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GIOVANNI OF MONTECORVINO IN KHANBALIQ: LITERARY AND CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF A LOST MONGOLIAN BIBLE TRANSLATION

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Abstract

This study reviews Giovanni of Montecorvino's lost Mongolian Bible translation based on remaining evidence, and discusses the factors that could have led to its disappearance, and its possible significance towards Mongolian literary history, linguistics, and translation studies. The research analyzes Giovanni's work by drawing on missionary letters, subsequent historical records, and comparative assessments of existing Mongolian Bible translations. In Khanbaliq, Giovanni completed the translation of the New Testament and the Psalter into Mongolian in the early fourteenth century, making it the earliest recorded case of a Mongolian Bible translation. Therefore, it is still a significant literary work for researchers to be aware of. Its potential historical, linguistic, and literary influence goes beyond missionary history, as it can portray early Mongolian literary culture, medieval translation methods, and cross-cultural exchange under the Mongol Empire.

Keywords: *Mongol Empire, translation history, Bible translation*

Introduction

The Mongol Empire had great political influence and vast geographic scope, however, few documents and records from that era have survived. This was largely due to the nomadic lifestyle and how Mongol rulers mostly relied on existing Chinese, Persian, and Arabic scribal elites.¹ Particularly in China, Iran, Russia, and Western Europe, several documents, letters, maps, and decrees concerning the Mongols have surfaced in foreign libraries and archives over the past few decades. One of these results was Giovanni of Montecorvino's 1305 letter to the pope about translating the Bible into Mongolian. Giovanni claimed that he had finished translating the New Testament and the Psalter, but the manuscript was never discovered.² Its loss is especially significant since hardly any long Mongolian literary works from the late 13th–early 14th century exists, particularly those in Latin–Mongolian translations and those in poetry. Relevant to poetic studies, the researcher views the lost translation as a historical record, linguistic tool, and literary work. With the goal of an academic call for archival attention, this paper

¹ Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West, 1221–1410* (Routledge, 2005), 43–44.

² A. C. Moule, “Documents Relating to the Mission of the Minor Friars to China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1914, 533–99. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25189199>.

explores what is currently known about this translation, what might have led to its disappearance, and evaluates its potential value for Mongolian literary, linguistic, and translation studies.

Giovanni of Montecorvino: Missionary Work and Translation Efforts

Giovanni, born in Italy in 1247, joined the Franciscan order and went on to do missionary work under papal authority. He arrived in India in 1291 and then in Khanbaliq (modern-day Beijing), the Mongol Empire's capital, in 1294 shortly after Kubilai Khan passed away. Although Giovanni was expecting to pay his respects to Kubilai Khan, he was welcomed by Öljeyitü Temür Khan who later approved his intention to build Catholic churches in the city.³ Giovanni sent several letters to the pope during his stay in Khanbaliq. In those letters, he claimed that the construction of the first Catholic church was completed in 1299, and by 1305 he had converted around 6,000 people to Christianity.⁴ Furthermore, the letters also mention how he had bought forty boys and taught them Latin and later wrote them thirty Psalters with Hymnaries and two Breviaries liturgical songs.⁵

Giovanni's missionary work faced several complications, especially from the Nestorians, who spread Christianity among the Mongols across the Silk Road, reaching Sogdia in the eighth century.⁶ Long before the Catholic missionaries arrived, the Nestorians had already converted several significant Turkic-speaking tribes, including the Kereit, Naiman, Ongud, and Uyghur.⁷ The Nestorians opposed Catholic Christianity due to their inherently different practices of the religion, which William of Rubruck who observed them between 1253 and 1255 described as "The Nestorians there know nothing. They say their offices and have their sacred books in Syriac, a language of which they are ignorant, and so they sing like our monks who know no grammar, and this accounts for the fact that they are completely corrupt. In the first place they are usurers and drunkards, and some of them who are with the Tartars even have several wives like them. When they enter a church they wash their lower members like the Saracens; they eat meat on Fridays and have feasting on that day after the Saracen custom."⁸ Although the Nestorians showed opposition and hostility,⁹ Giovanni continued his missionary work and succeeded in converting several Nestorians. Particularly among the Ongud people, several sources say that even King George (Kergüz) rejected Nestorian Christianity in favor of Catholicism.¹⁰ However, after King George's death around 1298–1299, his Nestorian brothers led many converts back to the Church of the East, therefore limiting the impact of Giovanni's mission among the Ongud.¹¹

The Nestorians were not the only ones that Giovanni attempted to convert. Among them were the Alans, originally considered to be Byzantine Orthodox Christians from the Caucasus, who had joined the Mongol military system and acted as members of the imperial guard for the Great Khan.¹² Giovanni reportedly turned a sizable number of Alans, including numerous nobles, to Roman Catholicism.¹³ Many

³ Wagner Kuhn, "The Christian Missions to China under Mongol Occupation: Challenges and Opportunities," *Hermenêutica* 6 (2006): 10.

⁴ Б. Мөнхзаяа, "Монгол Улс Дахь Христийн Шашны Түүхээс /Эртний Улсуудын Үеэс XIII Зуун/ [From the History of Christianity in Mongolia: From the Era of Ancient States to the 13th Century], Шашин Судлал Сэтгүүл 4 (2006): 100.

⁵ A. C. Moule, "Documents Relating to the Mission of the Minor Friars to China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1914, 577, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25189199>.

⁶ Bayarsaikhan Dashdondog, "Nestorian Christianity among the Mongols," in *The Mongol World* (Routledge, 2022), 631.

⁷ Dashdondog, "Nestorian Christianity among the Mongols," 632.

⁸ Christopher Dawson, *The Mongol Mission: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Sheed and Ward, 1955), 144–45.

⁹ G. Buffon OFM, "I francescani in Asia: Un ponte tra vecchio e nuovo mondo," in *L'arte di Francesco: Capolavori d'arte italiana e terre d'Asia dal XIII al XV secolo*, ed. Angelo Tartuferi and Francesco D'Arelli (Firenze: Giunti, 2015), 72, cited in Francesco Vossilla, "A Summary of the Historical Situation of Giovanni da Montecorvino's Mission to Yuan China," *The Macau Ricci Institute Journal* 13 (2025), https://mrijournal.ricci.ac.org/articles/issue_13/MRIJ_13_2.pdf.

¹⁰ Мөнхзаяа, "Монгол Улс Дахь Христийн Шашны Түүхээс /Эртний Улсуудын Үеэс XIII Зуун/ [From the History of Christianity in Mongolia: From the Era of Ancient States to the 13th Century], 100.

¹¹ Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West, 1221–1410* (Routledge, 2005), 258.

¹² Vladimír Liščák, "The Christian Nobles at the Court of the Great Khan, as Described in Medieval European Sources," *Golden Horde Review* 5, no. 2 (2017): 283, <https://doi.org/10.22378/2313-6197.2017-5-2.276-289>.

¹³ Jong Kuk Nam, "The Envoy to Pope Benedict XII Sent by the Great Khan in 1336," *Journal of Western Medieval History* 44 (2019): 108, <https://doi.org/10.21591/jwmh.2019.44.2.101>.

times it is regarded as one of the most important and enduring results of his journey, and this accomplishment is often mentioned.

Apart from his missionary work of conversion and baptism, he devoted himself to learning the Mongolian language, which was especially relevant to his Bible translation work. Learning the language might have taken a lot of his time as he claimed to have gained a "adequate knowledge" as mentioned in one of his letters.¹⁴ Giovanni started translating the New Testament and the Book of Psalms into Tartar language (scholars identify as Mongolian), which at the time was the main language used in the empire for administration and communication.¹⁵ Many experts also propose that the translation might have been done in the Uighur script, which at the time was the most common way to write Mongolian.¹⁶ Giovanni clearly stated in his 1305 letter: "I have an adequate knowledge of the Tartar language and script, which is the usual language of the Tartars, and now I have translated into that language and script the whole of the New Testament and the Psalter and have had it written in beautiful characters."¹⁷ Generally speaking, this translation work is thought to be the first known effort to convert the Bible into Mongolian because the Alans reportedly used Greek scripture while the Nestorians read Syriac scripture.¹⁸

Giovanni persisted in his missionary activities even in later life (fifty-eight years old in 1305) and in difficult circumstances. Having gained the respect of both his followers and parts of the local community, Giovanni died around 1328.¹⁹ The Christian Alans afterwards regarded him as a valiant, competent, and holy man.²⁰ But after his death, the Catholic mission slowly died out, and when the Mongol Empire weakened in 1368, all Christian presence, including both Catholic and Nestorian, disappeared from Khanbaliq.²¹

Mongolian Bible Translations: Historical Overview and Gaps

After a long chronological gap, Isaac Jacob Schmidt's work in the early nineteenth century started the Mongolian Bible translation efforts that continue even today. Schmidt first translated biblical writings into Kalmyk starting with the Gospel of Matthew in 1809, then broadened his work to literary Mongolian with the assistance of Buryat intellectuals.²² Although opposition from the Russian Orthodox Church restricted its distribution, a full Mongolian New Testament was completed by 1827.²³ Schmidt's translation served as a bridge towards future translation works despite the criticisms it received from translators such as Edward Stallybrass and William Swan, who started a new translation project shortly after. The London Missionary Society's translation project, under the direction of Edward Stallybrass and William Swan, began in the 1820s to create a better Mongolian translation of the Bible. They translated the Old Testament directly from Hebrew and Greek while cross-referencing with versions from other languages, including Russian, Slavonic, Manchu, and Mandarin.²⁴ They often used

¹⁴ Bayarjargal Garamtseren, "Re-Establishment of the Christian Church in Mongolia: The Mongolian Standard Version Translation by National Christians," *Unio Cum Christo* 2, no. 2 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.35285/ucc2.2.2016.art3>.

¹⁵ Simon Wong, "Towards a History of Bible Translation among the Dialects and Ethnic Languages of China," *Journal of Biblical Text Research* 24 (2009): 148, <https://doi.org/10.28977/jbtr.2009.4.24s.377>.

¹⁶ Wong, "Towards a History of Bible Translation among the Dialects and Ethnic Languages of China," 148.

¹⁷ Christopher Dawson, *The Mongol Mission: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Sheed and Ward, 1955), 277.

¹⁸ Nam, "The Envoy to Pope Benedict XII Sent by the Great Khan in 1336," 107.

¹⁹ Maurizio Paolillo, "La Lettera Di Giovanni Da Montecorvino (1247–1328) e Il Suo Incontro Con Il Re Öngüt Giorgio: Un Enigma Medievale in Asia Orientale," *Mediaeval Sophia: Studi e Ricerche Sui Saperi Medievali* 5 (2009): 75.

²⁰ Kuhn, "The Christian Missions to China under Mongol Occupation: Challenges and Opportunities," 11.

²¹ Christopher Dawson, *The Mongol Mission: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Sheed and Ward, 1955), 227.

²² Katsuhiko Takizawa, "19世紀前半モンゴル宣教における聖書翻訳をめぐる諸問題とその意義 [Issues and Significance of Bible Translation in Mongolian Missionary Work in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century]," *Tōhoku Shūkyōgaku* 7 (2011): 4, <https://doi.org/10.50974/00002036>.

²³ Bayarjargal Garamtseren, "Монголчуудын Христ Итгэл Хийгээд Библийн Монгол Орчуулгын Түүхэн Тойм," *Theological Journal* 05/02, no. 8 (2016): 77.

²⁴ Staffan Rosén, "The Translation History of the Mongolian Bible," *Mongolian Studies* 30 (2008): 32, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43193515>.

transliteration for foreign theological terms and mostly wrote in classical Mongolian script for the Buriat people, with a lot of contact with locals, Buddhist monks, and literary sources. This could have caused them to adopt several Buddhist terms during their translation, which many scholars still debate over the usage of certain word choices. The New Testament was subsequently printed in Manchu script in 1846, and the Old Testament was published in 1840, therefore producing the first full printed Mongolian Bible, with minor adjustments continued across the late nineteenth century.²⁵

Around 1872-1880, the missionaries shifted their focus onto the Khalkha Mongolian dialect instead of Kalmyk and Buriat. Based on the 1846 versions, Joseph Edkins and Samuel Schereschewsky adapted the Gospel of Matthew into the Khalkha dialect and published it in Beijing with the help of Mongolian collaborators who worked on refining linguistic accuracy.²⁶ Later, a missionary named David Stenberg translated other Gospels and Acts into Khalkha, but he was killed during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, leaving his work unfinished.²⁷

Although there are furthermore attempts at translating the Bible in Mongolian, they were mainly for Kalmyk, Buryat, and Inner Mongolian readers. In 1887, Aleksei Pozdnev translated the four Gospels into Kalmyk utilizing Todo script, at the same time, Orthodox translator Chestokin made Buryat translations of Matthew and Mark, which were printed in Cyrillic script between 1909 and 1912.²⁸ This translation represent the first time Cyrillic was used for Mongolic Bible writings. Another well-known translation work was done by Joel Eriksson and his team. They mostly worked from Chinese Guoyu versions, cross-checked against Swedish (1917), English RSV, Japanese, and Tibetan translations.²⁹ Furthermore, Joel Eriksson and his team translated the New Testament for the Inner Mongolians who were mainly reading the Bible in Chinese. Originally published in 1953 in traditional Mongolian script, this version highlighted simplified modern vocabulary and fewer foreign loanwords and was later converted to Cyrillic script by Stuart Gunzel in 1993, making it accessible to modern Mongolian readers.³⁰

The translation projects until the 1990s were not originally written in Khalkha Mongolian but later converted from other dialects. However, the Mongolian Bible Society released the first modern Mongolian New Testament in Cyrillic, which John Gibbens translated with his team. Based on the Textus Receptus, this translation took a meaning-based approach meant for readers with little or no knowledge of Christianity under socialism.³¹ Though quite influential, it was criticized for theological reinterpretation and overmuch explanatory paraphrasing.³² In 2015, the complete Bible translation was published while preserving a dynamic equivalence approach with improved language and cultural correctness.³³ Shortly after Gibbens's New Testament publication, The Mongolian Bible Translation Committee (MBTC) started a new translation project with a team consisting of nationals from Mongolia, America, Japan, Korea, and Sweden.³⁴ The team translated from an English-based text (NASB) rather than directly from the original biblical languages and the New Testament was published in 1996,

²⁵ Bayarsaikhan Dashdondog, "Brief Notes on the Bible Translations into Armenian and Mongolian," *An International Journal of Mongol Studies* 51 (2017): 24.

²⁶ Rosén, "The Translation History of the Mongolian Bible," 32.

²⁷ Rosén, "The Translation History of the Mongolian Bible," 32.

²⁸ Takashi Shimamura, "History of Mongolian Bible Translation," *Journal of Biblical Text Research* 19 (2006): 205, <https://doi.org/10.28977/jbtr.2006.10.19.200>.

²⁹ Rosén, "The Translation History of the Mongolian Bible," 33.

³⁰ Kyo Seong Ahn, "Professionalism vs. Popularity: Different Strategies of Word Choice in Bible Translation with Special Reference to 'Presbutēs' (Πρεσβύτερος) in Philemon 1:9 in Modern Mongolian Bibles," *Journal of Biblical Text Research* 46 (2020): 204–5, <https://doi.org/10.28977/jbtr.2020.4.46.196>.

³¹ "Bible Society of Mongolia," <https://biblesocietymongolia.org>.

³² Garamtseren, "Re-Establishment of the Christian Church in Mongolia: The Mongolian Standard Version Translation by National Christians," 60.

³³ Youngcheol Lee, "Features of Bible Translations in Mongolic Languages in Comparison with Korean Bible Translations," *Journal of Biblical Text Research* 33 (2013): 81, <https://doi.org/10.28977/jbtr.2013.10.33.77>.

³⁴ Bayarjargal Garamtseren, "A History of Bible Translation in Mongolian," *The Bible Translator* 60, no. 4 (2009): 222–23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/026009350906000403>.

followed by the full Bible published in 2000.³⁵ This version is still commonly used by people along with the revisions in 2004 2013, and 2019.

There were several more translation attempts, including the Rich Heart Baptist Bible (2011) and Today's Mongolian Bible (2016). The meaning-based translation of the Today's Mongolian Bible by Akihide Kitamura in 2016 reportedly relies heavily on the German Gute Nachricht Bible (1997, 2000), even if sometimes said to be derived from the original languages.³⁶ The translation uses functional equivalence, but it has been criticized for lexical omissions, Russian ecclesiastical influence, unusual phonology, and limited acceptance among Mongolian churches.³⁷

Overall, the history of Mongolian Bible translation reveals a rich but temporally uneven tradition in which most surviving texts were written for Buryat, Kalmyk, Inner Mongolian, or later Khalkha readers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Even while many of these translations were written in classic Mongolian script and in some cases, were translated directly from Hebrew and Greek or English and other modern languages, they were to some extent influenced by Buddhist lexicon, Russian ecclesiastical, or contemporary missionary translation techniques. Giovanni of Montecorvino's lost Mongolian translation, in contrast, has a unique place in this history. The translation, made in the early 14th century, is the only known case of a direct Latin-to-Mongolian Bible translation and predates all other surviving Mongolian Bible versions by many centuries. Montecorvino's work represents a link between medieval Latin Christianity and early Mongolian literary culture, as no Mongolian writings translated from Latin are presently known. Its absence not only obscures a key event in the history of intercultural translation during the Mongol Empire but also restricts knowledge of medieval Mongolian biblical language and poetics.

Literary and Linguistic Significance

Scholars have long debated over particular word choices and unresolved translation problems since the first Bible translations were made in Kalmyk. Particularly, the translation of terms such as "God" and "Logos" do not have exact matches in Mongolian, and they could be confused with Buddhist and indigenous religious ideas. Translators have developed either new lexical forms or indirect alternatives to solve this issue, which has sparked theological controversy.

Early translators such as Isaac Jakob Schmidt in the 1820s used the term "Deed" (Highest) to refer to the Christian God, however the London Missionary Society (LMS) translators, Edward Stallybrass and William Swan, chose "Burkhan" in their 1846 version because it was the only general term for God that most people would understand at the time. Some critics argue that the term "Burkhan" risks heresy by mixing up the Christian God with local gods. Therefore, some translators aimed to find a suitable word while avoiding the term "Burkhan," which was thought to be too closely linked with "Buddha". One of them was John Gibbens, who introduced the term "Yertöntsiin Ezen" (Lord of the Universe) into his 1990 translation to avoid Buddhist syncretism, which however sparked another controversy among scholars and translators. Critics of "Yertöntsiin Ezen" say it is a strange, descriptive term that does not have the same gravity as a real religious title.³⁸ The most recent Standard Mongolian Translation led by Mongolian scholars has chosen to continue using "Burkhan" along with the term "YAHWEH" which leads to "Burkhan" being the most commonly used term at the moment.

Another ongoing controversy is with the translation techniques that were used. While the early translations, including the 1846 Stallybrass-Swan version was written in a "high language Buriat" style

³⁵ Wong, "Towards a History of Bible Translation among the Dialects and Ethnic Languages of China," 152.

³⁶ Kyo Seong Ahn, "Professionalism vs. Popularity: Different Strategies of Word Choice in Bible Translation with Special Reference to 'Presbutēs' (Πρεσβύτερος) in Philemon 1:9 in Modern Mongolian Bibles," *Journal of Biblical Text Research* 46 (2020): 203, <https://doi.org/10.28977/jbtr.2020.4.46.196>.

³⁷ Kyo Seong Ahn, "An Investigation into the Translation of Modern Mongolian Bibles: From the Mongolian Bible Translation Committee Version to the Mongolian Union Bible Society Version," *Journal of Biblical Text Research* 42 (2018): 99–100, <https://doi.org/10.28977/jbtr.2018.4.42.90>.

³⁸ Shimamura, "History of Mongolian Bible Translation," 208–10.

that was thought to be too elevated, non-functional and unintelligible for the general public,³⁹ contemporary attempts, like the 1990 John Gibbens translation, have been criticized for being excessively paraphrastic and some academics have even branded it "heretical" for its random inclusions and omissions.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the 2000 Holy Bible from the English NASB version,⁴¹ which resulted in loss of the linguistic and poetic features by being too literal translation. Regarding the most recent Mongolian Standard Version, it is still in progress so there are no current comments and critiques yet.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper discusses what is currently known about Giovanni of Montecorvino's lost Mongolian Bible translation, the factors that could have led to its disappearance, and its possible significance for Mongolian literary history, linguistics, and translation studies. The research analyzes Giovanni's work by drawing on missionary letters, subsequent historical records, and comparative assessments of existing Mongolian Bible translations. Giovanni completed the translation of the New Testament and the Psalter into Mongolian in the early fourteenth century, making it the earliest recorded case of a Mongolian Bible translation. Therefore, it is not only the loss of a missionary document but also the loss of a potential literary and linguistic artifact from a period when Mongolian written texts, particularly poetic compositions, are extremely scarce.

The controversy over the existing Mongolian Bible translations reveals that all current versions are influenced by several source languages, writing systems, dialects, theological viewpoints, and translation approaches. From the nineteenth century onwards, translators often struggled with lexical equivalence, particularly while translating key religious ideas, and struggled between literal and meaning-based translation methods. These matters continue to remain as a subject of scholarly debate, which highlights the ongoing challenges of integrating biblical language into Mongolian linguistic and cultural systems. Therefore, had Giovanni's lost translation survived, it might have offered direct proof for early Mongolian biblical terminology, medieval methods for interpreting Christian ideas, and poetic aesthetics, especially in the Psalms. This missing work causes a significant academic gap, which limits knowledge of early Mongolian literary style, possible connections between Latin Christian poetics and Mongolian narrative and poetic forms, and translation methods. Important questions that still need to be answered are how Giovanni translated God in Mongolian, whether he preferred literal or meaning-based translation, and how he wrote the poetic forms of the Psalms. If the manuscript had survived, it might have answered many of the problems with translation that later translators continued to deal with.

Another interesting way to see the potential literary significance of this manuscript is through a hypothetical comparative study with *The Secret History of the Mongols*, written less than a century before Giovanni's alleged translation work. By looking at common linguistic aspects, genealogical structuring, idioms, and more, scholars can further learn about the traits of Mongolian in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century. Furthermore, since both the Psalter and *The Secret History of the Mongols* have very prominent poetic features, comparing the rhythm, parallelism, metaphor, and other poetic features could help clarify old Mongolian aesthetic style.

From a historical perspective, Giovanni's translation may be seen as a cultural artifact of the Mongol Empire, a rare case of direct interaction between medieval Latin Christianity and Mongolian written culture. There are already few records related to the Mongols that have survived in the Western archives, thus if the manuscript was delivered to Rome, the Vatican Apostolic Archive or Franciscan archival collections might be among the possible repositories. Alternatively, if duplicates still exist in

³⁹ Bayarjargal Garamtseren, "A History of Bible Translation in Mongolian," *The Bible Translator* 60, no. 4 (2009): 219, <https://doi.org/10.1177/026009350906000403>.

⁴⁰ György Kara, "Reading a New Mongolian Version of the New Testament," *Mongolian Studies* 20 (1997), cited in Bayarjargal Garamtseren, "A History of Bible Translation in Mongolian," *The Bible Translator* 60, no. 4 (2009): 221, <https://doi.org/10.1177/026009350906000403>.

⁴¹ Youngcheol Lee, "Features of Bible Translations in Mongolic Languages in Comparison with Korean Bible Translations," *Journal of Biblical Text Research* 33 (2013): 81, <https://doi.org/10.28977/jbtr.2013.10.33.77>.

Asia and have survived, they might exist somewhere in Inner Asian or Chinese collections still waiting to be discovered. Although these possibilities are only speculation, the rediscovery of medieval records in recent times shows that the survival of historical manuscripts is not unprecedented.

To conclude, even if Giovanni of Montecorvino's Mongolian Bible translation is missing, it is still a significant literary work for researchers to be aware of. Its potential historical, linguistic, and literary influence goes beyond missionary history, as it can portray early Mongolian literary culture, medieval translation methods, and cross-cultural exchange under the Mongol Empire.

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