



A Comparative Study on the Origin of Chinese and Mongolian Idioms

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ABSTRACT

Both Han and Mongolian nationalities have advocated and valued education since ancient times, so teaching idioms are also abundant. Before classifying the semantics of Chinese and Mongolian educational idioms, it is necessary to trace back to the origin and study the origin of the idioms in these two languages. The origin of idioms is the soil that produces idioms, and each idiom has its own unique source. Idioms are derived from the ancestors of different nationalities' summaries of daily life, customs, historical stories, myths, legends, famous people's words and social experiences, as well as people's own experiences and wisdom. Chinese and Mongolian idioms are interlinked in this point.

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Introduction

In addition to the oral usage and spread of idioms from generation to generation, the transmission of idioms is recorded in written form, learning and spreading is a more important means, which is also an important reason for the existence and spread of idioms.

Of course, when comparing the idioms in the two languages, Chinese and Mongolian idioms also have their own unique sources. Through the comparison of the number of educational idioms between Chinese and Mongolian in this paper, it can be seen that most Chinese idioms come from written language, while most Mongolian idioms come from oral language.

The Chinese idioms in this article come from more than 70 ancient works, most of which are concentrated in the *论语*、*史记*、*汉书*、*礼记*、*战国策*、*国语*、*三国志* and other classic works. And there is no record of the source of literature, the number of idioms from oral literature is very few. Compared with the sources of Chinese idioms, there are very few examples of Mongolian idioms in written form, and the few idioms recorded in written form are all from the *《Монголын Нууц Товчоо》*. Most of the other idioms are passed down from parents to their offspring through family oral education.

In short, since ancient times, the Han and Mongolian people have learned the essence from their familiar farming or nomadic cultures when they understand the world around them, experienced this culture by themselves, inherited and developed their unique national thoughts, and passed on the experiences and lessons in daily life to their descendants by means of lectures and teachings. This way of spreading education is reflected in idioms and has become one of the main sources of idioms. This is common to the languages of other nations.

I. Origins of Chinese Idioms

1.1 From daily life

China is a big agricultural country, which is deeply influenced by the farming culture. Many idioms derived from real life are imprinted with the farming culture. Such as:

a. 玉不琢不成器: (Jade cannot be made into vessel without being cut and polished)

Jade is a very precious stone, but a piece of natural jade without processing will not become a fine handicraft. Metaphor: People cannot become talents without education and training.

From the Western Han Dynasty *《礼记·学记》*: "Jade is not polished, it is not a tool, and people don't learn, become know nothing".

Jade plays an important role in the life of ancient people in China. It can be seen at any time in the daily life of people. It has a very close relationship with people's lives. The scholar-officials used jade (metaphorical body (喻体)) to describe the integrity and purity of a gentleman (noumenon (本体)), hoping to become a useful talent (noumenon (本体)) like exquisite jade (metaphorical body (喻体)) after self-cultivation. In Mongolian idioms, specific things are often used first to elicit the true meaning of the latter.

b. 恨铁不成钢: (wish iron could turn into steel at once": be anxious for somebody to improve; regret that somebody does not live up to one's expectations)

Steel (metaphorical body (喻体)), parents, teachers to expect that the person is not up to speed, unproductive and anxious dissatisfaction noumenon (本体)). In ancient China's farming society, iron was a common tool, and steel was a better metal refined from iron. People use these two common things in everyday life as metaphors (比喻) for iron and steel, also the average person and the excellent person.

c. 百年树人: (It takes to hundred years to make education bear fruit)

From *《管子·权修》*: "A year's plan is better than a tree valley; a ten-year plan is better than a tree valley; a lifetime plan is better than a few people."

It is better to plant trees in ten years. It's better to cultivate talents than to accomplish in a lifetime.

Simultaneous development of talents, crops and trees, reflects the influence of farming culture on people's thinking and concepts.

d. 桃李满天下: ((Of a master/teacher) have pupils/disciples everywhere) Metaphor for teacher training many students, spread all over the world.

From 唐·白居易《春和令公绿野堂种花》: "Linggong's peaches are all over the world, so why plant flowers in front of the house".

Peach trees, plum trees are common fruit trees in people's daily life, and they can bear a lot of big fruit. Using peaches and plums to compare excellent students shows that teachers cultivate a large number of students and spread all over the world.

1.2 Origins from historical stories, myths and legends

A large part of Chinese idioms is derived from historical stories, which are condensed into idioms by later generations to express certain meanings. Most of these idioms come from books that record the evolution and changes of characters in Chinese history. 《史记》 is the first great biographical general history in the history of China.

The influence of this historical book is very far-reaching, therefore, the idioms related to it are most popular. In addition, a large number of historical books such as 《汉书》、《战国策》、《国语》、《三国志》 and so on have also handed down numerous idioms. Such as:

a. 孺子可教: (The boy is intelligent and teachable; the boy is worth teaching) It refers to young people who are intelligent and teachable

From the Western Han dynasty· Si Maqian 《史记·留侯世家》: Zhang Liang used to walk and play on the bridge in Xiapi County in his free time. An old man dressed in linen clothes went to where Zhang Liang was, threw his shoes under the bridge, and said back to Zhang Liang, "Boy, go down and take me. Take his shoes!" Zhang Liang was shocked and wanted to hit him. Seeing that he was old, he forcibly held it back and went down to retrieve his shoes. The old man said again, "Put it on for me!" Zhang Liang had already retrieved the shoes for him, so he knelt down and put them on. The old man stretched his feet to let Zhang Liang put on him, and then left with a big laugh. Zhang Liang was very surprised and watched the old man far away. The old man walked about a mile, then came back and said, "The kid is worth teaching. Five days later, at dawn, meet me here."

b. 韦编三绝 (Be diligent in one's studies) 韦: cooked cowhide, 韦编: In ancient times, bamboo slips were used to write books, and the bamboo slips used for writing books were connected with a cooked cowhide rope, which was called "韦编"; 三: approximate number, refer to many times; 绝: cut. Refers to studying diligently and studying hard.

From the Western Han Dynasty · Sima qian "史记 · Confucius family": "Confucius late and happy 《易》"..... Read "Yi", Be diligent in one's studies."

c. 悬梁刺股 (Keep oneself awake by tying one's hair to a beam and prodding one's thigh with an awl-be painstaking/diligent in one's studies; grind away at one's studies; study assiduously)

股: Big thigh. I was afraid that study would be affected by sleepiness, so I tied my hair up and hung it on the roof beam and pierced my thigh with an awl. Describes studying diligently.

From the Western Han Dynasty 刘向《战国策·秦策一》feeling sleepy while reading, he stabs himself. And 李昉等《太平御览》.

In addition, 李昉等《太平御览》 in Volume 363 of 《汉书》: Sun Jing's word is gem, study well, from morning till evening, tie hair with a rope and tie the other end to the beam to straighten it. If you doze off again at this time, you will be awakened by the rope.

d. 前事不忘, 后事之师 (Past experience, if not forgotten, may serve as guide for the future; lessons one has learned from the past can guide one in the future)

师: example, learn from. Lessons one has learned from the past can guide one in the future.

出自西汉·刘向《战国策·赵策一》: "前事之不忘, 后事之师。" From the Western Han Dynasty · Liu Xiang 《战国策·赵策一》: "前事不忘, 后事之师".

e. 失败乃成功之母: (Failure is the mother of success; failure teaches success; defeat is the mother of victory)

母: Where all the things are produced. Refers to learning from failure and turning failure into victory. According to textual research, it originated from myth of regulating watercourses by Gun and Yu.

中国古代神话《山海经·海内经》: It is said that Gun stole the soil (the soil that can grow) of the Emperor of Heaven to prevent the flood, but it was unsuccessful. Gun failed, Gun gave birth to Yu, and Yu succeeded. Later generations created the idiom based on the situation that "failure produces success" in the myth of Gun and Yu's water control: failure is the mother of success.

1.3 It comes from the famous expression

Confucianism has been in a dominant position in feudal society for thousands of years, and is the dominant thought of Chinese culture. The religious thoughts of Buddhism and Taoism have also been influencing people's ideas. In addition, the viewpoints of various schools of thought such as the Legalist School and the Miscellaneous School of the Warring State Period have been handed down, such as:

1.3.1 Confucianism

a. 循循善诱 (Guide patiently and systematically) It means to be good at guiding or educating methodically.

From 《论语·子罕》: "夫子循循然善诱人."

b. 因材施教: (Teach students in accordance with their aptitude; 因: follow along, basis; 材: to put in place. According to the specific conditions of different objects, different educational methods are adopted.

From 《论语·雍也》: "People above the intermediate level can tell him advanced knowledge; those below the intermediate level cannot tell him advanced knowledge".

c. 枉己正人: (Be crooked oneself yet try to set others straight) When oneself doesn't behave properly, but corrects others.

From 《孟子·万章上》: "I have never heard of someone who is in vain and can justify others, and this situation has been right to the world?"

d. 春风化雨: (Life giving spring breeze and rain-salutary influence of education; beneficial influence of good teachers) Metaphor for the popularization and depth of a good education and praises the teachings of teachers.

From 《孟子·尽心上》: "有如时雨化之者".

1.3.2 Buddhism

Buddhism is one of the world's three major religions with a long history and profound influence. Although Buddhism is not the native religion of China, it has been gradually accepted by the Chinese people since it was introduced from India, and its influence is extraordinary. Therefore, some idioms derived from Buddhism have also emerged.

a. 三头六臂: (three heads and six arms; those who have supreme) 原指佛的法相。后比喻非凡的本领。Originally refers to the Buddha's image. After metaphor of extraordinary ability.

From 宋·释道原《景德传灯录·汾州善昭禅师》: "He said: 'How to be the Lord of the Lord?' The master teacher said "三头六臂擎天地，忿怒哪吒扑帝钟" (Three heads and six arms protect the heaven and the earth).

b. 现身说法: (Advise somebody or explain something by citing one's own examples; warn people by taking oneself as an example; try to persuade somebody by taking oneself as an example) Originally a Buddhist term, it refers to the vast power of Buddha, which can show various shapes and preach the Dharma depending on the target. The latter metaphor uses his own experience and encounters as an example to explain the truth and persuade.

c. 神通广大: (Have a vast magic power; possess unusual powers; be infinitely resourceful) 神通: 原为佛教用语, 指神奇的法术, 今指无所不能的本领。本指法术广大无边。现在形容本领极大, 办法极多。Supernatural power: Originally a Buddhist term, it refers to magical spells, but now it refers to the omnipotent ability. This refers to the vastness of spells. Now I have great ability to describe it in many ways.

From the first chapter of 元·郑廷玉《忍字记》: "Liu Junyou, a poor monk with great powers and great spells, then I am like living Buddha".

1.3.3 Taoist

a. 大器晚成 (Great talents make time to mature; gain success late in life) It was used to compare talented people or things with late accomplishments. Later, people with great talents have to undergo long-term training to achieve great things and accomplish achievements.

Used to describe a talented person or thing who is late in achieving success. The latter refers to a person with great talent to go through long-term training, in order to achieve great things, to make achievements.

出自《老子》第四章: "Generous and without corners, and great tools are born late. The sound is very loud, but the elephant is invisible".

b. 千里之行, 始于足下: (A thousand-li journey is started/begins with the first step)

To walk thousands of miles away, we must start with this first step in front of us. As a metaphor, any ambitious goal must start from the small and small things at present.

From the sixty-fourth chapter of 《老子》: "The embracing tree was born at the end of the mill; the nine-story platform rises from the soil; a thousand miles begins with a single step."

1.3.4 Other sects'

a. 良药苦口: (A good medicine tastes bitter) Good medicine for curing diseases often tastes bitter. Metaphor for sharp criticism sounds uncomfortable, but it helps.

From 《韩非子·外储说左上》: "Most medicines that can cure diseases are hard to swallow, but smart people

encourage (self) to drink it, knowing that this medicine can cure their diseases."

b. 胜不骄, 败不馁 (Neither made dizzy with success, nor discouraged by failure) 骄: pride, 馁: discouraged; Neither made dizzy with success, nor discouraged by failure;

From the Warring States Period 商鞅《商君书·战法》: "The king's soldiers should not be arrogant when they win and not complain when they lose."

c. 歧路亡羊: (Lamb going astray at a fork in the road-go astray in complex situation)

歧: diverged; 亡: lost. There are too many forks to find the lost sheep. Metaphorical affairs are complicated and changeable, and without the right direction, they will go astray.

From 《列子·说符》: "The great avenues have lost many lambs, and the scholars have lost their lives in many ways".

2. Sources of Mongolian idioms

2.1 It comes from daily life

Such idioms are close to life, vivid images, numerous, is an important part of Mongolian idiom. Idioms are generated and exist in specific environments and time, so they reflect the unique civilization and national nature of Mongolian nomads in history. Such as:

a. "Амиа борлуулж

Довоо шарлуулах": (Trying to make a living, trying to turn the hills yellow) This idiom reflects the principle of wealth distribution in human society in the ancient clan era.

In ancient times, most Mongols lived by hunting. In this case, the game caught by the hunter has the habit of hooking the meat slices with a wooden fork and sharing it with everyone.

Idiom of the phrase "амиа борлуулах" (trying to make a living)" refers to distributing the meat to everybody, is arranged by the individual.

The person who was given the meat roasted it over the fire, and when it turned yellow on the outside, he ate it (whether it was cooked or raw on the inside, because this is a great improvement in the era of eating raw meat with blood and blood).

The phrase "довоо шарлуулах (the hill turns yellow)" refers to the clan's rule that a field is allocated to the herdsmen on the hill as the herdsman's private property. They have been raising livestock in this area for a long time. After the grass is eaten, the hill turns into withered yellow.

This idiom describes the time of the clan when herdsmen struggled with nature to make a living by their own strength while hunting or farming. Later generations use it to say to rely on their own strength to work hard, study and live.

b. "Эзэн хичээвэл

Заяа хичээнэ": (I tried my best and my destiny will also follow my best) and good-hearted people will eventually have a good ending and good retribution)

This is the Mongolian attitude towards life, which is the essence of the philosophical view in their life experience.

You can't rely on anyone, or trust in any magic or luck, but you have to believe in your own power, that you can achieve your goals with hard work.

c. "Эрдмийг хичээлээр

Эрлийг сурлаар": (diligently study knowledge, explore inquire) that is earnest study will acquire knowledge. If you study hard, you can gain knowledge, whether you study learn from others, or do it by yourself and learn lessons.

"Explore and inquire" is a traditional custom in the life, labor, customs, and oral culture of Mongolian herders. Most of the herders who lost their livestock were found through exploration. Those who saw and heard also told the herders generously to each other that they respected the herders who lost their livestock and tried their best to help them find the livestock.

d. “Эрхийг сурахаар

Бэрхийг сур”: (learn to light entertainment, easier than learning difficulties)

This idiom emphasizes not only learning knowledge alone, but also learning other aspects of life, such as how to communicate with others, how to relieve the pressure of study and work, and not doing things harmful to health. This kind of learning is relatively easy and can't be ignored. Learn these skills and your life will be easier and more enjoyable. These are the truths that are summed up from experience by observing things sensibly in work and life.

e. “Эх нь хээр алаг бол

Унага нь шийр алаг”: (If the mare is skewbald, so is the colt) and Chinese idiom “有其父必有其子” have similar expression.

Mongolian herdsmen know that females are related to calves by observing the color of horses and other livestock. This idiom reflects the wisdom of generations of herdsmen. It teaches children to observe and analogize more relevant things in society and learn by analogy.

f. “Урд ургасан чихнээс

Хойно ургасан эвэр”: (the horn that grows later is better than the ear that grows first) The herdsmen observe which horn or ear of their livestock grows first, and gradually understands the different conditions of the growth of the two. Herders are surprised by this common phenomenon in life, and after thinking about it, they come to the conclusion that “Урд ургасан чихнээс Хойно ургасан эвэр”. As it spread, the idiom came to refer to the law of development that any new force would be superior to the old one.

2.2 It comes from a fable

Summarized from stories, narrative poems or other folk literature, later generations condensed these stories into idioms to express a certain meaning. In the development of Mongolian folk oral literature, the people have created many vivid artistic images, and these images have gradually become common idioms in the widespread circulation. Such as:

a. “Оролдлого сайт

Оройд нь гарах”:

(勤奋的人会达到顶峰) 源自蒙古“学习唱歌”的故事: From the Mongolian story of "Learning to Sing": Once upon a time kite bird and chat bird were determined to learn interesting songs. They flew far away to new places, sat on rocks in the wilderness and began to learn. But the kite had begun to doze off and fell asleep, and in the meantime, chat had made an effort to learn a great many songs. The Kite woke up just in time to hear the whinny of a stray colt. That was the only sound the Kite had learned. All sorts of songs would be sung, and the kite would only make the same sound as the horse.

The moral of the story is that an active and diligent person will achieve his goal, while a lazy person will accomplish nothing.

b. “Эрдэмт хүн даруу

Их мөрөн дөлгөөн”: (person with knowledge is humble, big seas are calm)

From the Mongolian story of "Хоёр торхны үлгэр": A man rolled down two oval wooden barrels from the mountain, one was full and the other was empty. The full oval wooden barrel has no obstacles on the road, rolling all the way to the foot of the mountain. The empty oval wooden barrel jumped up and fell down, stumbling and making a loud noise. It seemed to be fanciful and powerful, but it was stuck in the middle of the roll and couldn't move.

The lesson of the story: like a full elliptical wooden barrel, a person with profound knowledge can reach the destination smoothly without making any changes. And the less-learned people, like the empty oval barrel, do everything with fanfare and bluff, but they can't succeed.

c. “Аргат туулай

Арсланг барина”: (Tactful rabbit can beat a lion) From the Mongolian "Туулай ба арслан" story:

In ancient times the lion was very proud. He called all the animals together and said to himself, "There is no animal in the world who is stronger than me. Now I call myself your king."

Upon hearing this, the rabbit said to him, "Dear Lion, I have seen a stronger animal than you." The lion said angrily, "Where is this fellow? I want to fight him!". So, the rabbit accompanied the lion to a large well of water, and said, "Here are animals that can compete with you."

The lion looked down from the mouth of the well and saw an animal as magnificent as himself. The lion bared his teeth and bristled his hair, and the animal did the same. The lion became even angrier, and trying to catch him fell into the well and was drowned.

Lesson: It's better to be smart than strong. In conclusion, Mongolian idioms have a variety of sources, most of them are experiences from people's life.

2.3 From written works

Literary works created by famous writers and artists are recorded in words. First, they are spread orally, and then gradually they are widely used by the masses and passed down from generation to generation as fixed words. Such as:

a. “Бие тэргүүтэй

Дээл захтай”: (body has a head and every dress has a collar).

From the Mongol Empire·《Монголын нууц товчоо》, “Бие тэргүүтэй” refers to people have their own careers, Дээл захтай there must be leaders in human society.

b. “Нүдэндээ галтай

Нүүрэндээ цогтой”: (Have piercing eyes, and radiant face)

From Mongolian Empire·《Монголын нууц товчоо》:

Having piercing eyes and radiant face refer to the children who can learn.

c. “Хээрийн галуу нисэн үл газраас

Хүний хүү эрдэнэ өвөртөлж ирнэ”: (From the place wild geese cannot reach, one's son bring gem)

Meaning: wild geese also have faraway places that they can't fly. Although people don't have wings, they can be passed on from generation to generation. Beishan Yugong (愚公)moves mountains and brings precious knowledge from there.

3. Conclusion

From our research, most of the Chinese educational idioms are derived from the writings and opinions of ancient poets, scholars, and philosophers, most of which are the works of the founders of Chinese Confucianism, philosophers, enlighteners Confucius, Mencius, and Laozi, or the sayings of famous Chinese historical works, such as: 《诗经》、《论语》、《礼记》、《史记》、《汉书》, etc. Chinese educational idioms can be summarized from the following three sources:

1. From daily life.
2. From historical stories, myths and legends.
3. From the famous expression including Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism and other sects.

Mongolian educational idioms can be summarized from the following three sources:

1. It derives from the observation and thinking of human beings in their long-term life, labor and communication, and is the crystallization of human wisdom.

2. Stories, epics and other long narrative poems of folk literature, extracted from the abstract, naturally evolved into independent idioms.

3. Some idioms originated in writing and were later spread to the masses and gradually evolved into folk literature.

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