

## DEPARTMENT OF MONGOL AND INNER ASIAN STUDIES

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Teaching activity related to Mongolian studies has been going on at Eötvös Loránd University from the 1870s under the guidance of prominent scholars like József Budenz and Gábor Bálint of Szentkatolna. The history of the Department, is inseparable from the academic interests of Lajos Ligeti, who founded the Department of Inner Asian Studies in 1938, his pupil and successor György Kara, and later the latter's pupil Ágnes Birtalan, who has been the head of the Department since 2002.

Ligeti laid the greatest stress on philological research, devoted great attention to the analysis of Middle Mongolian and pre-classical literary language. He published several 13–16<sup>th</sup> century Mongolian literary records in the volumes of *Mongol Nyelvemléktár* and *Monumenta Linguae Mongolicae*. Ligeti set up the Research Group of Altaic Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1969. From among the Research Group members, Alice Sárközi, Géza Bethlenfalvy, Zsolt Szilágyi have substantially contributed to teaching and research at the Department.

When Ligeti retired, György Kara took over the chair. Under his guidance, philology-based research continued, and research became increasingly diversified, the weight of Altaic, Tibetan and Buddhist researches increased in teaching. The research of Mongolian folk culture and dialects was initiated in 1991 and has been in progress since then under the leadership of Alice Sárközi and Ágnes Birtalan. Upon the recommendation of the chair, the faculty leadership endorsed Katalin Uray-Köhalmi's appointment as guest professor, which greatly bolstered the Manchu and Siberian studies. The main research fields at present are:

- Religion (shamanism, Buddhism and popular religion of Mongolian ethnic groups)
- Mongolian language and culture (Khalkha, Oirat, Kalmyk, Buriat, etc.)
- Traditional nomadic culture of Mongolian ethnic groups
- Processing of the historical sources of the Manchu era and the contemporary period

Mongolian studies and researches are based on traditional text analytical philology and up-to-date fieldwork techniques. Lessons cover Mongolian linguistics, religious studies, traditional culture, folklore and history,. During the BA course students learn the language (spoken and written Mongolian) and the bases of Inner Asian philology and Mongolian studies. At the MA-level the students will be capable of independent research work. Great emphasis is laid on the improvement of the students' skills of expression both orally and in writing. Due to student exchange programs four students and two researchers have chances annually to study five months at the National University of Mongolia or other educational institutions in order to study in a Mongolian milieu. PhD candidates can deepen their knowledge

at the doctoral program so as to be armed with all skills and knowledge for scholarship. During the operation of the Mongolian major 75 students graduated, 17 PhD dissertations were defended during the last decades, and several articles, monographs, individual fieldworks, new carriers grew out from the scientific workshop of the Department.

The teaching and research work going on in our Department was rewarded with a certificate of merit by the Mongolian Academy of Sciences in 2010.

Apart from monographs published mainly in Hungarian and in English, the Department is famous for its series: the *Debter*, the *Monumenta*, the *Treasures of Mongolian Culture and Tibeto-Mongolian Buddhism*, and the DVD series of *Traditional Mongolian Culture*.

### Research Centre for Mongol Studies

For the official initiation of Ágnes Birtalan, the Research Centre for Mongol Studies came into existence at the Department of Mongol and Inner Asian Studies in 2014 with the support of the Government of Mongolia (National Council for Mongolian Studies), the Ministry of Education and Science of Mongolia (Foundation for the Promotion of Mongolian Studies), and the Mongolian Embassy in Budapest. Ts. Elbegdorj, president of Mongolia opened the Research Centre ceremonially on 18<sup>th</sup> October with the donation of recent Mongolian publications, valuable computing devices, and a fund of 15 000 EUR for the operation of the new centre. The scientific opening of the Centre took place on 12<sup>th</sup> November during the visit of B. Enkhtüwshin, president of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences within the framework of a workshop. Under the guidance of Ágnes Birtalan two young research fellows (Attila Rákos, Krisztina Teleki) started to work in the centre to complete the following tasks in the first six months:

- Procession and publication of interviews recorded with old monks in cooperation with the Institute of History, Mongolian Academy of Sciences
- Procession and publication of previous fieldwork materials related to the Khalkha, Oirad and Darkhad dialects
- Developing a website for online publication possibilities ([innerasia.hu](http://innerasia.hu), [facebook.com/belsoazsia](https://facebook.com/belsoazsia))
- Organizing the international workshop "Mongolian Buddhism: Past, Present and Future" on 16–17<sup>th</sup> April, 2015
- In accordance with the Mongolian state policy developing an online Mongolian language learning system for Mongols living abroad, especially for children in order to aid the preservation of their Mongolian identity
- Assistance of the Department: participation in teaching, organizing scientific forums and other events.



1. President Ts. Elbegdorj hands the donation of Mongolia for establishing the Research Centre for Mongol Studies to Ágnes Birtalan, head of the department (18 October, 2014)



2. President Ts. Elbegdorj visiting the Eötvös Loránd University (18 October, 2014)



3. President of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, B. Enkhtuwshin and ambassador of Mongolia, T. Gandhi with Ágnes Birtalan at the Department of Mongol and Inner Asian Studies (12 November, 2014)



4. The delegation of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences participating on the workshop held on the occasion of the opening of the Research Centre of Mongol Studies at the Eötvös Loránd University (12 November, 2014)



5. Books donated by president Ts. Elbegdorj to the department and the research centre (18 October, 2014)



6. The building of the department and the research centre on the campus of the university (left)