

Clear Script Sources on Oirat History : Classification, Values, and Significance

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Clear Scripts Sources on Oirat History: Classification, Values, and Significance

N. SUKHBAATAR (Ph.D)

Associate Professor,

Mongolian National University of Education

The practices of locating, collecting, publishing, and studying Clear Script sources date back to the first half of the 18th century and have enabled substantial scholarly accomplishments both in Mongolia and abroad. These endeavors began in 1720, when a host of Mongolian books was found inside the ruins of Ablai Temple on the banks of the Irtysh River. Subsequently, a Mongolian Clear Script collection emerged in Russia. Then, between 1778 and 1790, a man named Georg Thomas von Asch sent samples of 33 books in Mongolian Clear Script to Göttingen. Today, museums and libraries in Russia, Germany, Hungary, China, Finland, the United States, and other countries (as well as in Mongolia) contain texts in Clear Script, and bibliographies of them have been published for broad academic use.

Key words: Oirat Mongols, 18th century, official correspondence, cultural heritage, Oirat history

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1. Studies of clear script sources

Historians of Oirat Mongol texts attribute far greater significance to those written in *todo úsúg* (literally, and hereafter referred to as, “Clear Script”) than to documents in Classical Mongolian, Tibetan, Manchu, Mandarin Chinese, and Russian. Clear Script, invented in 1648 by Zaya Pandita Namkhai Gyamtso of the Oirats, has contributed a great deal to Mongolians’ historical and cultural heritage: thousands of historical records, documents of official correspondence, laws and edicts, epitaphs, and religious literature. Yet the work of collecting, recording, preserving, studying, promoting, and evaluating such texts remains incomplete, mainly because of the following factors:

(1) Many have overemphasized the literary and linguistic aspects of Clear Script texts at the expense of their other elements.

(2) Some scholars, while acknowledging the texts’ historical significance, nevertheless assume that they relate only to region-specific Oirat history. However, Clear Script documents provide a unique perspective not only on Oirat history but also on that of Greater

Mongolia. For example, they include records of political relations between the Oirat and Khalkha Mongols and among the Mongolian, Russian, Tibetan, and Manchurian Empires.

(3) Others focus too heavily on the religious component of the Clear Script sources, citing the fact that most such registered writings are liturgical works and claiming erroneously that these provide little or no historical information.

The practices of locating, collecting, publishing, and studying Clear Script sources date back to the first half of the 18th century and have enabled substantial scholarly accomplishments both in Mongolia and abroad. These endeavors began in 1720, when a host of Mongolian books was found inside the ruins of Ablai Temple on the banks of the Irtysh River. Subsequently, a Mongolian Clear Script collection emerged in Russia. Then, between 1778 and 1790, a man named Georg Thomas von Asch sent samples of 33 books in Mongolian Clear Script to Göttingen. (Rinchen 1964: 202) Today, museums and libraries in Russia, Germany, Hungary, China, Finland, the United States, and other countries (as well as in Mongolia) contain books and texts in Clear Script, and bibliographies of them have been published for broad academic use.

In Russia, due to the rise of practical interest in Oriental studies, the beginning of the 19th century witnessed a surge in studies of Mongolian proper and of the Kalmyk-Oirat languages, inspiring determined efforts to collect, record, and publish Mongolian and Kalmyk-Oirat texts. The first step in promoting the study of Clear Script sources was taken by Professor A. Popov (Popov 1847), who transliterated partial collections of Clear Script documents and published them along with limited glossaries and Russian translations. Meanwhile, the works of H. A. Zwick (Zwick 1851; 1852 and undated) and A. Bobrovnikov (Bobrovnikov, 1849), published almost simultaneously with Popov's, were of a more narrowly linguistic nature. The first complete publication of a Clear Script source was achieved by a Buryat Mongol scribe and monk, Galsan Gomboyev, who published [CM]Mongγul-un ubaši qongtaiji-yin tuγuji orušibai ("The Tale of Mongol Prince Ubaši") with its Russian translation in 1858. The renowned scholar G. S. Lytkin, who spent many years in Kalmykia, contributed enormously to the study of Clear Script texts by collecting a plethora of rare documents from the local populace. Most notably, he located the [CS]Bātur Ubaši Tūmeni turbiqsan dōrbōn oyiradiy-in tūūke ("The History of Four Oirats composed by Bātur Ubaši Tūmen") with the help of the author's grandson, Čeringjab Tūmen, prince of the Khošud. He also translated parts of [CS]Xalimγ xādiy-in tūūke ("The History of Kalmyk Khans") into Russian and published in the newspaper [R]Astrakhanskiye gubernskiye vedomosti (*Affairs of the Astrakhan Governorate*). One of Lytkin's major contributions to the field is undoubtedly his unveiling of the [CS]Dōrbōn oyiradiy-in tūūke ("The History of Four Oirats") by Gabang Širab, but perhaps his most effective work in Clear Script studies will remain an article entitled [R]Materialy dlya istorii oiratov ("Materials on the History of Oirats"), which was written in 1860 based on Clear Script sources and edited and published by A. V. Badmayev along with the two aforementioned texts (Badmaev 1969; 2003).

The renowned Mongolist K. F. Golstunsky furthered the study of Clear Script by publishing the text of the 1640 [CM]Mongγul-Oyirad-un yeke čaγaja ("Grand Statutes of the Mongols and the Oirats") with a Russian translation and commentary (Golstunsky 1880).

Another well-known Mongolist, A. V. Pozdneyev spent years studying Mongolian

folklore, epic tales, and written records, bringing a certain novelty to the field by providing exact copies of original texts using metal or stone type xylographs rather than translating or transliterating them. His efforts to make Clear Script texts available in their entirety succeeded with the publication of [R]Pamyatniki istoricheskoi literatury astrakhanskikh kalmykov (*Works of the Historical Literature of Astrakhan' Kalmyks*) in 1885 (Pozdneyev, 1885). In this compilation, he included [CS]Xalimaq xādiyin tuujyigi xurāji bičiqsen tobči orošiboi (“A Concise History of the Tale of Kalmyk Khans”) and [CS]Dórbón oyiradiyin túúke (“The History of Four Oirats”) by Bātur Ubaši Tūmen. It is because of this compilation that the aforementioned sources spread widely around the world. As can be seen from the original copy in St. Petersburg, its compiler rather arbitrarily altered the orthography of some words in an attempt to approximate what was then standard Mongolian. It is worth noting that that Bātur Ubaši’s text was reprinted in Inner Mongolia, China, in 1956 (Boqdo jongkav-yin ...) ¹⁾ and in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, in 1976 (Xošoud noyon bātur ubaši túmeni ...) ²⁾ both times adopting A. M. Pozdneyev’s alterations without critique. Later, A. M. Pozdneyev reprinted his compilations and a number of other documents in his *Chrestomaty*, which was published three times (Pozdneyev 1892: 24–43; 1907: 24–43; 1915: 24–43). Another of his projects was the 1896 travelogue by Baaza Gelong of the Kalmyk Baga Dórbód clan, printed with a foreword, Russian translation, and full Clear Script text (Skazaniye o khozhdenii ...) ³⁾ which remains an important historical source, being the only surviving copy of the lost original.

The process of locating and making available Clear Script sources from Mongolia and from among the Mongols began in the early 20th century. This work was pioneered by A. V. Burdukov, then a merchant in the Khovd region, who acquired five Clear Script manuscripts from Načuqdorji Beise of the Dórvód—one of which was a rare biography by Ratnabhadra entitled [CS]Rab-byam cay-a pandidayin tuuji sarayin gerel kemekü orošiboi (“The Lunar Light, or Story of Rabjamba Zaya Pandita”)—and gave them to prominent Mongolist B. Ya. Vladimirtsov.

Vladimirtsov then traveled to Mongolia five times—in 1908, in 1911, from 1913 to 1915, in 1925, and in 1926—to collect rare documents concerning Mongolian language, traditions, and folklore. A collection of his Clear Script manuscripts and xylographic type prints now serves as the core of the Mongolian book collection at the St. Petersburg branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies in the Russian Academy of Sciences (Sazykin 1986: 267).

The contributions of Russian scholars (namely A. V. Badmayev, P. Ts. Bitkeyev, M. I. Golman, G. I. Slesarchuk, S. D. Dylykov, A. G. Sazykin, V. L. Uspensky, N. S. Yakhontova and D. A. Suseyeva) to the study of Clear Script sources have been priceless; their works encompass a wide array of disciplines, including linguistics, history, ethnology, and literature.

As for Mongolia itself, systematic work on locating, preserving, and studying Clear Script sources began in 1921 with the establishment of the Institute of Records, the progenitor of the current Academy of Sciences. Thanks to the Institute’s efforts in locating and collecting historical documents and literature, Mongolia acquired a rich collection of texts. In 1924, the Institute of Records holdings formed the cornerstone of the newly founded National Library, which now contains numerous Clear Script sources, most of which were collected during the 1930s (Luvsanbaldan 1975: 81). Included in these are such rare historical texts as correspondence between Dawači Noyan and Čering Ubaši, genealogical biographies of the

Čoros royal clan, and [CS]Dörbön oyirad monggolyigi daruqsan tuuji (“The Tale of How Four Oirats Defeated the Mongols”), otherwise known as [CM]Mongyol-un ubaši qongtaijiyin tuyuji orušibai (“The Tale of Mongol Prince Ubaši”).

In the early 1960s, the Institute of Language and Literature at the Mongolian Academy of Sciences began systematically sending field research teams to rural areas in Mongolia. These teams, along with individual scholars sent on research missions, were able to collect several dozen Clear Script manuscripts and xylographs. Many individuals and organizations also volunteered to donate literature. As a result, the Institute had acquired more than 1,000 Clear Script texts by 1965. Taking this into consideration, the Academic Council of the Institute decided in 1967 to establish a fund for Clear Script sources.

B. Rinchen has selflessly promoted the cause of collecting Clear Script writings and initiated the movement to study and promote them through his invaluable personal efforts. Traveling across Western Mongolia on a research mission in the late 1960s, he familiarized himself with the private library of the Tegüs Külüg Dalai Khan of the Dörvöd, bringing back such Clear Script treasures as a number of xylograph prints and a copy of [CS]Dörbön oyiradiyin tūūke (“The History of Four Oirats”). The latter was reprinted alongside a version taken from the National Library, with parallel Romanization and photographic copies of both texts (Dörbön oyiradiyin tūūkei ...).⁴ Other significant texts discovered and published during this period included [CS]Dörbön oyiradiyin tūūke (“The History of Four Oirats”) by Gabang Širab (Dörbön oyiradiyin tūūkei ...)⁵ and a standard Mongolian version of “The Lunar Light,” a biography of Zaya Pandita Namkhai Gyamtso of the Oirats, which was transferred to the National Library from the private library of another Zaya Pandita, Lobzang Tringlei of Khalkha (Ratnabhadra 1959: 59–61).

In the early 1970s, the Institute of Language and Literature collected a plethora of Clear Script manuscripts and xylographs, as did the National Library. Mongolian scholars have repeatedly noted that “merely collecting and preserving these rare sources were not our main objectives, but publishing them for wider academic use was.” They published a number of valuable historical and literary texts, including the “Unknown Medical Tractate in Oirat Characters” (Unknown medical tractate ...)⁶ released to commemorate the 320th anniversary of Clear Script’s invention; another work, [SM]Tod ūsgiin dursgaluud (“Works in Clear Script”) (Tod ūsgiin dursgaluud, 1976),⁷ was published on the occasion of the 3rd International Congress of Mongolists. A Mongolian scholar, Kh. Luvsanbaldan, not only took an active part in compiling these sources but also devoted himself to researching the Clear Script texts preserved at both the Institute of Language and Literature and the National Library, eventually writing a monograph called [SM]Tod ūseg, tūūnii dursgaluud (“The Clear Script and Works in It”) (Luvsanbaldan 1975). This monograph included brief introductions to existing Clear Script works, making it a valuable secondary source for researchers, and also helped rectify a number of errors and inaccuracies in the field of Clear Script studies.

The period from the 1960s to the 1980s was marked by intensive research on Clear Script and its texts from the perspectives of history, linguistics, culture, and literature, with numerous works published by such prominent scholars as B. Rinchen, Sh. Luvsanvandan, Kh. Luvsanbaldan, D. Tserensodnom, Ts. Shagdarsüren, and G. Jamiyan.

In the People’s Republic of China, despite a late start, studies of Clear Script sources met

with a certain success. For instance, when collecting old texts in Xinjiang, Mergenbagatur, a research fellow at the Inner Mongolia Institute of Social Sciences, found a number of works copied from originals in the 1930s by Šabilan Gegen of Torgud. Written in Clear Script and entitled [CS]Boqdo jongkav-yin šajini ögligiyin ejen torγoud ayimaq-yin xān sūljil-yin dangsa (“Records of the Royal House of the Torgud Clan, the Lords of the Blessing of Holy Master Tsongkapa”), the volume was covered in ox skin and contained five different texts, including [CS]Torγoud xādiyın tuuji (“The Tale of Torgud Khans”) and [CS]Bātur Ubaši Tūmeni tuurbiqsan dōrbōn oyiradiyın tūūke (“The History of Four Oirats Composed by Bātur Ubaši Tūmen”). All of these were copied using ink xylography (Boqdo jongkav-yin ...) and became important sources for researchers. The Clear Script sources found in Xinjiang were further enriched by documents found at the palace of Čebekdorji, qinwang of the Torgud. Unfortunately, many of these rare documents were lost or destroyed during the Cultural Revolution in China; the few that survived—either as originals or as copies in the hands of scholars—continue to serve as important sources of public and academic information. Since the 1980s, the [CS]Xān tengri journal issued in Urumqi has played an important role in the field by publishing an array of sources in Clear Script (Monggol-oyiradin čayaja ... and more).⁸⁾

The contributions of Chinese Mongolian scholars such as Ši Norbu, Dornutiib, Badai, Erdeni (Pagbajab), Altan-Orgil, and G. Lijiye deserve praise. Nevertheless, their errors should not be overlooked. In particular, [CS]Torγoud xādiyın tuuji (“The Tale of Torgud Khans”) and [CS]Dōrbōn oyiradiyın tūūke (“The History of Four Oirats”)—both contained in the 1956 [CS]Boqdo jongkav-yin šajini ögligiyin ejen torγoud ayimaq-yin xān sūljil-yin dangsa (“Records of the Royal House of the Torgud Clan, the Lords of the Blessing of Holy Master Tsongkapa”)—are actually reprints of an 1885 publication by A. M. Pozdneyev (albeit under different titles), so that readers and researchers risk mistakenly believing the two identical texts to be different. These scholars also failed to print such sources as [CS]Monggoliyın uq ekeiyın tūūke (“The History of Mongolia’s Origins”), [CS]Xo örlögiyın tūūke (“The Story of Khoo Örlög”) and [CM]Boqdo činggisiyın törıyigı barid xān örgō tetgūgsen tuuji (“The Tale of the Imperial Seat of the Honorable Chinggis Khaan) in their original forms using photocopies, hampering their use as fully fledged academic sources. Many scholars criticize the works of Chinese Mongolian scholars precisely for this reason (Kešigtotaqu 2003: 58). In addition, their publications’ lack of introductory material and of information on the origins of texts causes difficulties for their readers.

Significant Mongolists in the United States include N. Poppe, J. Krueger, and S. Halkovic. Krueger is a respected senior scholar, prolific in the field of Clear Script studies (Rozycki 2001). An Oirat-English dictionary, compiled from Clear Script sources extant at the time, was the product of Dr. Krueger’s hard work. He is known not only for his research but also for organizing a variety of events and helping train a number of Mongolists, especially in the field of Oirat studies. In particular, he has organized several seminars on Kalmyk immigrants to the United States and published their results (Kalmyk-Oirat Symposium 1966). He also led Halkovic through his masters’ thesis on translations of the Zaya Pandita and his doctoral dissertation on comparative studies of [CS]Dōrbōn oyiradiyın tūūke (“The History of Four Oirats”) by Gabang Širab (Halkovic 1977; 1985; 1986). Mongolists from the United States recently discovered correspondence written in Clear Script in Germany and published

it with both a transliteration and an English translation (Rozycki et al. 1995: 116–130).

Though Clear Script was first used among the Oirat Mongols, it has now spread among the Oirats in Mongolia, Russia, and China. The compartmentalization of research by region therefore leads to weak and relatively one-sided results. For most of the sources, no studies comparing different versions of the texts yet exist.

In my 2006 book [SM]Mongolyn tүүkhiin tod bichgiin survaljuud (*Clear Script Sources of Mongolian History*) (Sүkhbaatar 2006), I attempted to register and classify Clear Script sources written between 1648 and the 1920s, identifying the salient features of each and assessing its historiographic value based on how much factual information it provides. Collaborating with other enthusiasts, I helped launch the NGO [SM]Tod nomyn gerel töv (Center of Clear Literary Illumination) in 2006. The Center has released a number of Clear Script sources through its Bibliotheca Oiratica series (Bibliotheca Oiratica, 2006; 2008; 2009).⁹ This series aims to publish sources in their proper order, each with a photographic copy of the original, a Romanized transliteration, an index, a transcription into modern standard Mongolian, commentaries, and scholarly introductions. The Center plans to publish [CS]Dörbön oyiradiyin tүүke (“The History of Four Oirats”) by Gabang Širab and [CS]Xalimaq xādiyin tuujygi xurāji bičiqsen tobči orošiboi (“A Concise History of the Tale of Kalmyk Khans”) very soon.

2. Classification of clear script sources

As mentioned, libraries and research institutions throughout the world contain several thousands of texts written in Clear Script. Relatively few of those contain valuable historical information, but they merit classification and registration nevertheless.

Known sources written in Clear Script can be classified into the following categories: biographical works, historical (historiographic) works, genealogical texts, legal codes, official correspondence, epitaphs, and travelogues.

2-1. Biographical works

[CS]Rab-byam cay-a pandidayin tuuji sarayin gerel kemekü orošiboi (The Lunar Light, or Story of Rabjamba Zaya Pandita) by Ratnabhadra (1691).

2-2. Historical (historiographic) works

These Clear Script texts portray not only contemporary events but also the political, cultural, and religious developments of their period. Although “the Manchu state until its very collapse attempted to annihilate the Clear Script and during the Manchu genocide against the Western Mongols they murdered predominantly the literate class” (Rinchen 1971 (1970): 294), Oirat intellectuals nevertheless pursued and promoted knowledge of their roots and history, as can be seen from the following works, which are used in academic literature in various capacities:

[CS]Dörbön oyirad monggolyigi daruqsan tuuji (The Tale of How Four Oirats Defeated the Mongols);

[CS]Dörbön oyiradiyin tүүke (The History of Four Oirats) by Gabang Širab;

[CS]Dórbón oyiradiyin tuuji túúke (The Epic History of Four Oirats), author unknown;
 [CS]Xalimaq xādiyin tuujyigi xurāji bičiqsen tobči orošiboi (Concise History of the Tale of Kalmyk Khans), author unknown;
 [CS]Xo órlógiyin túúke (The Story of Kho Órlóg), author unknown;
 [CS]Bātur Ubaši Túmeni tuurbiqsan dórbón oyiradiyin túúke (The History of Four Oirats composed by Bātur Ubaši Túmen);
 [CS]Monggoliyin uq ekeiyin túúke (The History of the Progenitors of the Mongols), by Dēdi;
 [CM]Čorus-un ijayur garuysan namtur (Records of the Roots of Čoros), author unknown;
 [CS]Boqdo činggisiiyin uq, dórbón oiradiyin uq, xošoud-un uqiyin túúke bičig (The Historical Records of the Lineage of the House of Chinggis Khaan, of the Four Oirats and of the Khošud), author unknown;
 [CS]Monggoliyin eken adaqiyin tuuji túúke (The Epic History of Mongolia's Beginning and End) by Huashangbu;
 [CS]Šajini altan narani gereliyin nilči toqtōn ógúúlegsen óljói čayan padma nomlol bütel órgún delger sümēn eki tourbil altan erken kemekú orošiboi (The Golden Rosary, or The Prime Masterpiece of the Magnificent White Padma-Reminiscent Temple Carrier of the Golden Solar Ray of Faith) by Dharmabhadra.

In addition to these, a number of others—including [CS]Ike delger túúke (The Grand Elaborate History), [CS]Dórbón oiradiyin uq ike túúke bičig (The Grand History of the Lineage of Four Oirats), [CS]Dórbón oiradiyin bürin túúke (The Complete History of Four Oirats), and [CS]Júngqariyin túúke (The History of Jungaria)—are cited in the texts listed above but have not been found.

2-3. Genealogical texts

Though scholars distinguish among genealogies, lineage texts, and clan records, all of these can be referred to more generally as genealogical texts. They give the lineages of a house's princes with interpretations thereof and include:

Lineages of the khans and princes of Únen sújigtú (Old) Torgud and Čin sedkiltú (New) Torgud (the 1900s);

Genealogies of the Torgud (the 1980s);

Compilation of the Records of the House of Joriqtu khan Bayančogtu, lord and chief of the southern league of Únen sújigtú (Old) Torgud (1887);

Compilation of the lineages of the lords and princes of the northern league of Únen sújigtú (Old) Torgud.

2-4. Legal codes

Three related legal codes written in Clear Script have been preserved: the 1640 [CM]Mongyul-Oyirad-un yeke čayaja (Grand Statutes of the Mongols and the Oirats), amendments to it issued by Galdan Bošigtu Khaan in 1676 and 1678, and an addition decreed by the Kalmyk Khan Donduqdaši between 1741 and 1761.

Different scholars have referred to this three-part text differently, but arbitrary naming is not conducive to research: one must rely only upon available historical sources. [CS]Xalimaq xādiyin tuujyigi xurāji bičiqsen tobči orošiboi (Concise History of the Tale of Kalmyk Khans)

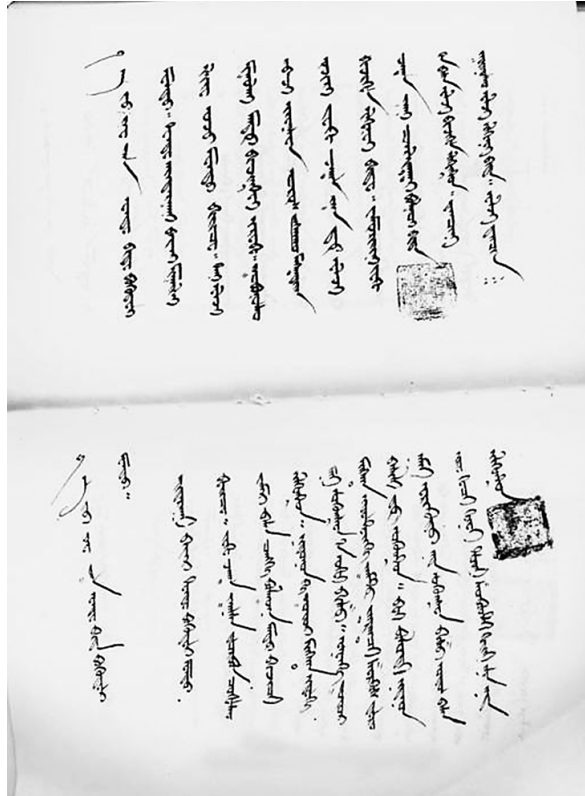


Photo 1 Letter in clear script of Ayuk khan of Kalmyk Kingdom—toduseg. Since 1 August 1717.

refers to the text as [CM]Döčin, dörben qoyar-un yeke čayaja (Grand Statutes of the Forty and the Four), praising it by saying, “the ancient Grand Statutes of the Forty and the Four are most suitable to the lifestyles of the Mongols and the Oirats.” The Clear Script version of this code begins by stating explicitly that “the Lords of the Forty and the Four established these Grand Statutes.”

Five copies of the Grand Statutes are extant: one at the Kalmyk fund of the Russian Central Historical Archives, two at the St. Petersburg branch library of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, one at the St. Petersburg State University library, and one at the Social Sciences Library of Inner Mongolia in China. A host of international scholars have devoted themselves to studying this document, which had begun to be translated into German, Russian, English, and Japanese in 1776. The textological aspects of the document interested such prominent scholars as P. S. Pallas of Germany; V. M. Bakunin, F. I. Leontovich, K. F. Golstunsky, and S. D. Dylykov of Russia; Tayama Shigeru of Japan; Dornutiib, Buyan-Öljei, and Bu He of Inner Mongolia (China); Erdeni of Xinjiang (China); and R. Altangerel, R. Erdenetsogt, and B. Batbayar of Mongolia. On the one hand, this document can be read as a fully developed legal code; on the other, it can serve as an important historical

portrait of social conditions and relations among various strata in the mid-17th century. The Grand Statutes' clauses allow readers to draw certain conclusions about the social organization and intra-group dynamics in the Mongolian society of the period. For instance, the Statutes describe the various privileges enjoyed by the different strata of Mongolian society, such as the [CM]yeke noyad and [CM]baγ-a noyad ("senior and junior lords"), [CM]tabunang ("in-laws of nobility"), [CM]jaisang ("chancellors"), [CM]yambutu dörben tūšimel ("four privileged officials"), [CM]otuy-un sayid ("prefecture chiefs"), [CM]jayimaγ-un sayid ("chiefs of leagues"), [CM]jasay bariγsan dörben tūšimel ("four governing officials"), [CM]jayimaγ-un tūšimel ("officials of leagues"), [CM]jerke-ügei yambutu ("non-entitled privileged class"), [CM]erketü kiy-a ("entitled convoys"), [CM]elči ("envoys"), [CM]demči ("associates"), [CM]šülengge ("tax collectors"), [CM]arban-u aq-a ("heads of the decimal unit"), [CM]jayil-un aq-a ("heads of the neighborhood"), [CM]sayin kōmūn ("upper commoners"), [CM]dumda kōmūn ("middle commoners"), [CM]adaγ kōmūn ("lower commoners"), and [CM]bosayul ("fugitives"). Military servicemen were also divided into various categories, such as the [CM]lübčiten ("lamellar troops"), [CM]dayulgatu ("helmeted troops"), and [CM]degelei quyaγtu ("armor-vested troops"), each with its own code of service and set of privileges.

2-5. Epitaphs

Six of these are extant and have been preserved as stelae with carved Clear Script texts: Sandstone stele on Mt. Geden featuring a commemoration of the pacification of Jungaria (1755);

Stele in Ili territory featuring a commemoration of the pacification of Jungaria (1758);

Stele in the Qoladakin-i amurjigulugči Temple featuring a story of pilgrimage (1765);

Stele featuring the return of the Torgud (1771);

Stele featuring the appropriation of benefits to the returning Torgud (1771);

Stele in the Tügēmel amurjigulugči Temple featuring an ode (1767).

2-6. Official correspondence

Official and diplomatic letters provide invaluable information on relations among individual rulers and nations, state policies, and political and economic developments.

Hundreds of such texts are held in Russian and Chinese archives, and more continue to be found.

Below is a partial list of letters that either provide new information to the field or help corroborate or illuminate such information:

Letter No. 1 from Galdan Bošigtu Khaan to the Tsar of Russia (1691);

Letter No. 2 from Galdan Bošigtu Khaan to the Tsar of Russia (1691);

Letter from the envoy of Galdan Bošigtu Khaan to the Tsar of Russia (1691);

Letter of protest from Čebengrabdun Khaan to the Russian Empire (1724);

Letter from Čebengrabdun Khaan upon receiving gifts from an envoy of the Tsar of Russia (after 1724);

Letter from Čebengrabdun Khaan through his envoy Darjiya (1724);

Letter from the Kangxi Emperor to Ayuki Khan of the Torgud (1712);

Letter from the Yongzheng Emperor to Čeringdonduq Khan of the Torgud (1729);
 Letter from the Qianlong Emperor to Ubaši, Čebekdorji, and Šeren, rulers of the Torgud (1771);
 Letter from Dawači Noyan to Čering Ubaši of the Dörvöd (1750);
 Letter from the Workers' and Peasants' Government of Russia to the Government of Autonomous Mongolia (1919);
 Letters from the Mongols of Ili Territory to the People's Government of Mongolia (1922);
 Letter from Kalmykia to the People's Government of Mongolia (1921).

2-7. Travelogues

Several Clear Script records of journeys from Kalmykia to Tibet, either through Mongolia or directly, possess rare historical value. Three such travelogues are known—those by Baaza Gelong, Zungarabiyin Purdaši, Norzaniy Ubaši, and Arluniy Lējing—of which only the diaries of Baaza Gelong survive.

[CS]Baha dörböd nuthai baaza-bagšin tóbödiin ornd yabugsan tūike (The Story of Master Baaza of Baga Dörvöd to the Land of Tibet) was written in Clear Script by Mōngkejini Badma (1846–1903), known by his clerical name, Lobzang Širab, and more commonly by his honorific, Baaza bagši. A native of the Baga Dörvöd clan of Kalmykia, he completed a pilgrimage to Tibet between 1891 and 1894, when he was a master (gelong) of [CS]Dunda qurul (a monastery). In his diaries, Baaza Gelong introduces the historical background and reasoning behind his own pilgrimage: 135 years prior to his time, Donduqdaši Khan of the Kalmyks had sent pilgrims to Tibet, including Galdančering, a descendant of Dalai Taiši of the Dörvöd. In obedience to the order “to return again,” Baaza Gelong made his own pilgrimage over a century later and wrote in detail about the interesting events, temples and monasteries, cities and towns, and prominent people he encountered in his travels. His apt observations and critical assessments of the causes and effects of various events make this diary a valuable historical source.

3. Brief introductions to Clear Script sources

The following section provides brief introductions to the twelve existing Clear Script texts and includes basic information on their dates, authors, and narrative themes.

3-1. Rab-byam cay-a pandidayin tuuji sarayin gerel kemekü orošiboi (The Lunar Light, or Story of Rabjamba Zaya Pandita)

This biography of the prominent Oirat religious philosopher and scribe Zaya Pandita Namkhai Gyamtso was written in 1691 by his disciple Ratnabhadra, making it a “unique historical source in that, unlike other biographies of qutuqtu and senior lamas, it portrays events as they happened, without excessive narration of miracles or the extraordinary abilities of the Pandita” (Luvsanbaldan 1975: 7). Six copies of The Lunar Light are extant: five in Clear Script and one in Classical Mongolian. Of the five Clear Script copies, four have been studied: two from Kalmykia and two from the Khovd region of Mongolia. The fifth is known to be in Xinjiang, China, but has not been studied. The Classical Mongolian version

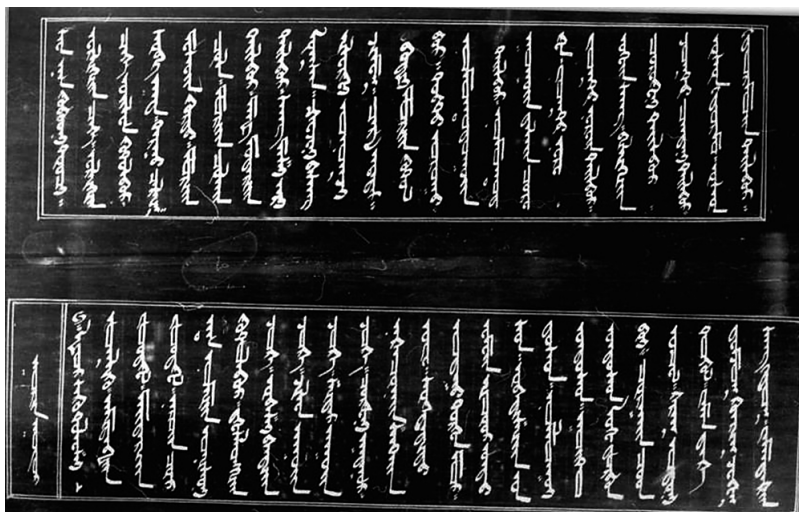


Photo 2 Sarny Gerel (the Light of Moon) Novel written with Clear Script by Ravjamba Zaya pandita—toduseg. Pages 21–22. Original letter in Library of Saint Petersburg University.

was in the private library of the Zaya Pandita of Khalkha and was widely used in research until the 1960s. Japanese scholar Junko Miyawaki-Okada, who has been researching the biography of Zaya Pandita Namkhai Gyamtso since 1985, has compared the two versions of *The Lunar Light*, finding numerous inconsistencies between the Clear Script and Classical Mongolian versions and arguing that a Clear Script copy found in Mankhan in Mongolia's Khovd Province is the most reliable version for researchers' purposes (Miyawaki 1985: 157–164).

The *Lunar Light* narrates more than 90 years of events among the Four Oirats between 1599 and 1691, providing not only information related directly to Zaya Pandita but also broader narratives of contemporary events.

The basic storyline can be divided into two parts. The first section covers the period from Zaya Pandita's birth in 1599 to his ascent to nirvana in 1663, including his apprenticeship in Tibet and participation in religious and secular affairs as well as his missionary activities. This part of the text includes both narratives and critiques of contemporary events in Mongolia and among the Oirats. Of particular value are the annual records of Zaya Pandita's activities during every year after 1638, when he returned from Tibet.

The second section covers historical events between 1663 and 1691, including the search for and recognition of the *šabrun* (reincarnation) of Zaya Pandita, the relocations and growth of the [CS]Ike *kūrē* (religious seat) of the Oirats, the protest petitions of the lords of [CS]*kūrē* against Gelong Noyan, the credentials issued by the Dalai Lama to the Oirat lamas, the rivalries between Jungar and Khošud princes, and the wars of Galdan Bošigtu Khaan against the Manchu Empire.

The *Lunar Light* mentions the names of 248 people, all historical figures of the 17th century, and of 204 geographical objects, temples, and monasteries (Sukhbaatar 2004: 67). The

names of Xara tala, the Ili region, and the Erčis (Irtys) River appear repeatedly, proving the scope of this work.

3-2. Dórbón oyirad monggolyigi daruqsan tuuji (The Tale of How Four Oirats Defeated the Mongols)

This tale has attracted the attention of scholars since the mid-19th century. It goes by several names, including [CM]Mongγul-un ubaši qongtaiji-yin tuγuji orušibai (The Tale of Mongol Prince Ubaši) and, more simply, [CM]Ubaši qongtaiji-yin tuγuji (The Tale of Prince Ubaši). Its readership increased when Russian scholar A. V. Popov published some of it—in Clear Script alongside a Russian translation—in 1847 (Popov 1847: 366–374). It attracted the attention of Mongolists when the Buryat scribe Galsan Gomboyev released a single volume containing all the three existing copies of the text along with a Russian translation (Altan tobchi 1858).¹⁰

All copies of this text studied internationally have related origins in Kalmykia, including a copy conventionally thought to be from Dresden, Germany. The National Library of Mongolia maintains a largely truncated 15-page copy in Clear Script that was probably rewritten in the mid-19th century. The key storyline of this version mentions a Mongol-Oirat war that apparently occurred in the year of the Fire Tiger (according to scholars who base their assessments on this version), or 1587. However, a closer look compels us to conclude that the event took place in the Year of the Water Tiger, or 1623. Other Clear Script sources describe this war as well: a detailed narrative appears in [CS]Dórbón oyiradiyin túúke (The History of Four Oirats) by Bātur Ubaši Tūmen, composed in 1819–1820, which places the event in the year of the Red Rat (1636).

The text widely known as [CS]Dórbón oyirad monggolyigi daruqsan tuuji (The Tale of How Four Oirats Defeated the Mongols) and its portrait of the war was probably transmitted through an oral tradition until being written down in Clear Script sometime after 1648 or transliterated around the same time from Classical Mongolian into Clear Script.

3-3. Dórbón oyiradiyin túúke (The History of Four Oirats) by Gabang Širab

All existing copies of this text are from Kalmykia; as none has a title, all are known by the arbitrary name above. A version in Classical Mongolian is entitled [CM]Oyirad ulus erte boluγsan qayučid-un teúke (An Ancient and Old History of the Oirat Realm), which is perhaps the original title. Two copies in Clear Script are preserved in Russia, of which the better is thought to be that numbered E 66 and kept at the St. Petersburg branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. A copy found in Xinjiang, China, is incomplete and of unknown origin. This version, copied several times, was reprinted in 1885 by Badai et al. in both Classical Mongolian and Clear Script (Gabang širab-un tuγuji ...).¹¹ However, it is missing several pages at the end, beginning from the chapter called [CM]Dumda dórben oyirad-ud-un sayid-ud-un üye bičimüi (“The Genealogical Tree of the Governors of the Middle Four Oirats”). It also adds to and subtracts from various passages as they appear in other versions. Scholars have tended to rely on the version published in Classical Mongolian in 1985 in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia (China)—a text I find unsuitable for research.

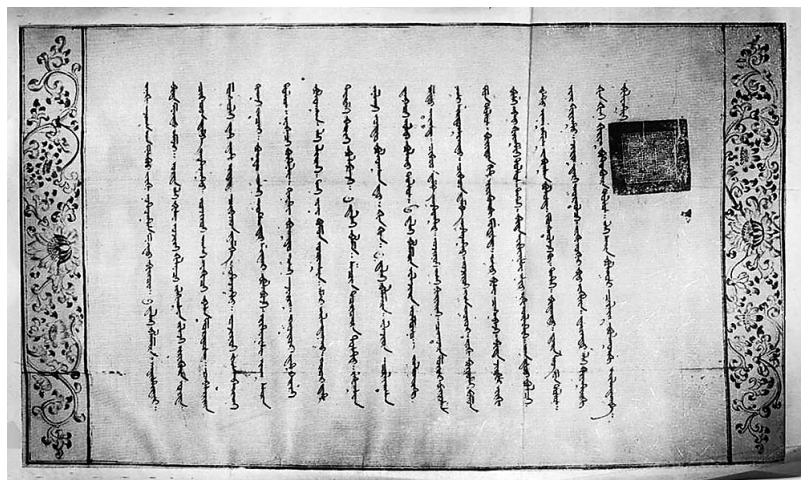


Photo 3 Letter of Galdanboshigt Khan of Zuun Gar State to Russian Emperor. -Tsagaan khan in clear script—toduseg.

The history's author, Gabang Širab, was of the princely house of the Torgud of the Ijil (Volga) River basin. Popularly known as “The Healer,” he completed the history in the year of the Red Serpent, or 1737. Rather than following an exact chronological sequence, his work is divided into over 30 sub-topics covering historical events significant to Oirat history, changes in the composition of the Oirats, and the lineages and genealogical trees of the princes of the five Oirat principalities, as well as tales of their benevolent and erroneous deeds.

3-4. Dórbón oyiradiyin tuuji túúke (The Epic History of Four Oirats), author unknown

This work has been preserved and disseminated among residents of the Khovd region of western Mongolia, with ostensibly two Clear Script “copies” extant. However, our research revealed that these two “copies” differ markedly in content, making them actually two distinct works. A separate Classical Mongolian work, is in fact an amalgamation of the two Clear Script texts, contributing to the misunderstanding that the latter constitute a single work. Judging from the context, these works were probably compiled from separate records in the 1770s. The author remains unknown but was probably a lama of the Bayad ethnic group and subject of Čeringmóngke of the Dórvöd. The text includes both real historical events and quasi-legendary tales that somewhat diminish its scholarly value. Nevertheless, it contains some valuable information, especially its clarifications of official Manchu sources. The two Clear Script “copies” each include about 34 sub-topics, most related to the history of the Khovd region.

3-5. Xalimaq xādiyin tuujyigi xurāji bičiqsen tobči orošiboi (Concise History of the Tale of Kalmyk Khans)

Clear Script originals of this work, known to scholars since 1860, have all been found to be

from Kalmykia. Most commonly used is the stone type xylograph printed in 1885 by A. M. Pozdneyev; however, no photographic copy of this was preserved. Another well-preserved Clear Script copy is kept by the St. Petersburg branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. We plan to use this copy to introduce the Concise History to a wider public.

The Concise History spans more than 160 years of Torgud and Dörvöd migrations, from the 1607 westward relocation until the return to the basin of the Ili River, and includes not only historical records but also oral information and the author's own recollection of events in which he participated. The last event mentioned in this work is the 1775 death of Ubaši Khaan of the Torgud Kalmyks, so it must have been written after that year. The author clearly participated in the 1771 return migration, suggesting that the text may have been written in Xinjiang.

3-6. Xo órlógiyin túúke (The Story of Kho Órlóg)

Although this text's author and its date and place of writing are unknown, its content suggests that it was written after the Torgud returned to their original homeland in Jungaria. It is small but covers major events in Oirat history after the formation of the Oirat confederacy in the 1400s, providing a brief but well-grounded analysis of the composition of the Oirats and the reasons behind their numerous migrations. It thus deserves to be designated the "concise history of the Oirats." The original text has not been found, and the only preserved copy has yet to be reprinted.

3-7. Dórbón oyiradiyin túúke (The History of Four Oirats) by Bātur Ubaši Túmen

Of this text's many Clear Script copies, the most widely circulated has been that found in the private library of Čeringjab Túmen, its author's grandson. One copy's title is [CS]Xošoud noyon bātur ubaši túmeniy tuurbisan dórbón oyiradiyin túúke orošibo (The History of Four Oirats, Authored by Bātur Ubaši Túmen, the Prince of Khošud). The story behind the author's lineage is as follows: in the mid-1750s, Dejid Noyan of the Khoid fled Manchu rule in Jungaria but died on the way to Kalmykia. When a son was born to him near the city of Tyumen, Dejid named him "Túmenjirgalang," in partial reference to the place of his birth. Dejid's widow, Óljei-Orušiqu, remarried Jamiyan Noyan, prince of the Khošud, with the permission of Donduqdaši Khan of the Kalmyks; her son Túmenjirgalang was thereafter called "prince of the Khošud." He began writing this work in 1801; it was completed in 1819–1820 by his son Bātur Ubaši Túmen and is therefore a co-authored piece.

Written in Kalmykia, it spread throughout the region. It encompasses Oirat history but focuses on the history of the Khoid. The text is divided into roughly 20 sub-topics and contains several passages taken directly from the 1837 History of Four Oirats by Ğabang Širab.

3-8. Monggoliyin uq ekeiyin túúke (The History of the Progenitors of the Mongols) by Dēdi

A single copy in Clear Script was found among the Óöld of Xinjiang. The author, Dēdi, mentions in his epilogue that the work was completed in 1825. It contains 14 chapters recording important events in the history of the Four Oirats. In emphasizing the lineage and deeds of the Čoros rulers of Jungaria, the text takes a defensive stance, at times attributing the Čoros

rulers' errors and missteps to other Oirat clans. Its photographic copy remains unpublished and is therefore difficult for scholars to access.

3-9. Čorosiyin ijaqur garuqsan namtur (Records of the Roots of Čoros)

A small volume in Clear Script with only a few pages of text has been found in Mongolia. Its author and date and place of writing are unknown; it may have been written by or among the Dórvöd and Ööld residents of Mongolia. It contains quasi-legendary information on the origins of the Čoros rulers of the Oirats and narrates the lives of some of their princes.

3-10. Boqdo činggisiiyin uq, dórbón oiradiiyin uq, xošoud-un uqiyin túúke bičig (The Historical Records of the Lineage of the House of Chinggis Khaan, of the Four Oirats and of the Khošud)

Another name for this work, a single Clear Script copy of which was found in Xinjiang, is [CS]Boqdo činggisiiyin töriyigi barid xān örgö tetgügsen tuuji (The Tale of the Imperial Seat of the Honorable Chinggis Khaan). Although its main storyline ends in the 1760s, it mentions the name of someone who lived in the 1850s, proving that it is not an original. Its content suggests that the author belonged to the Khošud clan. It depicts many aspects of Oirat history but emphasizes the history of the Khošud. Moreover, The Historical Records connects the roots of the Čoros rulers of the Oirats to Jarčuidai of the Uriangqan and his son Jelme, sharply criticizing the khans of Čoros lineage. The text's key theme is that the Four Oirats Confederacy was the direct heir to Chinggis Khaan's Great Mongolian Empire, a claim accompanied by disapproval of disunity among the Mongols.

3-11. Mongqoliyin eken adaqiyin tuuji túúke (The Epic History of Mongolia's Beginning and End) by Huashangbu

A copy of this work, preserved at the Clear Script fund of the Institute of Language and Literature of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, was located by Kh. Luvsanbaldan and brought to Mongolia by Mongolian historian L. Jamsran during his studies in Beijing.

The author is Huashangbu, a man of Manchu origin commonly referred to as "Yü Ting." A native of Gūl šira banner of Šibe Manchus, Ili Territory, he identifies his birthplace in this work as "Gūl ulaqan banner of Mukden." The text was completed in the Year of the Fire Sheep, or the 33rd year of the Guangxu Emperor's reign: 1907. However, the epilogue also refers to the second year of the Xuantong Emperor's reign, which was 1910. Excerpts from The Epic History have often been used as sources for official histories. The work contains references to the Chinese origin of Mongolia's Khaans; records of events involving the Jungar rulers (Galdan Bošigtu Khaan, Dawači, and Amursanaa); information on the 24 [CM]otuy, 9 [CM]jisa, and 21 [CM]anggi (administrative divisions of the Jungar Khanate); stories of the Jungar clergy; Jungaria's population and household data; and the story of Ubaši Khan of the Torgud.

3-12. Šajini altan narani gereliyin nilči toqtōn ógúúlegsēn óljói čayan padma nomlol bütēl órgūn delger sūmēn eki tourbil altan erken kemekú orošiboi (The Golden Rosary, or The Prime Masterpiece of the Magnificent White Padma-Reminiscent Temple Carrier of the Golden Solar Ray of Faith)

The original of this work, dedicated to the history of the Dashi Padghar Shaddub Darjāling temple, has been preserved in the Clear Script fund of the Institute of Language and Literature of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences. The text contains information on the life of Zaya Pandita and the later period of the Jungar Khanate. Its 172 pages (86 tablets) were written in 1911 by the lama Dharmabhadra.

The Golden Rosary is inscribed in a specific form of Clear Script. The Oirat Mongols used two forms of Clear Script: [CS]ike delger todo bičig (“Grand Elaborate Clear Script”) and [CS]čaqaṅ todo bičig (“White Clear Script”). The Golden Rosary is the only existing text written in the former, which uses a number of additional symbols designed to transliterate Sanskrit and Tibetan sounds, thus easing the reading and pronunciation of loanwords.

In our analysis, The Golden Rosary is composed of two main parts. The first, comprised of tablets 1(a) to 48(a) or pages 1 to 96, narrates the history of Buddhism, its introduction to Mongolia, and proselytization among the Mongolians. The text’s second section covers the general history of the Oirats with a focus on the Zakhčīn clan and the establishment of the Tsangnid Datsang (monastery) of the Zakhčīn. In this section, tablets 48(a) to 65(a) cover the origins of the Oirat Mongols, the deeds of the Zakhčīn princes, and their religious proselytism, while the remaining pages narrate the story of the Tsangnid Datsang: its founding and records of its possessions and the offerings given it by pilgrims. It contains a number of records valuable to research on the monastic organization, especially regarding the economic basis of its existence.

4. Value and significance of Clear Script sources

Unexpectedly surviving legal codes and official correspondence sometimes contain valuable historical information. Extant official documents in Clear Script can therefore be trusted as sources of historical information on social relations and developments without necessarily questioning the intentions of the authors or those who commissioned the texts. Official correspondence, which forms the bulk of this category of texts, highlights many aspects of relations between the Oirats and Mongolia, the Manchu Empire, and Russia.

As for the Clear Script biographies, historical works, and genealogical texts introduced above, identifying their main primary sources is an important research objective, since studying the primary sources of historical works is key to assessing their reliability and historical value.

In our view, the Clear Script sources introduced in this article drew upon five basic types of primary sources:

First are historical works written in the preceding period. Most of the Clear Script texts utilize such sources, either by referencing them directly or by using them to verify and compare historical accounts. Citation methods vary and include:

Directly citing a source’s title, author, or content;

Referencing a source’s title and author without a direct citation, for the sake of authenti-

cating one's own work;

Making no explicit reference to a source but making it vividly identifiable through the content of one's own work.

Second are official documents and genealogical texts. Most Clear Script works use this type of primary source, mainly in sections that provide genealogies of nobility. Almost all texts—with a few exceptions, including [CS]Boqdo Činggisiiyin uq, Dörbön Oiradiyin uq, Xošoud-un uqiin tūūke bičig (The Historical Records of the Lineage of the House of Chinggis Khaan, of the Four Oirats and of the Khošud)—provide nearly identical lineages of the princes of the Čoros, Dörvöd, Torgud, Khošud, and Khoid clans. It therefore seems likely that one primary genealogical source was common to all of them.

Official correspondence was widely used as well. For instance, The Lunar Light uses direct quotations from the Dalai Lama's 1678 granting of ecclesiastical privileges to the Erke Čogoji of the [CS]Ike kūrē (religious seat) of the Oirats and his disciples, a 1676 letter from Ūiceng Nangso and Daičing Nangso of the [CS]Ike kūrē to Galdan Bošigtu Khaan, and two protest petitions, one from Erke Čogoji to Noyan Gelong and the other from the lamas of the [CS]Ike kūrē to Galdan Bošigtu Khaan. The Golden Rosary cites records from the [CS] kūrē of the Zakhč'in; similarly, the Records of the Lineages of the Khans and Princes of the Torgud of Ūnen süjigtū and Čin sedkiltū Leagues references [CM]Γadaγadu mongyul, qotan ayimayud-un wang güng-ūd-ün iledkel šasdir (Records of the Princes of Outer Mongolia and of the Khotan Clans). A lineage tree of the Torgout princes written later also cites the earlier lineage trees directly.

Third are eyewitness accounts by authors. Their use is a salient feature of Clear Script texts that both enhances and limits their historical value. On the one hand, eyewitness accounts tend to transform historical records into memoirs; on the other hand, they provide firsthand verification of the events recorded. Eyewitness accounts also tend to be more compelling to readers, though the same dramatic qualities that make them appealing can also confuse the logic and structure of a secondary text citing them. For instance, in The Lunar Light, Ratnabhadra provides detailed coverage of the recognition of Zaya Pandita Namkhai Gyamtso's reincarnation and of rivalries within the [CS]Ike kūrē (religious seat) of the Oirats. These narratives occupy about 6% of the text. Other examples of disproportionately detailed eyewitness accounts include that of a ceremony held on April 23, 1757 on the banks of the Šira Ceke River—described by the unknown author of the [CS]Xalimaq xādiyin tuujyigi xurāji bičiqsen tobči orošiboi (Concise History of the Tale of Kalmyk Khans)—and that of Dörvöd migrations, including their initial crossing of the Altai Mountains, their intermediary settlement in the basin of the Zag and Tūin Rivers, and their final settlement in the Ulaangom area—all described in [CS]Dörbön oyiradiyin tuuji tūūke (The Epic History of Four Oirats).

Fourth are memoirs and hearsay accounts. When describing historical events in which they did not participate, some authors rely on the memoirs of those who did participate or hearsay from those deemed reliable. In The Lunar Light, Ratnabhadra distinguishes clearly between events he witnessed and those he did not; in his final chapter, Gabang Širab records events as he heard them recounted by Aldar Geshe, Queen Dorjirabdun (consort to Sečen Khan), and Ayuka Khan of the Kalmyks.

In these and many other cases, such sentence endings as [CS]"kemedeg" ("it is said

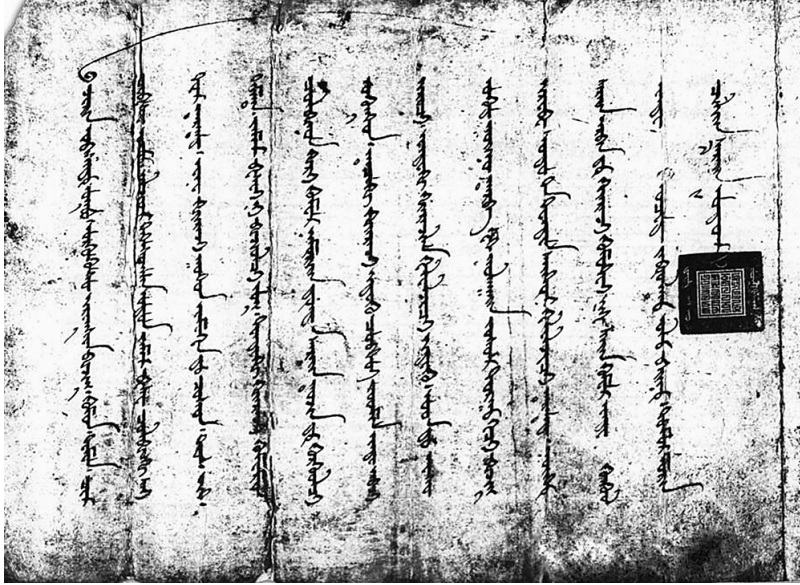


Photo 4 Letter written in Clear Script by Davaach Khan of the Zuun Gar State to Tseren Uvsh of Durbet—toduseg.

that”), [CS]“kemegsen ajiq” (“it has been said that”), and [CS]“kemeldebei” (“they have said that”) signal indirect references to memoirs and hearsay.

Fifth are folklore and legendary accounts. Because the “historical folklore spread among the Mongols prior to the emergence of written language was the first stream of historical knowledge of the Mongols” (Bira1966: 60), Clear Script texts make extensive use of oral sources. For example, the unknown author of *Dórbón oyiradiyin tuuji túúke* (The Epic History of Four Oirats) refers to several legends about the birth and life of Amursanaa, popular stories about a Bayad strongman named Bayanmóngke, and a wrestler nicknamed “Temegen Qara” who allegedly lifted a camel (“temege” in Mongolian).

[CS]Boqdo činggisiiyin uq, dórbón oiradiyin uq, xošoud-un uqiyin túúke bičig (The Historical Records of the Lineage of the House of Chinggis Khaan, of the Four Oirats and of the Khošud) discusses the origins of the Khoid clan with reference to the legend of Yabugan Mergen’s ancestry. However, [CS]Bātur Ubaši Túmeni turbiqsan dórbón oyiradiyin túúke (The History of Four Oirats composed by Bātur Ubaši Túmen), with its far more detailed account of the clan’s origins, avoids the legend of its progenitors and begins instead with Yabugan Mergen. Even so, this work, completed in 1819–1820, contains a number of references to legends and folklore.

Of particular note is the fact that no Clear Script work quotes the canonical texts of Mongolian history—such as [CM]Qaγad-un ündüsün-ü quriyangyui altan tobči (Concise Account of the Khaans, or Golden Chronicles) and [CM]Erdeni-yin tobči (The Precious Chronicles)—partly due to political rivalries between the Oirats and the rest of Mongolia and partly because the Classical Mongolian texts, only a few of which were released, were not

generally available to Oirat scholars. Only toward the late 19th century did two works in Clear Script—the Records of the Lineages of the Khans and Princes of the Torgud and [CM]Monggoliyin eken adaqiyin tuuji tūūke (The Epic History of Mongolia’s Beginning and End) by Huashangbu—cite the official historical records of the Manchu Empire.

The principal works of Mongolian history in Classical Mongolian are full of information on the Oirat Mongols prior to the 17th century, while Clear Script sources provide much more detailed accounts of Oirat history during and after the 17th century. In many instances, the facts contained in Clear Script sources do not repeat those in Classical Mongolian texts, making comparative studies difficult. For example, the tale of the four sons of Duba Soqur, forefathers of the Oirats, appears in various Classical Mongolian texts accompanied by phrases such as [CM]“Duba soqur-un kōbegūn donui, doḡšin, emnige, erke kemeken-ber oyirad, ōgeled, baḡatud, qoyid, kerenegūd obuytan bolbai” (“The sons of Duba Soqur—Donoi, Doḡšin, Emnige, and Erke—begot the Oirat, Ōöld, Baatud, Khoid, and Kernegūd clans”) (Sagan setsen 1961: 73)¹²; [CM]“Dörben oyirad duba soqur-un ūr-e bui” (“The Four Oirats are descendants of Duba Soqur”) (Shara tudzhi 1957: 10)¹³; and [CM]“Duba soqur-un ači kōbegūn bu qan eriyen qabiry-a aḡula-dur” (“Bu Khan, the grandson of Duba Soqur on Mt. Eriyen Qabirga”) (Ōgeled-ūn noyad-un uy eke ...) ¹⁴—yet none of these can be found in the Clear Script sources.

In the 18th century, however, the canonical histories written in Classical Mongolian began to enrich Mongolian historiography with a number of interesting details on the ethnic composition of the Oirats and the genealogy of their rulers (Mongḡul-ul borjiḡad obuy-un teuke 2000).¹⁵ Many of these facts can be compared with information contained in Clear Script texts.

Various records of 18th-century Oirat history were based on Manchu imperial edicts and official documents. Most such texts were written after 1770 and cover the events of the 18th century; they can therefore help supplement, support, or falsify Manchu records. One example is a description of the ill-fated attempt of Galsangdorji, Čagdurmanji, and Bayar to capture the cities of Urumqi, Barkōl, and Čongji a year after Amursanaa swore allegiance to the Manchu throne and of the subsequent journey of qinwang Čering, junwang Čering Ubaši, and junqiang Čeringmōngke of the Dōrvōd paying tribute to Beijing:

[CM]“Meyiren-ū janggi yarḡaši ḡurban tūmen čerig-tei ireged, čagdurmanji-yi barkūl-dūr bariju qadabai. ḡalsangdorji-yi čalin čerigtū jangjun doluḡan tūmen čerig-tey oduḡad bariju qadabai. Bayar-i altai-yin bel-dūr bariju qadabai. Nemekū aqatai-yi erčis-ūn goul-dur, basa tus tus anu bayisan gajar tur anu kidaysan-u toy-a jegunḡar, qošiud, qoyid ene ḡurban tūmen ileḡū kūrgej kidabai.” (“Yarḡaši the janggi thus came with 30,000 troops and killed Čagdurmanji at Barkōl; Galsangdorji was killed by a general with 70,000 troops; Bayar was killed on the foothills of Altai and Nemekū Aqatai on the banks of Irtysh River. Those killed among these Jungars, Khošud, and Khoid exceeded 30,000.”) (Boqdo čingḡisiyin ..., 1992).¹⁶ In contrast, Manchu sources portray this event as a consequence of an intra-Oirat rivalry occurring in 1756, and this interpretation made its way into modern Mongolian historiography: [SM]“Galsandorj Manjiin tsergiig tsokhin ustgaad, biye Zūūngaryn khaan ōrgōmj1ōkhōōr šiidej baijee. Getel Zangarbu, Nyam nar khaan shiree bulaatsaldan tūūniig barij aljee” (“Galsangdorji was plotting to defeat the Manchu army and enthrone himself as the Khaan of

Jungaria. But Janggarbu and Nima captured and killed him out of their desire for the throne”) (Enkhtuvshin and Ochir, 2003: 151).

These and other examples compel us to question whitewashed Manchu records portraying the Manchu crackdown on the Oirat revolt and subsequent retaliatory genocide as the “pacification of intra-Oirat warfare.” If Clear Script texts are reliable, then certain established historiographical assumptions are erroneous.

In sum, Clear Script documents address the overarching themes of Mongolian history—princely genealogy, administrative structures, historical events, ethnic migrations, historical figures, and more—all of which are mutually complementary and enrich our understanding of our nation’s history.

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