

THE MONGOLIAN NEWSPAPER
NEYSLEL KÜRIYEN-Ü SONIN BIČIG
IN THE POLISH COLLECTIONS
AND THE DATE OF ITS FIRST PUBLICATION*

ABSTRACT: The *Neyslel küriyen-ü sonin bičig* (“News of the Capital”) holds a significant position in the history of the Mongolian press. Regarding the history of its first publication, we know that in 1915 some Mongolian intellectuals started publishing it in the Classical Mongolian language on weekly basis in the printing office of the Russian Tsar’s Consulate’s Information and Technique Office. For the first time, the date of publication was briefly discussed by Deleg Gendenjamtsyn (1924–1992) in his book entitled “Brief History of Mongolian Periodicals” (Mong. *Mongolyn togtmol khevleliin tүүkhen toim*, 1965). Thereafter, many scholars followed the publication date proposed by Deleg. This question is discussed further in this paper based on the specimens of *Neyslel küriyen-ü sonin bičig* kept in the Library of the Department of Turkic Studies and Inner Asian Peoples, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw and in the Archive of Science of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Cracow, together with the detailed report on the collections of this newspaper in Poland.

KEYWORDS: *Neyslel küriyen-ü sonin bičig*, Mongolian newspaper, Mongolia, text criticism

The *Neyslel küriyen-ü sonin bičig* (“News of the Capital,” further referred to as *NKSB*) holds a significant position in the history of the Mongolian press. Among Mongolian newspapers, this weekly periodical had been appearing for the longest time before the establishment of the Mongolian People’s Republic (MPR). In terms of the newspaper layout, the format of the examined issues differed: issues from 1 to 5 measured 35 × 26 cm, from 6 to 38 measured 44 × 35.5 cm, and from 39 to 84 measured 32 × 25 cm. Most of the issues consisted of six pages, however, some of them consisted of four pages.

Regarding the history of its first publication, we know¹ that in 1915 some Mongolian intellectuals started publishing the *NKSB* in the Classical Mongolian language and script and kept publishing it for almost five consecutive years in the printing office of the Russian Tsar’s Consulate’s Information and Technique Office.² According to Mongolian scholar Deleg Gendenjamtsyn, Bodoо Dogsom³ and Tseveen Jamsrany (known also

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¹ See *Bügd Nairamdakh Mongol Ard Ulsyn түүх*, p. 667; Deleg 2014, p. 121; Norovsүren, p. 132.

² Mong. *Orosyn konsulyн material tekhnikiin baaz* (Deleg 2014, p. 122).

³ Bodoо Dogsom (1885–1922) was a leader of the 1921 revolution who resigned the office of prime minister. He was persecuted and executed on August 31, 1922 in a false political case (Atwood, pp. 42–43).

as Tsyben Jamtsarano⁴ were its editors (Deleg 2014, p. 122), while Badrakhbaatar,⁵ Dorj B.,⁶ Jantsansambuu,⁷ and others participated in its publishing, as well. In addition, M. I. Kucherenko together with B. Ya. Kondkov⁸ served as printing technicians and typists. Moreover, Eeden D.⁹ and Namsrai N.¹⁰ also contributed to the publication of the periodical.

The newspaper had well-structured fixed columns such as “Foreign News,” “Domestic News,” “Front News,” “Brief Comment,” “Criticism,” and altering columns like “Newsletters Around,” “Reports,” “the Capital News,” “Republic of China News,” as well as “Border Defense Newsletter.”

There has already been some research conducted on the *NKSB* by Mongolian scholars, especially by Deleg Gendenjamtsyn, a historian and a journalist. He introduced the newspaper in his book entitled “Brief History of Mongolian Periodicals” (Mong. *Mongolyn Togtmol Kheвлеiin Түүххен Тоим*, 1965).¹¹ According to him, it appeared in 103 issues in total, from September 1, 1915, to January 23, 1920, when its publication was suspended (Deleg 2014, p. 125). In terms of the contents of the newspaper, he characterized it as a newspaper “protecting the rights and interests of the people,” “exposing the invaders,” “criticizing the feudal rulers of Mongolia,” and representing the “newspaper’s progressive direction towards masses”. He also added that it recorded domestic and foreign affairs, issues concerning Mongolian society, politics, and financial situation, and noted the importance of establishing schools, hospitals, cooperatives, and factories that contributed to the development of the economy “in Mongolia in a civilized way” (Deleg 2014, p. 156). Moreover, the author observed that the articles in the *NKSB* were written from the sociological and historical perspective and demonstrated its editors’ critical views on the activities of the Republic of China, Tsarist Russia, and the new Mongolian theocratic government. In other words, he exposed the newspaper journalists’ engagement to improve the political and economic situation of the Mongolians. A well-known Mongolian scholar Norovsüren Lombo (1964–) elaborated on the *NKSB* in the first volume of his three-volume “Historical Overview of Mongolian Journalism” (Mong. *Mongolyn Setgүүл Зүүн Түүххен Тоим*, 2000).¹² He considered the newspaper a valuable contribution to

⁴ Tseveen Jamsrany / Jamsrangiin or Tsyben Jamtsarano (1880–1942) was a famous Buriat scholar, who contributed, among others, to studies of Mongolian folklore (Alzakhgüi 2011).

⁵ Badrakhbaatar (1849–1922) was a writer during the Qing dynasty – well-versed in both Mongolian and Manchu languages (Deleg 2014, p. 123).

⁶ Dorj Borjigin (1877–1943) worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Academy of Sciences of Autonomous Mongolia during 1921–1940 (Deleg 2014, p. 124).

⁷ Jantsansambuu (dates unknown) served as an assistant at the Judicial Department (Khishigt, p. 75).

⁸ M. I. Kucherenko and B. Ya. Kondkov were members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Bolshevik-leaning mechanics (Atwood, p. 472).

⁹ Eeden D. (1889–?) was a member of Mongolian revolutionary forces in 1921 and a printer during Autonomous Mongolia. Since 1949, he worked in the National Archives of Mongolia (Deleg 2014, p. 124).

¹⁰ Namsrai N. (1889–?) was the head of the first publishing house of the MPR, and worked in the Central Committee of the Mongolian Revolutionary Youth Union and Business Organization of Ulaanbaatar (Deleg 2014, pp. 124–125).

¹¹ Deleg 1965. In 2014, his book was republished in Mongolian Cyrillic.

¹² Its first volume was published in 2000, and the subsequent two volumes in 2001 and in 2003, respectively.

Mongolian journalism and the development of journalistic thinking (Norovsüren, 2000, p. 134). Although his work dealt with additional issues such as the newspaper's social responsibility, the rest of the information concerning the contents of the newspaper, etc. overlapped with the data provided by Deleg's above-mentioned work. Moreover, in China, Oyun (1965–) outlined its general characteristics based on the following issues: no. 7, 9, 13, 39–54, 61, 75, 76, 101, 103 in her doctoral dissertation entitled “Research on Mongolian Newspapers and Periodicals in Modern China” (Wuyun). Regarding the date of the first issue of the *NKSB*, the author repeated the date previously reported by Deleg and Norovsüren. In addition, Mongolian linguist Borolzoi Dashidondog, in his paper “Calculation of Word Frequency of the ‘News of the Capital’ in 1916” (Borolzoi, pp. 205–213) analyzed the frequency of words' occurrence in the *NKSB* issue no. 28 published on August 10, 1916, from the linguistic perspective. According to his statistics, there were 2083 words altogether in this issue, of which 651 appeared most frequently.

Summing up, research on the *NKSB* has been limited to issues of its chronology and comprehensive, yet still, introductory remarks. As we know, the newspaper was one of the first periodicals published in the early 20th century. Moreover, some scholars have not provided information concerning the source material they worked on. For instance, they did not refer to the whereabouts of the collections of the newspaper's issues. Most probably they had at their disposal incomplete sources and therefore relied on the research done by the others. Such could have been the case with the publication date of the 1st issue of the newspaper. The scholars probably followed the date proposed by Deleg. Furthermore, the incomplete records of the collections of Mongolian newspapers and periodicals have led to shortcomings in the previous research.

During my scholarly stay in Poland in 2019/20, I had an opportunity to do preliminary research on the selected issues of the *NKSB*, which are kept in the Library of the Department of Turkic Studies and Inner Asian Peoples (DTSIAP) of the Faculty of Oriental Studies (FOS), University of Warsaw, and the Archive of Science of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences (PAN and PAU) in Cracow, Poland.¹³ Therefore, I would like to share my insights on the two collections and also re-define the publication date of the 1st issue of the newspaper.

1. THE *NKSB* IN THE POLISH COLLECTIONS

There is a considerable number of Mongolian newspapers like *Sin-e toli kemekü bičig*, *Uriy-a*, or *NKSB* under discussion, kept in the Polish collections alongside the 19th-century publications and rare materials related to Mongolia due to a longstanding tradition of Mongolian studies in Poland going back to early 20th century. Substantial part of these were collected by such scholars as Professor Józef Kowalewski (1801–1878), the pioneer of Mongolian Studies, Władysław Kotwicz (1872–1944), Marian Lewicki (1903–1955), Stanisław Kałużynski (1925–2007), Stanisław Godziński, Jerzy Tulisow, and others. They have contributed greatly to the library collections of Mongolian literature and writings. Among them, there is a relatively complete collection of the *NKSB*. Since it is directly related to the private collections of Professor Władysław Kotwicz, both his book collection and the archive containing his work materials, it is worth mentioning

¹³ My best thanks go to Prof. Agata Bareja-Starzyńska for her help and making the newspapers available for my study.

a few words concerning his contribution to Mongolian studies, the interaction between him and other scholars, and on the transfer of his library and archive to Poland.

Władysław Kotwicz, a famous Mongolist (and Altaist), graduated from the Faculty of Eastern Languages of St. Petersburg University in 1895, where he specialized in Mongolian, Manchu, and Chinese languages. After his graduation, he worked in the Third (Eastern) Department of the General Chancellery in the Russian Ministry of Finance from 1896 to 1917. At the same time, he also carried out research work devoted, among others, to the Mongolian language and history of Mongolia. Meanwhile, in 1900 he also began teaching at St. Petersburg University. During this period, W. Kotwicz collected a substantial number of valuable materials related to the history and culture of Asian regions, including Mongolia. Moreover, in 1912 he organized a scholarly expedition to Mongolia. His main co-worker in this project was Tseven Jamtsarano, the then editor of *NKSB*, what was described in the monograph entitled *In the Heart of Mongolia* (by Jerzy Tulisow, Osamu Inoue, Agata Bareja-Starzyńska, and Ewa Dziurzyńska, 2012). The cooperation with Tseven Jamtsarano was not limited only to the 1912 expedition but lasted during the early 20th century as is proven by the extensive correspondence carried between *NKSB*'s editor-in-chief and the Polish Mongolist. Thanks to the contact with Jamtsarano Kotwicz came into possession of such newspapers as *Sin-e toli kemekü bičig* and *NKSB*. In 1922 Polish Society for Oriental Studies (Polskie Towarzystwo Orientalistyczne) was founded and Kotwicz became its President (Lewicki, pp. 11–29). In December 1923 Kotwicz came to Poland. That year, he established Far East Studies, consisting mainly of Mongolian and Manchu studies, at Jan Kazimierz University in Lvov. Kotwicz passed away in 1944.

After World War II, in 1950, Kotwicz's disciple Marian Lewicki established the Department of Altaic Studies, based on Mongolian Studies, at the Institute (today Faculty) of Oriental Studies of the University of Warsaw. With the help of Kotwicz's daughter, Maria Kotwiczówna, Lewicki brought Władysław Kotwicz's personal collections from Czarny Bór, where he lived until the end of his life, to Warsaw and Cracow (Bareja-Starzyńska 2015, pp. 1–18). Maria Kotwiczówna donated also various books and materials left by her father to the Institute of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw (Bareja-Starzyńska 2007, pp. 187–191).

Currently, the issues of the *NKSB* are kept in two places in Poland. One is the Library of the DTŚIAP FOS in Warsaw, and the other is the Archive of Science of PAN and PAU in Cracow. According to the statistics of the Library of the DTŚIAP FOS collection, there are seventy-eight issues of the *NKSB* preserved in Warsaw, from issue no. 1 to issue no. 84. Since the newspaper was published in 103 issues in total, it means that nineteen issues are lacking from Warsaw. Moreover, among the issues no. 1–84 just mentioned, issues no. 56, 63, 78, 79, 80, and 81 are missing from Warsaw. Issue no. 2 (published on August 12, 1915) lacks two pages, the fifth and sixth, crucial for the *NKSB*'s history due to the information provided there on the reason for founding the newspaper. Fortunately, the full copy of issue no. 2 is kept in the Archive of PAN and PAU in Cracow. Moreover, in the collection of the Library of DTŚIAP FOS in Warsaw, issue no. 31 lacks the last page. The issues of the *NKSB* newspaper have not been yet included in the library's electronic catalogue and described there.

As it has been already mentioned, the working and private materials of Władysław Kotwicz are kept in the Archive of PAN and PAU in Cracow, forming a collection labeled K–III–19. There are only the first four issues of the *NKSB* kept there bearing

an archive number K–III–19, 123. Although the number of issues of the *NKSB* is small in comparison with that of the Library of DTSIAP FOS, however, the valuable copy of issue no. 2 of the *NKSB* is preserved in the Archive of Science of PAN and PAU filling up the shortage of the collection in Warsaw. To sum up, the *NKSB* collected by Prof. Kotwicz amount to the issues from three years (1915–1918) kept in the Library of DTSIAP FOS in Warsaw and the Archive of Science of PAN and PAU in Cracow.

2. RE-EXAMINATION OF THE PUBLICATION DATE OF THE *NKSB*, ISSUE NO. 1

I would like to re-examine the publication date of issue no. 1 of the *NKSB* based on the collection of the Library of the DTSIAP FOS in Warsaw. Professor Deleg noted that "...publishing period of the 'News of the Capital' was from September 1, 1915, to January 23, 1920, and 103 issues were published in total" (Deleg 2014, p. 121). Although he did not specify any calendar that he used to provide the dates, it was clear that he referred to the Julian calendar. It could not have been the Gregorian calendar, as some scholars believed, since the Julian calendar was abandoned in Russia only on January 26, 1918. It is also necessary to add that the publication dates in the *NKSB* were given according to two systems: the Julian calendar and the so-called 'yellow calculations'. Adhering to them, the date of issue no. 1 would be September 1, 1915, and the fifth day of the eighth month of the fifth year of the *Olan-a ergügdegsen* reign (the new Mongolian theocratic government proclaimed the year 1911 as the first year of the *Olan-a ergügdegsen*, Sanskrit: *Mahāsammata*; Eng. 'Elevated by the many', Atwood, p. 75).

Afterward, Mongolian scholar Norovsüren Lombo followed the dates given by Deleg in his *Mongolian setgüül züin tüükhen toim* ("Brief History of the Mongolian Press", vol. 1, 2000), and so did other contemporary Mongolian scholars. Nevertheless, according to my recent research, they might have been mistaken, and therefore, it may be useful to re-examine the publication date to clarify the issue.

For determining the date of the first publication of the *NKSB* newspaper it is necessary to establish, which calendars were used by Mongols in Khüree, the capital of the Mongolian Theocratic Government (Atwood, pp. 23–24) around 1915. One of the most widely employed Mongolian terms connected with the calendar has been *ḡiruqai* in Classical Mongolian (Modern Mong. *zurkhai*), meaning 'mathematics, calculations, astrology, horoscope' (Bareja-Starzyńska 2019, p. 198). The lunisolar calendar called in Tibetan *gser rtsis*, lit. 'yellow calculations', and in Classical Mongolian *ṣar-a ḡiruqai* (Modern Mong. *ṣar zurkhai* (referred to also as 'broad Chinese calculations and calendar') developed relatively late in the history of Mongolian calendrical systems (Bareja-Starzyńska 2019, p. 199).

Since the Mongol Empire, Mongols had been adhering to several calendrical calculations. For instance, *ike gegen ḡiruqai* was created in 1182. The type of calculations called *baragunṣ dailaysan čayan morin ḡil-ün ḡiruqai-yin yaḡayur* was based on the Arabic calculation system and got reformed by Yelü Chucai in 1220. *Matib ḡiruqai*, known also as *tümen on-u ḡiruqai* got reformed by Yelü Chucai, as well. *Čay-un medegen-ü ḡiruqai* introduced by Kublai Khan in 1280 lasted among Mongols for more than four hundred years. This calendar also spread in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and other regions. *Čay-un dūrim-ün ḡiruqai* was reformed by Minggatu during the Qing dynasty. Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor (1704–1788), a Mongolian (Oirat-Jungar) scholar from Amdo, created *tögös buyantu sin-e ḡiruqai* in 1747 based on the Tibetan calculations

(Mönkh-Ochir 2012, pp. 292–317). It did not mean that these systems were used and abandoned one after another, on the contrary, sometimes two different systems were used simultaneously. It is worth mentioning that in 1911 when the Mongolian theocratic government was established, a question of an official calendar gained symbolic value. On the second day of the twelfth month of the first year of the *Olan-a ergüdegsen* reign (acc. to the Gregorian calendar on January 19, 1912), the Cabinet submitted a declaration to the Eighth Jetsundampa Khutagt (1870–1924) that stated the following:

Now since our Mongolian new regime, built by ourselves, has been formed, soon we should issue and distribute our own calendar. To be ready for this [task], since in our Astrological Datsan in Khüree a calendar in Tibetan script is prepared and distributed and there is a text with all kinds of [astrological] calculations, from now on, each year, two astrological systems, the Yellow Calculations, and the Tibetan Calculations should be additionally used with precision for making calculations and the calendars should be designed [accordingly] and translated into Mongolian...

Original declaration in Mongolian reads as follows:

Odo man-u mongyol öber-tegen baiyulju tulyur törü toytaysan-u tula darui öber-ün-iyen çay ularil-un toyan-u biçig tarqayan dayaju yabuylbasu joqiqu . egün-dü beleken-e man-u küriyen-ü jiruqai dadzan-du töbed üsüg-ün çay ularil-un toyan-u biçig-i joqiyar tarqayaday böged jüil jüil-ün yosu-yi jirun yaryaju bolqu nom bui kemekü tula edeger-eçe jil büri sir-a jiruqai, töbed jiruqai qoyar yosu-yi qabsuryan naribçilan jiruylju çay ularil-un toyan-u biçig jokiyalyaju mongyol-iyar orçiyulun... (Mönkh-Ochir 2014, p. 45).

On the fifth day of the twelfth month (acc. to the Gregorian calendar on January 22, 1912), the Eighth Jetsundampa Khutagt gave official approval to the above-quoted demand (kept in the Mongolian National Archive, No. A–3; D–1; HN–3; pp. 46–48). This document proves the fact that it was decided back then to use in Mongolia both calendrical systems, the Yellow Calculations, and the Tibetan Calculations. Tibetan calendar known also as *tögös buyantu sin-e jiruqai* system, that is “New Virtuous Calculations” was none other than the calendar reformed in 1747 by Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor, and called in Tibetan the *dge ldan rtsis gсар* or *rtsis gzhung dge ldan rtsis gсар ma bu* (Bareja-Starzyńska 2019, p. 208). These calculations were introduced in one of Sum pa mkhan po’s works entitled *Rtsis kyi bstan kun gsal me long gi bu gzhung zla bsil rtsi sbyor dge ldan rtsis gсар* (Erdenebayar, p. 310).

To know exactly which calendar was used in issue no. 1 of the *NKSB*, it is necessary to compare the date provided there with the dates of the Julian calendar. It will become clear then, what was the difference in 1915 between the New Virtuous Calculations and the Yellow Calculations. Terbish Lkhasran, a well-known Mongolian scholar astrologer, who designed a table of New Year dates based on the New Virtuous Calculations according to the Gregorian calendar noted in his article that “The New Year in 1915, according to the New Virtuous Calculations happened on February 15, 1915, according to the Gregorian calendar.”¹⁴ Relying on information available nowadays on the Internet, the New Year date of 1915 based on the Yellow Calculations equals February 14, 1915, according to

¹⁴ Terbish L., “Mongol...,” <http://news1.mn/?p=31429>

the Gregorian calendar.¹⁵ To sum up, in 1915, there was one day of difference between the Yellow Calculations and the New Virtuous Calculations.

As for the publication date of the *NKSB* under discussion, this date was provided in the newspaper in the Classical Mongolian language, using two calendrical systems (however, none of them corresponded to the Gregorian calendar):

Olan-a ergügdegsen-ü tabuduyar on naiman sarain sinein tabun . oros-un nigen mingyan yisün jayun arban tabuduyar on sindiyavri sarain sinein nigen (NKSB, no. 1).

Olan-a ergügdegsen-ü tabudugar on naiman sarain sinein tabun means “the fifth day of the eighth month of the fifth year of the *Olan-a ergügdegsen* [reign].” If the editors of the *NKSB* used the Yellow Calculations, the date would mean September 13, 1915,¹⁶ according to the Gregorian calendar (see picture 1), and September 14, 1915, according to the New Virtuous Calculations. To establish which calculations were used by the newspaper editors, the date should be compared with the corresponding date of the Julian calendar.



Chinese to Gregorian

Date: (year, month, day)

Leap month:

note: use years from 1900 to 2100

Gregorian Date: **13/09/1915** (day/month/year)

Chinese Year Name: 乙卯 (Yi Mao)

Chinese Year Sign: 兔 (Rabbit : 🐰)

Cosmic Element: 木 (Wood)

Ming: 大溪水 (Rapids Water)

Day of Week: 星期一 (Monday)

Picture 1

Oros-un nigen mingyan yisün jayun arban tabuduyar on sindiyavri sarain sinein nigen means “September 1, 1915, according to the Russian calendar”. *Sindiyavri* stands for September. *Oros-un*, lit. “Russian”, refers here to the Julian calendar, which was used in Tsarist Russia until January 26, 1918, when it was given up in favor of the Gregorian calendar. So at the time when the *NKSB* was published, the Julian calendar was still in use. It differed from the Gregorian calendar by thirteen days¹⁷ in the 20th century. Therefore, September 1, 1915, according to the Julian calendar, corresponded to September 14, 1915, according to the Gregorian calendar (see picture 2).¹⁸

¹⁵ See <https://wannianrili.51240.com/>

¹⁶ Also can see <https://wannianrili.51240.com/>

¹⁷ See <https://www.timeanddate.com/calendar/julian-gregorian-switch.html>

¹⁸ See <http://5ko.free.fr/en/jul.php?y=1915>



Picture 2

To sum up the above considerations, the comparison with the Gregorian calendar proved that the publication date of the *NKSB* was provided according to New Virtuous Calculations and the Julian calendar (see the chart below). The editors of the *NKSB* made use of the New Virtuous Calculations, and therefore the publication date of issue no. 1 of the newspaper according to the Gregorian calendar was September 14, 1915, and not September 1, 1915, as some scholars believed.

| Calendars under discussion | Date | Gregorian calendar |
|-------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| The Yellow Calculations | the 5 th day of the 8 th month, 1915 | September 13, 1915 |
| The New virtuous Calculations | the 5 th day of the 8 th month, 1915 | September 14, 1915 |
| Julian calendar | September 1, 1915 | September 14, 1915 |

CONCLUSION

The Library of the Department of Turkic Studies and Inner Asian Peoples of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw is undoubtedly one of the important places for Mongolian Studies in Europe since various rare books and materials are kept in its collection. It includes seventy-eight issues of the Mongolian newspaper *Neyslel küriyen-ü sonin bičig*. Moreover, in the Archive of PAN and PAU in Cracow, the first four issues of the *NKSB* are kept.

Based on the original text of the *NKSB*, I was able to re-examine the publication date of issue no. 1. As a result, I was able to establish that the newspaper had been published for the first time on September 14, 1915, according to the Gregorian calendar, and not on September 1, 1915. It is also important to note that the *NKSB* is a valuable historical source, therefore its publication date is of scholarly importance. Moreover, a systematic analysis of the contents of the *NKSB* is also one of the desiderata that should be undertaken in the future.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

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