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Collection and Publication of Oirat Folk Tales of Xinjiang: a Brief Historical Review

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Abstract. The paper provides a systematic introduction and a brief history of collection, compilation and publication of Oirat folk tales in Xinjiang. The process of scholarly collection and publication of the oral lore of Xinjiang Oirats initiated by such western researchers as G. J. Ramstedt and H. Haslund, was later contributed to by Kalmyk scientists Ts.-D. Nominkhanov and B. Todaeva around the mid-20th century, being basically finalized due to the vast support of such activities on behalf of the governmental bodies and academic societies of China from the late 1970s throughout the rest of the century. Since the 1980s, there has even been an academic plan conducted by the Society of Folk Artists affiliated to the Xinjiang Association of Writers and Artists — as a minor part of the Ninth 5-Year-Plan of China — to publish collections of folk tales, folk songs and proverbs respectively. So, the task has been meticulously dealt with ever since resulting in around one hundred collections and books of folk tales have been published in Xinjiang — in Clear script, traditional Mongolian script, or Latin transcription — with due regard of ethnic, historical and linguistic peculiarities of the recorded materials.

Keywords: Oirats, Xinjiang, folk tales, collection, publication

The academic collection and publication of Xinjiang Oirat oral literature actually started in the early 20th century by G. J. Ramstedt, the eminent Finnish scholar specializing in Altaic and Mongolian studies. He travelled and conducted field work in Inner Asia seven times in the early 20th century, namely in 1898, 1909 and 1912 in Mongolia, in 1902 in Kalmyk Steppe of Russia, in 1903 among Mughals in Afghanistan, and in 1905 among Xinjiang Oirats. The materials collected from Mongolia were compiled with annotations, German translation and a preface, and published by Harry Halen from Helsinki University in 1973 and 1974, under the title of *Folk Literature of Northern Mongolia* [Ramstedt 1973; 1974]. Some folk tales

collected in Xinjiang were also published by Harry Halen with transcription and German translation in 1991 [Ramstedt 1909; 1919]. The folk tales collected in Kalmyk Steppe in 1902 were published by G. J. Ramstedt himself with Latin transcription and German translation in 1909 and 1919 [Harry halén 1991: 171–189]. During his field trip to Xinjiang in 1905, G. J. Ramstedt traveled for a whole year through many places including Tarbagtai (Тарбагтай), Kur Khar-usun (Кур Хар-Усун) and Urumqi (Урумч), recording numerous heroic epics and folk tales from a person called Arshaa who accompanied and guided him. Arshaa used to be the translator of the Mayor of Tarbagtai and, thus, was quite a learned and capable man. G. J.

Ramstedt made quite a detailed field note about this experience [Ramstedt 2014].

The Danish Mongolist H. Haslund came to Xinjiang in 1928, stayed among the Torghuts of Kharshaar (Хар-шаар) for one year, and collected about 60 folk songs which are now stored in the National Museum of Denmark [Haslund 2010].

In 1937, Nirjidma¹, the daughter of prince Paltaa (Палта) of Kur Khar-usun, Xinjiang, transcribed² in Clear Script (Mong. *Тодо бичиг*) 18 short and long songs [Nirgidma 1937] that were widely spread among Oirats, and published them in France under the title of *Princess Nirjidma: 18 Mongolian Songs and Lyrics*³. Until then, the Oirat Kalmyk materials were only collected and introduced by Russians and Europeans, and she, for the first time, introduced the songs and culture of her own people to the foreign countries by herself. The publication of this material is a greatly significant event for Oirats and Kalmyks. P. E. Alekseeva, a researcher from the Kalmyk Institute for Humanities of the Russian Academy of Sciences, published a Russian translation of this book in Elista in 2009 under the title of *Princess Nirjidma and the Torghut Songs of China* [Алексеева 2009]. This book included the 18 folk songs and their Cyrillic Kalmyk transliteration. There are also a couple of poems dedicated to Princess Nirjidma by Kalmyk writers who were in France during 1933-1934. Besides, there are also research papers on prince Paltaa of Kur Khar-usun and princess Nirjidma by Amerian scholar Bormanjin Arash, and Kalmyk scholars B. Bicheev and P.E. Alekseeva, with a few pictures of Nirjidma attached. The Mongolian translation of her book by M. Bujigma was edited by D. Taya and published in Cyrillic Mongolian in Ulaanbaatar [Nirjidma čuglagulun tayilburilba 2014], which was then transliterated in traditional Mongolian script and pub-

lished by Inner Mongolia People's Press in 2013 [Nirjidma čuglagulun tayilburilba 2013].

Another important person is Tserendorji Nominkhanov (Номинхана Церндорж), a famous Altaic linguist and the first Science Doctor from Kalmykia. He mastered many languages including Kalmyk, Mongolian, German, English, Russian, Khakas, Kazakh and Uzbek; visited and delivered lectures at universities and colleges in Astrakhan, Uzbekistan, Khazakstan, Khakassia, Kalmykia, and published many papers and books.

In the 1930s, the local government of Xinjiang sent students to the Middle Asia University in Tashkent (Uzbekistan) for further studies. Among them were many Oirat Mongolian students. Although Tserendorji Nominkhanov was not able to conduct field researches among Oirat people in Xinjiang, he interviewed many students who came from Xinjiang and collected many source materials. During March of 1935 and April of 1937, for instance, he interviewed some Torghut individuals, such as Dosaan (Досан) and Badmara (Бадмара) from Kharshaar and Mongkjirgal (Монкжиргал) from Kur Khar-usun, and took notes of many folk materials including folk customs, 10 folk songs, 66 riddles, as well as names of people, minerals, animals, birds, plants and so forth. These materials are now stored in the scientific archive of the Kalmyk Institute for Humanities of the Russian Academy of Sciences [Tayibung 2015: 39–137]. He also published the book *Learning and Reading Mongolian Words* in Todo script in 1935 [Nominxanob 1935]. The book was designed for learning Todo script and included Kalmyk folk stories such as *The Lion and the Rabbit*, *The One-Inch Little Old Man with Five-Inch Long Beard*, *The Boy That Lies*, and 6 Oirat long songs of Xinjiang such as *Narin Gobiin Zeerde* (Нэрн һөвин зеерд) and *Tahtai Targan Hulan* (Тахта таргн хулн).

1950 is an important year for the publication of Oirat Mongolian literature in China, for the *Khongor* (Хонгор) edited by Bian Yuan was published in this year. Bian Yuan had been prisoned in Urumqi for a few years when he was working in Xinjiang in 1930s, together with a Jangarchi called Manji who was over fifty. Manji (Манж) sang *Jangar* (Жаңгар) in the prison to pass time. When Bian Yuan was out of prison, he recalled the chapters of *Jangar* he heard in prison and compiled them into a book called *Khongor* in 1942, and published it at Shangwu Press of Shanghai [边垣编写, 《洪古尔》, 上海: 上海商务出版社, 1950].

¹ Nirjidma was known by the name of *Shart-soo* (Шартуо) among the Torghuts of Kur Khar-usun.

² Ut duun (Ут дуун), is the Oirat vernacular term for the Mongolian long song, and Hokr duun (Хокр дуун) or Hokr yakr duun (Хокр ярк дуун) for the Mongolian short song, which is known as Shoshder duun (Шоштр дуун) among Chahar people of Bortai, Xinjiang, and Zabhai duun (Завха дуун) among Barkol (Баркөл) Mongolians.

³ The introduction in the book says that the 18 songs were collected by Nirjidma. It is more likely that Nirjidma wrote down the 18 songs that she was familiar with.

年]. The book was republished by Writers' Press in Beijing later [边垣编写：《洪古尔》，北京：中国民间文艺研究会主编，作家出版社，1958年。共77页]. The book is not a scientific text, and thus is not appropriate for academic studies, but it still has a great significance since it is the first domestic publication of *Jangar* in China and it transfers to us important information of that time.

The collection and publication of Oirat folk tales of Xinjiang started quite early, but it was conducted on a large scale only after the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

A general introduction of Xinjiang Oirat literature called *Literature* (3 volumes) was published in Todo script in 1953-1954 by Xinjiang People's Press, and some oral literary texts were included in it [Urun zokāl 1953; 1954], including a few folk tales, such as *Dalan Hudalchi* (Далн худлч) and hundreds of proverbs and riddles.

In the 1950s, the scholarly collection of Oirat folk literature of Xinjiang was started by B. Kh. Todaeva (Todiin Bulgan) from the Soviet Union. Todaeva was not only a linguist with expertise in Mongolian and Altaic languages but also a distinguished scholar who made a great contribution to the collection, compilation, publication and research of Oirat Kalmyk oral literature and folklore. She was invited as a visiting scholar in Beijing University and Central Minzu University. She was also invited as an expert in the compilation of the constitution for wide-scale linguistic field research during 1954 and 1957, and took part in the linguistic research of the Mongolian language and other Mongolic languages, during which she traveled to Xinjiang, Gansu, Koko Nor (Көк нур), Inner Mongolia for several years and collected vernacular and folklore materials of many peoples or tribes, such as Oirats, Ordos, Chahar, Horchin, Baarin, Bargu Buriyats, Daur (Дайр), Yellow Uyghurs (Шар Ыоһур), Dongxiang, Bao'an, Tsagaan Monguor (Ту), and so forth. Later, she published many papers and books on the basis of this field research. She also recorded the dialects, folklore and oral literature in Khoboksair (Ховгсэр), Dorbuljin (Дөрвүлжн), Bayangol (Байнгол) in 1954, in which there were folklore, *Jangar*, heroic epics, oral literature, folk songs, blessings, proverbs and riddles. Her paper *Folk Literature Materials of Mongolians in Xinjiang* [Тодаева 1960: 228-265] was published in *Turkic-Mongolic Languages and Oral Literature Studies*

published in Moscow in 1960, in which she included the transliteration of two stories of *Seventy Two Lies* and *Frog Girl* from Khoboksair and over a hundred of proverbs of Khoboksair, Dorbuljin and Khoshuud (Хошуд).

Oirat writers of Xinjiang have also made great contributions in the memorization, recording, publication of Xinjiang Oirat folk literature. Among them is A. Taibai (Тээвэ), who, in the 1940s recorded the heroic epic *Tsergiin Tsagan Khan* (Цергин Цаган хаан) that he heard from the old Torghuts of Kur Khar-usun, and recorded *Zul Aldar Khan* (Зул Алдр хаан) with *A Zurag Sharhal Horse* that his elder brother had learnt from the epic singer Yeh Naran of Shajin, from Altai Uriankhai in the 1930s, and also wrote down the epic *Khan Kharangui* (Хан Харнгуи) from a manuscript found in the house of an old Uriankhai man called Batumongke in 1962. He also wrote down the heroic epic *Kuder Altai Khan* (Күдр Алта хаан) in Latin from the Oirats in Gansu in the 1950s, and it was later stored in the library of the Institute of Ethnology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences⁴. A. Taibai also collected and recorded many other folk tales and other oral literature.

The book titled *The Mongolian Folk Songs and Poems of Xinjiang* compiled by the Department of Mongolian Language and Literature, Inner Mongolia University was published by Inner Mongolia People's Press in 1959 [Sin Jiyang-un mongyul arad-un dayuu silüg 1959]. The compilation included 36 folk songs, 6 blessings, 25 proverbs, 73 riddles and a couple of the Threes of the Universe.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the collection, publication and studies of folk literature was stigmatized due to various reasons, and hardly any oral literature materials or classical texts were published in Xinjiang. After 1976, especially after 1978, the collection, publication and studies revitalized, and the specialized unites such as the Working Group of *Jangar* and *Geser* Collection and Compilation, and Mongolian Division of Classical Texts and Books Collection and Compilation were founded under the Society of Xinjiang Folk Literature Studies. The folk literature collections and compilation of the folk tales of Torghut (Торхуд), Oolod

⁴ A. Taibai (А.Тээвэ) conducted linguistic field study in Gansu in 1954, and took note of the heroic epic *Kuder Altai Khan* (Күдр Алта хаан) in Latin transcription. The material was in the library of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, but was lost later.

(Өөлд), Khoshuud, Uriankhai (Урянха), Zakhchin (Захчин) and Chahar published in Todo or traditional Mongolian scripts have reached over 90 up until now, with over 50 compilations of *Jangar* and *Geser* and over 40 compilations of other oral literature published.

The men of letters of former generation have also made a great contribution to the collection and publication of Xinjiang Oirat oral literature. The editor of Xinjiang People's Press No. Batbayar (Но. Батбайр) compiled and published three collections with titles of *Beteg Tsagan Bogshirga* (Бетэг Цаган Бокширга), *The Khan's Search for Wife*, and *The Child's Linguistic Lore* [No. Batubayar nayiruulbai: Betege cayān bogširγo.-Ürümči: Šinjiyang-giyin arad-yin keblel-yin xorō, 1981 on.-100x; No. Batubayar nayiruulbai: Kūūked-yin keleni biliq.-Ürümči: Šinjiyang-giyin arad-yin keblel-yin xorō, 1981 on.-483x; No. Batubayar nayiruulbai: Xaan bere xayiqsan ni.-Ürümči: Šinjiyang-giyin arad-yin keblel-yin xorō, 1981 on.-117x] in Xinjiang People's Press in 1981, among them there are 24 stories such as *The Khan's Search for Wife*, which are all life, magic and humorous stories. 31 folk stories, mostly animal stories, were included in the compilation of *Beteg Tsagan Bogshirga*. This is a special compilation of animal stories of Xinjiang Oirat oral literature, and thus has a great significance. *Mongolian Fables* with 99 stories [Či. Erencei 1983] edited by the expert of Xinjiang People's Press Či. Erentsei (Чи. Эрэнцэ) was published by Xinjiang People's Press in 1983. Stories in this collection were not only from Xinjiang Oirats, but also from Oirats of Koko Nor, Gansu, Alasha (Алаша), and they include humorous, animal and life stories.

The most prestigious publication of Xinjiang oral literature should be the series of *Khan Tenggeri* (Хан Тенгэр). This is a series of 51 books published in Todo script during 1981 throughout 1998 by the Mongolian Division of Xinjiang People's Press, which include heroic epics, oral epos⁵, folk songs⁶, proverbs⁷,

riddles⁸, curses, the Threes and Fours of the Universe⁹, folk tales and texts on customs, as well as papers on Oirat studies. Besides, some oral literatures and folk customs of Oirats from Koko Nor, Gansu and Alasha are also included. Among the 371 folk tales there are 125 tales of magic, 38 realistic tales, 45 jokes, 23 animal tales, 15 myths and 66 legends, as well as 22 heroic tales.

The collection titled *Altai Taiji* (Алтай тээйж) with *Ardag Kureng* (Ардаг күрэн) *Horse* [Nima 1985] by Nima Mende was published in Mongolian by Inner Mongolia Culture Press in 1985. This book consists of 23 folk tales, 4 heroic epics and oral epos. The source materials were collected from Six Sumun Ooleds from Mongolkuree, Ili, Xinjiang. The 23 tales consist of 1 heroic tale, 8 tales of magic, 4 realistic tales, 6 jokes and 4 animal tales. The compiler did annotations to the Oirat dialects, as well as provided a long preface.

The book *Folk Tales of Oirat Mongolians* by Hosmengge (Хосмөнгг) from Northwestern Minzu University was published by Inner Mongolia People's Press in 1986 [Qoosmengge emkidhen nayirayulba 1986]. The book consists of 116 folk tales which are classified into tales of magic, Manggus stories, animal tales, myths, realistic tales, tales about smart persons, and jokes, with annotations of Oirat vernacular terms and a preface placed at the end. Those were collected from other compilations or magazines. 4 of them are heroic tales.

The *Oirat Mongolian Tales* [Badarangyui, Gombu todū üsüg-eče bayulγan emkidkebe 1987] by Badrangui (Бадрангуй) and Gombu (Гомбу) were published by Beijing Ethnic Press in 1987, which consists of 52 tales including 4 heroic tales, such as *Sangsar Baatar* (Саңсар баатар), *Red Face of Jargalt* (Жирхлт), *The Hero Bok Monggun Shigshirge* (Бөк Мөңгүн Шигширге), and *The Bravest Man Miimilzuur* (Миимилзур). These were collected from other books and magazines that had been published in Todo script in Xinjiang, and classified into myths, jokes, and tales about smart persons.

The collection of folk tales titled *Bayan*

⁵ Oral epos (叙事诗 in Chinese) refers to a genre of oral literature, often in hundreds of or thousands of verses, whose content is similar or identical to the magic story or the life story.

⁶ Ut duun (long songs) are sang on rituals and formal occasions, while Hokr duun (short songs) are sang on unformal occasions.

⁷ The vernacular term in Oirat or Kalmyk for proverbs is Üliger (Үлгүр), or Üliger üg (Үлгүр үг).

⁸ The vernacular term in Oirat or Kalmyk for riddles is Tuuli (Тууль), Ahar tuuli (Ахр тууль), or Tailalgatai tuuli (Тээлвртэ тууль).

⁹ The vernacular term in Oirat or Kalmyk for The Threes and Fours of the Universe is Orchilangiin Gurban / Dorben (Орчлңгин хурвн болн дөрвн), Orchilangiin Gurbadus, or Orchilangiin dorben hok (Орчлңгин хурвн болн дөрвн хөк).

Ulaan Khan (in traditional Mongolian script) [Sečenmōngke emkidken nayirayulba 1987] which consists of 45 tales by Sechenmongke from Institute of Ethnic Literature, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences was published by Inner Mongolia Education Press in 1987. The contents are classified into two groups: one comprises 20 tales collected from Xinjiang during his field research in 1981, and the other 25 tales are transliterations of Oirat tales published on *Khan Tenggeri* and *Oriin Tsolmun* (Өрин Цолмун). Heroic tales included in this book are *Kereedei Mergen* (Керәдә Мерген) with *Ke Buural Horse*, *15-year Old Aral Mergen* (Арл Мерген), *Kenze Kuder* (Күдр Кенз), *Sansar Baatar*, and *The Bravest Man Miimilzuur*. Also included is an annotation of Oirat dialects and a preface.

The collection *Source Materials of Oirat Dialects* was published by Inner Mongolia People's Press in 1987. The materials in this collection were collected by Choijungjav and his students Gerelt and Bimba during a field research in Khoboksair, Xinjiang during June to October of 1981. This collection consists of 128 long songs, 181 riddles, 89 proverbs and 6 folk tales. 3 of them, namely *Zurgaadai Mergen* (Зургадай Мерген), *The Bravest Man Miimilzuur*, and *Kereedei Mergen with Ke Buural Horse*, are heroic tales. They were recorded in Mongolian script and Latin transcription. Certain tales were also published in *Khan Tenggeri*.

J. Rinchindorji from Institute of Ethnic Literature, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences conducted field researches in Xinjiang for a couple of times since 1978 and collected *Jangar* and other Oirat epics. The author of this article also performed field researches for 4 months in Khar-usun County, Altai, and Khoboksair of Xinjiang during June to October of 1985. In 1986, Rinchindorji compiled and published the folk tales he collected in Tekes (Текес), Ili in 1981 and part of my collection with annotations. This work includes 50 folk tales consisting of 35 tales of Khoboksair and 15 tales of Tekes, and was published by the Inner Mongolia Culture Press in 1988 under the title of *Zurgaadai Mergen: The Mongolian Tales of Ili and Tarbagatai* [J. Rinčindorji, Ba. Damrinjab 1988]. 11 of the tales are heroic. The book has a preface and annotations of the Oirat vernacular terms, and storytellers' names and the places of recordings were noted at the end in this collection.

Another collection of folk tales with a title of *Argachi* (smart person) [S. Mayidar 1990] by S. Maidar (С.Мәәдр) was published by Xinjiang People's Press in 1989. Tales about smart persons, mostly humorous in nature, are very prevalent among Oirats.

There has been an academic plan since the 1980s, as a small part of the ninth 5-year-plan of China to publish the collections of folk tales, folk songs and proverbs respectively. This plan was conducted by the Society of Folk Artists affiliated to the Xinjiang Association of Writers and Artists, and the collection of the oral materials of the Oirat Mongolians hence started, and as a result, collections of Oirat Mongolian oral materials of different counties and cities are published individually. For instance, *The Xinjiang Volume of the Collection of Folk Literature of China: The Sub-volume of Borotala* (book 1) [Borotala xotoyin aradiyin aman zokōliyin emkidkel-igi nayiruulun kinaxu komis 1990] of over 830 pages was published in Todo script. 63 folk tales were included in this volume, which consists of 2 heroic tales, over 30 tales of magic, over 20 realistic tales, and 3 animal tales. The storytellers' names, recorders' names, place names, ages, and times of recording are also noted in detail at the end.

The Committee of Oral Literature Collection of Hejing County and the Committee of the Compilation of Three Collections of Folk Literature of Hejing County jointly published the compilation titled *The Collection of the Folk Literature of China: The Sub-collection of Hejing Folk Tales* [Xejin šiyani aradiyin aman zokōl-yin yurban emkidkel-igi nayiruulun kinaxu komis-ēce nayiruulba 1992], which includes: (1) legends about people, (2) legends about folk customs, (3) myths about ideals, (4) tales about living things, (5) tales about ghosts and devils, (6) realistic tales, (7) tales about smart persons, (8) jokes, (9) tongue twisters, (10) myths about places, and (11) doreen malia (дөрән маля)¹⁰. 63 folk tales were included in the collection, with a clear description of the storytellers' and the recorders' names, place names, ages, time, the education background of the storytellers and so forth. Even some introductions of certain storytellers are included, which is a very important source of information. Several heroic tales are included in this collection.

The Xinjiang Volume of the Collection of Oral Literature in China: The Sub-volume of

¹⁰ Doraа malia (Дөрән малә) is a genre of Oirat oral poems, used in wedding ceremonies.

Bostnuur Folk Tales in Todo script was jointly published by the Committee of Folk Literature Compilation of Bostnuur County and the Committee of the Compilation of Three Collections of Folk Literature of Bostnuur County in 1992. This collection consists of 62 folk tales, including 4 heroic tales, 14 tales of magic, 5 realistic tales, 5 jokes, 4 animal tales, 2 legends and 28 myths, and gave a clear note of the names, genders, ages and living or working places, education background of the storyteller and the recorder, the time of recording, and the area of the transmission of the story at the end. The stories are classified according to the storyteller rather than on story types.

The Committee of Folk Literature Compilation of Khoshuud County and the Committee of the Compilation of Three Collections of Folk Literature of Khoshuud County compiled and published *The Collection of Oral Literature in China: The Sub-volume of Khoshuud County Oral Literature* in 1992. This collection has 96 folk tales which are classified into tales of magic (myths), legends, and tales, and also offered detailed background information in the end as the other collections of this series did. Many heroic tales are included in the collection.

I myself conducted 8 months of field researches among Oirats in Khar-usun, Altai, Khoboksair (during June to October, 1985) and Khar-usun, Nilha (Нилх), Tekes, Mongolkuree (Монгл күрә) (during June to October, 1986), and collected many materials on oral literature, folklore and dialects. Over 50 tales (different variants are counted) in my collection were similar to heroic epics in content which I termed as heroic tales. I chose 44 of them, and was hoping to publish them under the title of *Oirat Heroic Tales* (Book one) in 1988, but the editor of the Xinjiang People's Press cut off 32 tales, the preface of over 10,000 words, and annotations of several hundred words without my consent, due to the lack of budget, and published only the 12 heroic tales under the title of *Khar Arangga* (Хар Арһа) in 1994. It was the first collection of Mongolian heroic tales in China and even in the world.

I gave the 94 tales collected among the Torghut Zahchins in the Khar-usun County of Xinjiang in 1985 and 1986 to Ethnic Press, and they were published under the title of *Saali Mergen and Saadag Mergen* (Сааль Мергэн болн Саадг Мергэн): *the Mongolian Tales of Khar-usun* [Ba.Damrinjab 1996] in traditional Mongolian script in 1996. This collection con-

sists of 17 heroic tales, 43 tales of magic, 12 realistic tales, 17 jokes and 5 myths and legends, with detailed information at the end of each story as to the name, gender, the tribe of the storytellers and the time and place of recording, as well as over 150 annotations to the special lexis of dialect, ancient words, unique folk customs, religious practice, and some linguistic phenomena. It also gave a general introduction of Khar-usun county, the storytellers, the custom of storytelling, and the naming of the oral literature genres by the local people in the preface. This is an exemplary collection of Mongolian oral literature.

I compiled in traditional Mongolian script around 80 folk tales recorded among Ooleds and Torghuts of Nilha, Tekes and Mongolkuree counties in Ili in 1986, and gave it to the Xinjiang People's Press in 1989 to publish under the title of *Altuijai Mergen* (Алтујжа Мергэн): *The Mongolian Tales of Ili*, which was published finally in 1998, consisting of 20 heroic tales, 25 tales of magic, 6 jokes, 14 realistic tales, 3 myths and legends. At the end of the stories were the name, gender, tribe of the storytellers and the place and time of recording, and over 710 annotations were added to some dialects, ancient words, unique folk customs, religious practice and linguistic phenomena.

The Selected Mongolian Oral Literature of Khoboksair (in Todo script) [Nü. Zorigtai 2004] compiled by Nu. Zorigtai (Нү.Зоригтэ) was published by Xinjiang People's Press in 2004. It consists of 47 folk tales, which are classified to the legends about historical persons, legends of historical events, legends about natural scenes, and folk tales. Most of the tales are collected by Nu. Jorigtai from Khoboksair during 1985 to 1996. There are heroic tales such as *Kereedei Mergen with Khe Buural Horse*.

The Selected Mongolian Folk Oral Literature of Jing County [Ba. Jüjei, S. Manji 2006] (in Tod script) compiled by B. Jujei (Б.Жүжэ) and S. Manji was published by Xinjiang People's Press in 2006. This collection includes three parts of folk tales, folk long songs and proverbs, and the part of folk tales includes 2 heroic epic and 16 folk tales, among which there are several heroic tales such as *Buyantodar Mergen* (Буйнтодр Мергэн), *Aral Mergen*, and *Hairin Yek Harabdal Khan* (Хээрн Ик Харабдл хаан).

The book *Han Harangui: Oirat Heroic Epic Text and Annotations* compiled by myself was published in 2006. 8 heroic epic texts and 10 variants of *Han Harangui* that I collected

in Xinjiang during 1985-1995 were included in the book. The book consists of 7 parts, namely preface, general statement, epic texts, annotations to 3162 words and sentences, epic music, index, and brief introductions of the epic singers. Actually 8 among the 10 variants of *Han Harangui* are heroic tales. *Han Harangui* is a very well-known epic transmitted both orally and in written texts among Oirats. The texts have either form of verse or prose, and the latter is more prevalent than the former. The name of the epic also has several variants such as *Han Harangui*, *Han Haranghui* (Хан Харңһу), *Har Haranggui* (Хар Харңһу), *Har Haranga* (Хар Харңһа), *Har Aranga* (Хар Арңһ), and so forth. Whether it was originally in verse and gradually transferred to prose, or was originally in prose and was noted down by some Lama or learned man into verse is an issue for further discussion. Generally speaking, the oral performance is often in prose form, while the written texts often take on a form of verse.

The *Collection of Mongolian Folk Oral Tales of Xinjiang, China* with 334 tales was compiled by the Society of Folk Artists of Xinjiang and published by the Xinjiang People's Press in 2006. The tales are classified into myths and tales, and the myths are classified into 7 types such as myths of world creation, myths of landscapes, myths of natural phenomena and so forth, and tales are classified into tales of magic, animal tales, realistic tales, religion tales, tales about smart persons, jokes, and tales about special sayings. The tales in this collection are either collected and recorded from Xinjiang Oirats, or selected from other collections and magazines in Tod or traditional Mongolian script. The name of the storyteller and the time of recording, or the information concerning its source is accounted at the end of the story. This collection is very important for the general understanding of Oirat folk tales of Xinjiang. This collection was published in traditional Mongolian script by Xinjiang People's Press in 2011 [Sinjiyang-un arad-un urliqčid-un neyigemlig nayirayulba 2011].

The *Oirat Mongolian Heroic Epics and Tales of Xinjiang* (in Tod script) [Sinjiyang giyin aradiyin urliqčidiyin neyigemlig nayiruulbai 2009] compiled by the Society of Xinjiang Folk Artists was published by the Xinjiang People's Press in 2009. This collection includes 2 heroic epics, 1 chapter of *Jangar*, 7 heroic tales and 8 tales of magic. Information with regard to the name, birth place of the storyteller or the singer and time of the recording, the recorder, date of

the transcription is given at the end.

Altan Tebeg the Son of the Smart Taiji (in Mongolian script) [Mende, Bayankesig 2009] was published by the Inner Mongolia People's Press in 2009. This collection includes 1 epos, 21 folk tales and 310 proverbs. Brief introduction about the storytellers is added at the end of the story, and annotations are done to some vernacular terms. Mende (Мендэ) and Bayankishig (Байнкишиг) collected these materials from Six Sumun Oolods from Mongolkuree, Ili, Xinjiang; they are warm-hearted contributors of the Mongolian culture, fully devoted to the cultural cause of Xinjiang Oirats.

The *Collection and Transcription of Oirat Mongolian Folk Tales of Xinjiang* (4 volumes, in Mongolian script) was published by the Inner Mongolia Education Press in 2011. This collection is the 3-year research outcome of the 2006 Key Research Project of Inner Mongolia University Research Center: Research Projects of Social and Human Sciences of Inner Mongolia Education Ministry. This collection consists of 470 folk tales, classified into 4 volumes of *Tales of magic* [Го. Jorigtu, Na. Sayijiraqu 2012], *Myths and Legends* [T. Namjil 2012], *Tales about smart persons* [Sarantuyay-a 2012], and *Heroic Tales* [Ba. Damrinjab 2012]. The tales were selected from other publications of collections and magazines published after the 1980s. It is published in traditional Mongolian script and is catered to the readers and researchers from Inner Mongolia and other places. It also includes detailed information with regard to the name, tribe, birth place, age, and education background of the storytellers, the name of the recorder, source material, time of recording and so forth. Each volume has a long preface, giving a general introduction to the related researches. I was in charge of the volume of *Heroic Tales*. It consists of 45 heroic tales that I collected from the Oolod, Uriankhai, and Zahchin people from Khar-usun, Altai, Khoboksair, Nilha, Tekes, and Mongolkuree in Xinjiang during 1985-1986.

The collection *The Khan's Search for a Wife* (in Todo script) compiled by the Mongolian editorial board of Xinjiang People's Press was published in 2011. It consists of a heroic epic called *Naran Khan Kobuun* and 32 tales, of which 23 are from the *Naran Khan Kobuun* (Нарн Хаан Көвүн) published in 1981.

The Selection of Khoboksair Folk Tales [Na. Buuw-a, P. Neyikei 2013] with 91 folk tales collected by Na. Buuvaa, P. Neikei (П. Нийкэ) and transcribed by D. Taya and O. Tai-

bung (О. Тэвн) was published by Inner Mongolia People's Press in 2013. The stories are classified into three parts of myths, legends and tales, which are further classified into many sub-groups. It also includes information as to the name, gender, date and place of birth, and the education background of the storyteller, the date of recording and the dissemination of the story, as well as some annotations. There are two heroic tales of *The Bravest Man Mimiilzuur* and *Malzan Ulaan Baatar*.

Besides the publication of a number of collections and compilations, many folk tales have been published in newspapers and magazines. Newspapers such as *Xinjiang Daily*, *Bayangol News* and magazines such as *Oriin Tsolmun*, *Literature of Xinjiang* and *Bayangol* have published many materials of Oirat folk literature in Xinjiang, including many folk tales. In addition, some tales and tale collections were translated and published in Chinese.

Another point to be mentioned is that, some units and individuals have been making great efforts to the cause of collection and publishing of Oirat oral literature. The Office and Working Group of *Jangar* and *Geser* was established under the Society of Xinjiang Folk Oral Literature in 1978, and To. Badma (То. Бадма) and Tu. Jamtsaa (Тү. Жамца), with their colleagues including Bu. Amurdalai (Бу. Амрдала), Ha. Altan, Liu Shiwu, Ko. Nima (Кө. Нимә), Nu. Zorigtai, Howa, A. Oltsuu, Ba. Oltsuu, Hubiraltu (Хүврлүт), Na. Namjav¹¹, and Chi. Erentsei¹², have made great efforts in the collection and publication of *Jangar*, *Geser* and other oral literatures of Oirats. They did field researches in almost every county and village of Oirat people and collected very rich materials of oral literature. As a result, many texts of *Jangar* and *Geser*

and other oral materials are published, which are now in the archive of the Office and Working Group of *Jangar* and *Geser*. Besides, scholars like J. Rinchindorji, Ja. Batnasan¹³, Buyankishig, D. Taya and B. Damrinjab, as well as some local Oirat people of Xinjiang have made great contributions in collection and publication of oral literatures, and they have many source materials that are not yet published. For example, I did field researches in Oirat counties for 17 times for 37 months in all during 1985-2017, collecting (recording) over 850 hours of oral literature, including 197 chapters of *Jangar*, 71 chapters of *Geser*, over 1300 folk tales, 367 blessings, over 60 *Jangar* blessings, over 1400 long songs, 87 short songs, over 20 heroic epics, over 20 chapters of *Han Harangui*, and many proverbs, riddles, Threes and Fours of the Universe and so forth, as well as many vernacular materials about Oirat dialects, and interviews with the epic singers, storytellers, folk singers, and blessing singers.

To summarize, around one hundred collections and books of folk tales have been published in Xinjiang, in Todo script, traditional Mongolian script or Latin transcription. Compared to those published in other Mongolian areas, these publications have great significance in many perspectives. First, the number is much bigger. The population of Oirat people in Xinjiang is only about 180,000, while the oral literature collections including *Jangar* and *Geser* have mounted to 200, about half of which is on oral tales, as introduced above. This is quite impressive for such a population of people, hardly possible for any other Mongolian tribes or even any other ethnic nationality. Second, most of the oral literature materials published in Xinjiang is in Todo script. Todo script, meaning 'Clear script', is very advantageous as transcription of oral literature because it clearly records the pronunciation. Third, the collections of Oirat folk tales were recorded in the local dialect, while the collections of oral literature texts of other places are generally recorded in standardized dialect. Fourth, annotations are done to the vernacular terms in most of the publications of Xinjiang. Fifth, the collections also included the detailed information about the storytellers and the process of taking notes, which is an important characteristic of publications of Xinjiang Oirat oral literatures;

¹¹ The Office and Working Group of *Jangar* and *Geser*, Xinjiang Society of Folk Literature Studies, was founded in 1978, and it used to transfer personnel from other units or places due to the lack of personnel. Among them are A. Oltsuu and Ba. Oltsuu from the Xinjiang Radio Station, Nimatseren from Bayangol Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture, Hubiraltu from Bortai Mongolian Autonomous County, and Na. Nimajab from Hoboksair Autonomous County. They, together with the colleagues from the *Jangar* and *Geser* Office, traveled among the Xinjiang Oirat people for many times to take notes of *Jangar* and *Geser* texts and other oral materials.

¹² Chi. Erentsei is the editor of the Xinjiang People's Press, and he also participated in the field work for collection of *Jangar*.

¹³ Ja. Batnasan is from Hoboksair Mongolian Autonomous County. He conducted field work for many times in Hoboksair, interviewed many *Jangarchis*, and collected many chapters of epic *Jangar*.

publications of oral literature of other Mongolian areas hardly gave accounts to such information. Sixth, there is a tendency for the publications of Xinjiang in recent years to attach the CDs of the oral performance, which is again very rare for publications in other Mongolian areas. This is an important change in the history of oral literature compilation, offering most reliable information for oral literature studies.

The collection, compilation and publication of the Oirat tales in Xinjiang started very early and the publications have several advantages over those of other Mongolian tribes and areas. The source materials are recorded and transcribed meticulously, and most of them are published exactly as in the performance without any refinements. These materials can be of great significance to the further research of Oirat folk tales or even general folk tale studies if they are recognized and made full use of by researchers from home and abroad in the future.

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К истории записи и публикации сказок ойратов Синьцзяна

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Статья представляет краткий экскурс в историю сбора и публикации образцов устного народного творчества ойратов, проживающих в Синьцзян-Уйгурском автономном районе Китая. Первопроходцами в данной области стали европейские ученые Г. Рамстедт и Х. Хаслунд, опубликовавшие ряд собранных среди ойратов Синьцзяна материалов в первой половине XX в. Далее последовали исследовательские работы калмыцких ученых Ц.-Д. Номинханова и особенно — Б. Х. Тодаевой, которая в ходе полевых лингвистических изысканий осуществила запись и последующую обработку большого пласта устного фольклора не только ойратов, но и ряда других монгольских этнических групп — дунсян, монголов, чахаров, хорчинов и т. д. В силу объективных обстоятельств в 1960-е и 1970-е гг. соответствующая исследовательская работа не проводилась, но тем активнее развернулась деятельность в этой области в 1980-х годах, когда задачи по фиксации и публикации образцов народного творчества были официально включены на региональном уровне в план девятой пятилетки КНР. В итоге были опубликованы около 100 фольклорных сборников, что ознаменовало качественно новый этап в развитии ойратоведения, так как в ходе указанной работы был раскрыт широкий культурный пласт, обозначены новые задачи, методы и перспективы будущих гуманитарных исследований.

Ключевые слова: ойраты Синьцзяна, фольклор, сказки, собрание, публикация