

ÖNDÖR GEGĒN JANABAJAR'S MAIN SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES, AND HIS ROLE IN THE MONGOLIAN CULTURAL TRADITION

He made great efforts to preserve Mongolian traditions even during the Manchu regime. In order to do so, he spread the thesis of Buddhism, writing commentaries and teaching his disciples, but also made many regulations concerning the general sacred rituals, the places of worship, ceremonial customs, the etiquette of the lamas' behavior, the life of the priests and believers, and also concerning the clothing of lamas and collective eating. He devoted great attention to keeping the traditional Mongol life-style and traditional clothing and promoted keeping these traditions alive. The style of the lamas' garments planned by him is a good example, as both the everyday garments of the lamas and the ones used at ceremonies were made on the basis of the characteristics of nomadic clothing before the Manchu period. Ceremonies, sacral rites, prayer books, rhythm of the ritual dance (cam) all play a very important role in Mongol tradition. A Buddhist symbolic system was also created, which is characteristic of the Mongol branch of Buddhism even nowadays. At the same time, plenty of Mongolian national symbols can be connected with him, for example the hairstyle of married women, the welcoming rite and the cattle-brands (Mong. *tamay-a*, Khalkha *tamga*).

Öndör gegĕn introduced the moral rules of the *Vinaya* and integrated them into the traditions of nomadic Mongols living close to nature. He revised the basic teachings so as to make them easier to obey for the Mongols and to contribute to the survival of this nation. According to his direction, all of the Mongol parents were obliged to give one of their sons to a monastery so that he should become a lama and study the teachings of the Buddha. It had become an everyday practice in the Manchu period among subjugated families and among *noyons* (nobles), as well. However, in addition to these rules Öndör gegĕn also gave directions for the believers which basically contradicted the rules of the *dge lugs pa* sect organized by Tsongkhapa (Tib. blo bzang grags pa, 1357-1419). For example, Öndör gegĕn suggested sending the young adult lamas back to their family to found their own families and make the number of the Mongols increase in this way. Later though, when these lamas became 40 years old, they were allowed to return to the monastery and live there as lamas until their death.

It is worth mentioning that after the change of regime at the beginning of the 1990s, when Buddhism started to bloom again, the number of lamas who had a family started to grow. This is partly an effect of the Bolshevik pogroms of the late 1930s, as a lot of lamas were forced to leave the monasteries, break their pledge and get married. That is why several lamas have a family nowadays. Society usually accept the marriage of lamas with a *genen* (Tib. *dge bsnyen*, *gelen* vow) but other marriages are condemned. The 14th Dalai Lama, who visited Mongolia in August 2006, had the same point of view on this question.

Öndör gegĕn constructed musical instruments that have been used even during the Mongol Buddhist rites. He compiled the general canon of the ceremonies that has

become the base of the Mongolian Buddhist ceremonial rules and he also composed many pieces of music.

A lot of rites are practiced even in our days in the monasteries which were shaped by him. Let me show now some ceremonies created by Janabajar:

Um lai tāya: This prayer is offered during the break between ceremonies when food and drink are consumed. The best parts of the foods and drinks are sacrificed to the Three Treasures.

Jinlaw cogjol: This is an appeasing prayer written by Janabajar at the time when inner discord and fight made the Mongol areas weaker.

Puncog gusum: This is a prayer to all the Khalkha saints. It contains the enumeration of Öndör Gegēn's earlier incarnations. Those prayers that are important from a historical point of view are recited during every Buddhist ceremony.

Geleg dod gi: This is a merit-accumulating ritual written by Janabajar himself. The prayer emphasizes the practice of virtue for others. The main virtue is mercifulness. If somebody accumulated merit then it should be used for the sake of others and that's the way how people can get closer to the enlightenment. During the funeral ceremony, this prayer is often asked for by the family members of the dead person.

Norow badam: This prayer is recited on the 14th day of every month, on the day when Janabajar departed. This is a glorifying prayer of a very important ceremony. This sutra is recited in the monasteries according to the form of the Mongol long song. This kind of interpretation was first used by Öndör gegēn himself in his monastery.

Daščirawīn san: This is a sacrificial ceremony offered to the masses; it was created by Janabajar according to the advice of the Panchen Lama. It is written in the rhythm of the limping walk of an old man carrying a leather bottle filled with *tarag* ('yoghurt') in his hand. The text of the ceremony is recited even nowadays in the monasteries in this-rhythm.

There is a difference between Tibetan and Mongolian ceremonial texts, as the revised Mongol texts remind us of the traditional rhythms that can be observed in Mongolian traditional nomadic life. The author usually did not change the text of the prayer; he varied only the rhythm, and the form of the recitation. There is a prayer that reminds us of the gurgle of quick mountain rivers in its Tibetan version. Öndör gegēn changed this prayer and made its rhythm similar to the walk of a camel.

He tried to tighten the links between Buddhism and the Mongolian traditions using the means of Buddhist iconography. In one of his most important portrayals, Öndör gegēn appears as the head of a nomadic family, who is dividing an *ūji* with his knife (1. Figure) The Buddhist representation of this important tradition on the occasion of a significant Mongolian family celebration does not only show Öndör gegēn's high rank, but it emphasizes his being a Mongol rather than being a Buddhist lama. Preserving Mongolian traditions was more important than keeping Buddhist rules.

Janabajar played an important role in the setting up of monasteries and temples and in particular in the establishment of the future *Ix xūrē* or *Urga*. In accordance with the Tibetan tradition, *Ix xūrē* was set up with seven *aimags*: *Amdo narīn aimag*, *Jasīn aimag*, *Sanggai aimag*, *Zōgoi aimag*, *Xūxen noyonii aimag*, *Darxan emčīn aimag*, and *Örlūdīn aimag*.

In 1651, Өндөр gegэн returned from Tibet and later, in 1654, Ix xürē moved to the front side of the Xentī Mountain in the East Khalkha territory and it was built from 1654 till 1686. So, the Ix xürē had been extended and it had a monastery with over 2 000 monks. The Khalkha khans invited Өндөр gegэн to Erdene Jū, and he made the monastery a center of permanent religious ceremonies, and also took part in the establishment of other temples and monasteries of Mongolia. In 1686-1697, during the years of Oirad-Khalkha battles Erdene jū and Ix xürē suffered serious damage, but Janabajar had them repaired with offering and catering places for lamas.

As a consequence of these kind of rules and proposals, the Mongolian Buddhist Church became an indispensable and integrated part of the nomadic Mongolian society. The Church obtained such an extensive acceptance which cannot be caused only by the fact that Abatai xan and his followers made Buddhism a state religion.

While Өндөр Gegэн was working and living in the Töwхөн monastery, he created a new script, the *soyombo* (tib. *rang byung snang ba*) in 1686. He made up that alphabet so that the holy languages of Buddhism, the Sanskrit, Tibetan and Mongolian could be equally recorded. However, the first sign of the alphabet the *soyombo* had a route of its own. The first letter has become a component of the Mongolian State seal, and today it is also the State Emblem. When independent Mongolia was declared, the *soyombo* became the symbol of the Mongol State and independence.

COMPONENTS OF THE *SOYOMBO*

The first three are: the symbols of fire, the Sun and the Moon. The triangles turned down are symbolizing the protector of the Buddhist religion, called *choyjing* (Mong. *čoyijuny*, Khalkha *čoijin*). A yin-yang symbol can be seen in the middle. The horizontal parallels' meaning is *sum* (Mong. *sumun*, "arrow"); the vertical parallels' meaning is *hos shad* (Mong. *qoos šad*, Khalkha *xos šad*, Tib. *shad*, "conjugate line").

The *soyombo* is the symbol of peace and freedom in the macro- as well as the micro cosmic space of the Mongols, and the Mongolian State in it. It was used as an Emblem of the Theocratic Mongolian State in 1911, the Mongolian People's State in 1921, the Mongolian People's Republic State in 1924, and was recognized as the State Emblem by the Constitution of 1940, 1960 and 1992.

CONCLUSION

We have to emphasize that Өндөр gegэн's present reputation cannot be due only to the atmosphere of the Buddhist renaissance. His activity as a religious organizer as well as an artist and his role in Mongolian history give us several examples proving that Өндөр gegэн, besides spreading Buddhism, made clear steps to preserve Mongolian tradition and consequently Mongolian identity, cultural and social integrity.

He recognized that Mongolian independence could only survive if Mongolian people preserved their cultural identity in spite of the Chinese influence. The fact that the Mongolian language has been raised to the level of a literary language, the forming of the independent Mongolian Buddhist terminology, the forming of the course of the ceremonies played an important role in it. The building up of the Mongolian monastery

system brought about a de facto administrative machinery existing side by side with the Manchurian. It joined the Khalkha territories and provided base for the proclamation of the independent Khalkha-Mongol State.

Today, Genghis is regarded as the symbol of the Mongolian State, but at the same time, Öndör gegēn's figure has similar importance among the Mongolian Buddhists.

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