

On the Earliest Known Clear (Todo) Script Xylographic Book Called *Xutuqtu Mayidariyin Sudur Kemēkü Orošibo* ‘Sutra Entitled Holy Maitreya’

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ABSTRACT

This article re-examines the dating of *Xutuqtu Mayidariyin sudur kemēkü orošibo*, a Clear (Todo) script xylograph. Through a philological and palaeographic analysis of its colophon, the authors suggest its publishing date is reconsidered from being 1747 to actually being 1735 (the Year of the Wooden Rabbit). Until recently, researchers of Mongolian scripts considered that the earliest known Oirat, i.e., Clear (Todo) script xylographic book was published in 1741. As a result of the evidence presented in this study, the date of the beginning of Todo script block-printing can be advanced by six years. This re-dating of the sutra is important in the history of Mongolian scripts, particularly in the early history of xylographic printing in the Todo script.

KEYWORDS

Mongolian script, Clear (Todo) script xylograph, Oirats, Buddhist literature, Galdan Tseren Khan, *Xutuqtu Mayidariyin sudur kemēkü orošibo*

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INTRODUCTION

The Todo script (Mong. *Todo üsüg*, written in Oirat *Todorxoi üzüq*, lit. ‘Clear letter’) was created in 1648 by the Oirat Buddhist monk, Zaya Pandita Namkhai Jamtsu (1599–1662),¹ to address deficiencies in the Uyghur-Mongolian script (Rákos 2002: 1). Over the preceding eight centuries, various Mongolian groups and states used about ten types of scripts (Kara 2005). To contextualize the Todo script’s emergence, only the major ‘state scripts’ are summarized here; for other variants and detailed references, see Kara 2005.

The first known official script of the Great Mongol Empire (1206–1368) was the Uyghur-Mongolian script, still in use today.² Under Kublai Khan (r. 1260–1294), the Tibetan-based ‘Phags-pa script, or square script, was devised in 1268 by the Tibetan Imperial Preceptor and advisor, ‘Phags-pa Lama (1235–1280).

The Oirat identity and its claim to dominance over other Mongolian ethnic groups needed a new script when the Western Mongolians took control of the Zünghar (*Jünghar/Jünger/Dzung-har*) Empire (1634–1755). The Oirat Buddhist scholar, Zaya Pandita Namkhai Jamtsu, created a new script based on the Uyghur-Mongolian script. The Todo script holds a special place amongst scripts used by the Mongols. According to its role, it is considered the second most important and widespread script. For centuries, it was used in parallel with the Uyghur-Mongolian script and exclusively among the Oirats and Kalmyks.

Thousands of Todo script manuscripts and some block prints have been saved in major collections of the world (e.g., Kara 2000, 2005; Sazykin 2001). These documents are vital for preserving Mongolian history and culture. The history of the script is closely connected with the second expansion of Buddhism among the Mongols³ as by the early 17th century, Buddhism had become central to Mongolian society. The newly forming Oirat supremacy found strong support in Tibetan Buddhism. In 1616, under Bayibayas Khan (1550?–1640?), Oirat nobles collectively adopted Tibetan Buddhism⁴, profoundly transforming Oirat society and history. The Todo script was also created to translate Buddhist texts, playing a key role in spreading Buddhism and Oirat-Tibetan cultural exchange.⁵

Although Zaya Pandita Namkhai Jamtsu created the Todo script in 1648, the origins of its xylographic printing remain unclear. Most scholars agree⁶ that xylographic printing in Todo script began under Galdan Tseren’s reign (1727–1745)⁷, though the exact date of the first printed work is unknown. This period of time marked the peak of Todo xylography with technical and artistic quality in the first half of the 18th century surpassing that of the 19th century (see Fig. 1).

¹ On his life and works, see Sazykin 1999.

² The official script of the Mongols living in China is based on the Uyghur-Mongolian script and it was reintroduced in the Republic of Mongolia after the political changes in the early 1990s. The original version was completed by Ayuši-guši, who created the Ali-gali Script (1578) for the proper transcription of Buddhist terminology from Sanskrit and Tibetan (Kara 2005).

³ Sagaster (2007) briefly summarises the waves through which Buddhism spread among various Mongolian tribes and states. The so-called second spread of Buddhism brought the supremacy of the Tibetan dge lugs pa order.

⁴ In detail, cf. Zlatkin 1964.

⁵ This topic was lately explored by B. Kitinov (2010) from various aspects with rich references in his articles.

⁶ See Tüwsintögs’ (2024: 53–97) survey. In this paper we use different transcription for Mongolian Cyrillic and Russian Cyrillic.

⁷ Galdan Tseren Khan (1695–1745), a Zünghar ruler who made peace with the Qing Empire after the death of his father.



Fig. 1 18th century xylographic printing of *Xutuqtu dāra ekeyin xorin nigen maqtāl kemēkū orošibo*
‘Praising of the Twenty-One Holy Tara Mothers’

1. SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVES ON EARLY TODO SCRIPT XYLOGRAPHS: A HISTORICAL REVIEW

Over the last 100 years, international Mongolian studies have researched Todo script xylographs. The earliest research that mentioned Todo script xylographic texts was conducted by B. Laufer in 1927. In his book, *The Mongolian Literature*, he states there were likely no printed texts among the Oirats and Kalmyks, only manuscripts. Even if this statement is wrong, he was the first researcher who drew attention to the Todo script xylographs. B. Ja. Vladimircov wrote a foreword to the Russian translation of Laufer’s book, *The Mongolian Literature*. He claims there were two Todo script printed books in the Asian Museum of the Soviet Union and the Oirats had tried to publish books. The items he refers to are the first recorded texts of the Oirats’ printing activity.

In Walther Heissig and Klaus Sagaster’s catalogue (1961), *Mongolische Handschriften, Blockdrucke, Landkarten*, it is noted that there are two xylographic books and another seven fragments of incomplete wood-cut books in Leningrad. In his paper *Nanggiyad-ača orčiyuluysan oyirad-un orčiyuly-a* ‘Translation from Chinese to Oirat’, the outstanding Mongolian scholar, B. Rinchen (1966: 66) pointed out that seven or eight Todo script xylographs were known. Numerous Mongolian scholars have devoted substantial academic efforts to the collation and research of ancient Mongolian texts, whereas the documentary materials related to Todo scripts have long remained on the periphery of academic attention.

The first comprehensive outline about the Todo script xylographs was compiled by Kh. Luwsanbaldan in 1975. In his book entitled *Tod üseg tüünii dursgaluud* ‘The Clear Script and its Monuments’, Luwsanbaldan (1975: 112) collected twelve printed books and two works about printing that were preserved in Mongolia and the Soviet Union. According to him, the earliest Todo script xylograph was published in 1741 during Galdan Tseren Khan’s period.

B. Tüwšintögs (2024) recently published a scholarly monograph on the history of Todo script printing. The book lists the xylographs known to be preserved in the major libraries, archives and private collections around the world. His opinion aligns with Luwsanbaldan’s viewpoint concerning the earliest Todo script xylograph, dated 1741.

In China, the study of Todo script xylographic printing is relatively recent. From 2000 until the 2020s, Erdemtü Mingyad (Yeerda 叶尔达) has been conducting fieldwork on ancient Todo

script documents and has found dozens of previously undiscovered Todo script xylographs. In 2005, Erdemtü Mingyad published a paper titled *The Research on Block-printed Edition of Todo Script Documents Stored in China*, and in 2009, one of his papers summarizing his research was published in the *Journal of Mongolian Studies of Waseda University* (Erdemtü 2009).

2. THE AUTHORS' VIEWPOINTS ON THE XYLOGRAPHIC PRINTING DATE OF *XUTUQTU MAYIDARIYIN SUDUR KEMĚKÜ OROŠIBO*

The subject of this paper matches that of Erdemtü Mingyad's⁸ (2019) study on the earliest xylographic printing of Todo scripts, which was published in the Mongolian language. However, this paper will study the topic in more detail. In the present paper, we suggest a viewpoint that 1735 was the earliest example of xylographic printing in the Todo script, based on the philological studies of the *Xutuqtu Mayidariyin sudur kemĚkü orošibo*⁹ and its year of publication. Recent academic articles on newly discovered Todo script sources are also crucial to this perspective.

The Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences holds an Oirat manuscript in its repositories called *Xutuqtu Mayidariyin sudur kemĚkü orošibo* ('Sutra entitled Holy Maitreya'). It is in pothi form and measures 9.5×26.5 (7×21.7) cm, written on both sides in black and red ink with a calamus (Sazykin 2001: 83).¹⁰ The original xylographic print-out of this book has not been found, and the manuscript is a handwritten copy. The text was the translation of the Tibetan book titled *'phags pa byams pa'i mdo*. This paper will focus on the identification of the publication year and discuss the initiation and research background of the Todo script xylographic printing. This article also gives details about the engraver of the *Xutuqtu Mayidariyin sudur kemĚkü orošibo* and further discusses the value of the Todo script xylographic printing.

The handwritten manuscript provides very interesting information on the xylographic printing in the Todo script. Although it is not the original xylographic print-out, the colophon contains detailed information about the person who requested it and those who made the xylograph. The words at the end of the manuscript (26a) are:

Mayidariyin sudur öüni šažini öqligüyin ejen dga ldan čering dwang po tani jarliṽar lamrim gelüṽg ngaa dwang 'jam dbyangs, pangs pa gelüṽg cosbzang po. dge chul [...] šes rab. tos bsam gling dge chul blo bzang šes rab. dge chul dge'dun cos 'pel. [modon] toulai jil-dü [...] güülüqsen [seyilegüülüqsen]::: [...] mamkhalam

⁸ Concerning the transcription of Mongolian words in this paper, we used Nikolas Poppe's (2006) transcription system. However, for the names of well-known historical figures, we adopted the common English transcription, while other rarely occurring names in the transcription reflect the Todo script.

⁹ This manuscript is kept at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg, Russian Federation), No. 2743 (Sazykin 2001: 83).

¹⁰ The authors would like to express their gratitude to N. S. Yakhontova from the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Saint Petersburg) and researcher B. A. Bicheev from the Kalmyk Scientific Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Their courtesy made it possible to study the source. They offered us a photocopy of the epilogue of the xylograph *Xutuqtu mayidariyin sudur kemĚkü orošibo*. The authors also thank Ágnes Birtalan for her valuable comments.

The Holy Maitreya sutra was (carved) by the order of the religion's donor dbang po Galdan Tseren in the [wooden] Rabbit year. This xylography was made by Lamrim monk Ngawang Jamyang, monk Chos Sangpo from Agba (Tib. *sngags pa*)¹¹ school, monk Sherab, monk Lobsang Sherab from Tosamling (Tib. *thos bsam gling*)¹² and monk Genden Choshpel.

From this colophon, the following can be discovered;

1. The person who requested the xylographic printing of this sutra was Galdan Tseren Khan.
2. The people who made the xylograph were Lamrim gelong Ngawang Jamyang, gelong Chos Sangpo from Agba, getsul Sherab, getsul Lobsang Sherab from Tosamling and getsul Genden Choshpel.
3. The xylograph was engraved in the Year of the [Wooden] Rabbit.

By far the most fascinating piece of information is that the sutra's xylograph was prepared in the Year of the Rabbit. Unfortunately, due to the damage to this part of the manuscript, the adjective word before *toulai* (rabbit) cannot be read except for the final grapheme *-n*. The manuscript was first catalogued by Russian scholar A. G. Sazykin (2001: 83) in his *Catalogue of Mongolian manuscripts and xylographs of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences*, and he states it was xylographed in 1747 at the request of Galdan Tseren Khan. The *Catalogue* has brought this unique source to the attention of other Mongolists. Subsequently, a researcher from the same institute, N. S. Yakhontova (2014), introduced the manuscript once again in her paper *The Oirat manuscripts and xylographs from the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences* and expressed the same opinion as Sazykin concerning the date of its publication.

Was *Xutuqtu Mayidariyin sudur kemēkü orošibo* really engraved in 1747? Considering Galdan Tseren died in 1745, if the suggestions of Russian scholars A. G. Sazykin and N. S. Yakhontova are correct and it was xylographed in 1747, it would suggest it was engraved in xylograph two years after Galdan Tseren's death. However, this paper proposes that it was not engraved in the Year of the Rabbit of 1747, but rather the Wooden Rabbit year of 1735.

In the following, we lay out our perspective.

Firstly, although the colophon shows 'rabbit year', the adjective word before it has become damaged. During the period around Galdan Tseren's reign (1727–1745), there were only two years of the rabbit – one in 1735, the Year of the Wooden Rabbit, and one in 1747, the Year of the Fire Rabbit. The rabbit year in the source should logically be one of these years.

Secondly, the colophons of all available translations of Buddhist literature from the period of Galdan Tseren's reign use the Tibetan five-element calendar. The five elements of the Tibetan calendar are iron, water, wood, fire and earth. For example, the colophon of the 1731 translation *Arašāni jüreken nayiman gešöütü niyuuča ubadis erdemiyin ündüsüni xalalta xadxulaxui xalouni enelge arilyaxui kabur čaq busuyin üküliyin čalma tasulaxui ildü orošibo* (hence abbreviated as *Arašāni jüreken*) 'The Secret Tantra of Nectar Essence Eight Branches the Sword to Cut the Noose of Untimely Death, a Supplementary to the Knack of Healing' mentions the Year of the Iron Pig; the colophons of the 1741 xylographs of the critical editions of *Suvarṇa-prabhā-sottama-sūtra* and *Vajracchedikā-Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* mention the Year of the Iron Hen; the

¹¹ Tib. *sngags pa* 'the tantric college'.

¹² Tib. *thos bsam gling* 'listening and practicing dharma school'.

colophon of the 1742 wood-block printing of the critical edition of the translation of *Aṣṭasāhas-rikā-Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* contains the Year of the Water Dog and the colophon of the 1744 xylographic printing of *Šasin-du oruqsan egüden itegel-ün kötülbüri-yin sedkilge sayin qubitan-u eril qangyayči kemekü sudur orosibai* refers to the Year of the Wooden Mouse.

Following the spread of Buddhism among the Oirats, all the Buddhist literature in Oirat used the Tibetan five-element calendar. Thus, the illegible word before the rabbit year of the source must be an attribute of the year using one of the five elements of the Tibetan calendar. As mentioned earlier, the adjective word before *toulai jil* ‘Year of the Rabbit’ is damaged, but the last three graphic elements are still recognizable. One of these is the square-looking element for the Todo vowel *o*, traditionally called *gedesü* ‘belly’ in Mongolian. The inventor of the Todo script, Zaya Pandita Namkhai Jamtsu, created different shapes for the labialized vowels ‘*o*, *u*, *ö*, *ü*’ that were not distinguished in the Mongolian script. (The base graphic element was *gedesü*.) For this purpose, the circular ‘belly’ element of the vowel *o* was modified with a triangular corner in its lower left part making it look somewhat square. This renders it easily distinguishable from *u* or *ü*. Another recognizable graphic element is the final *-n*.

As previously stated, all the Buddhist literature from the Galdan Tseren’s period used the Tibetan five-element calendar. The Oirat names of those five elements have only two lexemes ending with final *-n*. They are *usun* ‘water’ and *modon* ‘wood’. This means that any Year of the Rabbit must be either water or wood. From the two rabbit years of 1735 and 1747, only the former is the Year of the Wooden Rabbit. There is no ‘water rabbit’ year during Galdan Tseren’s reign.

The vowel *u* in the Todo script is written as a circle with a prick in its lower left part but the damaged part before the final *-n* does not give the possibility to be read as *u*. Therefore, it cannot be *usun* (water). Another important piece of evidence is the remains of the ‘loop’ of medial *-d* before *-o*. These arguments indicate that the word before *toulai jil* ‘Year of the Rabbit’ was *modon* ‘wooden’. The Year of the Wooden Rabbit corresponds to 1735 whereas 1747 was the Year of the Fire Rabbit. Due to the above-mentioned reasons, the damaged word before *toulai jil* ‘Year of the Rabbit’ cannot be *yal* ‘fire’. Thus, *Xutuqtu Mayidariyin sudur kemekü orošibo* must have been carved into a wooden block in 1735, not in 1747 as it was previously believed.

From this apparent confirmation of the printing date of the sutra *Xutuqtu Mayidariyin sudur kemekü orošibo*, we now move on to a discussion about its engravers.

3. THE LAMA SCRIBES OF *XUTUQTU MAYIDARIYIN SUDUR KEMĒKÜ OROŠIBO* FROM ZÜNGHAR

During the first half of the 18th century, the translation and wood-block printing of Buddhist texts into Todo script were carried out by lamas affiliated with the five Buddhist colleges of the Zünghar Khanate. The term ‘Zünghar Five Rasang’ refers to the five Buddhist colleges, which are the following: 1. Agba Rasang (Tib. *sngags pa grwa tshang*) – the Tantric College; 2. Lamrim Rasang (Tib. *lam rim grwa tshang*) – the College for the Study of the Stages of the Path; 3. Dulba Rasang (Tib. *’dul ba grwa tshang*) – the Disciplinary College; 4. Tosamling Rasang (Tib. *thos bsam gling*) – the College for Listening to and Contemplating the Dharma; 5. Yeke Khural (Tib. *tshogs chen*) – the Great Assembly Hall, functioning as the monastery’s central organ for both administration and congregational gatherings (Oyunbilig 1993).

The biographical data of these lamas is not clear, since little is known of their lifetime or work in any detail. The construction of the Zünghar Five Buddhist Colleges began under Galdan Boshogt Khan at the end of the 17th century and all colleges were established during the reign of Galdan Tseren Khan in the first half of the 18th century. Specifically, during the Galdan Tseren Khan period, Agba Rasang and Lamrim Rasang were formed; the Yeke Khural and two Dulba Rasang were set up at the time of Čewangrabdan. Until the time of Galdan Tseren Khan, Tosamling Rasang was established (Oyunbilig 1993: 383). The five Zünghar lamas who printed *Xutuqtu Mayidariyin sudur kemëkü orošibo* were from Lamrim Rasang, Agba Rasang, and three from Tosamling Rasang. These five Rasangs had a significant impact on the development of Buddhist texts in the Todo script, as well as on Zünghar Buddhism.

Although there is no detailed biography about the lamas who printed the *Xutuqtu Mayidariyin sudur kemëkü orošibo*, some pieces of information do appear in the colophons of some other Buddhist texts and books. For example, Lamrim monk Ngawang Jamyang's name appears on the last page of the primary source *Nayiman mingyan-tu orošibo* 'The Eight Thousand Verses' and Agba Chos Sangpo's name appears on the colophon of the *Arašāni jüreken*.

Among these five lamas, Lamrim Rasang Ngawang Jamyang took part in the work of the xylographic printing of *Nayiman mingyan-tu orošibo*¹³, which is the largest xylographic printing in the cultural history of the Todo script. The colophon of the text reads:

aburitan dēdū yurban erdeni-gi takičī giškib kiged, angkidxui ügei süjüq-tü čewang čecen tayiji terigüüten duraduqsan-du. toyin rab 'byam za ya pandida nayiroulun orčiulbai. todorxoi uxātu radna bhadra tong yaqčār samuradan, tonilxu-yi kereqleqči ketürkei bičiči dge 'dun bzangpo časun-du bičin, dousuqsan burxani kereqleqči dge slong cos rgyamcho demnen bičibei. ene metü buyan-yēr ene sudur xamuq-tu delgeren ene jügiyin amitan tonilxui möriyin yarxui-du oron, endöürel ügei uxātan örgüjin arya biliq bišilyaji, erken ayanista terigüüten sayin oron-du dēdū xutuq olxu boltuyai.

Ene nayiman mingyatuyin suduri, urida Rab-'byam-pa xutuqtuyin gegēn kürböülüqsen-ēče, jabsar-tu bičiči terigüületi erkēr üleqsen tasuraqsan endöüreqsen bügüdeyigi, šarayin šajini öqligüyin ejen dga ldan čering vangpotani jarliyār, lamrim dge slong ngga vag gzam dbys, suns pa dge slong bzangpo rgyamcho, tos bsam gling dge slong bkraši rgyal chan, dge slong ilhun grub rgyamcho, dge slong yung drung dar dgyas, nayiman mingyatuyin yeke tayilbur kigēd ariun eke bičigüüd-tü tulyan olon merged-ēče asaxaji söügēd, usun noxoi jildü mon-gyol-yēr kebtü daroulbai.

(Figs. 2-4: The pictures of xylographic printing *Nayiman mingyan-tu orošibo* stored by Quyai Bürintegüs.)

Giškib, who was always giving offerings to the superior Three Treasures and unwavering faith, and Čewang Čecen requested, monk Zaya Pandita translated it. Radnabadra with clear wisdom wrote on the board, Genden Sangpo wrote on the paper, gelong Chos Jamstu helped to write it down. This blessing, this scripture is widely disseminated, let this era's

¹³ The xylographic printing of *Nayiman mingyan-tu orošibo* 'The Eight Thousand Verses' is preserved in two copies in the Academy of Language and Literature in Mongolia. One copy is kept by Quyai Bürintegüs in Mongyol Küriy-e County in the Khazak Autonomous Prefecture of Ili, Xinjiang. Its physical details are: 10.9×42.7 cm (382 pages double-sided).



Fig. 2

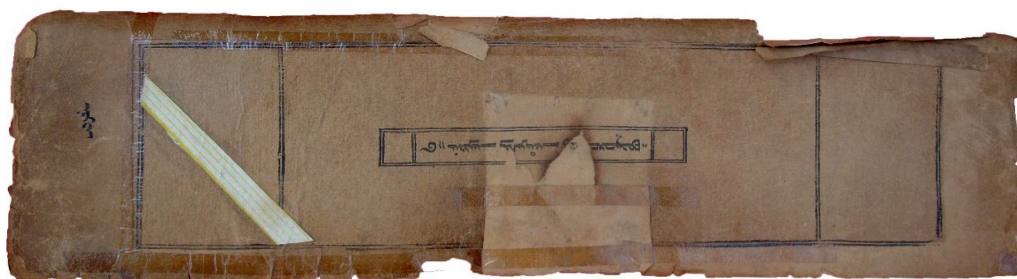


Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Figs. 2–4 The Pictures of xylographic printing *Nayiman mingyan-tu orošibo* stored by Quyai Būrintegüs

living beings enter the way of liberation, infallible wisdom has multiplied, practice wisdom, then please get a superior blessing in a good place, as the Akaniṣṭha.

This sutra entitled ‘The Eight thousand Verses’ translated by Rabjamba Qutuqtu before, written but the content is redundant, missing or misunderstood, all of these was corrected again under the command of Galdan Tseren Khan, Lamrim gelong Ngawang Jamyang, Agba gelong Sangpo Jamtsu (Tib. bzang po drag mtsho), Tosamling gelong Tashi Jaltzen (Tib. bkra shis rgyal mtshan) Lhundrup Jamstu (Tib. lhun grub rgya mtsho) and gelong Yonden Dargye (Tib. yon tan dar rgyas) proofread [Mong. *ariyudqan sigükü*] the original texts with *Nayiman mingyatuyin yeke tayilbur* ‘The Great Explanation of the Eight Thousand Verses’ and other books and consulted with many other intellectuals and the block-printed edition carved in the Mongolian language in the Water Dog year.

In sum, the following information is included in this colophon (Erdemtü 2005: 107):

1. The original text was the *Nayiman mingyan-tu*.
2. The original text was requested by Giškib and Čewang Čecen. Zaya Pandita translated it. Additionally, Radnabadra wrote it on the blackboard. It was transcribed onto paper by Genden Sangpo and Chos Jamstu.
3. Under the command of Galdan Tseren Khan, Lamrim gelong Ngawang Jamyang, Agba gelong Sangpo Jamtsu, Tosamling gelong Tashi Jaltzen, Lhundrup Jamstu and gelong Yonden Dargye proofread [Mong. *ariyudqan sigükü*] the original texts with *Nayiman mingyatuyin yeke tayilbur* [The Great Explanation of Eight Thousand Verses], other references and consulted with many other intellectuals.
4. During the Year of the Water Dog in 1742, it was printed using the xylographic printing model.

According to this manuscript’s colophon, *Nayiman mingyan-tu orošibo* was translated by Zaya Pandita. However, no exact date of his translation is provided. Radnabadra, who wrote it on the blackboard, was one of his loyal disciples and he was the author of Zaya Pandita’s biography *Saran-u gerel* ‘The Moon Splendor’ (Norbu 1999: 10). Giškib, Čayan and Čecen tayiji were the sons of the Ombu Dayičing leader who was the fourth son of Dalai Tayishi Noyan of Dörbed. Ombu Dayičing leader’s youngest son was Giškib, the second son was Čayan, and the third son was Čecen tayiji. *Saran-u gerel* recorded that these three sons invited Zaya Pandita to Yeke Kūriy-e.

Rayirwang nom-un Qayan Rabjimba Čorji kemeküi čay-tu yeke ed mal olju barayun tal-a yabuqu-dayan nayur-un qorjoljin-du učaražu külgen-dü jiruy-a keger arjumas keger qoyar mori ergüjü abisiy abun nayir üiledcü degegsi ögede bolbai. Kūriy-e-yi ču Giškib, Čayan, Čecen tayiji yurban keüked jalaju otoγ mončuy kemeküi-dü ebüljibei. čayan sar-a-yin irügel delgerenggüi üiledün bodi mör bočoi terigüten-i nomlan čayan buyan-u üile delgerenggüi üiledügsen-dü tede ču süjüglen kündüleküi-yi aqui yeke ögede bolqui čay-tu yučin temegen yurban jayun ayta-nugud-i ergübei. (Norbu 1999: 116)

Rayirwang dharma king named Rabjimba Čorji got lots of property and livestock on the way to the west and met Oirat people on the lakeside, gave *jiruy-a* and *arjumas* two hazel horses and received the good blessing. An invitation to spend the winter in the monastery

was offered by Giškib, Čayan and Čečen, three nobles who lived in a place called Otoy Mončuy. The lamas of the monastery gave the new year's blessing, did lots of things to develop good karma and accumulate good fortune. They filled with reverence; they offered thirty camels and three hundred steed horses.

In 1654, Toryod Dayičing and three nobles invited Zaya Pandita Namkhai Jamtsu and all the lamas of the Yeke Kūriy-e monastery¹⁴ to Ijl-Ĵai¹⁵. Thus, it can be seen that Zaya Pandita translated the *Nayiman mingyan-tu orošibo* in 1655, when he was in Otoy Mončoy with the advocacy of young nobles from Dörbed.

In 1742, during the time of Galdan Tseren, *Nayiman mingyan-tu orošibo* was proofread on his orders and printed by xylographic printing. *Nayiman mingyan-tu orošibo* has a total of 382 double-sided pages. It is the largest book of Todo script xylographic printing and was proofread by the Oirats. In this context, proofreading was an elaborate work that entailed the original texts being proofread and compared with other better-preserved version of the texts in order to avoid incorrect dates and other mistakes. The reason why there may have been many mistakes is that the people who transcribed it may have miswritten, added or omitted certain words. Furthermore, misspellings could appear during the process of transcription. To avoid the occurrence of mistakes in Buddhist texts and to disseminate accurate manuscripts, it was a significant undertaking to proofread these Buddhist texts.

Nayiman mingyan-tu orošibo was probably translated in 1655 and proofread in 1742 on the command of Galdan Tseren Khan and made into xylographic printing. Lamrim gelong Ngawang Jamyang was one of the leaders who directed the work of Buddhist text xylographic printing during the time of Galdan Tseren Khan, and his name is written in the colophon of the printed book. Another lama, Agba gelong Chos Sangpo, together with the physician Lubsangnamĵil, translated a medical book titled *Arašāni jüreken* according to this primary source.

Rinchin Nipe from Ili, Xinjiang saved an ancient text titled *Arašāni jüreken* (its size is 11×50cm, 266 double-sided pages). This text is badly damaged and has traces of restoration. It contains the names of the benefactor, translator and translation time in the colophon.

*Arašāni jüreken nayiman gešöütü niyuuča ubadis erde=miyin ündüsüni xalalta xadxulxui xalouni enel=ge arilyaxui ka bur čaq busuyin üküliyin čalma tasula=xui yildü kemekü öüni šaĵini öqlüküyin eĵen dga ldan ze ring dwang pü tani ĵarliyar emči blo bcang rnam rgel bolod olon sayin emči-ner-tei nagq pa dge ĵol ĵui bzang po tömür yaxai ĵil-du körböülbe.*¹⁶

The Secret Tantra of Nectar Essence Eight Branches the Sword to Cut the Noose of Untimely Death, a Supplementary to the Knack of Healing book was ordered by the royal benefactor of the religion Galdan Tseren Khan, and physician Blo bcang rnam rgel and good physician Agba getsul Chos Sangpo translated it in the year of the iron pig.

¹⁴ Yeke Kūriy-e [Big Monastery]: Kūriy-e is a Lama monastery that adapted to the Mongolian lifestyle. They used many yurts to store books for study or for gathering and meeting. Oirat's Yeke Kūriy-e begins at the time of Zaya Pandita Namkhai Jamtsu about 1644, but because of Galdan Boshogtu Khan's war, this monastery was dismissed (Oyunbilig 1993).

¹⁵ Place name near the Volga (Oir. Ijl) river.

¹⁶ Rinchin Nipe's collection: 266b.

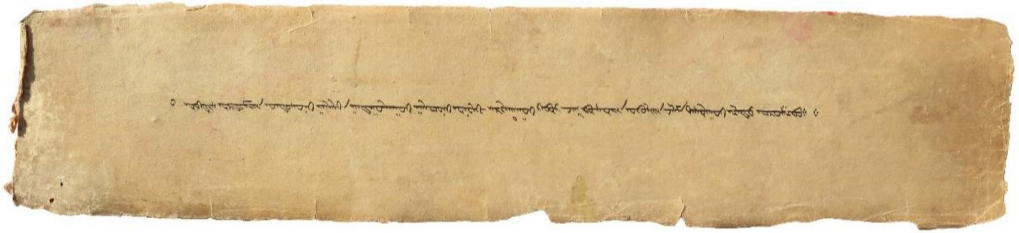


Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Figs. 5–6 *Arašāni jüreken nayiman gešöütü niyuuča ubadis erdemiyn ündüsüni xalalta xadxulaxui xalouni enelge arilyaxui kabur čaq busuyin üküliyin čalma tasulaxui ildü orošibo,*

‘The Secret Tantra of Nectar Essence Eight Branches the Sword to Cut the Noose of Untimely Death, a Supplementary to the Knack of Healing’ stored by Rinchin Nipe from Ili, Xinjiang of China.

The colophon refers to the following important data:

1. The benefactor of the translation of the original text was the political and religious leader Galdan Tseren.
2. The translators were the physicians named Lobsang Namgyal and Agba getsul Chos Sangpo.
3. The year of the translation was the Iron Pig year.

In summary, the religious leader Galdan Tseren Khan ordered its translation and physician Lobsang Namgyal, together with another physician, translated the text in the Year of the Iron Pig. Galdan Tseren’s reign lasted from 1727 to 1745, and the Year of the Iron Pig occurred only once, in 1731. As a result, it was the year 1731 that the Galdan Tseren Khan commanded physician Lobsang Namgyal and Agba getsul Chos Sangpo to translate this medical text. Chos Sangpo was the Agba Rasang of Zünghar and a lama physician who participated in the work of translating the texts from 1731.

Due to long-lasting wars and turbulent times during the existence of the Zünghar Empire, the authors could not find any Todo script text between the late 17th century to the 1720s of the next century. The text *Arašāni jüreken* is the earliest Todo script text translated from Tibetan in the 18th century. One can learn from this text that Chos Sangpo actively took part in the translation and printing of Tibetan texts at the beginning of the rule of Galdan Tseren Khan.

There are no other detailed biographies found by the authors regarding the Agba monk getsul Sherab, Tosamling monk getsul Lobsang Sherab, and monk getsul Genden Chosphe from the 18th century to the present. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that they were important figures who put effort into spreading and developing the Todo script texts under the Zünghar Five Rasang

during the time of Galdan Tseren Khan in the first half of the 18th century. They devoted much effort to the work of translating Buddhist texts and xylographic printing (Figs. 7–8).

This result concerning the date of the Todo script xylographic works will contribute to further research. Notwithstanding, it is necessary to point out that this new finding cannot undoubtedly affirm that the year 1735 was the beginning of Todo script printing during the time of Galdan Tseren Khan. It was only the earliest book that was found.

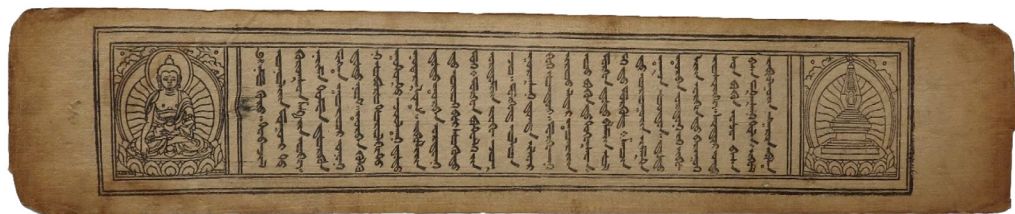


Fig. 7



Fig. 8

Figs. 7–8 The pictures of Todo script xylographic printing in 1744

CONCLUSION

Through a detailed analysis of the fragmentary colophon in the manuscript *Xutuqtu Mayidariyin sudur kemēkü orošibo*, this study establishes the original xylograph dates to the Wooden Rabbit year (1735), correcting the previously catalogued date of 1747. The revised dating relies on key palaeographic evidence – namely, the legible final grapheme *-n* and the distinctive square-shaped *gedesü* (belly) vowel for ‘o’ – which together conclusively identify the calendrical term as *modon* (wooden); part of the Tibetan five-element system employed in Oirat Buddhist colophons.

The re-dating of this sutra to 1735 carries substantial implications for the history of Mongolian printing. It establishes this text as the earliest currently verifiable example of a Todo script xylograph, predating the formerly accepted earliest print as being from 1741. Furthermore, the study illuminates the active patronage of Galdan Tseren Khan and the collaborative scholarly efforts of lamas from the Zünghar monastic colleges (Rasangs) – specifically the Lamrim, Agba, and Tosamling Rasangs – in the systematic translation, editing and printing of Buddhist canons in the first half of the 18th century. The cross-referencing of colophons from related texts, such

as the *Nayiman mingyan-tu orošibo* (1742) and the medical treatise *Arašāni jüreken* (1731), provides a richer context for the activities of these scribe-lamas and confirms the flourishing state of Todo script literary production under Galdan Tseren's rule.

While these findings mark 1735 as the earliest confirmed date for the discovery of Todo script block-printing, the paper cautiously notes that it does not definitively pinpoint the absolute beginning of this tradition. The possibility of earlier, yet-to-be-discovered prints remains. Therefore, this research serves as a critical milestone and a call for further investigation into the Oirat manuscript and xylograph collections. Future discoveries may refine the understanding of the genesis and evolution of this significant chapter in Inner Asian book history and Buddhist cultural exchange.

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Xutuqtu mayidariyin sudur kemëkü orošibo. This manuscript is kept at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg, Russian Federation). No. 2743. (Sazykin 2001: 83).

Xutuqtu dāra ekeyin xorin nigen maqtāl kemëkü orošibo, size 31×10cm, 20 pages, xylography, stored by Badma Jab's private collection, in Mongyol Küriy-e County in Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, Xinjiang, China.

Nayiman mingyan-tu orošibo, xylography, size 10.9×42.7 cm. 383 pages, this document is kept at the private collection of Quṡay Būrintegūs, who lives in Mongyol Küriy-e County in Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, Xinjiang, China.

Arašāni jüreken nayiman gešöütü niyuuča ubadis erdemiyin ündüsüni xalalta xadxulaxui xalouni enelge arilyaxui kabur čaq busuyin üküliyin čalma tasulaxui ildü orošibo, written with a black and red ink manuscript, size 11×50 cm, 266 pages. This document is kept at the private collection of Rinchin Nipe, in Mongyol Küriy-e County in Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, Xinjiang, China.

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