

## THE EIGHTH BOGD GEGĒN

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On the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month in 1868, during the seventh year of Emperor Tongzhi's (1862-1874, Mong. Būrentü ʒasaγči) rule, the seventh *Bogd Gegĕn* died and as a result the Mongol Buddhist church lost its leader again. The Manchu emperor acted according to the tradition set by his predecessors and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> month in 1869, he gave out his order to the Dalai and the Panchen Lama that they were only allowed to search in Tibet for the new incarnation and at the same time he allocated 50.000 *lan* (1 *lan* = 37.3 gr silver) to cover the cost of the search.

In 1874, with Da Lam Luwsan-Iš as the leader, a council of eight left the Mongol capital with the aim of finding and escorting to Mongolia the 8<sup>th</sup> incarnation of the head of the Mongolian Buddhist church. After the Mongolian legation arrived in Lhasa they carried out the choosing procedure of the new incarnation with the help of the Dalai and Panchen Lama. The ceremony itself was similar in many ways to several elements of the Dalai Lama's choosing ceremony, where luck played a more significant role than actual wise decision-making, which was developed during the Manchu era. They chose the new incarnation in two steps. First, they wrote down the names of the nine young boys and put them in a gold bowl. They pulled out the names one by one with a smaller silver bowl, only the three last names were left in the gold bowl. They used a similar method in the later stage of the search as well, but now they used another gold bowl to choose from the last candidates and finally the last name that remained was the name of the 4-year-old who became the 8<sup>th</sup> *Bogd Gegĕn*. The eighth incarnation reincarnated into a Tibetan noble family on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the ninth month of 1870. His father was one of the Dalai Lama's chamberlains.

Following his selection, he got his monastic name from the Dalai Lama, Agwānluwsančoiḡindanjanwānčigbalsambū (Tib. ngag dban blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma bstan 'dzin dbang phyug dpal bzang po). Then, he left Lhasa and started his journey to the Mongolian capital, where he arrived on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1875. During his inauguration ceremony he received the seal that was one of the symbols of the Öndor Gegĕn's power and into which the following script was engraved: "Appointed by order, the reviver of religion, the felicitor of animals" (Mong. „*ǰarliy-iyar örgömḡilegsen šasin-i mandayulayči, amitan-i ḡurayulayči jebjundamba blam-un tamay-a, Khalkha „Jarligār örgömḡilsön šašnḡ mandūlagč, amitnḡ jargūlagč jawjandamba lamḡn tamga*”).

After the inauguration, the learning process begun, during which he had to learn the historical traditions, common law, and every element of the Buddhist ceremonial, which were the legacy of his seven predecessors, in order to be able to occupy his office. He did not have secular power, since the Manchu emperor intended to strip the head lama of all of his prerogatives. Due to his young age, the decisions were made by his incumbents the *Da Lam Luwsan-Iš*, the *Xamba Nomun Xan Baldančoiḡimpil* and the *Erdene Šanjodwa Cerendoḡ* who decided about practically everything. Historiography,

on the other hand, already arrogates every significant document and provision that was produced during this era to the head lama.

## THE HEAD OF THE MONGOLIAN BUDDHIST CHURCH

During the last quarter of the century, the *Bogd Gegēn* did not participate in the country's political and administrative governance as the Manchu empire, the imperial court might have taken it as a declaration of war, or the very least as an attempt to break away from the empire, but by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it had the necessary power to retaliate.

The head of the Mongolian Buddhist church turned 18 in 1888. First he traveled to Erdene jū, then later to the Amarbayasgalant monastery to carry out ceremonies over the remains of the previous incarnations. On his journey home, the *Bogd Gegēn* met Cendin Dondogdulam, whom he shortly after married.

As earlier, he fulfilled his commitments stemming from his role in the Buddhist church after his marriage as well. The head of the Mongol Buddhist church, the “protector of the Law” strived to elevate his religion not only by spreading Buddhism's spiritual guidance or performing ceremonies, but also by large scale construction work. In 1891, the construction of the new monastery palace – which introduced several innovations and deviated from the others previously built in the capital to a certain degree – in the Mongol capital, in Ix xūrē started on the Tūl River's bank.

Similarly to the *Bogd*'s predecessors, he promoted the translation of texts in order to cultivate Mongolian literature. They translated several Tibetan, Chinese and Manchu books into Mongolian and only a portion of these were specifically Buddhism oriented; one can find historical and literary works among them as well. In these translation schools, not only Buddhist lamas worked, but as part of secular education they hired many students here as well. The *Bogd Gegēn* himself showed a strong interest in literature and besides the Buddhist works he also read historical, literary and medical books. Just like his predecessors, he himself contributed to the enlargement of the Mongolian literary body of work. He regularly put to paper his religious and historical guidance and remonstrance.

Besides supporting the ecclesiastical education and the translation schools, he played close attention to the cultivation of secular education as well. The first secular school was established back in 1898 on state funds, where the students learned the Manchu language and writing. The two Western *aimags*' as well as Ix šaw's forty-forty youngsters could study Chinese and Manchu at the school established there. By that time, the Mongol nobility was also required to contribute to the coverage of these institutions' running expenses. The *Bogd Gegēn* sent one tümen (10 000), while *Erdene Šanjodwa* Badamdorj 8000 *lan* of silver to cover the cost of the construction and the upkeep. In 1909, the *Bogd* donated 100 000 *lan* of silver from his personal treasury for the construction of the secular school in the capital and later he promoted the continuation of the construction with a similar sum as well.

In 1903, a British military expedition marched into Tibet with the aim of spreading Britain's influence in the region with the help of the British Empire's Indian heartland.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama left the capital in June 26<sup>th</sup> 1904 at 2 a.m. before the expeditionary army arrived and fled to Mongolia. The *Bogd Gegēn* welcomed him with great respect and in a manner befitting the station of the high ranking ecclesiastical dignity. He had a new resting place made out of tents built by the delta of the Tolgoit River for the Dalai. The Dalai Lama stayed in Mongolia for almost a year. During that time, his yurts that served as living quarters and places of prayer were provided for him by the Daščoimbil and Gungādārjālin monasteries that belonged to Urga (Ix xūrē), while he was provided for by the *Bogd's donirs* (Tib. *don gyner*).

## THE LEADER OF THE MONGOLIAN NATION

In 1911, the fall of the Qing Empire brought with it a radical change in Mongolia's history as well. During the year, the anti-Manchu sentiment had already considerably strengthened in the country. In July, the Bogd Gegeen and the Mongol nobility gathered in one of the valleys of the Bogd ūl for a council to discuss their ideas concerning the disengagement. In accord with the plans born there, the delegation sent to Russia in hopes of finding support against China started negotiations already in the name of the Mongolian head lama about initiating a possible political cooperation.

The Chinese revolution that broke out in October of the same year overthrew the Qing dynasty and the Mongols used this opportunity to their advantage and declared their independence. In the name of the *Bogd Gegēn*, at the end of November they commanded the Manchu governor residing at the Ix xūrē to resign from his position and the Chinese soldiers as well as the Manchu military *amban* in Uliastai to leave the country.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of December in 1911, the eighth *Bogd Gegēn*, the head of the Mongol Buddhist church, was enthroned as the khan of Mongolia according to the ceremonial tradition that started back during the Manchu period. The *jebcundamba xutagt's* new official title from then on became "the religious and secular law unifier radiant hallow Khan" (Khalkha *šašin törīg xoslon barigč naran gerelt bogd xān*). The head lama assumed power over the ruling insignia and with his enthronement a new period begun. The name of Mongolia's capital was also changed to Nīslel xūrē ("capital city monastery"). The year was given name of Olnō örgögdsön ("enthroned by the masses") to the regal era. After his enthronement as khan the spiritual leader represented the religious and the secular powers that were mentioned as the two laws (Mong. *qoyar yosun*) in Mongolian historical tradition. After his enthronement, he established his five member cabinet besides his office, where the heads of the five ministries participated. The interior minister and *de facto* prime minister was Da lam Cerenčimed; the minister of foreign affairs, Čin wan Xanddorj; the defense minister, *Dalai Wan* Gombosüren; the head of the Ministry of Finances, Dambīn Čagdarjaw and the Ministry of Justice's, *Erdene Wan* Namsrai.

During the later years, more and more and increasingly important positions were filled by high ranking ecclesiastical dignities. The Ministry of Religious Affairs that was founded in 1914 was taken over by *Da Lam* Dašjaw; later *Šanjodwa* Badamdorj followed him in his office. Luwsanbalдан lama became the head of the Ministry of

Finance in 1915. The prime minister assigned the position of deputy minister of foreign affairs to *Da Lam* Rawdan, the head of the Ministry of Justice to *Da Lam* Cerendondow, and for the Ministry of Internal Affairs to *Da Lam* Puncagdorj.

In 1914, the theocratic government created the bicameral parliament, which was one of their most important provisions regarding Mongolian state life and political history. The *Bogd Gegēn* in his order for the establishment of parliament claimed to “follow the example of the world’s rich and strong countries” when it accepted the Ulsin Dōd and Dēd Xural’s eight sectioned regulation. With that the *Bogd Gegēn* and his government laid down the foundations of the modern Mongolian statehood.

Unfortunately, preserving the country’s independence turned out to be unachievable. The Chinese-Mongol-Russian treaty signed in Kyaxta in May of 1915 only offered autonomy for the Mongols; however, it did not acknowledge their attempts at breaking away from China. In 1919, the spiritual leader was forced to start new negotiations with China about the political status of the country. Since by that time he irrevocably lost his Northern supporter and in the end not only made the decision to give up Mongolia’s autonomy, but in January of 1920 during a ceremony that was highly humiliating for the Mongols he was forced to concede China’s authority over the country.

Barely a year later, Baron Ungern’s troops invading the country were defeated and chased away the Chinese troops stationed in Ix xūrē and restored the *Bogd Gegēn*’s authority in name; however, it was only a semblance of a solution. By that time, young Mongolian rebels were already in talks with the Bolsheviks about a possible alliance to drive out the Chinese troops and Ungern. In 1921, they asked for help from the Russian Bolsheviks with the assent of the *Bogd Gegēn*, who soon entered the country and with the help of their Mongolian allies they captured the Russian baron. On July 11<sup>th</sup> 1921, they marched into the capital and declared the takeover of power by the people. They appointed the *Bogd Gegēn* to the position of khan, but with limited powers. At the time, there was no mention of those anti-clerical acts that later defined the new political power’s almost seventy year rule.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1921, they forced the *Bogd Gegēn* to sign the so called the “Oath Treaty” (*Khalkha Tangarīn gerē*), but he was allowed to retain his ecclesiastical title and his full religious authority. He remaining the ruler of the monarchy, but his say in state affairs was severely limited.

The following years brought the retreat of the Buddhist church’s power. During the life of the *Bogd Gegēn*, the new political power was unable to significantly restrict the influence of the Buddhist church. He was the last stronghold of the old social order and was able to prevent the Bolsheviks from taking full control over the Mongols while he was alive. He died on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 1924 and shortly after the Mongolian People’s Republic was proclaimed.

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