

GODAN KHAN IN MONGOLIAN AND TIBETAN HISTORICAL WORKS

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When studying original manuscripts relating to the history of the Mongols in the Chinese, Persian, Tibetan and Mongolian languages one cannot but notice amazing discrepancies in their views of the role of Prince Godan (*Güden, Kutan, Ko-duan, Ködön*) (1208-51), the son of Ögedei Khan and the younger brother of Güyük.

Chinese historians, judging from the materials we have access to, seem to be rather indifferent to Godan, writing very little about his participation in the military operations against Chin and Southern Sung (Munkuev 1965: 113-114). Juvaini mentions him only once on account of his mother Türgene Khatun's struggle for power (Boyle 1958: 241). Rashid ad-Din gives a slightly more detailed account of him. He narrates Godan's involvement in a conspiracy against Qubilai, his appanage, his part in the events preceding the enthronement of the Great Khan Möngke, his sons, his claims to the property won in the internecine wars and his support for his mother (Smirmova 1952: 56, 231, 276; Verhovskij 1960: 11, 13, 112-113, 115-119, 132, 140). We can see that he interests Chinese and Persian historians (if at all) only as a participant in this or that event in which he obviously plays not the most important part and is mentioned in the above-mentioned works in a quite insignificant place. The reason for this is easy to see. Godan was never a central figure in the Mongolian history of the 13th century. He was not a great khan and his appanage comprised comparatively peripheral lands between China, Mongolia and Tibet, in the territory of the modern Chinese provinces of Gansu and Qinghai. The wars he waged were neither large-scale nor significant ones.

At the same time the picture given above is in sharp contrast to the attention paid to the person of Godan in Mongolian historical works. Usually they have a description of a curious episode that I would like to quote from the chronicles of Sayang Sečen (17th century):

Ögedei Khan had two sons, Güyük and Godan. The elder brother Güyük (was born) in the year of the Cow and ascended the throne of the Khan at the age of 28 in the year of the Kui-Serpent. That same year, six months later he died. His younger brother Godan was born in the year of the Bin-Tiger. In the year of the Ke-Horse he ascended to the

throne, at the age of 28. In the year of the Ji-Sheep he became ill, contracting the disease of the Tsar of the Dragons [a kind of skin disease, possibly leprosy, A.Ts.]. Traditional methods of treatment proved ineffective. By chance he heard that in the West, in the Eternal Land, there lived an amazing Sakya Kun dga' rgyal mthsan, who had mastered five sciences. If he were invited he would surely cure the Khan. Envoys headed by the *uymakhud* Dorda-darqan were immediately sent out to invite the scholar to come to the Khan... [Sakya-pandita] set out on his way in the year of the Ke-Dragon, at the age of 63, and met the Khan in the year of the Tin-Sheep, when the former was going to be 66 years old. Fulfilling the ritual devoted to the Lion-voiced Qonsim-bodisadua he subordinated to his power the Tsar of the Dragons, granted the Khan initiation to that deity and gave him his blessings. The Khan recovered immediately from his illness. Everybody rejoiced and began to follow the instructions [of the monk]. Sakya-pandita was the first one to spread the religion in the lands of the Mongols. At the age of 69, in the year of the Shin-Pig, Sakya-pandita attained the sacred state of Nirvana whereas the Khan died that same year, the year of the Shin-Pig, at the age of 46 after an eighteen-year-long reign. They say that the abodes of hope, the Lama and the Khan-alms-giver, died together in the same year. (*Erdeni-yin tobčiy-a*, pp. 131-134.)

An account of the story told above can also be read in the *Sira Tuuyuji* (17th cent.), the *Altan Kürdün Mingyan Kegesütü* by Darma-gosi (18th cent.), the *Bolor Erike* by Rasipungsuγ (18th cent.), the *Bolor Toli* by Jambadorji (19th cent.), and the *Köke Debter* (19th cent.). In other annals, e.g. the *Altan Tobči* by Lubsandanjan (17th cent.), and the *Asarayči Nere-tü-yin Teüke* (17th cent.), the somewhat altered story of the invitation of Sakya-pandita is referred to by Ögedei Khan.

The natural question arises whence such a difference of opinion as to the role of Godan among Chinese and Persian historians, on the one hand, and Mongolian ones, on the other, arises. Besides, it is worthwhile mentioning that this attention paid to his person is not typical of the Mongolian chronicles themselves. As is well known, these chronicles are based on the genealogical principle with a consecutive description of the rule of the great khans, i.e. those who occupied the throne of the ruler of the entire Mongolian Empire. The Chinese dynastic chronicles have influenced these works, especially in the part dealing with the Yuan dynasty. The principle of describing events 'from one great khan to another great khan' is all the more strictly observed in this part. It seems that Godan is the only one of the non-great khans of 13th-century Mongolia to whom the Mongolian chronicles attached such importance.

This attitude towards Godan in historical works can be accounted for exclusively by the influence of the Tibetan historiographical tradition on the Mongolian chronicles and in this connection the chronicles' gradual switching over to relate events in the history of religion.

Godan's appanage expanded at the expense of the Tangut lands bordering on Tibet and thus he turned out to be the exponent of the policy of the Mongolian khan in Tibet. We know that he organized Dorda-darqan's military reconnaissance expedition to Tibet in 1239. On his initiative the well-known Tibetan preacher Sakya-pandita, who spent seven years in Lianjou (present-day Uvei) at Godan's

General Headquarters, was invited to Mongolia in 1244 (Rerih 1958: 333-345). Naturally Tibetan historians showed more interest in these events than, let's say, in the expeditions of the Mongolian military leader Muquli to China, or the conquest of Russian and European territories by Chinggis Khan's grandson Batu. These events took place in approximately the same period and have proven to be the most significant facts in the history of the Mongolian Empire. The Tibetan works written until the mid-17th century, i.e. the time of the emergence of the first Mongol chronicles dealing with Godan, are the original sources of the Mongolian chronicles. The events mentioned above were described in Tibetan sources by Sakya hierarchies, by the fifth Dalai Lama, by the author of the well-known work *Ulan Debter*, by the famous Tibetan historian Gos lotsava Zhon nu dbal, and by others (Rerih 1958: 333-334, 337-339; Bira 1978: 243-244, 253-255).

As early as the 17th century the Mongolian chroniclers began to use widely Tibetan sources. The orientation towards Tibetan historiography was gradually becoming more thorough as the Buddhism was acquiring a firmer and stronger status in Mongolia. By that time Tibetan historiography had taken an obvious clerical bent. Accordingly, the interest of Mongolian historians for the history of the Mongolian khans gave way to the history of religion. In this context one of the most significant events of the 13th century was Sakya-pandita's visit to Mongolia, which originated the wide-scale spread of Buddhism in Mongolia. As the initiator and organizer of this visit, Godan began to be viewed by Tibetan and Mongolian historians as the main figure in Mongolian history in that time. For this reason Mongolian historians like Saγang Sečen and Toba taiji, who were not supposed to have a wrong understanding of the titles of their great khans, began to call Godan a *qayan* (the title of the Great Khan of the Mongols), like the Tibetan historians. Furthermore they wrote about his ascending to the throne of the Great Ruler of Mongolia and pointed out the terms of his rule. Other historians, who were familiar with Chinese and Mongolian historical works, saw discrepancies with regard to the place of Godan in the chronicles and his actual importance. They tried to find a way out by 'transferring' the episode of the invitation of Sakya-pandita to Ögedei, the actual Great Khan of Mongolia at that time. In a later period, with the gradual adoption of a critical approach in the Mongolian historiographical tradition, Mongolian authors began to make attempts to comment on the information provided by their predecessors, a vivid example of this being Rasipungsuy's commentaries (*Bolor erike*, p. 203).

It was thus the influence of Tibetan historiography and the Mongolian chroniclers' growing interest in the history of religion which caused a heightened interest in the person of Prince Godan and made the chroniclers attach to him an inappropriately great importance, as far as declaring him great khan. We can see that the Mongolian manuscript tradition, which was under the growing influence of clerical historiography, not infrequently decreased in importance, sometimes even distorting its own history.

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