethnic group holds the identity of their own. The traditional identity is determined by various items of the culture. Among them, Language and literature become important. Literature depicts the life of an individual and that of a group, a community or a society in that respect the Gesar is an epic which refers to the heroic deeds of the eminent Asian legendary personalities.

Historians may decide whether Gesar was a historical person or not, but the peoples belonging to multiple ethnic groups in Asia, particularly those of China, Mongolia, Manchuria, Jighur, Tibet and those of the Himalayan belt accept Gesar as their national hero.

The performance of Gesar becomes a source of inspiration for the persons of all ages, beginning from their childhood. An anthropologist or a folklorist may find these versions of folk elements belonging to the above mentioned countries in Asia.

As a specimen of the folk literature, Gesar songs had many recensions. The Gesar academy, the Institute of the Gesar Epic Studies is already engaged in excavating and preserving various recensions of Gesar epic.

In the north-western Himalayas some tales of the Gesar epic are frequently heard. Among them a Ladwags version which had been edited by A. H. Francke (1941) was published by Asiatic Society, Calcutta with a foreword by the eminent international renowned linguist S. K. Chatterji (1941).

The Ladwags (Ladakh) version of the Gesar epic may be thematically divided into seven broad divisions.

(i) Prologue to the Gesar Songs (pp. 1-29)
(ii) The advent of Gesar (pp. 64-72)
(iii) His marriage with Dugumu ('a brugumur' p. 122-129)
(iv) His second marriage with Yul Kung Choq Ma of China (p.154-159)
(v) Gesar's journey to the North and his challenges with the giant (p. 189-194)
(vi) Hor king captured Dugmu (p. 243-249)
(vii) Victory of Gesar over the abductor, king of Hor (p. 306-313).

The above distributions are however made by A. H. Francke which are not mentioned in the songs as published here.

The narrations of the account however based on several tales floating from one hillock to other hillock. A general proverb goes that every hill has got its own speech, similarly every hill may have tales of its own A. H. Francke collected different versions of the Gesar and referred to them. Such five tales are:

(i) Mon beloved to Gesar
(ii) Skya ba rgod po
Another nine tales were published in Indian Antiquary Vol XXXI 1902.

Moreover several Gling glu belonging to Sheh, Khaitse and songs of Bon tradition have been available.

In the hill tracts of north western Himalayas, in the olden days, the movement of the people was scarce due to climatic strangeness. Snow and the strong wind in winter through the gorges and ravines of the hills used to keep them captive within their four walls. The spring and the summer appeared to them for collection of food articles by hunting and cultivation in the valleys where the nature was congenial. The life style of the people has been elsewhere. The present study devotes to the language of the songs which appear to be peculiar.

II

The language used in the printed version of Gesar songs had some distinct uses. The tale preserved the old tradition of speech which was easily communicable to the listeners. Their grammatical formulation therefore play the least importance. The emphasis was laid more on usages and idioms than morphology and phonetics. Some language peculiarities which are not always determined by rules of sam ring (sum rtags) ascribed to Thonmi Sambhota (7th Century A.D.) have been noted here.

Probably the tales of Gesar came prior to systematization of the Tibetan grammar by Thonmi Sambhota. The archaic and proto-Tibetan usages disappeared later on due to orthodoxy of the Tibetan lobsaws who preferred to follow the Mahayupatti (8th - 9th Century A.D.).

The Tibetan materials of Tun huang and those of Chinese Turkeishan could also avoid such grammatical liturgy.
The analysis is attempted in the following lines.

(i) Vocabulary and their agglutinative forms.
(ii) Rare usages other than the grammatical formulae.
(iii) Expressions referring to the local environment.
(iv) Peculiarities in the syntax and the sentence construction.

(i) In scrutiny of the vocabularies in printed edition by A. H. Francke, it is found that he occasionally mended the word formation and sentence construction with annotation where necessary. No grammatical derivation and structural formulation of the words were entered. However the vocabularies and their agglutinative form used in the songs hold linguistic importance which may not be normally observed in the subsequently Tibetan literature. For instance:

Some instances of vowel harmony are occasionally observed, such as ཉོ་ནུ་ nor bu
nur bu/lucer. མོ་ཤིཟི་་་ཞེ་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་་　

(ii) Some indigenous versions of the Gesar tales floated among the ethnic groups of the north western Himalayas preserved peculiarities in expression. Whether the genius was of external origin may be difficult to determine. On examination of the vocabularies of the songs many words are found rare, loanwords from other speeches or of unknown origin. Such as:

(Francke 202. 6-9)

(iii) Many local expressions and usages are occasionally found in the prose and metrical composition such as.

(estead 202. 6-9)
mi 'dug/par thod cig bim 'dug zer/ A bi kho raf gi khai pala son/
Then A bi (the witch) played the mo (oracle). Then the lady asked 'what is the meaning
of the dream of the mistress?' A ai said 'The dream was neither good nor had as the
mo suggested. It remained in middle.' A bi then went her home.

Here ma bzan po (good) and ma nan pa (bad) are the local usages.

See also ང་ོ་ཤེ་སྙམ་ (tsa' mikan) (Francke p. 95.4) as explained below.
Onomatopoetic formation of the first dentalised palatal is (masculine) with the
(feminine) of tsa sde is not admissible. Here, Itsan appears to be an instance of
archaic use. ཕེ་ ལེ་ jo mo or ཕེ་ ལེ་ jo mo for governess of a house which is used for
occasional vocation with endearing respect to a senior lady.

(iv) As mentioned above the version of the Great collected from Lower Ladwags
presented several peculiar usages. Besides, their morphological indigenousness,
the structure of sentences are not always grammatical. It shows the folk usage in
expressions, the spontaneity of the Language is an outburst of emotion and sentiment
of the ballad singers. In the Indian tradition the ballad singers possess generally gift
of the gab who usually flourish in their instantaneous rhetoric knowledge and
prosical composition. In many cases they can hardly read or write but they
spontaneously articulate in composing metrical with no rehearsal or practise. Some
peculiarities observed in the text are jotted below:

སྙམ་ མཁར་བརྟ་ས། སྣ་ ཁྲ་མ་ འབྲ་ ར་ སྲིད།

(Francke 205. 5-6)

སྙོན་མ་མཁར་བརྟ་ས། མི་མོ་ལ་གི་མཁར་རྟ་ས། དྲུ་བཟོ་རེ་ཀོན།

Formerly the strong castle was ling mkhar now it is called Idem Idem. Here the
naming may not be historical but it shows the alliteration and sonorous rythms
which makes the song attractive.

Similarly:

མཁར་པོ་ཉིད་ ར་ སྦིང་ རྒྱུད།

མཁར་པོ་ཉིད་ ར་ སྦིང་ རྒྱུད།

མཁར་པོ་ཉིད་ ར་ སྦིང་ རྒྱུད།

5
When the Agu with his followers in the cold valley and the army of Khr', went to the gling castle 'afbru gu ma and Agu Khr' mtn were left. The song thus goes on, you would enjoy a tournament of the army and enjoy the stores of old meal and enjoy the old butter and be happy with 'afbru gu ma. There after proceed to Giling mikhra.'

Here the contents of the lines are simple but its melody and speech rhythms become charming. The line number one and two are almost similar. In the song the order of Syntax becomes minor.

Franke p 95.12-15

But because a street child had become the bride-groom, they exchanged the silken curtain for one of black goat’s hair, and the golden throne for a ragged carpet which was spread on the floor the wrong way.

Here the construction is peculiar in usage particularly the sentence, stan chad po zhig phir log la bthi ste bios. Such construction appears to be archaic. It suggests that the street boy (rta’itsan) who had come forth was of unidentified origin. For rta’itsan ཤེས་རྒྱ་མཚོ. (S. Das p. 100B. Also Jaschke enters ཤེས་རྒྱ་མཚོ ་p 438).

It is presumed that rta’itsan mikan is equivalent to rta’ mikan, a grass cutter (boy).
Here it is used as an indignified expression in a society.

When the boy arrived on a litter carried by beggars he sat down on the carpet wrongly with his face towards the wall, for his food he received some flour with chaff.

The construction of small sentences in the above passage appears to be figurative. The awkward action of the bride-groom made other laughter.

Also the peculiarities of the sentence construction may be noted. རྒྱུད་གྲུབ་ལྡན་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ལྲེལ་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིས་ཁྱེ་ཁྲིς

III

Despite that, the aesthetic values of the Gesar songs are predominant as they continue through centuries. The exact time of the introduction of Gesar Saga in the Western Himalayas may be difficult to determine. Moreover the tales of Gesar moved from one part to other in the oral tradition of the common folk in China, Mongolia, Manchuria, Central Asia (Hor yut?) and in the North West and the Eastern Himalayas among the Indo Mongoid (Tibetan speaking) population. Thematically Gesar songs are heroic.

The account of the heroic deeds of Gesar narrates the struggle of the human history. In the olden days a person of leadership quality endeavoured to exhibit his valiant prowess by his desperate courage to win over the most that one could aspire.

In this respect the tales of Rama and Sita and many other episodes in the Mahabharata may be cited for instance. In the history of Europe similar account of Helen and Cinderella and many others may be cited. Whether those tales had occurred or not is not our question. The historians may be assigned to the task. In
every regions of the globe the genesis of the folk tales might have some common source in the hoary past. Minor bifurcations of the common source happened to be local environmental ornamentation according to the liking of the people. It also may be presumed that such tendency of showing of valorous heroism by conquer and capture was probably the inner urge of the powerful one. In that case the tales could grow in different localities though the eventualities were almost the same.

In that respect the Gesar songs may be examined to locate its special traits from those of Rama episode. It may not be irrelevant to mention that the episode of Rama floated outside India particularly in South East Asia, Tibet and Mongolia, China and Japan in East Asia.

The aesthetic aspects of the Gesar songs, as collected by A. H. Francke, may be cited below.

(a) Rhetoric expression by using sweet and sonorous phonemes.

A po ra rai la tsha bo zhig ihob lo/
bkra his la ra tsha zhig byor lo/
ra1 tsha bo la mi zhig tssal lo/
ra1 bu tsha la mi zhig tssal lo/

"Oh father, I got a child what would be his name?"
Me ma returned to call the child Dong gsum mila sion mo.
Also:

(vi) Rhymes:

Francke p 4. 6-9

Francke p 48. 19.49-1-4
How do I go to the land of Gling when I have no possession of horse, have no retinue to follow on, I have no weapon, I would go to the land of human beings.

On the birth day of Gesar many other creatures gave birth to their respective children such as to the mare Thsa langs-khyang rgyud byer pa to the Dzo with crooked horns - the Dzo, 'White foot' to the white goat, - the goat 'Red neck' to the...
sheep Dromo - the sheep porze, to the ass 'Black with a white mouth', - a brown ass to the white bitch - the yellow hound - to the black cat - a cat of many colours.

(c) Metrical varieties with contextual diversity.

A ne si sings:

steñ phyogslha yul/kun non/pai/a/ma la/bu zhiig/bitams - -
bar phyogs/bitams yul/kun non/pai gol/bzañ la/aras sig/bitams - -
Hog phyogs/kis yul/kun non/pai A/ma la bu sig/bitams - -

The lullaby song was displayed by A ne si buks damar mo refers to the prayer to the land of gods, the earth and the land of nags. This very prayer has been still in vogue as A. H. Francke witnessed at every wedding feast at Khaltatse, When three pieces of wedding cake will be thrown towards the sky, over the earth and downwards' ritualistically.

In contrast, the meter used in the citation in connection with the birth of Gesar be noted above.

rta rgo/d/ma tshal/la/fs la/
mdzn mo/ru yon/la/
lug dro/mo la/
lug por/ze skyes/
bon bu/nag po/kha dkar/la
bon bu/kham pa/skyes/ (See above in the Tibetan script)

Also,

(Francke 107. 14-17)
Please listen to all my deeds. Please listen to all that of mine.
Where is the round (region) Rin? Where is the round apricot (peach)?

(d) Aesthetic sentiment and co-emphatic relation between the performers and the listeners.

After the separation between 'abrug gu ma and Gesar the later lived in a hermitage in despair: Ane burk dmar mo appeared before Gesar and inspired him to make 'abrug gu ma free from the clutches of the evil Hev ruler. Ane advised Gesar in following lines.

| དུན་བཤེས་ཐ་ན། སྐྱེ་ན།
| སྒྲ་བཤེས་ཐ་ན། སྐྱེ་ན། སྐྱེ་ན། སྐྱེ་ན།
| སྒྲ་བཤེས་ཐ་ན། སྐྱེ་ན། སྐྱེ་ན། སྐྱེ་ན།
| སྒྲ་བཤེས་ཐ་ན། སྐྱེ་ན། སྐྱེ་ན། སྐྱེ་ན།
| སྒྲ་བཤེས་ཐ་ན། སྐྱེ་ན། སྐྱེ་ན། སྐྱེ་ན།
| སྒྲ་བཤེས་ཐ་ན། སྐྱེ་ན། སྐྱེ་ན། སྐྱེ་ན།
| སྒྲ་བཤེས་ཐ་ན། སྐྱེ་ན། སྐྱེ་ན། སྐྱེ་ན།

Francke p 169, 1-8

duññ yo sa pi cag sgo la phin lo/
sgo lo phin ste lan gsum rig sprug lo/
msho mo'i nthil na chu sprug toñ lo/
tsan dan dmar po'i bsañ sug bdug lo/
mkhañ bzo ma kak gu sgo de la phin lo/
sgu la phin sthe lan gsum rig sprug lo/
msho mo'i nthil na chu sprug rig ton lo/
tsan dan dmar po'i lasañ sug bdug lo/

11
The dialogue between Gesar as ‘abrug ma in the song was highly emotional. Gesar said “take the knife with a (conch) shell handle from the house, brush it three and wash it thrice in the deep sea and bring an offering of the sander wood. (དམར་པོ

Francke noted that pencil cedar wood was often called candan (Sandle wood)

The above passage showed the lucidity of the language in repetition and thematic simplicity. The articles mentioned in 19 verses were not rare but were wondrous. And the purification of those articles in the deep ocean and be smearing them with red sandle created a thrilling atmosphere in which daring valour and avowed redening zeal had been symbolized.

In respect of the listeners and the atmosphere of joy and thrill were likely to be conjoined.

Phyag ni phyag sör bcu pa dañ ma ten pa/
Zhal ni pad m’i me tog dañ thug ma bcug pa/
Ice mo da’re gi yul pa dañ ma myan sà/
oi s’dor gi gîi bûn pa dañ ma smin pa’nîn
sem gyan chub kyi sems dañ len te sà la phob/
cha’g ral te ton te gân te mdun la phob k’/

| ལུགས་ དུས་མོ་ཐོད་ཐ་ སྟུད་པ་ ཡོན་ཏན་ལྔ་ི་ དཔྱལ་ དེ་བྱང་བ་ དཔྱལ་པོ་
| ལུགས་ དུས་མོ་ཐོད་ཐ་ སྟུད་པ་ ཡོན་ཏན་ལྔ་ི་ དཔྱལ་ དེ་བྱང་བ་ དཔྱལ་པོ་
| ལུགས་ དུས་མོ་ཐོད་ཐ་ སྟུད་པ་ ཡོན་ཏན་ལྔ་ི་ དཔྱལ་ དེ་བྱང་བ་ དཔྱལ་པོ་
| ལུགས་ དུས་མོ་ཐོད་ཐ་ སྟུད་པ་ ཡོན་ཏན་ལྔ་ི་ དཔྱལ་ དེ་བྱང་བ་ དཔྱལ་པོ་

(Francke 93. 4-9)
sag gi sag khris ste nh na sen chu shron po kun 'dug lo/
ber kai bar khris ste nh mo nan ni shron phrug kun 'dug lo/
lag pa se yag can dan ma len pa mthun lo/
khde chag ra dan ma thug pa mthun lo/
lo se dag bar dan ma myar ba mthun lo/
oi sdon nh mo nas ma rim pa mthun lo/
dug sems de dan an te sa la phob lo/

can gan mthun st ja gan mdun la phob bo/

Compare the two songs by 'abrug gu ma in course of search of companion abrug gu
ma offered beer for companionship (grogs chang རྒྱ་མཚོ་) to Agu khar yi khras'
thun with the warmth of her heart but she warned him not to touch the pot with ten
fingers, not to touch his lotus like mouth, not to taste it with the silken knot of his
tounge, not to swallow it through the golden vessel of his throat. The maiden
requested to take the beer with his soul and to place the pot on the ground ....

The second song is again the maiden came before the street child who showed
her the donkey's ear. The maiden however narrated the destitute look of the beggar
boy before offering the beer. She put the similar warning. The expression of the
destitute look showed warmer disposition of the heart of the love laden maiden.

Evidently the songs of Gesar survives up till date inspite of the changes of time and
space.

**Romanised transliteration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Tibetan alphabets</th>
<th>Chinese phonemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ka kha ka</td>
<td>a (a) n (ng)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca cha ca</td>
<td>b (ba) o (o)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ta tra ta</td>
<td>c (tsa) p (p)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pe phi pe</td>
<td>d (he) t (to)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsa shi tsu</td>
<td>e (s) r (ar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhins zhes zhi</td>
<td>f (ef) s (es)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ra ra sa</td>
<td>g (ga) t (te)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ha A i</td>
<td>h (ga) u (u)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>v (ve)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>j (toe)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>k (ke)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>l (el)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>m (em)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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SOURCE MATERIALS

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