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**SAMPLES OF WRITTEN AND VERBAL HERITAGE OF OIRAT-
MONGOLS OF XINJIANG**

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Abstract

The state of modern Mongolian studies is characterized by the expansion of theoretical and empirical base of scientific research, increased interest in the study of verbal and written monuments, the creation of large fundamental works, and intensive scientific contacts between the Mongolian centers of China and Russia.

This article presents some of the results of field research obtained during an international scientific expedition to the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China, carried out in the summer of 2012 by research workers of the Kalmyk Institute of Human Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences with the support of the Russian Foundation for Humanities and teachers of Xinjiang Pedagogical University.

The collections of manuscripts and xylographs in the Oirat language, which were discovered in the Ili-Kazakh autonomous region of the SUAR of the PR China are of particular interest. The largest existing manuscript collection is owned by Kharin Togtokh, a resident of the village of Gedeng. His collection consists of 74 manuscripts, most of which are rewritten by him personally.

The materials of the expedition of 2012 also present unique samples of the poetic folklore of the Oirat-Mongols of Xinjiang.

A full description of manuscripts, xylographs, samples of the poetic folklore of the Oirat Mongols of Xinjiang identified during the expeditionary study and their introduction into scientific sphere will expand the understanding of verbal and written heritage of the Mongolian peoples.

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Keywords: Manuscripts, xylographs, Oirat-Mongols, Xinjian.



1. Introduction

The monuments of the written and verbal heritage of the Mongolian people are studied and described in an unequal extent, and some of them are still insufficiently known to science, therefore the descriptive period of study still remains relevant in Mongolian studies. In this regard, the study of written monuments and samples of the poetic folklore of the Oirat-Mongols of Xinjiang, as well as comparative typological studies in terms of comparison with Russian Kalmyks in historical tradition present particular interest.

2. Problem Statement

Over a period of two centuries, many Russian, Chinese, and Mongolian researchers studied written monuments in Old Kalmyk (Oirat) writing. The composition, content of translations, their genre affiliation, and a number of other problems were covered in the works of K.F. Golstunsky, A.M. Pozdneev, A.V. Popov and others; in the XX - XXI centuries the research was performed by V. Heissig (FRG), C. Damdinsuren (MNR), Kh. Luvsanbaldan (MNR), S. Luvsanvandan (MNR), Do. Galdan (PRC), A.G. Sazykin (Russia), V.L. Uspensky (Russia), N.S. Yakhontova (Russia), A.D. Tsendina (Russia).

Russian specialist in Mongolian studies A.G. Sazykin performed a tremendous work on the classification of Mongolian and Oirat manuscripts and xylographs. He prepared three volumes of the catalog of Mongolian manuscripts stored at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg (Sazykin, 2003). In 2001, Uspensky (2014) published a catalog of Mongolian manuscripts from the Scientific Library of St. Petersburg State University and a number of publications. In 1979, the Mongolian academician Ts. Damdinsuren published a monograph "The Mongolian versions of the Ramayana". The study was based on manuscripts in Kalmyk (Oirat) language. Yakhontova (1996) wrote a number of monographs concerning old-Kalmyk Oirat literary monuments.

A significant contribution to the study of the Old Kalmyk (Oirat) monuments was made by Kalmyk scientists - A.V. Badmaev, K.V. Orlova (Orlova, 1991), D.N. Muzrayeva, B.A. Bicheev (Bicheev, 2011), D. B. Gedeeva (Gedeeva, 1999), E.U. Omakaeva. The first Kalmyk researcher of the Zaya-Pandits heritage is A.V. Badmaev, who published the consolidated text of the biography of Zaya-Pandita "Moonlight" (by Radnadadra) (Badmaev, 1968).

It is necessary to express gratitude to Chinese colleagues who study and publish Oirat-Mongolian sources. Such a scientist and popularizer in China is Mingad Erdemt, a professor at China Central University. In 2016, Professor Erdemt released a series entitled "Collection of Oirat written sources stored in private collections of Ili". In this series 14 issues were released.

Verbal folklore of the Oirat Mongols of Xinjiang is expressed in the research created in the past centuries (B. Ya. Vladimiretsov, "Samples of Mongolian folk literature," C.D. Nomininkov, "Outline of the History of Kalmyk Writing", etc.) and in relatively recent time: from the folkloristic works of the last two decades it is possible to name a number of articles by Chinese scholars: Badai (2004), Batnasan (2008), Jamtso (2004).

In 2012, the journal "Bulletin of the Kalmyk Institute for Humanitarian Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences" published articles on the language, literature and culture of the Oirat-Mongols of China (Borlykova, 2012; Menyaev, 2016; Omakaeva, 2012; Ochirova, 2012).

3. Research Questions

The essence of the scientific problem is presented by the need to study and describe some samples of the written and verbal heritage of the Oirat-Mongols of Xinjiang. It should be noted that the majority of modern Oirat-Mongols of Xinjiang are the descendants of Kalmyks migrating from the Russian Empire (1771). They live mainly in Bayangol-Mongol, Ili-Kazakh, as well as in the Bortala-Mongol autonomous districts. The material of the study was presented by personal materials of the authors of the article collected from Xinjiang informants in 2012. During the writing of this article the following work was carried out: transcribing (decoding audio and video recordings into text), textological analysis of written records (description of the manuscript, transliteration, translation from Oirat to Russian, philological and textual comments); classification by genres of samples of verbal heritage of the Oirat-Mongols of Xinjiang.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this article is the identification, description, investigation and introduction into scientific sphere some written monuments (manuscripts, xylographs) and samples of the poetic folklore of the Oirat-Mongols of Xinjiang, obtained and recorded during an international scientific expedition in 2012.

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis for the research is presented by the principles of a comparative historical study of folklore, the theoretical principles reflected in the works of Russian folklorists: V.P. Anikina, V.M. Gatsak, E.M. Meletynsky, G.I. Mikhailov, S.Yu. Neklyudov, V.Ya. Propp, N.I. Kravtsov, V.E. Gusev, V.M. Zhirmunsky, D.S. Likhachev, B.N. Putilov, N.O. Sharakhshinova, S.S. Bardakhanova et al.; as well as in the studies of Kalmyk folkloristic researchers: M.E. Dzhimgirov, A.Sh. Kichikov, N.Ts. Bitkeev, T.G. Basangova (2014), E.E. Khabunova, V.T. Sarangov, D.E. Basayev. In order to describe and analyze the handwritten monuments of the Oirat Mongols, the authors relied on the methodological recommendations of famous Mongolian researchers: A.G. Sazykin, V.L. Uspensky, N.S. Yakhontov, A.D. Tsendina, as well as on the works of A.V. Badmaev, K.V. Orlova, D.N. Muzrayeva, B.A. Bicheev, D. B. Gedeeva.

6. Findings

During the course of the expedition, the authors managed to find written monuments in Buddhist temples, museums and in private collections. As it is known, the Oirat Mongols had a reverent attitude to the manuscripts: they could only be touched with clean hands, stored on the altar, wrapped in silk fabrics, in special wooden cases. The first manuscript of a private collection was revealed at the summer encampment (Kalm. *зуслн*) of a sheep man named Ochra Olzy (50 years old). His encampment was located near the town of Mongol-Cuire in the area called Atan-uul. On the front sheet of the manuscript there was an inscription in the frame with the title of the essay «Pazar Bi-da-ra-na-yin sudur bui». At the beginning of the text, traditionally, the names of the work were given in Sanskrit, Tibetan and Mongolian (Oirat) languages (*enedkegiyin kelen-dü Pazar-bi-dara-na-na-ma-dhivi: töbüdiyın kelen-dü rdo-rze ramanar gzompa gvs byeva zus: mongyoliyin kelen-dü: teyin ebdeqči očir kemėkü toqtöl*). Here it would be appropriate to give the Russian name of the manuscript “Dharani vajry, destroying in this way”. The text

of the manuscript contains spells (dharani) in Sanskrit, written down by the Oirat “clear letter”. The manuscript consists of seven sheets.

During the expedition the researchers saw one of the Oirat Mongolian xylographs, a relatively small amount of which has been discovered until present time. In the village of Bakhlyk, Tekessky District, Ili-Kazakh Autonomous District, XUAR PRC, in the house of Ungenengngi the Oirat xylograph “Golden Glitter Sutra” is stored (*«Xutuq-tu suduriyin ayimagiyin erketü xān dēdū altan gerel kemēkü yeke külgüni sudur orošiboi»*).

This work is widely known in scientific sphere under the short title “Altan Gerel”. The part of it was translated by Zaya-pandita from Tibetan. Sutra “Altan Gerel” was extremely popular and common among all Mongolian people. The text is full. The xylograph consists of 131 sheets, the pagination is per sheet, and the paper is dense.

The colophon of the manuscript contains information about the initiators of xylography, translators and scribes. Thus, the donators of sutra printing were Kalmyk khan Donduk-Dashi and Khansha Degit (*«öqligüyin ezen oloni ezen oyirodiyın noyon Don grob bkra šes kigēd neyideyin yeke ezen eke xatun Bde skyed*). Donduk-Dashi Khan was known as a lawmaker and a great champion of education among the Kalmyks. The translation of the composition from Tibetan into Oirat was made by Ogtorguyin Dalai Zaya-Pandita (*olburi dēdū yeke amruulang-gi olxuyin tula Oqtoruyi Dalai Rab-byam Za-Ya pandida orčiulbai*). On the writing board (sambar), the essay was made by the scribe Mergen Gushi Cultim Jamtso (*onomyoi uxātu Mergen güüši Çül-krim byam-co samuradan*), а на бумагу Федун Занно (*onco dēdū-yi-gi kereqleqči ketürkei bičēci Dge-dun Bzangpo cāsun-du bičiqsen*). As the keeper of the xylograph, Uvelzeng-gogyia, explained, the xylographs were removed from the Volga in 1771, when Ubashi-khan led most of his subjects to Dzungaria. On each sheet of the xylograph there is a red print, on which the syllables of the Om Mani Padme Hum mantra are carved in Tibetan. According to Uvelzeng-gengi, the Altan Gerel xylograph was previously kept in the Zaya-Pandita monastery (Hutgryn-Curie).

The largest manuscript collection that we were able to discover belongs to Harin Togtokh, the inhabitant of the village of Gedeng, ICAO SUAR. His collection consists of 74 manuscripts, the main part of which was rewritten by him personally. Among his manuscripts are Buddhist canonical texts, such as Altan Gerel, Dorji Jodva (oirat. *«Xutuqtu biliğiyn činadu kürüqsen tasuluqči očir kemekü yeke külgüni sudur orošiboi»*) *«Yeke toniluqsani sudur orošiboi»*, as well as works from the class of “popular Buddhism”: *«Burxan baqši-yin suryal orošiboi»*, *«Rdorze gzodpayin tayilbur kemēkü yeke külgüni sudur orošiboi»*. The texts relating to the cults of various deities of the Buddhist pantheon and the texts accompanying the ritual incense to them were of great interest. For example, *«Očirpānin sang orošiboi»*, *«Yaman Dagayin serjim orošiboi»*, an essay on the cult of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara *«Aryā Pala sudur orošiboi»*. There is also one of the rare Oirat translations in the collection titled *«Suryuuliyin baqši Badma Sambayin zokōqsan arkiyin uq yarulya-gi sayitur ilayuqsan sudur»*. It describes the origin of alcohol and the consequences of its use. The author of this work is the Buddhist philosopher Padmasambhava.

The authors of the article attributed a number of texts from the Kharin Togtokh collection to the category of astrological, fortune-telling works on signs, natural phenomena, etc., such as, for example, *«Kerē-in duu šinjilkü bičiq»*, *«Kümün-ni šinji kemēküi sudur orošiboi»*, *«Mongyoliyin xurdun mörin-ni šinji-in bičiq orošiboi»*. The works of this kind were once popular among the Mongolian people. From this

collection such texts as, for example, «*Gal-in sang orošiboi*», «*Güün-ni sün-ni sang orošiboi*». can be attributed to the pre-Buddhist ritual works.

The last text was intended to appease the guardians of the mares so that they give milk in abundance. The texts of sprinkling of milk of marea, for example, «*Güüni sün-ni caculi-in sudur orošiboi*» can be attributed to this category of works. The collection of manuscripts of Kharin Togtokh is interesting as it contains works related to various genres of Buddhist literature. It is noteworthy that the keeper periodically reads all these texts (oirat. *ном неенэ*, i.e. “opens the book” and kalm. *ном амрулна* (“revives the book”). This indicates that the owner of the manuscripts knows the composition of his collection and its purpose.

The collections of investigated manuscripts are an invaluable treasury of the cultural heritage of the Oirat-Mongols and are of great interest for further scientific research.

“The folklore repertoire of an ethnos has been formed for centuries and includes multidirectional processes of preserving and changing the tradition, adapting to modern sociocultural realities. The very nature of verbal folklore tradition has a communicative basis; therefore, the verbal tradition can save and transmit the text only in the process of reproduction in a situation of direct communication ” (Shakhov, 2018).

The materials of expedition of 2012 present unique monuments of poetic folklore of the Oirat Mongols of Xinjiang. This is a part from the chapter of the “Jangar” epos «*Oršil*» («Пролог»), «*Arsalanggiyin araq ulān Xongγor Xošuun köbüüteyigēn xoyoulān mangγasiyın Bürgüd xāgi Xotxor Cōxur morinduni kötölön tatād düüreji irqsen bölöq*» (the chapter is about Khongor, crimson lion and his son Hoshun; they captured Mangas Burgud-Khan, put him on his own horse, leading him to the bridle); the performer is: Dzhangarchi Olonbayar, born in 1957, a native of Mongol district, Ily-Kazakh autonomous district, «*Güün önggütei zērde moritai Küčirdünggiyin Güzēn Gumbü Doqšin Šara Gürgüügiyin nutugi dayiluqsan bölöq*» (the chapter is about Gusen Gumbe Dogshin Shar Gyrgyu Khan, who took over the lands and who had a red horse that looked like a mare”), “*Jangγar-in maqtāl*”(Praise to Jangar); the performer is: Dzhangarchi D. Bynde, bargain, native of the county of Jing Bortal-Mongol Autonomous Region. “The Xinjiang-Oirat tradition, which goes back to the Central Asian epic community, is characterized by typological unity and stability” (Seleeva, 2018).

Rich and colorful landscape of Xinjiang inspires folk poets to create poetic praises. The praise of a place chosen for prayers - a sacred mountain with healing waters, with fragrant herbs, with precious stones - sounds in the following praise

To Altai «Altai-in maqtāl»:

<i>Möngkü casun eketei,</i>	With the well of eternal snow,
<i>Mölgür čoluun orgil-tai,</i>	With a rounded stone peak,
<i>Örgen tümen, küdür öndör...</i>	Wide, vast, strong and glow [Altai],
<i>Burγasu ulāsun čimeqtei,</i>	With a willow tree sprig,
<i>Bulaq-in usun undut</i>	With drinking spring water flow ...

During the expedition, we recorded the *ym dyð* “plangent songs” and the *woump dyð* “short comic songs” of the Oirat Mongols of Xinjiang. In the recorded songs such as «*Arban kēriyin duun*» (“Thirteen songs about bay horses”), «*Ijil Zāgiyin usun*» (“Waters of the Volga and the Urals”), «*Aduu talam*

yabuxulam» («When I go to my herd»), «Yongxor torγun utasun» («Silk thread»), «Bömbürei-bömbürei modondu» («At the Bombur tree»), «Tabur tabun xasaq» («Five Kazakhs»), «Šamu šatanai tosörön» («The lamp is burning from oil»), «Xarādai xarādai xamā nisenei či?» («Swallow swallow, where do you fly?») and others, the subject and content are various. These songs tell about a favorite horse and a horse - the winner of traditional competitions in horse racing, songs-hymns about the native land, and songs of philosophical, heartfelt thoughts, historical, lyrical and comic.

Historical songs are one of the most popular genres of songwriting by the Oirat Mongols of Xinjiang. None of the traditional song genres is so popular and does not express the soul of the Oirat-Mongols as vividly as its historical songs. Many dramatic events in the history of the Oirat Mongols of Xinjiang are connected with their departure from Russia to China in 1771. The songs of Xinjiang Oirat Mongols are devoted to this event: «Ubaši xān» («Ubashi Khan»), «Ijil Zāgiyin usun» («Water of the Volga and the Urals»), «Üülün buural» («Cloudy-Gray»), «Öriyin torγoi» («Morning Lark»), «Ijil γoliyin usun» («Waters of the Volga River»), etc.

Thus, 82-year-old Bindy Dongruv, a bargain from the settlement of Jing Bortal-Mongol Autonomous Region of the XUAR of the PRC, two verses from the song «Ijil Zāgiyin usun» («Waters of the Volga and Urals») were performed:

Ijil γoliyin usugi

Iškileng geji nüülelei či?

Ili Tekesiyin usugi

Amitayixan geji irelei či?

The waters of Volga River

As saltiest did wander you?

The waters of Ili and Tekes River

As sweetest did roam you?

Xayiyād ireqsen čini

Xada čiloun xoyorbui?

Olōd abuqsan čini

Otuγa jingges xoyorbui?

What you was looking for

Were stones and rocks?

What was your fighting for...?

Were *omh* a plume, a sultan on a headdress (the sign of the feudal lords, officials in the board of the Manchu Qing dynasty) and *jingis*? (ver. ball, knot on the headdress).

The songs about Ubashi Khan did not praise an individual person, even if an outstanding political figure, they created a certain image symbolizing both a certain idea and a whole political era, acting as a kind of cultural sign, a carrier of certain qualities, a master of events and destinies.

In the Xinjiang Oirat Mongol song «Üülen buural» («Roan [horse]»), the historical figure of Ubashi Khan is praised as a “national hero.”

The linguistic consciousness of the bearers of the Oirat Mongols of Xinjiang folk tradition, who at that time knew the khans, noyons, zaisangs, transfers the image of the leader to Ubashi Khan: in the studied song under they call him *noyon* prince, *torγuud noyon*, *örliq noyon* “commander”; the verb *daxuulxu* “to lead” (*daxuuluqsan-ni*, *daxuuldaq*) accentuates the image of Ubashi Khan as a helmsman pointing the right

direction to his *nutuq* people. The final lines of the third and fourth verse of the song are filled with love and devotion of the nobility to Ubashi Khan: *Üye-in olon tüşimel-ni / Ubaši noyondān ünenci* (Dynastic nobility / Devoted to [their] Ubashi noyon), *Törö šajin xoyorān / Ubaši xāndān baridaq* (Authority and religion / Give [their] Ubashi khan).

Kalmyk song folklore of Russia also preserved a large number of lyrics that mention the event of 1771: “Ubaši xān” (“Ubashi Khan”), “Maniyigi yayaturai geqsenbi?” (“To whom you left us?”), “Samburiyin ħurban tolyoi” (“On the three hills of Sambur”) and others.

In traditional song folklore of the Oirat Mongols of Xinjiang, mostly lyrical songs prevail. Their main purpose is to reveal the inner state of a person by direct expression of his feelings, thoughts, impressions, moods. Very remarkable in this regard is the Bost-Nur hostess song “Bömbür-bömbür modondu” (“On the Bombor Tree”), performed by Midga, the artist of the folklore group.

<i>Bömbür-bömbür modondu</i>	The Bombor tree
<i>Bürgüd šobuud cuqlurnai.</i>	Gathers Golden Eagles
<i>Büübēlēn büübēlēn ösküqsen</i>	How to pay a mother fee
<i>Ējīyin ačiyigi yayanai da koi.</i>	Lulling, raised [me].
<i>Saqlar saqlar modondu</i>	The spreading tree
<i>Šāzayai šobuud cuqlurnai.</i>	Gathers noisy magpies
<i>Šaraxan uuraq-yēn köküleqsen</i>	How to pay a mother fee
<i>Ējīyin ačiyigi yayanai da koi.</i>	Milking, fed [me].
<i>Xarçai zandan modondu</i>	The green pine tree
<i>Xarçayai šobuud cuqlurnai.</i>	Gathers noisy hawks
<i>Xarangyui sōgēr büübeleqsen</i>	How to pay a mother fee
<i>Ējīyin ačiyigi yayanai da koi.</i>	Lulling in the dark [me].

This song praises the great power of maternal love. All of us have a debt to a mother which is impossible to pay. The image of a mother is a traditional poetic symbol in the folklore of the Mongolian people. The song presents traditional folk formulas, motifs, themes and images, in particular, floristic (the image of the spreading Bombor tree), ornithonymic (the image of the golden eagle, the image of magpies, the image of hawks), which proves the respectful attitude of the Oirat Mongols to sacred trees and birds.

In the love songs of the Oirat-Mongols, love is presented in its entirety - with pain and joy, longing and anticipation, with bitterness of unfulfilled dreams. The love poetry of the Oirat Mongols differs from other song cycles in exceptional poetry. It is quite obvious that such a highly artistic level (evidenced by symbols, other various artistic and visual means: epithets, metaphors, comparisons, etc.) of the folk love lyrical song of Oirat-Mongols reached as a result of a long evolution. For example, the famous folk song of the hoshuts of the Bost-Nur Bayangol-Mongolian Autonomous Region, “Yongxor toryon utasun bui” (“Silk Thread”) presents several epithets.

In the materials of the expedition the well-wishing were widely presented. Wishes are peculiar verbal poetic works of mostly poetic form, in which good wishes are expressed to a person. “In ritual folklore there is a variety of topics of goodwill with positive semantics, addressed to a specific person with wishes for good and advice for the future” (Yusha, 2017). The authors recorded the following good wishes: «Beri-in yöröl» («good wishes to a daughter-in-law»), «Xurim-in yöröl» («Wedding good wishes»), «Köšiq-in yöröl» («good wishes for the canopy»), «Xurdun morini yöröl» (“Good wishes for the fast horse”), “Geriyin yöröl” (“Good wishes for the house”), “Nasbayin yöröl” (“Good wishes for snuff”).

The historically established model of the nutrition of nomads includes two main components of meat (in the form of various dishes from meat and blood) and dairy products. Food praises are reflected in the texts of good wishes. Wishing koumiss “Čigēni yöröl”:

<i>Čigen gedeq idēn</i>	The Kumis food
<i>Činggis boqdo ezen xān zokōqsan idēn</i>	The food given by the great ruler Chinggis Khan
<i>Čindayan cayān güüni üsēr keqsen idēn.</i>	The food made from pure white mare milk
<i>Bar-in arasun arxatai</i>	With a tiger skin
<i>Balbar zandan büliürtei</i>	With sandal
<i>Bayajuulxu sürügiyin üsēr keqsen idēn.</i>	The food from large herd milk
<i>Uuraq noyōni šime boluqsan</i>	It has become nourishing milk
<i>Ökün tosuni dēji boluqsan</i>	It became an honourable fat treat [food]

The artistic form of the wishes of the Oirat-Mongols, their imaginative system is reasoned by the genre peculiarity of these works. The main purpose of the composition, the poetic style of wishes, is to be as concise as possible. Nevertheless it expresses their ideological and emotional content more deeply and more fully. The main compositional form of wishes is a monologue, which enables the performers of the wishes for the “yerolchins” to express directly the conceived blessings and good wishes.

Önödör-in čini bayar giyiči-ni ölzeyitei bolji

Oni ireqči čini xotolo tögüs bayar jiryaltai bolji .

May your next year be filled with joy and happiness!

At the end of the wishes, such words are used that reinforce the blessing voiced by Verolchin, for example, Oir. boltuyai “talk!”, Kalm. “boltha!” – “Let it come true!”. Apparently, such statements were used deliberately by Yerolchins to enhance the magical efficacy of good wishes expressed verbally.

7. Conclusion

Thus, as a result of the presented field research, it has been established that the poetic folklore of the Oirat-Mongols of Xinjiang has been a rather lively and functioning system of traditional culture until the present time. The description of samples of verbal folk art shows the heterogeneity of the genre composition of the poetic folklore of the Oirat-Mongols of Xinjiang. Due to certain historical and geographical features, a significant layer of genres characterized by archaic nature is preserved (bäturliq tuuli, maqtāl, aradiyin duud, yöröl). The samples of the poetic folklore of the Oirat Mongols absorbed the clarity and organization

of national language, the accuracy of its poetic structure, the simplicity and naturalness of everyday and conversational speech of people. In the future, a more complete and comprehensive study of the national poetic creativity of the Oirat-Mongols of Xinjiang is expected. The collections of manuscripts and xilographs recorded during the scientific expedition of 2012 present an invaluable treasure of the cultural heritage of the Oirat-Mongols and are of great interest for further scientific research.

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