

Mongolian Collection of the BULAC - Bibliothèque universitaire des langues et civilisations

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The BULAC (Bibliothèque universitaire des langues et civilisations²) is a university and research library specializing in non-Western languages and civilisations. It was established in 2011 through the grouping of several library collections to create a pole for the study of languages and cultures.

The BULAC has inherited more than 1,500 titles related to Mongolian studies, accumulated since the late 19th century by the Library of Oriental Languages previously attached to INALCO, and has continuously expanded its collection through researchers' donations and acquisitions.³ The Mongolian collection saw significant growth following the establishment of a Mongolian language department at INALCO in 1967. Today, BULAC's Mongolian collection comprises nearly 4,400 titles, with 68% in vernacular languages such as Mongolian, Chinese (201 documents), Kazakh, Buryat, Kalmyk, and Oirad.

The books in BULAC's Mongolian collection cover a wide range of themes, with a priority given to history (30% of the collection), particularly the Chinggisid era, to other humanities and social sciences (22%) with a focus on ethnological studies of the various ethnic groups, including religious traditions such as Buddhism and shamanism, as well as to linguistics and language manuals (18%) and literature (16%). From Buddhist scriptures to *The Secret History of the Mongols*, from the Epic of Gesar (Mo. Geser) to works by socialist authors and contemporary writers like Ölziitögs, Ayurzana, and Mend-Ooyo, the BULAC offers a comprehensive panorama of Mongolian literature, both in vernacular and translated editions.

The Mongolian collection includes works from diverse origins, in vernacular languages—published in Mongolia, Inner Mongolia (China), Buryatia and Western Russia (Moscow, Saint Petersburg)—, as well as books in other languages such as English, Latin, French, German, Russian, Hungarian, Chinese, Arabic, Finnish, and Persian. The collection thus features a variety of alphabets, with the majority of texts in Cyrillic Mongolian and traditional *bichig* script, along with a few in *todo bichig*. The online catalogue takes into account the different Mongolian scripts.⁴ Among its rare curiosities, the BULAC holds works on Chinggis Khan's conquests written in Tamil and Vietnamese.

The majority of titles in the Mongolian collection are relatively recent, dating from after 1960. However, nearly 500 works were published in the first half of the 20th century or earlier. Among the oldest are accounts from the first Western travellers describing their journeys to the East, followed by the first scientific and historical studies, as well as translations intended for evangelical purposes. The oldest book in BULAC's Mongolian collection is a 1671 edition of Marco Polo's account in Latin.

The oldest Mongolian-language documents are missionary translations of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John (1819) (**figs 1 and 2**) and the Old Testament (1835), translated into *bichig* Mongolian by

¹ At the time of writing this article, Anna Dupuy was in charge of the Mongolian collection of the BULAC.

² University Library of Languages and Civilisations.

³ Catalogue : <https://catalogue.bulac.fr/>.

⁴ See for instance: <https://catalogue.bulac.fr/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=1194549>; <https://catalogue.bulac.fr/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=1242142>.

missionaries in Siberia. Also of note is a Russian grammar of Mongolian titled *Grammatika mongol'skogo âzyka* ("Grammar of the Mongolian Language") by Isaak Jakob Schmidt, dated 1832 (figs 3 and 4). This book bears the stamp of the Tsarist embassy in Beijing, along with a seal from the commercial department of the Moscow branch of the Soviet State Publishing House and a price in rubles. It was therefore most likely among the many valuable books and works of art sold by the Soviet authorities in the 1930s to obtain foreign currency. Seized by German occupation forces during World War II, it was deposited at the Library of Oriental Languages by the French Artistic Recovery Selection Commission between 1949 and 1950.

The BULAC's Mongolian collection also holds a rare piece, *Buriat hür - türüsin devter* (1907), a Buryat language textbook written in Vagindra, a script created from *bichig* Mongolian specifically for the Buryat language, and which was only in use between 1905 and 1910 for a dozen books and pamphlets (figs 5 and 6).

Aside from this last work, the BULAC's Mongolian collection, although rare in Western Europe, is distinguished more by its regularity and comprehensiveness: the BULAC holds numerous works in *bichig* Mongolian from the Inner Mongolia People Publishing House (Öbür mongγul-un arad-un keblel-un qoriya) printed in Hohhot and the National Publishing House (Ündüsüten-ü keblel-ün qoriya) published in Beijing. It also owns the complete collection of 108 anthology works of Mongolian literature (*Mongolyn uran zokhiolyn deejis*).



Fig. 1. Gospel of St. Matthew, 1819. Bibliothèque universitaire des langues et civilisations (BULAC, Paris), BULAC RES MON Fol 707

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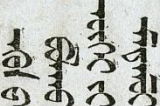
Fig. 2. Gospel of St. Matthew, 1819. Bibliothèque universitaire des langues et civilisations (BULAC, Paris), BULAC RES MON Fol 707

4) При глаголахъ означающихъ повѣствованіе, подчиненный глаголь поспавляется въ наклоненіи изъявитель-


номъ, на пр.  Ламы говорятъ, что шаринская (ламская) вѣра распространилась по всѣй землѣ.

153. Иногда союзъ  замѣняется часпицею винительнаго падежа; тогда глаголь подчиняемый обращается въ наклоненіе неокончательное, а подлежащее поспавляется

въ падежѣ родительномъ, на пр.  Вѣрую, что

Богъ есть единъ.  Знаю, что это не сбудется.

§ 154. Междометія въ Монгольскомъ языкѣ поспавляются при падежѣ именительномъ, или звательномъ, кроме

мѣспоименій первого и второго лица, на пр.  горе

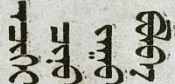
мнѣ;  ахъ! что съ побоею случилось. Впрочемъ какія и гдѣ поспавляются въ Монгольскомъ языкѣ

Fig. 3. Grammar of the Mongolian Language (*Grammatika mongol'skogo âzyka*), 1832. Bibliothèque universitaire des langues et civilisations (BULAC, Paris), BIULO PB.II.437

междометія, можно усмотрѣть изъ приложеннаго при
семь примѣра.



Handwritten Mongolian script in vertical columns, with red ink markings above certain lines.

К О Н Е Ц Ъ .



Fig. 4. Grammar of the Mongolian Language (*Grammatika mongol'skogo âzyka*), 1832. The stamp of the Russian embassy in Beijing is visible. Bibliothèque universitaire des langues et civilisations (BULAC, Paris), BIULO PB.II.437

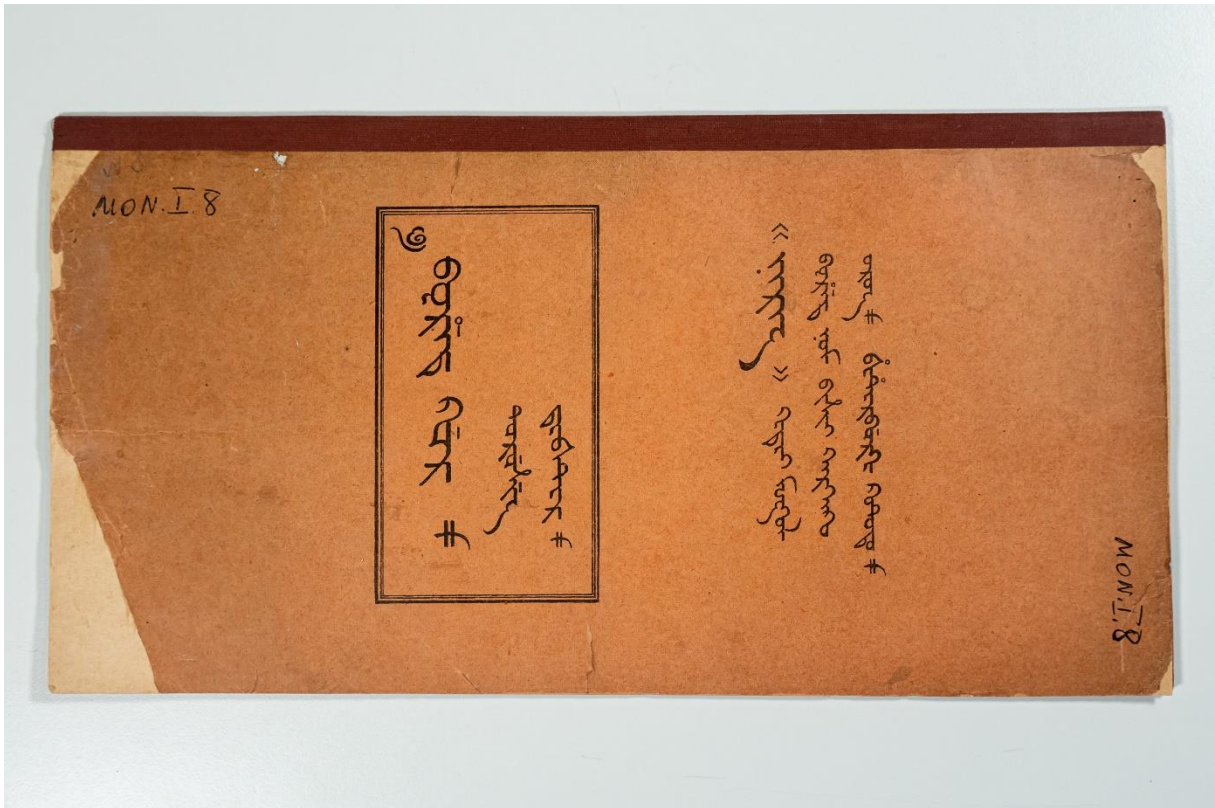


Fig. 5. *Buriat hür - türüsin devter* (in Vagindra script), 1907. Bibliothèque universitaire des langues et civilisations (BULAC, Paris), BULAC RES MON 4 3647

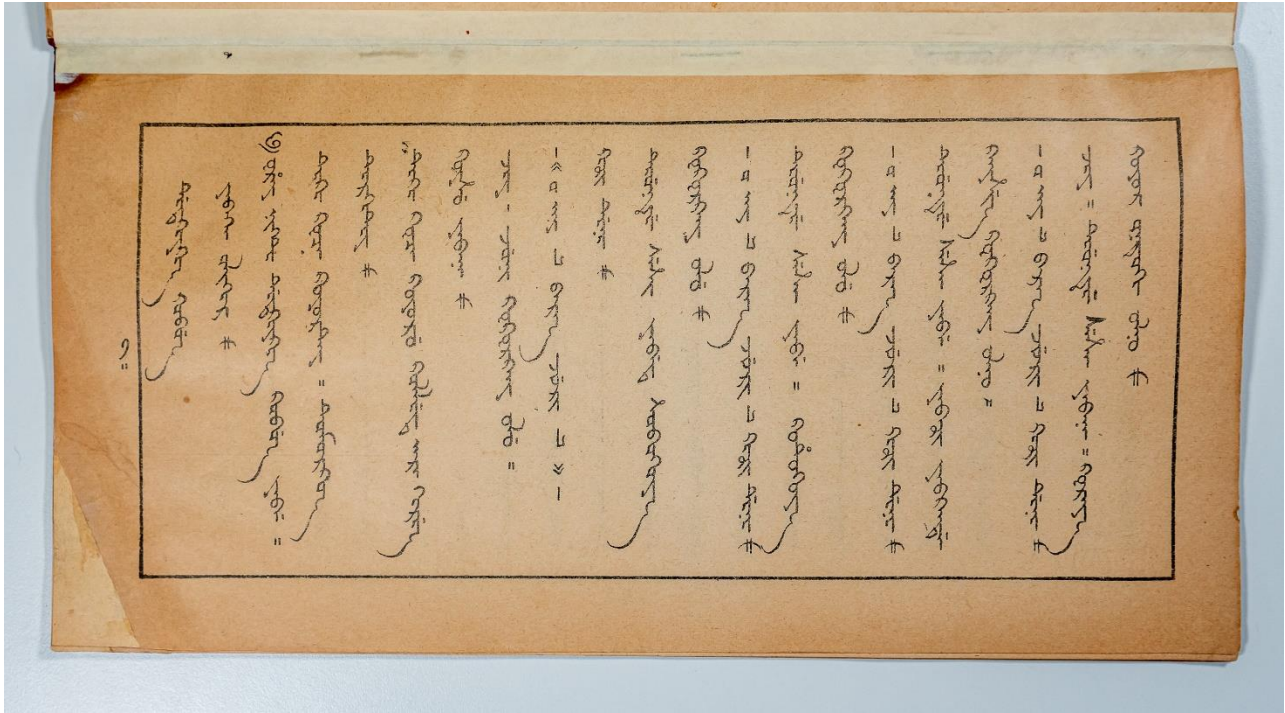


Fig. 6. *Buriat hür - türüsin devter* (in Vagindra script), 1907. Bibliothèque universitaire des langues et civilisations (BULAC, Paris), BULAC RES MON 4 3647