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The St. Petersburg Mongolian Type¹

Abstract

St. Petersburg boasted the earliest movable type printing of Mongol texts in Europe; the rediscovery of two early printed tracts by I.J. Schmidt provided further hints to clarify the genesis of the development of the font. The existing clues point to a cooperation between Schmidt (Mongolist), Schilling von Canstadt (Orientalist and printing pioneer), Friedrich Gass (designer) and Nikolaj Greč (printer).

Keywords: Mongolian type, I.J. Schmidt, Paul Ludwig Schilling von Canstadt, Nikolaj Greč, Friedrich Gass

When some years ago a monograph on Isaak Jakob Schmidt, the founder of Mongolian Studies² was published, the fact that the list of his publications showed two positions which were not available for inspection³ created both curiosity and dissatisfaction. Nothing matching the brief available description was found in the major collections of Mongolian books until an entry in the old catalogue of the German Oriental Society (Halle) provided a clue. Prof. Bawden studied and translated this tract which turned out to be one of the missing links.⁴ This booklet consisted of two sections, or texts, and obviously matched item 4 in the Schmidt bibliography. As the title indicated the little work was targeted at the Buryats and was apparently a translation or rewritten version of an originally

¹ This paper is a revised update of an investigation published as introduction to Bawden 2012.

² Cf. Walravens 2005.

³ See item 3 and item 4 from the list of Isaak Jakob Schmidt's publications: "3. *Kurze Darstellung der christlichen Glaubenslehre* (Kalmükisch) 26 S. sowie eine Übersetzung ins Mongolische 30 S. – 4. *Christliche Tractätlein zur Bekehrung der Burjäten, in zwey Abtheilungen*. St. Petersburg 1828. Mong. 28 S.; Kalm. 14 S."

⁴ Cf. Bawden 2009.

Kalmuck work which was unknown at the time. The little work was noteworthy for at least two reasons:

1. It seemed to be the first extant Christian tract in Mongolian of the Protestant mission, published under the auspices of the Russian Bible Society. And it allowed glimpses of the work of the translators who struggled with the necessity to express terms and concepts alien to tradition in the Mongolian language. As Prof. Bawden pointed out the terminology was by no means standardized yet and one noticed the endeavour to find and apply the most appropriate terms. The 1815 translation of the Gospel of Matthew into Kalmuck⁵ by Schmidt may have been of some assistance but the Gospel would not solve the issue of presenting in adequate and concise form the essence of Christianity.
2. In contrast to later Mongolian translations by Schmidt and his collaborators, sponsored by the Russian Bible Society (Russkoe Biblejskoe Obščestvo), this booklet has an imprint in Russian indicating that it had been printed by Nikolaj Greč's printing-shop. In a number of books the firm's name is given as N. Gretsich (the original German spelling of the name). The preface to the recent edition of the *Buryat Tract* assembles some biobibliographical information on Nikolaj Greč (1787–1867) without, however, being able to explain some basic issues.

The unanswered questions remained:

- What was Greč's interest in printing Mongolian texts? Was it just a job like any other printing order? Or did Greč have a special interest in Mongolian, or perhaps just Oriental scripts or type? We know from Karl Tauchnitz in Leipzig, for example, that he printed a beautiful edition of the Qur'an because he considered this a challenge. And in 1835 he printed two Tibetan texts as suggested by Baron Paul Ludwig Schilling von Canstadt.⁶
- What type was used for the printing? We have some information on the cutting of the Kalmuck type that was used for the printing of the 1815 book. But what about the Mongolian type? It is known from other sources that Baron Schilling von Canstadt⁷ had a larger Mongolian/Manchu type cut in 1817, and a smaller type in 1819. Or was it another type perhaps designed by Schmidt? Abel Rémusat wrote:

“Dès 1817, M. de Schilling avait fait graver à Pétersbourg, par M. Fr. Gass,⁸ un gros caractère mandchou-mongol; deux ans après (en 1819) il en a fait exécuter un nouveau plus petit et plus commode, à Leipsick,

⁵ Cf. Schmidt 1815.

⁶ Walravens 2004.

⁷ Cf. Jarocij 1963; Čuguevskij 2006; Gurevič 1911.

⁸ Friedrich (Fedor Ivanovič) Gass had been employed by the Mint and pursued his studies at the Academy of Art. He became Schilling's assistant and deputy in the lithographic printing shop. The Manchu and Mongol fonts were apparently to be used for the project of printing the five language dictionary of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, see below.

par Schelter. Les mêmes modèles ont servi pour l'un et pour l'autre. C'est du dernier que M. de Schilling a offert généreusement la fonte au Conseil de la Société, et l'on n'a pu qu'accepter avec empressement et reconnaissance cette occasion d'enrichir notre typographie d'une aussi précieuse acquisition. Le même caractère, dont M. Schilling avait aussi prêté les matrices à la Société Biblique, a servi en 1822 à l'impression de l'excellente traduction de l'évangile de Saint-Mathieu, faite en mandchou par M. Lipowzoff."⁹

After the *Buryat Tract* was published the search for further texts, especially no 3 of Schmidt's lost publications went on. It was known that Vilnius University Library had a large number of Mongolian texts from the Kowalewski collection, but nothing was found in the manuscript department, that matched the requirements. After protracted searches a booklet was found in the department of printed books but this turned out, on inspection, to be another copy of the already published *Buryat Tract*. After further searches another text was found of which Konstantin Jahontov had already given the title years ago:¹⁰ This item was not known from other sources and possibly matched the missing Schmidt no. 3. On closer inspection, Prof. Bawden noticed that its contents was very close to the previous text – so was it an earlier or later or parallel version? New questions arose.

While leafing through Walther Heissig's union catalogue of Mongolian books in German libraries¹¹ to look for a possible copy of Ferdinand Verbiest's Mongolian calendar,¹² the small Christian section was again investigated. It turned out that Libri mongolici 2, described as a Buryat printing carried the same title as the newly found Vilnius booklet.¹³ The "Buryat printing" with an accession date of 1887 turned out to be another copy of this tract. The accession date also provided a clue: Bernhard Jülg¹⁴ who had been professor of classical languages at Warsaw and later Innsbruck universities, had been a student of the Altaicist Wilhelm Schott¹⁵ and had published in 1866, and 1868, respectively, the Mongolian text of Siddhi-kür¹⁶ and Arĵi-borĵi¹⁷ in Innsbruck. In a letter to the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* he had given valuable information on

⁹ Cf. Walravens 1999, p. 93. N. Greč does not mention any professional contacts or the Mongol fonts in his appreciation of the baron: Greč 1853.

¹⁰ See Alexeev, Yakhontov 1992, p. 330, no. 55: "Christian precepts".

¹¹ Cf. Heissig 1961.

¹² Ephemeredes of 1680. Only two copies are currently known, one in Copenhagen and one in the University of Kansas, Lawrence. The beginning of this book was reproduced on table VII in Sharpe 1767. Cf. Golvers 2003, Ill. 24. A copy of this interesting document was found among Walther Heissig's papers.

¹³ Heissig 1961, p. 278: Burjatischer Typendruck. Titel (Titelblatt): *Neyite mongyol buriyad ulus irgen-ü ayu ĵam-ıyan tebčiged. [...] ĵirüken-ü gerel erıl qangyayçı čindamani orosıba.*

¹⁴ Heizmann 1930.

¹⁵ Walravens 2001.

¹⁶ Jülg 1866.

¹⁷ Jülg 1868.

Mongolian Studies in Europe.¹⁸ When he passed away in 1886, his Mongolian books were acquired by the Royal Library in Berlin – and there the accession date of 1887 comes in. Heissig's catalogue also described Libri mong. 1 which was said to be the Kalmuck original of the newly found tract,¹⁹ and Libri mong. 3²⁰ was identified by Prof. Bawden as the Kalmuck version of the first part of the other *Buryat Tract*. This serendipitous find provided interesting research material for further study:

1. Now it would finally be possible to investigate the relationship between these very early Christian Kalmuck and Mongolian texts (which were not directly influenced by Chinese texts, as in the case of the Jesuits).
2. It might be possible also to shed some light on a topic that had given some cause for speculation. What was the actual role of the two Mongolian nobles, Badma and Nomtu who had helped to turn the Kalmuck texts into (Eastern) Mongolian? There has been the suspicion that Schmidt did not have a hand in the Mongolian versions at all and that they were the exclusive work of the Mongol *zaisangs* (mainly Badma).
3. As to the format and printing style it seemed obvious that all four texts had come from the same printing shop, judging from the type and the border decoration, even if they were neither dated nor carried Greč's imprint.

Was the work by Schmidt and Badma and Nomtu mainly printed by the short-lived Russian Bible Society? Hardly the 1827 editions of the New Testament in Kalmuck and in Mongolian because by that time the RBS had been dissolved by imperial command and the Holy Synod had taken over, who was not in favour of these publications which were considered not in line with orthodox teachings. The 1815 Gospel of Mathew was published by Friedrich Drechsler but at least two copies are known to carry a stamp: Rossijskago Biblejsk. Obščestva [Russian Bible Society]. While the Bible Society seems to have had a printing press it was probably used for the major printing jobs while specialized work was farmed out.

In the absence of other evidence it may be helpful to look at other works printed by Greč, which comprise annual reports and other publications of the Bible Society, a Latin thesis, the New Testament in Greek, Schmidt's edition of the Mongolian chronicle *Erdeniyin tobči*, books in German, etc.

A few of the titles may actually have been Greč's publications, not only printing jobs. The catalogues which were consulted are not always clear about this. It becomes evident from this list that Greč printed a number of items for the Russian Bible Society. Later on this was followed by the famous letter of Józef Sękowski (1800–1858) who

¹⁸ Jülg 1882.

¹⁹ Heissig 1961, p. 278: Kalmückischer Typendruck. 14 fol. Titel (Titelblatt): *Neyide xalimaq ulusiyn ö žam yēn tebčid [...] ünen möri üžlülüčči žürükēni gerel erili xangyačči čindamani orošibai*. Christlicher Traktat mit einer Wiedergabe der Schöpfungsgeschichte und der Geschichte vom Sündenfall (1v–11v), mit den zehn Geboten (11v–13r), dem Glaubensbekenntnis (13r–13v) und dem Vaterunser (13v–14r).

²⁰ Heissig 1961, p. 278: Kalmückischer Typendruck. (Titel) (1r) *Dėdu ončo burxan yezüs kiristusiyn ibelėr nūlese bosod nūliyin nekelgen-ese yayaži yarxu üžlülüčči nom. niyile xalimaq-tu orosixu boltuyai*.

would become his collaborator in editing the *Ėnciklopedičeskij leksikon* A. Pljušara,²¹ and Isaak Jakob Schmidt's *Geschichte der Ost-Mongolen* (i.e. *Erdeni-yin tobči*). There is no evidence to assume a deeper interest in Oriental languages on Greč's side at that time – he may either have sympathized with the goals of the Bible Society, or had expert printers who were able to do these specialized jobs (printing Mongolian, Greek, German and French texts).²²

It may be useful for the researchers to summarize the state of knowledge regarding the Kalmuck and Mongolian types used for these early works:²³

Kalmuck:

large type 1813 – The first application was the printing of the Gospel of Mathew, 1815;
small type ca. 1822 – It was used, e.g. for a medical handbook, written in Russian by Osip Kirillovič Kameneckij (1754–1823) in 1802 and printed in Kalmuck in 1823,²⁴ and the New Testament of 1827.

That Kalmuck type, which the BFBS had agreed to pay for some years before, had never been manufactured. Now that Schmidt's Kalmuck St. Matthew was in being, with a Russian Bible Society prepared to promote it, there was a pressing need for a Kalmuck font. Between them, the two men designed one and got it manufactured. Typically, [Rev. John] Paterson claimed the credit for this himself, writing:

“Mr. Schmidt had put into my hands specimens of the Calmuck, and after studying the nature of the writing, I succeeded in reducing it to such order that it could be cut in type, and printed in the usual way – an attempt which had not hitherto been made. I was also directed to a type-cutter, a self-taught German, a very clever, ingenious person, and by him, under the direction of Mr Schmidt, I had a font cut, and the printing commenced in the course of the year.”²⁵

There is nothing inherently improbable in this. While in Sweden, Paterson had studied the whole craft of printing and book-making, and knew what was required. However, Moravian records attribute the successful creation of the Kalmuck type to Schmidt alone. Both men were rather acquisitive of fame.²⁶

²¹ Cf. *Istorija* 1990, p. 212.

²² He does not say anything in his *Reminiscences* about his printing Oriental texts but he points out the religious interests of Czar Alexander, and the fact that Prince Golitsyn, president of the Russian Bible Society (RBS), became Minister of Public Instruction in 1817; thus the RBS became an important political factor. Greč notes: “Кто не принадлежал к Обществу библейскому, тому не было хода ни по службе, ни при дворе” [the one who did not belong to the Bible Society, could not have access to official job, neither to court], (Greč 2002, p. 245).

²³ Cf. Bawden 1980, pp. 82–83.

²⁴ Copy in the Wellcome Library, London. The original is probably *Краткое наставление о лечении болезней простыми средствами* [short instruction about healing of illnesses by simple means].

²⁵ Considering the fact that Schilling had the Mongol font cut by Gass it is possible, not to say likely, that Gass was responsible for the Kalmuck type, too.

²⁶ Bawden 1985, pp. 53–54.

Mongol:

large type by May 1818²⁷ used for printing Schmidt's tracts;
 small type²⁸ 1823–1826? used for printing the New Testament of 1827.²⁹

“Both tracts and gospels were printed in St. Petersburg with types developed by, and belonging to, the RBS. The RBS was responsible for producing the gospels [...]. The Bible Society's Mongolian type was ready for use by mid-1818, and in May of that year some copies of the Lord's Prayer were printed off as a first test-piece. There was plenty of copy for the press. The two gospels and a tract composed in Mongolian by Schmidt were ready for printing, and Schmidt was at work on a second tract. The first one had been printed by the end of 1818, when Paterson wrote home that he was having several hundred copies bound up to send to Siberia. A finished copy was sent to the Directors in February 1819 as a sample, and by May of that year, Edward, still in Irkutsk, had received the first hundred copies.”³⁰

In the *Buryat Tract* Prof. Bawden quoted a communication from a letter of Dec. 10, 1818: “Sotman had read the Gospel of Matthews and the two tracts” which, from today's point of view, may refer either to the two tracts now under consideration, or the two parts of the *Buryat tract*. The newly found tract cannot have been printed before May 1818 in its Mongol version as the type was not yet available. If one wants to identify it with Schmidt no. 3, then Jülg's suggestion of “1817” could only apply to the Kalmuck version. But this is an open question.

One should remember that after Napoleon had ordered the publication of the first Chinese dictionary in Europe,³¹ there was rising interest in Russia to print a new dictionary prepared by members of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Peking. But the pentaglot (Chinese, Manchu, Mongolian, Russian and Latin) as submitted by Pavel Kamenskij (archimandrite Petr) posed a number of challenges for printing, and therefore a test was to be made. Schilling suggested to have the Chinese printed by lithography and the other four languages by typography. Four sample pages were printed in 1817 – by the printing-shop of Greč!³² A copy of the first page of the proof-sheet is held by the Library

²⁷ According to a letter by an anonymous Moravian to the Bible Society agent Paterson, the Mongol type was ready (May 1818). Bawden 2009, 16. – This font may have been the adjustment of the «dictionary type» by Gass, mentioned above.

²⁸ “Both of the NT versions of 1827 were printed by means of a newly made font that was smaller, yet both had been cast in St. Petersburg some time between 1823 and 1826. The bigger and older font, which had been used for the earlier prints had been cast in May 1818.” Cf. Rosén 2008, p. 23.

²⁹ Franz Babinger (in his biographical sketch of Schmidt, quoted after Walravens 2005, p. 22) said: “Die Übersetzung des Neuen Testaments wurde wirksam gefördert; zur Drucklegung waren indes eigene Lettern nötig, die unter Aufsicht und Anleitung Schmidts hergestellt wurden.”

³⁰ Cf. Bawden 1985, p. 223.

³¹ Brollo 1813.

³² Vgl. P.E. Skačkov: *Očerki istorii russkogo kitaevedenija*. Moskva: Nauka 1977, pp. 124–126. N. Greč does not mention any professional contacts or the Mongol fonts in Greč 1853.

of Mongolian and Tibetan Studies of the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the University of Warsaw³³ and is reproduced here.

This seems – so far – the only connection with the Greč printing shop. The printed samples were very satisfactory but the project did not materialize as Kamenskij was sent to China, and thus the language expert and supervisor was gone.³⁴

If we compare the Mongolian type with that of the (later) Schmidt tract then a very strong similarity is apparent but some letters look very Manchu indeed. Especially the *t* and *k* follow the Manchu style. For want of other evidence we might hypothesize that Schilling created the font in 1817 with the help of Gass and that then afterwards, with Schmidt's advice, the letters in question were adjusted to the Mongol style; this font would then have been used for printing the tracts in 1818.

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³³ Thanks go to Jerzy Tulisow for finding these samples available for the present study. So far it is not known how they found their way to the Library of Mongolian and Tibetan Studies of the University of Warsaw. There are no traces showing that the samples were used by Polish Mongolists: Józef Kowalewski, Władysław Kotwicz, Marian Lewicki or Stanisław Kałużński.

³⁴ See Čuguevskij 1971.

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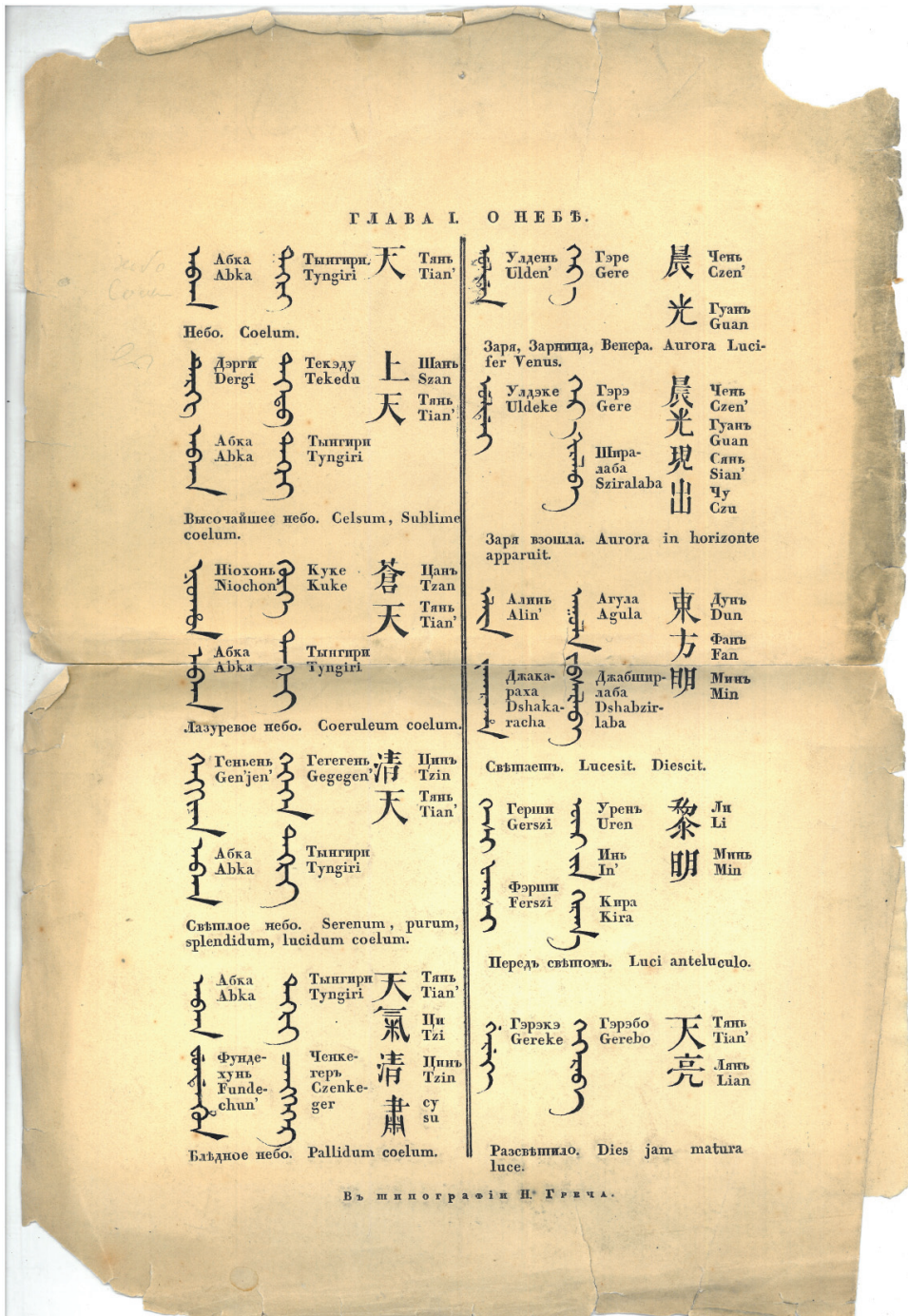


Image 1. First page of the sample of a five-language dictionary which was to be printed under the direction of P. Kamenskij. Kept in the Library of Mongolian and Tibetan Studies of the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the University of Warsaw

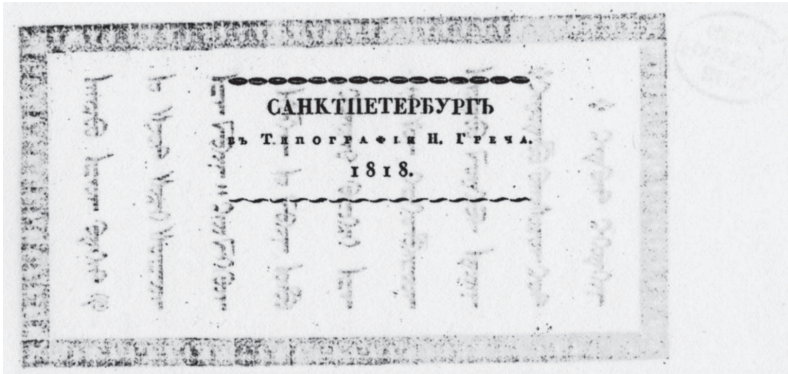


Image 2. Imprint of the Mongolian tract

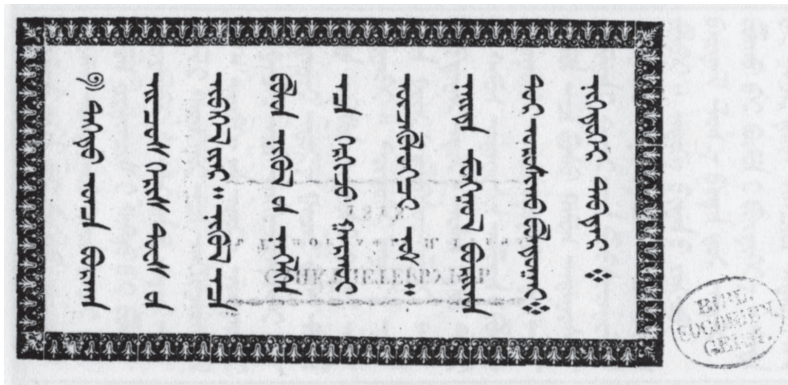


Image 3. Title page of the Mongolian tract found in Halle:

Degedü onča burqan İčus Keris Tos-un ibegel-iyer: nigül-eče nigül-ün nekelgen-eče kerkijü yarqui üjegülüğči nom: neyite mongyol buriyad-tur orusiqu bolturyai

“Teaching which shows how to renounce sin and the accusation of sin through the protection of the only god Jesus Christ. May this abide with all the Mongol Buryats.”



Image 4. Beginning of the Kalmuck tract LM 1 (Berlin) which is parallel to the Mongol tract found in Vilnius (as transcribed by Charles Bawden):

Neyide xalimaq ulusuyin ou zam yēn tebctd: onco ezen yesiis kirisusiyin songyoqdaqadiyin tō du orolcoxui sayin xubitan du: töüni nigüülesküyitu zarlıq kiged ünēn toqtöl kiged mayad itegel kiged zalbarili onoulān: ünēn möri üzüülüğči: zürükēni gerel erili xangyaqci zindamani orošibai:...



Image 5. Beginning of the edition of Schmidt's *Geser Khan* (based on the Peking blockprint)



Image 6. Portrait of Isaak Jakob Schmidt



Image 7. Portrait of Paul Ludwig Schilling
von Canstadt

http://schools.keldysh.ru/sch444/museum/1_17-19.htm



Image 8. Portrait of Nikolaj Greč
Левицкий Сергей Львович, runivers.ru