

Batsaihan Oohnoin, *Mongolyn süülčiin ezen haan VIII Bogd Žavzandamba. Am'dral ba domog* (The Last Emperor of Mongolia Bogdo Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu. The Life and Legend)

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- 1 O. Batsaihan here gives a second edition of his rather provocative account of the role the Eighth Žavzandamba Hutugtu (1869/1870-1924) played in the origin, process and outcome of Mongolia's national revolution of 1911. A first version of the book was published in 2008 under the title *Mongolyn süülčiin ezen haan VIII Bogd Žavzandamba. 1911 ony ündesnii huv'sgal : sudalgaany büteel* (Ulaanbaatar, Admon, ISBN 978-99929-0-464-0), and translated into English by Mounkhou Ravjaa in 2009 (O. Batsaikhan, *Bogdo Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu, The Last King of Mongolia*, Ulaanbaatar, Admon, ISBN 978-99929-0-768-1).
- 2 Compared to the first edition, the 2011 edition has 12 additional chapters and about 300 more pages. Chapters 1 to 8, 11 and 13 are updated versions of the preceding editions,

while chapters 9 and 10, and 14 to 22 are new additions. The book must be praised for its extraordinary iconography, with 179 photos (twice the number of photos of the previous edition) relating to the life and activities of the Bogd Haan¹ and the main actors of his reign (some pictures are reproduced twice, such as p. ii/282, p. 30/167, pp. 32-33/164-165). Some excellent portraits were certainly taken at a photographic studio in Hüree (Ih Hüree, or Da Hüree, known in the West as Urga, Russian transcription of *örgöö*, 'palace, residence' [of the Žavzandamba]). The only thing that is lacking is a table of illustrations with proper copyrights of the pictures, as well as a list of quoted documents. In fact, a presentation of the sources being used could explain why those produced in Bogd Haan's circle are missing, especially as far as his dealings with the Dalai Lama at the beginning of the century are concerned. During Mongolia's recent socialist past, the Eighth Žavzandamba Hutugtu was vehemently decried and even depicted as an arch-enemy of Mongolia's independence. However, in a very convincing and comprehensive 707 page-long demonstration, Batsaihan shows that he was a main actor of the independence movement. Some may think that though he claims to be "as objective as possible," Batsaihan perhaps goes too far in praising this "extraordinary leader and a father of Mongolia's national revolution" (p. iv); however, his account is based on a great variety of Mongolian, Japanese, Russian, and American archival sources used for the first time in analyzing this period of modern Mongolian history: a number of decrees, "The Secret History of Bogd Žavzandamba's Enthronement" (on this Mongolian manuscript preserved in the National Central Library, see p. 256), newspaper articles, memoirs, diaries, reports, and secret telegrams by those who took part in or witnessed those events, such as Magsar(žav) the Witty (Mongolian language teacher and mentor of the Bogd Haan), Russian and Japanese diplomats and officers (Border commissar Hitrovo, Russian Consul Šišmarev, Plenipotentiary Representative of the Russian Empire Korostovec). Batsaihan translated a number of these sources in the book. Finally, he led interviews with old renowned scholars such as O. Pürev. Thus Batsaihan does not only show the political importance of the Eighth Žavzandamba, he also sheds light on his relations with Chinese, Russian and Mongolian parties and officials (see chapters 3 and 4). What is more, his study goes beyond the Žavzandamba's death in 1924, up to 1929, and addresses two major issues about the new Mongolian state: the first about the treasure of the Bogd Han after his death, and the second about the decision of the government not to recognize a new reincarnation.

- 3 The first two chapters, mostly based on Russian archives describe Mongolia's situation before 1911, focusing on the relations between the Žavzandamba Hutugtu and the exiled Thirteenth Dalai lama, who had taken refuge in the Mongol capital in 1904-1906. It is well known that the Thirteenth Dalai lama did not get on well with the Žavzandamba Hutugtu, who was jealous of the Tibetan pontiff's popularity, and the tensions between the two may have forced the Dalai Lama to leave the city earlier than planned. Batsaihan pointed out that this animosity was caused by the Bogd Haan's fear of having his authority over nobles and lamas contested by the Dalai Lama, who was trying to have Mongols on his side (at that time, Tibet was caught between Chinese and British interests and so eventually looked for Russian support). He shows that the Mongolian independence movement had begun before the Dalai Lama's arrival in Mongolia, in response to the mutual pressure on Outer Mongolia from both China and Russia. Thus, the independence movement was not encouraged by external forces such as Russian agents plotting a conspiracy, even if Russia kept a close eye on the

development of such a movement : the origin of the 1911 movement of national independence was first and foremost a reaction against the “New Policy/ Administration” of the Qing government, that entailed attempts of colonization and assimilation of Mongolia by the settlement of Chinese farmers, troops and offices (although he does not quote Thomas E. Ewing’s work, Batsaihan arrives at the same conclusions as him) (Ewing 1978, 1980a, 1980b). Batsaihan thus highlights the role of the Žavzandamba in the organization of the movement to oppose the New Policy, starting in 1905 with secret meetings and the dispatch of a first delegation to Russia to seek assistance. The tensions between the Manchu authorities on one side and the Žavzandamba and the Mongol princes on the other about the implementation of the new Manchu policy slowly degenerated.

- 4 *De facto*, just before the fall of the Qing the Bogd Haan was already growing more and more independent. Batsaihan highlights his authority and political courage at that time. Although the Halh had stayed loyal to the Qing,² the Žavzandamba always found pretexts not to visit the emperor in Beijing : before 1911, he was already “semi-independent in his relations with the Chinese [read : the Qing]” (p. 25). Batsaihan gives a detailed description of the events leading to the declaration of independence of 1911. Thus we learn about the dissension and contradictions inside the delegation sent to Russia, and between the delegation’s members and other Mongolian officials in Khüree (pp. 48-50). He confirms the Russians tried to use this event to reinforce their presence in Mongolia and did not want to promote an independent Mongolia. Facing the determination of the Mongols who did not want any negotiation about their independence from the Chinese, the Russian consulate gave protection to the Chinese *amban* in Khüree.
- 5 A central question of the book, which is only discussed in chapter 7 pp. 237-238, is : how could a lama of Tibetan origin win over all Halh Mongols under his banner and become emperor of Mongolia ? Although his identity remains full of inexplicable contradictions, mysterious ambivalence and disturbing ambiguity (see chapter 7), one thing is sure : the Žavzandamba was the supreme leader of the Halh, and was worshiped and respected by the princes and the whole population of Halh, as well as Buryats (who went on pilgrimages to worship him) (pp. 267-268), Inner Mongol princes and even a few Chinese, who thought to rally his government. The trust people had in the Bogd Haan was not shaken in spite of his marriage, dissolute life and drinking, and he was the one with whom noble men consulted about the future of Mongolia.³ In addition, he was considered as belonging to the Chinggisid family since he was viewed as the reincarnation of Zanabazar, himself a descendant of Chinggis Khan. He was Mongolized, erudite (unlike his predecessors, he had passed the *gavj* (Tib. *dka’bcu*) degree, the second degree of doctrinal studies), and charismatic, while none of the four ruling princes of the Halh *aimag*-s (even the Tüšee Han, who was the eldest and direct heir of Chinggis Khan) were approved unanimously (p. 252). Buddhism therefore acted as a unifying factor for the Halh.
- 6 Two fascinating chapters, chapters 5 and 6, describe from witnesses’ accounts the enthronement ceremony of the Bogd Haan and his queen and the new symbols of the state. In reinstating independence and enthroning the Bogd Gegeen as the theocratic ruler of a feeble state, he and the Halh nobles had to consider all concepts of Mongolian political authority. But it here appears that the Buddhist references dominate (the Soyombo on the flag, the Seven Jewels of the Cakravartin ruler of ancient India

multiplied on many supports such as the official dress, seals, and crowns, and the reign title “Elevated by Many” — a Buddhist reference to an ancient Indian king, Mahāsamādhi, of whom Mongol emperors were said to descend according to Mongolian Buddhist chronicles). Why the Bogd, who was acknowledged as belonging to Chinggis Khan’s lineage, took the title of Haan, and aimed at reunifying the two Mongolias, did not use any reference to Chinggis Khan comes as a surprise. The only ritual linked to the Chinggisids is the New Year ritual of lighting the hearth of the Western Palace, the ancestors’ shrine dedicated to Abadai Khan (Avtai Han), the late 16th century Buddhist king of the Halh.

- 7 Why did the Žavzandamba infringe his monastic vows to take a wife ? It had become common for Mongol monks to take a wife at that time, but we also know that he enforced the law forbidding women to enter Gandan Monastery. Batsaihan gives us here another clue : since he was enthroned as a Cakravartin ruler, he definitely needed a queen, one of the “Seven Jewels”— he had the six others : wheel, jewel, general, minister, horse, and even the elephant (p. 221). Another justification of his marriage could be that the depiction of power in ancient Mongolia was dual, the queen being on an equal footing with the king (Charleux 2010). After Dondogdulam passed away a new queen was even chosen for him. He nevertheless apparently felt uncomfortable with this situation and sought for legitimation of his marriage (see page 279, when he discovered in a book in his library that a “certain Dalai lama in Lhasa had been married” — a reference to the Sixth Dalai Lama).
- 8 Chapter 7 also raises the issue of the monumental statue of Migžed Žanraisig, “Eye-healing Avalokiteśvara,” erected as a landmark of Mongolian independence. For Batsaihan, the common assertion that the statue was built to cure the Bogd’s eyes was certainly a pretext, but a German scholar, Olaf Czaja, has shown that this rare iconography also supports this hypothesis (Czaja 2013).
- 9 After having listed the accusations (including assassination, pedophilia and debauchery) widespread in socialist propaganda and perpetuated in modern democratic Mongolia that reflect the impact of ideology on historical research, Batsaihan assesses the personality and acts of the Bogd Haan, using as main sources “The Secret History of Bogd Žavzandamba’s Enthronement” and witnesses’ accounts (chapter 7). Batsaihan “rehabilitates” the Žavzandamba by listing several examples of his high reputation and morality. Although he acknowledges that some of the accusations against him were certainly true, such as his passion for alcohol and bisexual affairs, he also showed that witnesses have lied or exaggerated them, in particular *donir* (clerk of a monastery) Žambal, “a sinful person,” “a liar” (p. 270). Since Žambal’s diary was published in Mongolian and translated into English (Jambal [1959] 1997), this source has been widely used by scholars (perhaps the author should also be cautious when using Ossendovsky’s account, see Maistre 2010, p. 392).
- 10 A useful complement to the Žavzandamba’s political aims is given by Tsultem Uranchimeg (2009) who analyzes in great detail the paintings he commissioned to painter Šarav that include many sexual scenes, and proposes a reading of his contradictory life from the perspective of his patronage and involvement in art production.
- 11 The central part of the book is the development of Russo-Chinese-Mongolian relations with detailed accounts of the meetings and negotiations about Mongolia’s real status — autonomy or independence — and its consequences concerning foreign relations,

diplomatic representations, military presence, economic relations, and communications. The arm-wrestling between Mongolia, that sought for official recognition as well as military assistance and financial loans ; Russia, that had strong strategic and economic interests in Mongolia it viewed as a buffer-state between the great empires and wanted to avoid an open conflict with China while at the same time opposing Chinese economic and military penetration ; Nationalist China, that desperately attempted to keep the Qing colony within its fold ; and Japan, is described step by step.

- 12 The personality and policy of *amban* Sandoo, in charge of implementing the New Administration, is analyzed in chapter 3, based on an interview he gave to a Japanese scholar, preserved in the Archives of Japan (see picture p. 71). Because of the troubled political situation in China, his reports on the evolving situation in Mongolia remained without response, and his attempts to arrest the members of the delegation to Russia, manipulating some influential Mongols and threatening the Žavzandamba, were ineffective.
- 13 Extremely detailed accounts from various sources are given about the missions sent by Mongolia to Saint-Petersburg, their composition, their reception, and the ambivalent nature of Russian's response, starting with a secret mission to seek assistance from the Tsar (August 1911, chapter 2). Batsaihan evidenced that before the departure of the mission, on the occasion of a 1911 secret meeting, a provisional government was in effect established in Mongolia, and was formalized after the return of the delegation to Russia on 30 November 1911. Named General Provisional Administrative Office for the Affairs of Halh Hüreer, headed by Tüšee Güng Čagdaržav (1880-1922), it gathered nobles and high-ranking lamas. Batsaihan assumes that the Žavzandamba fully controlled and directed it, though his role is not clear according to sources. On 1st December 1911, the provisional government proclaimed a Declaration of independence, addressed to "the Mongols, Russians, Tibetans, Chinese and all people" (translated p. 49). Sandoo was expelled from Hüreer, while the Manchu troops who had not shifted to the side of the Žavzandamba were disarmed.
- 14 In chapter 4, based on the biographies (life, political activities) of six (plus two) lay and cleric personalities, Batsaihan shows that these men won social and economic power by serving the Bogd Haan. Indeed he emphasizes their political role in favor of independence, overlooking the fact that the new regime did not offer a better life for Mongolian commoners.⁴ These biographies reveal the tensions and dissensions between them, and the author enumerates the first measures of the new government concerning the organization of its finances, army, ministries, communication, transportation, calendar, production of a map, adoption of the new symbols of the state, and policy towards Chinese merchants and usurers. So, these men accumulated experience in internal politics and diplomatic affairs, as it was shown during the negotiation of treaties in the 1910s (pp. 75-76). Chapter 8 is dedicated to the first treaty signed on 21st October 1912 in Hüreer between Mongolia and Russia, which entailed the first official recognition of the Hüreer government through an agreement conforming to the standards of international law, and gave favorable trade conditions and special privileges to Russian traders in Mongolia. Batsaihan shows the pivotal role of Ya. Korostovec appointed as Russia's plenipotentiary representative to hold the negotiations. He stresses the ambivalent position of Russia, which used in the treaty the words "Mongolia" (in Russian) and "self-governing/self-rule," "Mongolian state/

nation” (in Mongolian) on the one hand, and on the other hand clearly limited her support to the Hutugtu of Hüree and the Halh princes, carefully avoiding the question of Inner Mongolia and Barga because of a secret agreement they had passed with Japan on the division of the spheres of their influence in the Far East.

- 15 Chapter 9 lists about 200 laws, rules and administrative acts adopted during this period, on topics as diverse as land-cultivation, military flags of the *aimag*, training of troops, Russian veterinarians, fines and sentences for stealing animals, payment of previous debts, and excessive drinking and gambling.
- 16 The Bogd Haan government engaged a dialogue of the deaf with the young Republic of China, which rejected “Outer Mongolia”’s independence from China. Chapter 10 describes the mission sent by Hüree to Saint-Petersburg in 1912-1913, which confirmed that the Tsarist government recognized an “autonomous” but not “independent” (Northern) Mongolia. A Russo-Chinese Declaration signed on 23 October 1913 (“the result of a secret plot on Mongolia by her two great neighbors” according to the author) made real the threat to Mongolia’s national sovereignty. Meanwhile several dozen of Inner Mongol princes who had expressed their desire to join the Bogd Haan’s government (including a few Han Chinese) changed their mind when Yuan Shikai offered them higher salaries, and popular revolts that rose up in Inner Mongolia were suppressed. Fearing a Chinese invasion, Hüree sent in 1913-1914 another delegation to Saint-Petersburg, to request military, financial and diplomatic assistance. Batsaihan gives the text of two letters addressed by the Bogd Haan to the Russian Emperor in 1913, a personal letter that Prime Minister Namnansüren handed to a French ambassador (pp. 391-395), and the Mongol text of a treaty for mutual assistance between Tibet and Mongolia, two newly “independent” states, on 24 December 1912 (chapter 11).
- 17 Chapter 12 is about another act of foreign policy of the Bogd Haan’s government : the fate of a letter to the Emperor of Japan, dated 19 January 1914, asking for Japan’s assistance in uniting the two Mongolias. Thanks to archives about discussions between the Japanese Foreign Minister and the Ambassador of Russia, Batsaihan shows the prudent position of Japan who found a pretext to ignore the letter and sent it back to Hüree. Batsaihan tried to restore the content of the letter from the incomplete Mongolian original in the Mongolian National Archives and from its Japanese translation in the Archives of the Japanese Foreign Ministry.
- 18 Chapter 13 is dedicated to the Kiakhta tripartite treaty (1915), about which the author had already published a monograph (Batsaihan [2002] 2007). Russia represented the middle path between the two extreme positions of Mongolia and China, and helped both parties soften their claims after nine months of negotiations (the parties met formally 41 times). This chapter details the discussions on status, delimitation of borders, trade, reign title, terminology (“autonomy,” “self-rule,” “ruler,” “haan,” and their translations in the three languages plus French, a “neutral” language), and highlights how the three parties differently perceived, understood and interpreted the tripartite agreement (including the “Book of interpretation on the meaning of the Sino-Russian and Mongolian Agreement” issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia). Batsaihan retranscribes the opinions of various researchers, and concludes that the Kiakhta tripartite treaty was a *de facto* recognition of the Mongolian state and her government at international level – although it recognized on paper Chinese suzerainty over Mongolia, and the transfer of political and economic rights to Russia.

No discussion could be held on the unification with Inner Mongolia, and the treaty officially recognized the separation between (Outer) Mongolia and Inner Mongolia.

- 19 The following chapters list some of the activities of the Bogd Haan government after the Kiakhtha treaty (chapter 14) and recount Baron Ungern's restoration of the Bogd Haan's government (fall 1920-1921) and the expulsion of the Chinese troops who had taken advantage of the Russian revolution to occupy Hüree (chapter 15). Thus, there was a resurgence of the freedom movement and a search for new allies when Baron Ungern entered Mongolia on behalf of the Russian-Mongolian traditional friendship (pp. 309, 318). Batsaihan does not mention the historiography that describes a brutal and negative attitude of Ungern in Mongolia. By reading this chapter, readers can get the impression of a peaceful collaboration during the time of Ungern's presence.
- 20 Chapter 16 investigates the relations between the Bogd Haan and the Mongolian People's Party, that seized power in July 1921 and founded a new Provisional government, proclaiming the separation of state from religion. He points out that the People's Provisional Government of Mongolia usurped Bogd Haan's government power. Batsaihan retranscribes the unilaterally adopted "Treaty of Oath regulating the relations between the Bogd Haan and the Government" (November 1921), and examines the limited power of the Bogd Haan, whose privileges were progressively abolished. In spite of this limitation, the provincial nobles and officials continue to refer to him (p. 327). He also provides an account of the arrests and imprisonment of dozens of people, including ministers and officials of the Bogd's Government to create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. In addition, the question of state funding appears, although not explicitly, when the author addresses the financing of tributes to Bogd Haan, the use of his property for public service, etc. (pp. 329-331).
- 21 Chapter 17 is about the circumstances and cause (possible assassination — see page 238) of the Bogd's death on 20 May 1924. After he asked the reader to judge by himself the relationship between the Bogd Haan and the government (p. 331), the partial treatment of a possible assassination of the Bogd Haan by E. Rincino here alters the scientific scope of the work. The reader is not convinced by this chapter based on oral sources, even though at the same time it provides valuable documents produced by the government after the death of Bogd Haan, that show how the legitimacy of the Bogd Haan was quickly transferred to the government.
- 22 Chapter 18 goes into economic questions, introducing the inventory of Bogd's properties and assets, their administration, revenue sources, and expenditure. In the following chapter, the author studies how the administrative structure of the Bogd's Šav' was dismantled by the People's Government after his death, and his properties were confiscated, inventoried and nationalized, part of them being (re)distributed or sold. He concludes that the state budget of Mongolia for 1927 was not in the red for the first time in years, because the Bogd's properties served as the basis of the modern Mongolian economy.
- 23 Chapter 20 inventories the library of the Bogd Haan and highlights the great project of collection, compilation, and translation of all kind of works in different languages, including his own writings.
- 24 Chapter 21 investigates the failed attempts to have a young boy recognized as his reincarnation in 1925-1926 — the Bogd Haan's death being a convenient pretext for establishing a Republic in Mongolia replacing the monarchy. The government postponed the settlement of the issue and although it had sent a delegation to the Dalai

Lama for his guidance on the issue of reincarnations (in 1927), it eventually banned the identification of any reincarnation in Mongolia (in 1929). The last chapter deals with the identity and destiny of the Bogd Gegeen's biological and adopted children.

- 25 In addition to the documents translated in the text, six appendices can be found at the end of the book (pp. 606-685, already present in the first version) : 1) a profile of the Bogd Haan by Liuba, General Consul of Russia in Nisleel Hüree, 1912 (given in translation) ; 2) the 1912 Treaty of Friendship between Mongolia and Russia (in modern Mongolian and Russian, with reproduction of the Mongolian and Russian original manuscripts) ; 3) a reproduction of the Mongolian and the Tibetan originals of the 1913 Treaty between Mongolia and Tibet ; 4) a reproduction of the French, Mongolian, Russian and Chinese versions of the Kiakhta Tripartite Agreement of 1915 ; 5) and the Bogd Haan's golden diplomas.
- 26 In his search for exhaustiveness, the author accumulated existing primary and secondary sources of events including world press reports and Western travelers' accounts, and many repetitions sometimes make the reading exhausting. Batsaihan seems so passionate about these documents that he sometimes fails to criticize them, or to place them in their context of production : for example, on several occasions the author uses a document written in 1933 to attest to an earlier movement of unification between all Mongols, dating back to the beginning of the 20th century (p. 30, 186). He mentions the authors are Buryats but the purpose of this document remains unknown. This example is quite a typical one, since the meaning of "Mongol Uls" could be quite different from one individual to another during the first half of the 20th century. Neither does he mention the influence of the Inner Mongols' nationalism in Outer Mongolia or the activities of other Mongol groups like Kalmyks, the "liberation" of the Hovd province, the rallying of Western Mongols, and the episode of the charismatic independent Ja Lama. These omissions perhaps lead him to overlook the complexity of a "national" movement in Mongolia.
- 27 If one is now sure that the Bogd Haan played an important role in the 1911 movement of separation from China, it would perhaps have been useful to define precisely in introduction the meaning of "national" and "national movement", and to analyze the evolution of the uses of the word *uls*. Indeed, the expression Mongol Uls is used in the documents, but *ündesnii* (which means national or roots) is not, except sometimes in religious contexts. However, the documents also show how the Bogd Haan recovered the legitimacy of power with the help of the Mongol nobles. He became the khan of the Mongols, calling other Mongol groups to join the new "Mongol Uls." But was this movement a national one or the rehabilitation of a traditional ancestral power ? This may be the reason why China did not accept the term *uls* to describe the new status of Outer Mongolia.
- 28 This is not really a criticism but rather a call for better definitions, in order to properly communicate on the same phenomenon and thus to contribute to a common field of research on a topic that remains essential to Mongolia, because of its inclusion in the "concert des nations." Whatever the nature of the Bogd Haan's power, traditional or modern, he bears an unquestionable legitimacy. Thus it is extremely interesting that Batsaihan addresses the question of the Bogd Haan's reincarnation and, even if sometimes timidly, the issue of state funding, particularly when he asserts that "Bogd's properties were the basis of the modern Mongolian economy" (p. 360).

- 29 So, in spite of a few questionable choices in the presentation of the sources, this work is an invaluable contribution not only to the history of modern Mongolia and the birth of her nation-state, but also to the history of international relations in Asia, the history of representation, and to the history of political thought. In addition to giving a reappraisal of the Eighth Žavzandamba Hutugtu's role in the independent movement of 1911, thanks to the cross-fertilizing of sources reflecting the point of view of Russians, Chinese, Mongols and Japanese, Batsaihan has also cleared the way for further research.

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NOTES

1. "Holy emperor," title given to the Žavzandamba Hutugtu when he was proclaimed emperor of Mongolia.
2. On this question, see Elverskog 2006.
3. About the Žavzandamba's prophecies, see Sarközi 1992.
4. See Kaplonski & Sneath 2010, in particular Tsedev, "The Social and Economic Situation of the Shav," pp. 771-788 (vol. 3), previously published in 1964.