Mongghul Ha Clan Oral History Documentation
Mongghul

- A group of Monguor or Tu, one of China’s 56 officially recognized nationalities
- Live in Qinghai and Gansu provinces
- Speak a Mongolic language retaining certain archaic features of Middle Mongolian
- Monguor dialects, depending on location, with influence from Chinese and Tibetan
- The dialects are undergoing fast transformation
Mongghul History

Contested academic theories about the origin

1. Descendants of the Tuyuhun branch of the old Xianbei people from Manchuria, 4th – 7th cent.
2. Descendants of 13th and 14th century Mongol soldiers sent to defend the border regions of the Mongol empire
Possible Clan Ethno-genesis

Complicated internal clan origin traditions

- Some clan chronicles suggest a Shatuo (Turkish) origin, e.g., Li, Na, and Ji clans
- Chinese, e.g. Chen clan
- No mention of the Ha Clan in official historical records
Ha Clan

• **Xihajia** (78 out of 81 households), in Huzhu Mongghul Autonomous County, Qinghai

• **Donghajia** (40/43 h.) in Huzhu, Qinghai

• **Hawan** (20/25 h.), Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County, Gansu

• Tianzhu County town - **Huazangsi** (>15 h.), Gansu

• **Dakeshidan** (8/>100 h.), Tianzhu, Gansu
Xihajia
Hawan
Methods/Approaches

- Local community members do the project
- Digital audio-visual documentation
- Invited clan elders from different Ha Clan villages to meet and talk about their past. They had common topics since they shared similar life experiences.
Local Reaction

• Welcomed our arrival at the clan’s home-village
• Compliments and encouragement from elders
• Elders’ interests in future work
• Indifference of the young generations towards cultural documentation, great interest in the equipment
• Doubt in project importance and practicality
Preservation

Transcription, translation and glossing (gram. analysis)
• Appendix 1 – Interview
• Appendix 2 -- Transcriber files

Research papers
• *Mongghul Ha Clan Oral History* (BA thesis)
• Continuation -- MA thesis

DVDs and VCDs

Online database
Redistribution

What?  
• DVDs and VCDs made from the interviews  
• Online digital documents

Whom?  
• Interviewees, their relatives and neighbors, their interviews, and interviews from other Ha clan villages
Redistribution Significance

- Supplementary material to family chronicles
- Continues family chronicle tradition
- Strengthens clan unity
- Preserves memories of family members and relatives
- Unabridged materials preserve authenticity for future use
Project Impacts

- Cambridge University funded
- Project involvement by two community members studying abroad reminds young people of the importance of knowing their own culture, and suggests their culture has value
- Encourages youth to speak their own language
- Inspires culturally sensitive villagers
- Helps people realize the value of oral transmission
- Emphasizes the value of education
Thanks for your attention!
If you take the wishes of your parents as your own, there won’t be any unfriendly brothers;

If you take the wishes of your ancestors as your own, there won’t be any inharmonious clansmen.