Prof. Christopher P. Atwood
Introduction to Ordos Documents  (Central Eurasian Studies 520)
Syllabus for the course offered in 2001
Indiana University
Dept. of Central Eurasian Studies

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U520: Introduction to Ordos Documents
Instructor: Christopher P. Atwood
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In this course we will read in English translation Mongolian texts and documents copied or collected in the early twentieth century by Catholic Scheut missionaries in southern Ordos (Inner Mongolia). The documents in this valuable collection, covering a wide range of Mongolian life, have been extensively transcribed and translated, giving a unique window onto both Mongolian life and the methodology of Mongolistics. As we read and discuss the documents, we will learn the various pre-modern poetic, epistolary, prayer, ritual handbook, and legal formats used by writers and officials in pre-revolutionary Inner Mongolia and be introduced to the major problems and pitfalls in their use. Topics covered by the documents and to be discussed in class include Buddhist didactic poetry, Buddhist and folk religious prayers, political ideology and rituals of the Mongolian banner administration, the Chinggis Khan cult, manuals for weddings and horse races, legal privileges of the nobility, district self-defense and border disputes, financial structure and difficulties of the Mongolian banners, Chinese colonization and Mongolian resistance organizations (duguilangs), banditry, and Mongolian relations with the Scheut missionaries themselves. The ultimate aim of the course will be to develop a rounded picture of a pre-revolutionary Mongolian society through the use of native documentary material.

Prerequisite: Some prior course work in Chinese or Mongolian history or Tibeto-Mongolian religion. Knowledge of Mongolian and/or French helpful but not necessary.

Requirements: The class will be held in seminar format. Students will write a research paper on a topic chosen in conjunction with the instructor. The format will be one of an extended introduction giving background to and explication of a defined body of Ordos documents including those dealt with in the course and/or others published by Antoine Mostaert, Joseph van Hecken, or Altan’orgil and other contemporary Inner Mongolian scholars. No exams. Grades will be based on class participation and the paper. Students will be required to submit weekly e-mail questions or comments on the reading two days before class, and will give an oral presentation of their research topics near the end of the semester.

Course Materials: A course packet with the relevant articles and Henry Serruys’s Kumiss Ceremonies and Horse Races (1974) will contain all the weekly class readings.

Weekly Readings (author is Henry Serruys, unless otherwise noted)

1. Introduction

2. Writing and literacy.
3. Buddhist didactic poetry. Historical legends

4. Buddhist prayer and ritual

5. Political rituals.

6. Wedding ceremonies

7. The Chinggis Khan cult


   “Two Mongol letters” Zentralasiatische Studien 5 (1971), 95-104.
10. The nobility and the banners
“A question of land and landmarks between the banners Otog and- üsin (Ordos),” 
40, no. 3 (1977), 581-585.
“A quarrel among the noble families of- üsin banner, Ordos,” _Central Asiatic Journal_ 20 (1976), 
297-309.

**List of Documents to form basis of paper due.**

11. Mongol banners and the Chinese state--the formal organization.
“A receipt from Outer Mongolia from 1907,” _Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum 
Hungaricae_, vol. 24, no. 3 (1971), 331-335.
“A document from 1904 dismissing an Ordos prince from office,” _Central Asiatic Journal_ 19 
“Mourning regulations in Ordos,” _Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies_ vol. 40, 
no. 3 (1977), 580-581.
51-59.
2 (1976), 213-224.
“A letter of protest from Ordos against the creation of provinces, 1923,” _Central Asiatic Journal_ 
21 (1977), 251-258.

12. Criminal cases
“Mongol letters from Otog (Ordos) 1920-1923 regarding a number of murder cases,” _Annali 

13. Banner finances and administration (time on Monday or Tuesday, TBA)
“A socio-political document from Ordos: The _dürim_ of Otog from 1923,” _Monumenta Serica_ 30 
(1972/3), 526-621.
“Five documents regarding salt production in Ordos,” _Bulletin of the School of Oriental and 
“More about the Otog salt lakes,” _Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies_, vol. 42, 
no. 1 (1979), 61-65.
“A Letter from Alaan to the Catholic Bishop of Ordos,” _Ural-Altaische Jahrbücher_ n.f. 2 (1982), 
224-233.

14. Colonization and land problems
“Two complaints from Wang banner, Ordos, regarding banner administration and Chinese 
colonization (1905),” _Monumenta Serica_ 34 (1979/80), 471-511.
15. Popular protest and the *duguilang* movement
