Boris Vladimirrov’s work, originally published in 1929, is a classic of Mongolian studies that deserves reprinting. It was the most important study of the Khalkha dialect (the standard dialect of Mongolia) before Nicholas Poppe’s grammar of 1951, and it retains value to linguists today for its description of contemporary Khalkha pronunciation.

V’s book has three parts. The introduction (1–50) surveys the dialects of Mongolian and provides a historical overview. Part 1 proper (51–89) discusses the sound system of Khalkha and classical Mongolian script. As the modern Cyrillic alphabet was introduced in the early 1940s and a Latin script based on Turkic Romanization systems (widely used in the 1930s but never made official) was only developed around the time this work was published, comparison between the literary language and Khalkha required the citation of words in classical script. While the absence of standard Cyrillic forms renders this book less immediately accessible to linguists, its treatment of classical script is very good. Khalkha forms are transcribed in standard Cyrillic phonetic transcription.

Part 2 (91–421), a comparative study of literary Mongolian and contemporary Khalkha, makes up the bulk of the work. After a short section of general remarks (93–96) follow discussions of stress and vowel harmony (97–142), vowels (143–345), and consonants (346–421). While the focus is a comparison of the sound systems of the literary language and Khalkha, it includes much data from other dialects. As the number of pages suggests, V’s treatment of vowels is richer than that of consonants, and while changes in the Mongolian vowel system are extensive, the fact remains that V’s treatment of consonants lacks some detail. Finally, the end matter consists of an index of Khalkha roots (422–32), an index of Khalkha morphemes (433), and errata (434–36).

As a comparative and historical study of Mongolian, this book is a transitional work from the time the basic knowledge of the field was being collected and refined; rather, Nicholas Poppe’s introductory work in 1955 is the starting point for studies of Mongolian dialectology. On the other hand, for Mongolists interested in the development of the field, it is well worth reading. Moreover, much of the content is still useful. The section on stress (which includes a useful discussion of poetic meter) and the discussions of classical script generally hold philological interest even today: literary Mongolian is a written language whose monuments span eight centuries, and V’s discussions of the changes in the script and the development of loanwords at different periods are well worth reading. Nonetheless, the book is likely to be predominantly of interest to specialists, and the price makes it suitable primarily for university libraries.