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Tsogtu Khong Tayiji and the Contest for Power between Eastern and Western Mongols in Seventeenth-Century Tibet

ABSTRACT:

Tsogtu Khong Tayiji (1581–1637) was a Khalkha prince of the Eastern Mongols and poet who supported Ligdan Khan and opposed the Dalai Lama's Gelug ("Yellow Hat"; Tib.: *Dge-lugs-pa*) sect. His lifetime encompassed the short rise and fall of Khalkha–Mongol supremacy in Tibet. This article draws on Mongolian sources, Chinese and English translations of Tibetan sources, and Chinese, Japanese and English secondary research in order to illustrate the political importance of a Mongolian prince in seventeenth-century Tibetan history. It argues that after Tsogtu Khong Tayiji there was no longer a politico-military force from Mongolia proper that could compete with the Khoshud domination of Tibet until the Manchu incorporation of Tibet in 1720. Therefore, Tsogtu's downfall marks a withdrawal of the Eastern Mongols' involvement with Tibet. From that point until 1720, Western Mongolian forces (first Khoshud, then Zünghar) in collaboration with the Dge-lugs sect maintained supremacy in Tibet.

KEYWORDS:

Tsogtu Khong Tayiji, Mongolia, Khalkha, Oirat, Tibet

INTRODUCTION

Tsogtu Khong Tayiji (1581–1637; aka Tümenkhen Tsogtu Khong Tayiji), was a Khalkha prince who supported Ligdan Khan (b. 1588; r. 1604–1634) – the last independent khan of the Northern Yuan 元

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dynasty (the less-powerful Mongolian state that survived after the fall of the Yuan dynasty in 1368). The Khalkha Mongols originated in the latter half of the fifteenth century and emerged as one of the six *tümen*, or peoples. The word *tümen* meant literally “10,000” households, but here also the principal military-political divisions constituting the Mongol polity reestablished under Dayan Khan Batu-Möngke (b. 1475?; r. 1480?-1517?). After the Yuan emperor withdrew to Mongolia proper – roughly corresponding to the modern Mongolian plateau – in 1368, the Mongols soon confronted a formidable challenge from their western neighbors, the Oirats. Ming-period Chinese sources referred to the Oirats as *Wala* 瓦剌 and to the Mongols as *Dada* 韃靼. In this usage, *Wala* denoted the Western Mongols, while *Dada* designated the Eastern Mongols, reflecting a basic geographic distinction.

Under Dayan Khan, the Eastern Mongols succeeded in reasserting their authority and curbing the influence of the Western Mongols.¹ In the struggle for Eastern Mongolian supremacy in Tibet, Tsogtu Khong Tayiji opposed the Dalai Lama’s Yellow Hat sect. There has been no comprehensive research in English on Tsogtu so far.² Drawing on a large variety of Mongolian and Tibetan sources, the present article argues that after Tsogtu there was no longer an Eastern Mongol force from Inner Mongolia or Outer Mongolia that could compete with the Western Mongol (Oirat) domination of Tibet, until the Manchu conquest of the Zünghars. In short, after Tsogtu Khong Tayiji, the Eastern Mongols lost power in Tibet and the Oirat gained supremacy until the mid-eighteenth century.

¹ For the struggle between the Eastern and Western Mongols and Sino-Mongolian relations from 1368 to 1634, see Dmitrii Pokotilov, *History of the Eastern Mongols during the Ming Dynasty from 1368 to 1634*, part 1, trans. Rudolf Lowenthal (rpt.; Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1976).

² For Tsogtu Khong Tayiji’s life and time, see Christopher P. Atwood’s entry for Tsogtu Khong Tayiji in his *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire* (New York: Facts On File, 2004). Okada Hidehiro 岡田英弘 wrote an article on Tsogtu Khong Tayiji; “Çoytu Qong Tayiji ni tsuite” Çoytu Qong Tayiji について, *Ajia-Afurika gengo bunka kenkyū* アジア、アフリカ言語文化研究 1 (1968), pp. 111-25. In Inner Mongolia, B. Oyunbilig and Tuya both recently have done an excellent job to illustrate the basic facts and solve relevant questions. Oyunbilig has written a series of articles on Tsogtu Khong Tayiji and continues to expand those and respond to other scholars’ works, including Tuya’s work. See B. Oyunbilig 烏雲畢力格, “Guanyu Chuoketu Taiji” 關於綽克圖台吉, *Neimenggu daxue xuebao* (zhexue shehui kexue ban) 內蒙古大學學報 (哲學社會科學版) 3 (1987), pp. 52-57, 76; “Chuoketu Taiji de lishi yu lishi jiyi” 綽克圖台吉的歷史與歷史記憶, in *Shiqi shiji Menggu shi lunkao* 十七世紀蒙古史論考 (Hohhot: Neimenggu renmin chubanshe, 2009), pp. 230-74; “Chuoketu Taiji de lishi yu lishi jiyi” 綽克圖台吉的歷史與歷史記憶, in *Wuse sifan: duoyu wenben zhong de Neiya minzu shidi yanjiu* 五色四藩, 多語文本中的內亞民族史地研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2017), pp. 53-77; “Wenben wudu yu ‘yingxiong’ de dansheng: ‘Chuoketu taiji moyai shi’ bawen xinshi” 文本誤讀與‘英雄’的誕生, ‘綽克圖台吉摩崖詩’ 跋文新釋, *Qingshi yanjiu* 清史研究 1 (2025), pp. 47-56. Tuya 圖雅, “Ka’er’ka Chuoketu hong Taiji shengping yanjiu” 喀爾喀綽克圖洪台吉生平研

EASTERN MONGOL POLITICO-RELIGIOUS
POWER IN TIBET AFTER THE LATE-SIXTEENTH CENTURY

In the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth century, the Second Conversion to Buddhism in Mongolia marked a significant transition in Mongolian history.³ Altan Khan (1508–1582) of the Tümed people invited a high lama of the Gelug sect named Sonam Gyatso (Tib.: *Bsod-nams rgya-mtsho*; 1543–1588) to spread the Buddhist dharma in Mongolia. Altan Khan granted Sonam Gyatso the title Dalai Lama, and in 1578 the latter became the Third Dalai Lama so as to recognize his high status in Tibetan Buddhism. In 1586 Abatai Khan (1554–1588) of the Khalkha traveled to the Ordos to meet the Third Dalai Lama.⁴ The next year, Abatai Khan invited him to Khalkha to bless Erdeni Zuu Temple.⁵ After the Third Dalai Lama passed away in 1588, Altan Khan's great-grandson, Yonten Gyatso (Tib.: *Yon-tan rgya-mtsho*; 1589–1617), was later identified as the Fourth Dalai Lama. Since Yonten Gyatso was from a Mongolian imperial family, his enthronement in 1602 symbolized the unification of the Chinggisid family and a sacred Buddhist lineage, thus strengthening the alliance of the Eastern Mongols and the Gelug sect of Tibet.

Since the mid-sixteenth century, the power of the Phagmo Drupa (Tib.: *Phag-mo gru-pa*) dynasty (1354–1618), who patronized the Gelug sect in Tibet, was waning and fracturing. A king of Upper Tsang in west-central Tibet called Zhingshak Tseten Dorje (Tib.: *Zhing-shag tshe-brtan rdo-rje*; d. 1599) rebelled against the Rinpungpa in western Tibet and founded the Tsangpa (Tib.: Gtsang-pa) dynasty (1565–1642). Zhingshak Tseten Dorje formed an alliance with the Drigung Kagyu (Tib.: *'bri-gung bka'-brgyud*) lineage and controlled Lhasa in 1605.⁶

究, M.A. thesis (Inner Mongolia U., 2004). In Mongolia, Zhambyn Dashdondog has written a booklet on Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's life and legends; *Khalkhyn Tsogt Khun Tayiji* (Ulaanbaatar: Shuwuun saaral compani, 1992). Dorjderemiin Büdsüren has written a survey of the historical sources concerning Tsogtu Khong Tayiji, mainly those in Mongolian and Tibetan; *Tsogt khun taijid kholbogdokh tüükhen barimtyн sudalгаа* (Ulaanbaatar: Soyolyn deed surguul', 2011).

³ For an introduction to the Second Conversion, see Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, s.v. Second Conversion. For a detailed narrative of the Second Conversion, see Zahiruddin Ahmad, *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1970), pp. 85–99.

⁴ Johan Elverskog, *The Jewel Translucent Sūtra: Altan Khan and the Mongols in the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 189–90.

⁵ Oyunbilig, *Asalakeqi shi yanjiu* 阿薩喇克其史研究 (Beijing: Zhongyang minzu daxue chubanshe, 2009), p. 133.

⁶ Chen Qingying 陳慶英, *Meng Zang guanxi shi daxi, zhengzhi juan* 蒙藏關係史大系, 政治卷 (Beijing: Waiyu jiaoxue yu waiyu yanjiu chubanshe, 2002), p. 196.

When the Fourth Dalai Lama arrived in Tibet, the Gelug sect came under severe pressure from the Tsangpa dynasty and the Karma Kagyu sect. Some Khalkha military forces came to Tibet with the Fourth Dalai Lama as guards. Later, some of the Mongolian princes led their forces to Tibet on the pretext of paying tribute to the Fourth Dalai Lama. But in fact, this was simply a military intervention in the internal affairs of Tibet. For the religious leaders of the Gelug sect, the Mongolian forces from Khalkha–Mongolia could be used as their supporters to balance out the overwhelming power of Tsangpa Khan and Karma Kagyu.⁷ However, the sudden death of the Fourth Dalai Lama in 1617 and Tsangpa Khan's delay in searching for the latter's incarnation put the Gelug sect in a disadvantageous position. In 1618, some Khalkhas from Mongolia were invited by the Gelug sect, causing turmoil in Lhasa and surrounding regions that built up to an attempt to overthrow Tsangpa Khan. Tsangpa Khan reacted immediately and in the same year put down the rebellion definitively. Phagmo Drupa's rule in Tibet was ended.⁸

It was during such a chaotic era that Tsogtu Khong Tayiji rose politically in Khalkha–Mongolia, and his life and career signified the last attempt by these Eastern Mongols to control Tibet.

TSOGTU KHONG TAYIJI'S FAMILY BACKGROUND

We know that Tsogtu Khong Tayiji was of noble origin among Khalkha Mongols. His great-grandfather was Geresenje Jalayir Khong Tayiji (1513?-1548), the eleventh son of Dayan Khan Batu-Möngke, who united the Mongols and reasserted Chinggisid supremacy on the Mongolian plateau in the sixteenth century. Dayan Khan gave Alchu Bolod (his fifth son) and Geresenje the Khalkha *tümen*. The tribes under Alchu Bolod later moved southward to the Liao 遼 River basin and formed the Five *Otogs* of Inner Khalkha (Mong.: *Öbör tabun qalq-a*). After the Manchu conquest of Inner Mongolia, the Ba'arins and Jaru'uds became the autonomous *jasag* banners of Inner Mongolia, and others were incorporated into the Manchus and became Mongol bannermen in the Manchu–Qing state. Geresenje stayed in the north of the Gobi Desert. As for the tribes of Geresenje's descendants, they made up the Seven *Otogs* of Khalkha (Mong.: *doloyan qosiyu qalq-a*), or, North-

⁷ Chen, *Meng Zang guanxi*, p. 196.

⁸ For the rise of the Tsangpa dynasty and the conflict between the Gelug sect and Karma Kagyu sect, see Olaf Czaja, *Medieval Rule in Tibet: The Rlängs Clan and the Political and Religious History of the Ruling House of Phag mo gru pa. With a Study of the Monastic Art of Gdan sa mthil* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2013), pp. 276–313.

ern Khalkha (Mong.: *Aru qalq-a*). Under Qing rule, the *otogs* became the four *ayimag*, denoting a Mongolian traditional ethno-political unit (translated into Chinese as *bu* 部). Those four were: Khalkha Tüsiyetü Khan *Ayimag*, Jasagtu Khan *Ayimag*, Sechen Khan *Ayimag*, and Sayin Noyan *Ayimag*.⁹

Geresenje's third son was No'onokhu (b. 1534; sobriquet Üyijeng). Before Geresenje died, he divided his people into the Left (East)-flank and Right (West)-flank Khalkha and made No'onokhu in charge of the Left-flank Khalkha. After his father died, No'onokhu inherited Kerigüd and Gorlos *Uluses*, and his appanage was around the Orkhon and Tuula River basin and Khanggai Mountain area – the heartland of the present Outer Mongolia. No'onokhu's eldest son was Abatai, the ancestor of the Tüsiyetü Khans. Tümengken was No'onokhu's fourth son and the ancestor of the Sayin Noyan Khans. His fifth son Baqarai (b. 1565; sobriquet Khosiguchi) was Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's father and he had no other sons.¹⁰ In conclusion, Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's family was the most powerful one among the Left-flank Khalkha Mongols and Tsogtu had no male siblings with whom he would have competed.

Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's maternal uncle's family of the Abakhanar tribe were also influential. Moreover, Tsogtu's mother was Ching Bisireltü Sayin Madi Tayi'al Khatun, called Tayi'al Khatun for short. Her father was Berke of the Ongni'ud.¹¹ Here the Ongni'ud was the designation of the tribes of Chinggis Khan's brothers' offspring. The Abakhanar tribe was under the descendants of Belgütei, Chinggis Qan's half-brother. From Geresenje's time, Belgütei's family had maintained a close marriage alliance with the Khalkha nobles. According to a Qing imperial memorial of 1687, Geresenje had an audience with Altan Khan of the Tümed. He also adopted a nine-year-old daughter of Altan Khan who later married Nomi Temgetü Khan, the founder of the

⁹ Okada, “Čoγtu Qong Tayiji ni tsuite,” p. 113.

¹⁰ Oyunbilig, *Asalakeqi shi yanjiu*, pp. 127, 133, 138. For Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's genealogy, Oyunbilig correctly documents Geresenje as Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's great-grandfather in his article published in 1987. However, in his later works published in 2009 and 2017, he wrongly identifies Baraqai as No'onokhu's fifth son and argues that Geresenje was Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's grandfather. In his latest article published in 2025, he emended this argument and correctly identifies Tsogtu Khong Tayiji as Dayan Khan Batu-Möngke's great-great-grandchild. See Oyunbilig, “Guanyu Chuoketu Taiji,” p. 52; “Chuoketu Taiji de lishi (2009),” p. 234; “Chuoketu Taiji de lishi” (2017), p. 55; “Wenben wudu yu ‘yingxiong’ de dansheng: ‘Chuoketu Taiji moyai shi’ bawen xinshi,” p. 48.

¹¹ Anonymous, *Erten-ü Mongyol-un qad-un ündüsün-ü yeke sir-a tuyuji*, coll. and annot. Öljeitü (Begejing: Ündüsüten-ü keblel-ün qoriy-a, 1983) p. 166. Tuya, “Ka'er'ka Chuoketu hong Taiji shengping yanjiu,” p. 5.

Abakhanar tribe.¹² After that, the Abakhanar built a strong coalition with the Khalkha Mongols. According to Oyunbilig, two of No'onokhu's daughters married Bagtu and Buriyadai, sons of Nomi Temgetü Khan of the Abakhanar.¹³ A daughter of No'onokhu's third son, Kitad Ildeng, married Dontu, grandson of Nomi Temgetü Khan. Two daughters of No'onokhu's sixth son, Bodisung Otqun, respectively married Sonum and Sha'dur. The former was another grandson of Nomi Temgetü Khan, and the latter was probably a Tayiji of the Ongni'ud.¹⁴

Regarding Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's subjects, he had inherited from his father a patrimony consisting of three *otogs*: Gorlos, Kheregüüd (Gerüüd), and Ereegchid (Tsookhor), and all three were part of the former Uriankhai *tümen*.¹⁵

Tsogtu Khong Tayiji had five sons: the eldest Arslan Khong Tayiji, the second Radna Erdeni, the third Linkhua Sechen Dayiching, the fourth Ja'an Khong Tayiji of Garma Jüg, and the youngest Asaral Erke Dayiching.¹⁶

TSOGTU KHONG TAYIJI AS A POWERFUL MONGOL PRINCE

Between 1596 and 1616, Tsogtu participated six times in legislation produced by the Khalkha Mongols. According to the Khalkha-Mongol Law written on birch bark,¹⁷ from the year 1596,¹⁸ when he was only fifteen years old he joined a major assembly (Mong.: *çiyulyan*,

¹² "Eden-ü inggeji bayi-qu-du mani üge Ĵalayir taiji yeke qatun-tai taulai jil-du Altan Gegen qayan-u otog boro iruyun-du aqu çay-tu ociju baralyaci, qayan-u sayin jula aradu keüken-i yisün nasutai abci ireji öber-ün doloγan kübegün-iyen degüü bolan jüsügejü Temgetü qayan-du öggüsen tere Azsusi abaγai gegci bile." See Jighachidai Buyandelger, Borjigidai Oyunbilig, and Wu Yuanfeng 吳元豐, eds., *Dayičing gurun-u dotoyadu yamun-u Mongγol biçig-ün ger-ün dangsa* [Records of Mongolian Chancellery of the Qing Grand Secretariat] (Kökeqota: Öbör Mongγol-un arad-un keblel-ün qoriy-a, 2005), vol. 6, p. 50. Also see Oyunbilig, "Chuoketu Taiji de lishi" (2009), pp. 204-5.

¹³ Oyunbilig, "Chuoketu Taiji de lishi (2009)," p. 234.

¹⁴ Oyunbilig, "Chuoketu Taiji de lishi (2009)," pp. 234-35.

¹⁵ Tsongol Battsengeliin Natsagdorj, "Tsogt khuntaijiin ger bül bolon ömch irgenii tukhai ögüülekh n'," in Ts. Tserendorj and L. Ganbat, eds., *TüsHEET KHAN AIMGIIN JONON ZASGIIN KHOSHUU: TÜÜKH, SOYOLYN ASUUDAL* (Ulaanbaatar: Soyombo Printing, 2024), p. 86.

¹⁶ Oyunbilig, "Chuoketu Taiji de lishi (2009)," p. 235.

¹⁷ In 1970, a Soviet-Mongol joint archeological expedition found many written materials in a stupa at Khara Bukha, Dashinchilen *sum* (county), Bulgan Ayimag. In those materials were two volumes of the Khalkha-Mongol law written on birch bark. The first contains seventeen items from the late-16th to the early-17th c. The second volume contained fragments of the 1639 Mongol-Oirat law code. The first volume has been compiled by Mongol scholar Kh. Perlee.

¹⁸ According to Futaki Hiroshi 二本博史 ("Shirakanba höten ni tsuite" 白樺法典について, *Ajia-Afurika gengo bunka kenkyū* 21 [1981]), pp. 52-53, Kh. Perlee, who discovered the Khalkha-Mongol law materials, argued that the Year of the Monkey is supposed to be 1620.

chuulgan) of legislators at the bank of the Tarni River. Present were Khalkha Mongolian khans and princes, including Aqai Khan, Khatan Ba'atur Noyan (b. 1551), Darkhan Tüsiyetü Noyan (b. 1561), Dayiching Batur Noyan (b. 1561), Köndelen Chögökör Noyan (b. 1561),¹⁹ Jorgol Noyan (b. 1562), Khosi'uchi Noyan (b. 1573), Tsogtu Noyan (b. 1576), Khulang Abai Noyan (b. 1579), Yeldeng Noyan (b. 1560), Khosi'uchi Noyan (b. 1565), Bingtu Noyan, Übandai Noyan, Öljejütü Noyan,²⁰ Mergen Tayiji, Sechen Tayiji, Khong Tayiji, Dayiching Tayiji (b. 1576),²¹ and Rakhuli Tayiji. This would be the first time that Tsogtu Khong Tayiji appeared on the stage of Khalkha Mongolian politics. During that time, Tsogtu had not obtained the title of Khong Tayiji, but was only called Tayiji. Why was he able to join this assembly while still young? The reason was probably that he had already inherited his father's authority and was the lone representative of his powerful family.²²

The second time that Tsogtu joined a minor assembly for Khalkha Mongolian legislation was in 1603, at the Berke Northern Spring (Mong.: *Berke-yin aru-yin bulay usun-a*). Present were Köndelen Chögökör Noyan, Öljejütü Tayiji, Dayiching Tayiji, Sechen Tayiji,²³ Chuu Tayiji,²⁴ Tüsiyetü Khong Tayiji,²⁵ Lamaskib Abai, Emelder (Lamdar) Abai, and Dorji Abai.²⁶ The code that they produced regulated the nomadic territories of No'onoqu's descendants.²⁷

The year 1614 saw the third time. Tsogtu, still as a Tayiji, attended the assembly at Sayikhan Temple, with Sechen Khatun,²⁸ Köndelen Chögökör Noyan, Öljejütü Khong Tayiji, Dayiching Tayiji, Shiolai Khong Tayiji,²⁹ Chuu Tayiji, Sechen Khong Tayiji, Bjodba Sechen

Futaki rejects this, arguing that the Monkey Year should be 1608. Recently, Oyunbilig has rejected both viewpoints and dates it to 1598; "Chuoketu Taiji de lishi (2009)," p. 236. Here I follow Oyunbilig's opinion.

¹⁹ Köndelen Chögökör Noyan is Tümengken, the fourth son of No'onokhu and the ancestor of Sayin Noyan Khans of Khalkha Mongol under Qing rule.

²⁰ Öljejütü Tayiji is Abatai Khan's eldest son.

²¹ Dayiching Tayiji is the eldest of Abkhu Mergen (b. 1556), No'onokhu's second son.

²² Oyunbilig, "Chuoketu Taiji de lishi (2009)," p. 236.

²³ Sechen Tayiji is Köndelen Chögökör Noyan's eldest son.

²⁴ Chuu Tayiji is the second son of Abkhu Mergen.

²⁵ Tüsiyetü Khong Tayiji is later Tüsiyetü Khan Gumbü.

²⁶ Lamaskib Abai, Emelder (Lamdar) Abai, and Dorji Abai are Tüsiyetü Khong Tayiji's younger brothers.

²⁷ Oyunbilig, "Chuoketu Taiji de lishi (2009)," pp. 236–37.

²⁸ Sechen Khatun is Abatai Khan's spouse.

²⁹ Shiolai Khong Tayiji is the first Sechen Khan of Khalkha Mongol under the Qing dynasty.

Tayiji,³⁰ Yeke Kitad Tayiji, Ba'a Kitad Tayiji, Chering Tayiji, Bübün Tayiji, Tarba Dasi Tayiji, Babari Tayiji, Tüsiyetü Khong Tayiji, Lama-jab Tayiji, Lamdar Tayiji, Dorji Tayiji, and Barang Tayiji.³¹

The fourth legislative assembly Tsogtu Khong Tayiji attended was in the autumn of 1614 at the Alta'ad River. The attendees included Tüsiyetü Khan, Dayiching Köndelen Chögökör Noyan, Dayiching Khong Tayiji, Dalai Sechen Khong Tayiji,³² and Sechen Tayiji. At this assembly, the title Khong Tayiji was first used in addressing Tsogtu. However, according to the order of the names in the law document, Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's rank among the Khalkha Mongolian princes was still behind that of Dayiching Tayiji and Shiolai Khong Tayiji.³³

The fifth occasion was a minor assembly for legislation at Khota'ur Khatun's and Dalai Khong Tayiji's temple in 1614. Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's ranking was still below that of Dayiching Tayiji and Shiolai Khong Tayiji.³⁴

The sixth and final one was at Köndelen Chögökör Noyan's temple in 1616. In this minor assembly there were four *tayijis* attending, including Dayiching Khong Tayiji, Tsogtu Khong Tayiji, Sechen Tayiji, and Erke Tayiji.³⁵ According to the order of the names addressed, it seems that the rank of Tsogtu Khong Tayiji was second, below only Dayiching Khong Tayiji of the Abkhu Mergen family and higher than Sechen Tayiji of the Köndelen Chögökör Noyan.³⁶

All of this shows that Tsogtu Khong Tayiji was a dignitary and a powerful prince among the Khalkha Mongols. He was one of the three Khong Tayijis of the Khalkhas. Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's status was just

³⁰ Bjodba Sechen Tayiji is Köndelen Chögökör Noyan's eldest son.

³¹ Oyunbilig, "Chuoketu Taiji de lishi (2009)," pp. 237-38.

³² Dalai Sechen Khong Tayiji is another designation of Shiolai Khong Tayiji.

³³ Oyunbilig, "Chuoketu Taiji de lishi (2009)," p. 238.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

³⁵ According to Lhamsuren Munkh-Erdene, *The Taiji Government and the Rise of the Warrior State* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), pp. 207, 209, 214, the four princes were appointed "governmental princes" (*jasay-un tayijinar*). They are the ruling princes for the four *khoshuus* (Mong.: *qosiyu*, appanage) and have power to restrain the khan's authority. He also argues that the Northern Yuan regime maintained a centralized autocratic administration, which can be called the Taishi government. However, under constant challenges, the Taishi government could not sustain itself and was replaced by the Taiji Government, established by Dayan Khan and characterized by a federal constitutional monarchy, which integrated various aristocratic elements. The *Chuulgan* (assembly) served as an aristocratic parliament within this structure. The *Jasag* represented an appointed central government. In this sense, Tsogtu Khong Taiji is more like an aristocratic lord with his own appanage.

³⁶ Oyunbilig, "Chuoketu Taiji de lishi (2009)," pp. 238-39.

under those of Tüsiyetü Khan, Köndelen Chögökör Noyan, and Dayiching Tayiji, and Dalai Sechen Khong Tayiji.³⁷

TSOGTU KHONG TAYIJI AS A BUDDHIST PATRON

Tsogtu Khong Tayiji was not only a dignitary of the Khalkha Mongols, but also a patron of Tibetan Buddhism. The Inscription of the White House (Mong.: *Chayan bayising-un bichig*) contained important information about his deeds in support of Tibetan Buddhism.³⁸ According to it, Ching Bisireltü Sayin Madi Tayi'al Khatun and her son Tsogtu Khong Tayiji built six temples, including the Inconceivable Cintamani Temple (Mong.: *sedkisi ügei chindamani süme*), on Khaltud Jirüken Mountain (Mong.: *Qaltud-un jirüken neretü ayula*), located north of the Tuula River. The construction of the six temples happened from 1601 to 1617.³⁹ Moreover, Tsogtu Tayiji and his mother also patronized the translation of Buddhist sutras into Mongolian. For instance, the Mongolian translation of the *Biography of Milarepa* (Mong.: *Mila-yin namtar*; Tib.: *Mi-la-ras-pai-rnam-thar*) came under their sponsorship.⁴⁰ Tsogtu and his mother had close connections with the temples in Köke Khota because his maternal uncle's family had good relations with Tümeds in the Ordos. They committed Güüsi Chorji Lama (Mong.: *Güüsi Čorji Blam-a*) to translate the aforementioned *Biography*.⁴¹

However, Tsogtu Khong Tayiji supported the Red Hat subsect of the Karma Kagyu sect, and not the Gelug, or Yellow Hat, sect. According to the *Crystal Mirror* (Mong.: *Bolor Toli*), Shamar Rabjimba (1631–1694), a lama from Jang (Tib.: *gtsang*), instigated Tsogtu Tayiji's destruction of the Gelug sect. Later, this lama reported to Tsogtu Khong Tayiji the betrayal of Tsogtu's son Arslan.⁴² As to Shamar Rabjimba's

³⁷ Archival documents show that Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's status was only second to Tüsiyetü Khan's. But this might be out of some unknown specific concern. For those disputes, see Oyunbilig, "Chuoketu Taiji de lishi (2009)," pp. 239–40.

³⁸ Okada, "Čoγtu Qong Tayiji ni tsuite," p. 122. This inscription was discovered by A. Pozdneyev in 1892 and had two versions respectively in Mongolian and Tibetan. See A. M. Pozdneyev, *Mongolia and the Mongols*, trans. John R. Krueger (London: Curzon, 1997), pp. 308–12. Recently, Sangseraima Ujeed provided a new translation of both the Mongolian and Tibetan inscriptions; "The Refuge of the 'Enemy of the Dharma': Qalqa Čoγtu Qongtaiji's Čayan Baišing Stele Inscription," *Journal of Tibetan Literature* 4.1 (2025), pp. 41–66.

³⁹ Okada, "Čoγtu Qong Tayiji ni tsuite," p. 116.

⁴⁰ D. Гонгор, *Qalq-a tobčiyen* (Kökeqota: Öbör Mongγol-un suryan kümüjil-ün keblel-ün qoriy-a, 1990) 1, p. 429.

⁴¹ Č. Damdinsüreng, *Mongγol uran jokiyal-un degeji jaγun bilig orusibai* (Ulaγanbayatur: Bügüde nayiramdaqu Mongγol arad ulus-un sinjileküi uqayan ba dededü bolbasural-un küriyeleng-ün keblel, 1959), p. 279.

⁴² Ĵimbadorji, *Bolor Toli* (Begejing: Ündüsten-ü keblel-ün qoriy-a, 1984), pp. 485–86.

name, Shamar in Mongolian transliterates the Tibetan sound *zhwa dmar*, that is, “red hat.” Rabjimba (Tib.: *Rab-'byams-pa*) is a title for knowledgeable monks. Therefore, we know that Shamar Rabjimba was supposed to have been a lama of the Red Hat subsect. The evidence of his religious belief is also seen in other aspects: the style and philosophy of the poem “Cliff Inscription of Tsogtu Tayiji,” which was believed to be composed by Tsogtu in 1621.⁴³ It imitated a Karma Kagyu literary work titled “A Hundred Thousand Odes” compiled by Milarepa (1028/40–1111/23).⁴⁴ The author of the Tibetan version of the Inscription of the White House was also Karma Ting-'dzin Grags-pa Nor-bu, a Karma Kagyu lama. Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's fourth son Garma was also named after the Karma sect.⁴⁵ Georg Huth pointed out that the Mongolian title of the temple established by Tsogtu Khong Tayiji was *sed-kisi ügei*, which was the Mongolian translation of Tibetan “*Bsam-yes*.”⁴⁶ As we know, *Bsam-yes* was also the title of the famous Samye Monastery in Tibet, which did not belong to the Gelug sect.⁴⁷ Therefore, it is believed that Tsogtu Khong Tayiji was a patron of the Karma Kagyu sect.⁴⁸ Later, the conflict between the Red Hats of the Karma Kagyu sect and the Gelug (or, Yellow Hats) in Tibet ultimately led to socio-political chaos in Qinghai and Tibet and provided a good chance for Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's invasion of Kōkenuur.

THE 13TH-CENTURY MONGOL CONQUEST OF KÖKENUUR AND THE RISE THERE OF EASTERN MONGOLS IN THE MID-15TH

Before we discuss Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's campaign in the Kōkenuur region, it would be good to consider the ecological and historical background of Kōkenuur (spelled Kokonur/Kokonor in Western works)

⁴³ As to the text of this poem, see Damdinsüreng, *Mongyol uran jokiyal-un degeji jayun bilig orusbai*, pp. 277–78 and Okada, “Çoytu Qong Tayiji ni tsuite,” pp. 122–25.

⁴⁴ Oyunbilig, “Chuoketu Taiji de lishi (2009),” p. 241.

⁴⁵ Okada, “Çoytu Qong Tayiji ni tsute,” p. 122.

⁴⁶ Georg Huth, *Die Inschriften von Tsaghan Baišîn: tibetisch-mongolischer Text mit einer Übersetzung sowie sprachlichen und historischen Erläuterungen* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1894), p. 60.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Although, according to the Biography of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Tsogtu Khong Tayiji claimed to be a believer of the Karma Kagyu sect, he was actually a secret follower of Chinese policy. In the Chinese translation of the Biography of the Fifth Dalai Lama, that policy was shown to be Chinese Taoism. See Samten G. Karmay, *The Illusive Play: The Autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama* (Chicago: Serinda Publications, 2014), p. 130. Ngag-dbang blo-bzang rgya-mtsho, *Wushi Dalai Lama zhuan* 五世達賴喇嘛傳, trans. Chen Qinying 陳慶英, Ma Lianlong 馬連龍, and Ma Lin 馬林 (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 2005; hereafter, cited as *WDLZ*), p. 109. This is quite doubtful because there are no other prohibitive evidences, except the testimony of the Fifth Dalai Lama. See Oyunbilig, “Chuoketu Taiji de lishi (2009),” p. 242.

from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries. Located directly northeast of the Tibetan Plateau, the Kökenuur region (today Qinghai 青海 province) is called Amdo in Tibetan history and is viewed as part of historical Tibet along with three other macroregions, namely, U-Tsang, Ngari, and Kham.⁴⁹ It is an important part of the roof of the world, with an average altitude of about 3,500 meters. Its northern area involves the Altun and Qilian 祁連 Mountains, and in the south we have the eastern Kunlun 崑崙 Mountains and their offshoots the Hoh Xili, Bayan Kala, and Amnye Machen Mountains. Between these are the Tsaidam and Gonghe 共和 Basins. To the south of the Kökenuur region sits the vast Qingnan 青南 Plateau. There are many lakes in the Kökenuur region, most of them salt water. In the basin and on the shores of the larger lakes there is a wide spread of pastures with several small rivers, suitable for grazing, all of which helps meet the needs of both people and livestock. The annual temperature range of the Kökenuur is small and the frost-free period is short. The winter is extremely long and there is no summer period. The air there is quite thin. It shows the usual (and remarkable) climatic characteristics of continental plateaus. Although the climate of the Kökenuur region is more difficult for survival than that of the Mongolian steppe, it is still suitable for the development of a nomadic economy, and the Right-flank of the Eastern Mongols, including the Yüingshiyebü, Ordos, and Tümeds, are still able to weather through the harsh climate.⁵⁰

Historically, Kökenuur had been a strategic region for the northern nomads, specifically a route of entry into Tibet. As early as the early-thirteenth century, Mongols managed to occupy Kökenuur and subjugate Tibet. Originally, the Mongols penetrated the area in order to vanquish the Western Xia 夏 Tangut kingdom and the Jurchen Jin 金 dynasty, and for the dispatch of troops to Tibet and the Dali 大理 kingdom. Mongols first entered Amdo during the 1227 campaign against the Western Xia led by Chinggis Khan (ca. 1162–1227). Later, Köten (fl. 1235–1247), the second son of Ögedei Khan (r. 1229–1241), conquered the Hexi corridor and Tibet. Sakya Pandita (1182–1251) managed to persuade his fellow Tibetans to submit to the Mongols. During the era of Qubilai Khan (b. 1215; r. 1260–1294), the leadership of the Kökenuur region gradually came into the hands of Qubilai's descendants under Yuan rule.⁵¹

⁴⁹ For the introduction of historical macroregions of Tibet, see Karl E. Ryavec, *A Historical Atlas of Tibet* (Chicago: U. Chicago P., 2015), pp. 6–11.

⁵⁰ Li Wenjun 李文君, *Mingdai Xihai Menggu shi yanjiu* 明代西海蒙古史研究 (Beijing: Zhongyang minzu daxue chubanshe, 2008), pp. 10–11.

⁵¹ Li, *Mingdai Xihai Menggu shi yanjiu*, pp. 11–16.

After the Yuan dynasty retreated from China proper in 1368 following the Ming 明 dynasty's (1368–1644) consolidation, the Mongols in the Kökenuur region were subject to the Ming administration's establishment of a defensive network known as the Four Guards beyond the Pass (Ch.: *saiwai siwei* 塞外四衛), namely comprising the Anding 安定, Aduan 阿端, Quxian 曲先, and Handong 罕東 guards. They maintained a tea-horse trading relationship with the Ming state. The valley of the Qilian Mountains became an important passage for the Eastern Mongols to enter the Kökenuur region, and it was also an important site for them to exchange goods with locales under Ming governance.⁵²

Since Ming defenses against Mongolian incursions gradually weakened in the second half of the fifteenth century, some of the Right-flank of Eastern Mongols, who lost in the power struggle against Dayan Khan, moved into the Kökenuur region. The Yüngshiyebü were the most powerful among the Right-flank of Eastern Mongols who moved to the Kökenuur region. The Right-flank of Eastern Mongols were nominally subject to Altan Khan of the Tümed. After Altan Khan passed away in 1582, the Right-flank of Eastern Mongols in Kökenuur achieved de facto independent status. They forced local Tibetans to join their attack on Ming-controlled northwestern border towns, but were severely defeated by Ming forces in 1588–1590. In a decisive battle in the Huangzhong 湟中 area in 1595, thousands of Yüngshiyebü were killed. Since then, the power of the Yüngshiyebü declined, and Kholochi of the Seven Tümeds – the seven tribal branches of Tümeds – seized control of the Mongols in Kökenuur until the invasion of Tsogtu Khong Tayiji of the Khalkha.⁵³

CIVIL WAR AMONG THE EASTERN MONGOLS AND TSOGTU'S INVASION OF KÖKENUUR

After the death of Dayan Khan, the six *tümen* of Mongolia were under the nominal rule of Chakhar Khan. However, each *tümen* was subject to its own khan and Chakhar Khan hardly meddled in the internal affairs of any one *tümen*. But in the early-seventeenth century, Ligdan Khutugtu Khan of Chakhar was devoted to uniting Mongolia. He attacked the Five *Otogs* of Inner Khalkha and the Khorchin Mongols in 1625–1627. As a result, the Five *Otogs* and the Khorchin turned to an alliance with the Manchus in the east. To resist the Manchus, Ligdan Khan planned to unite the Right-flank Mongols and move to the west with his army. However, his military action created chaos:

⁵² Ibid., pp. 17–19.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 72–73, 135–37.

many refugees fled north to seek protection from the Khalkha–Mongol princes.⁵⁴ Ultimately, the Seven *Otogs* of Khalkha fought with each other to win over these refugees at the beginning of the 1630s.⁵⁵ It may be thought of as a civil war among different Khalkha clans, that is, among the *Otogs*. Tsogtu Khong Tayiji was involved in it, however, he lost out and had to leave for Kökenuur in 1634 with his family, except his fourth son.⁵⁶

The reason why Tsogtu Khong Tayiji left Khalkha and moved to Kökenuur, is still open to question.⁵⁷ One theory is that Tsogtu attacked the Seven *Otogs* of Khalkha–Mongolia and Kūriyen of Manjusri, left for Kökenuur, killed Khutugtu, and destroyed the Seven Tūmeds (Mong.: *doloyan Tūmed*). Therefore, he was banished by the Khalkha.⁵⁸ However, this does not explain why Tsogtu let his fourth son stay in his appanage without objections from other Khalkha princes.

The other possible reason was that Tsogtu Khong Tayiji left for Kökenuur because he planned to join Ligdan Khan of Chakhar. Their connection may have been established before the civil war. The Rock Inscription of Tsogtu Tayiji, of 1624,⁵⁹ mentions Khutugtu Khan, who is believed to have been Ligdan Khutugtu Khan.⁶⁰ Besides, Tsogtu and

⁵⁴ Those Mongol tribes were including Ujumchin, Sönid, Khuuchid, Aba'a, and Abakhanar.

⁵⁵ Oyunbilig, "Guanyu Chuoketu Taiji," p. 55.

⁵⁶ Jǐmbadorji, *Bolor Toli*, p. 486; Sum-pa Ye-shes dPal-'byor, *The Annals of Kokonor*, trans. Yang Ho-Chin 楊和縉 (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana U., 1969), p. 33; Ngag-dbang blo-bzang rgya-mtsho, *A History of Tibet*, trans. Zahiruddin Ahmad (Bloomington: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1995), p. 195. Ngag-dbang blo-bzang rgya-mtsho, *Xizang wangchen ji* 西藏王臣記, trans. Guo Heqin 郭和卿 (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1983), p. 177. For the year of Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's flight to Kökenuur, Sangseraima Ujeed argues that it should be 1622; "Refuge of the 'Enemy of the Dharma'," p. 61. However, her argument does not stand up well because Tsogtu Khong Tayiji obviously was still in Khalkha–Mongolia and was involved in the civil war until 1634. See Oyunbilig, "Guanyu Chuoketu Taiji," p. 55.

⁵⁷ As to the other possible reasons about Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's flight, see Tuya, "Ka'er'ka Chuoketu hong Taiji shengping yanjiu," pp. 13–14.

⁵⁸ See Buyandelger, Oyunbilig, and Wu, eds., *Dayičing gurun-u dotoyadu yamun-u Mongγol bičig-ün ger-ün dangsa* 3, pp. 141–46; Oyunbilig, "Chuoketu Taiji de lishi (2009)," p. 244.

⁵⁹ Johan Elverskog and Brian Baumann both have offered a partial English translation of this inscription. See Elverskog, *Our Great Qing: The Mongols, Buddhism, and the State in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: U. Hawai'i P., 2006), pp. 95–96. Brian Baumann, "The Stone Inscription of Tsogt Taij (Čoytu Tayiji)," in Vesna A. Wallace, ed., *Sources of Mongolian Buddhism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford U.P., 2020), pp. 4–5.

⁶⁰ Recently, B. Oyunbilig and György Kara both provided a philological reading and translation of this rock inscription. The line in it that reads "*Mongγol-un Qutuγtu qaγan-u ucir-a*," is traditionally translated as "for the case of the Holy Emperor of the Mongols." However, Oyunbilig argues that in this line the term *ucir-a* should not be interpreted as "reason," but "time" in English. However, Elverskog and Kara both insist on the traditional interpretation. See György Kara, "On Prince Tsogtu's Rock Inscriptions of 1624," *AOASH* 78.2 (2025), pp. 295, 299, and Elverskog, *Our Great Qing*, pp. 95–96.

Ligdan both had a connection with Shamar Rabjimba.⁶¹ However, it was not necessary for them to have had a previous political alliance.⁶² Their connection was possibly established after Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's occupation of Kōkenuur.

No matter the circumstances, Tsogtu Khong Tayiji did leave Khalkha–Mongolia and invade Kōkenuur. When Tsogtu arrived in Kōkenuur, he encountered the Seven Tūmeds. In that time, Kholochi had just died and the Seven Tūmeds were not united and were weak. Therefore, Tsogtu Khong Tayiji defeated them easily and stayed in Kōkenuur, subsequently to be elevated as khan by local Khalkha and the Tūmed Mongols.

However, the Tūmeds in Kōkenuur were an ally and a patron of the Gelug sect. Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's victory over the Tūmeds posed a grave threat for the Gelug. Importantly, Tsogtu was a patron of the Karma Kagyu sect, the archenemy of the Gelug.

During this time period, it was said that the Karma Kagyu sect relied on four khans: 1) Tsangpa Khan Tenkyong Wangpo (Tib.: *Bstan-skyon bdan-po*; 1606–1642); 2) Donyo Dorje (Tib.: *Don-yod rdo-rje*; d. 1640), king of Beri (Tib.: *Be-ri*) and a Bon leader in Amdo;⁶³ 3) Ligdan Khan of Chakhar, and 4) Tsogtu Khong Tayiji of Khalkha. They were called Four Evil Khans by Gelug historians.⁶⁴ However, we should be cautious about the reality of this anti-Gelug alliance. For example, as Peter Schwieger shows, Donyo Dorje should not be viewed as a devoted anti-Gelug leader. In 1635, while Tsogtu's military operation in Kōkenuur was in process, Donyo Dorje even invited a figure of the Gelug sect and gave him many gifts. As Schwieger says, until that time Donyo Dorje “had let the Buddhists know that he would tolerate and accept them in his dominion provided they acknowledge his secular rule.”⁶⁵

Similarly speaking, Tsogtu Khong Tayiji should not be seen as a devoted anti-Gelug leader either because he even sent his minister Thaichin to Tibet in order to distribute gifts to high lamas of all sects, including the Fifth Dalai Lama, prior to his sending Arslan to attack

⁶¹ On one occasion, Shamar Rabjimba had given Ligdan Khan a secret initiation. See Oyunbilig, “Guanyu Chuoketu Taiji,” p. 55.

⁶² Charles R. Bawden, *The Modern History of Mongolia* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), p. 46.

⁶³ For the life of Don-yod rdo-rje, see Peter Schwieger, “Towards a Biography of Don-yod rdo-rje, King of Be-ri,” in Helmut Eimer et al., eds., *Studia Tibetica et Mongolica* (Swistal-Odendorf: Indica et Tibetica Verlag, 1999), pp. 247–60.

⁶⁴ Jimbadorji, *Bolor Toli*, p. 484.

⁶⁵ Schwieger, “Towards a Biography of Don-yod rdo-rje, King of Be-ri,” p. 257.

Tibet in the early months of 1634.⁶⁶ This shows that Tsogtu was not keenly hostile to the Gelug sect. Therefore, it would be better for us not to exaggerate the religious solidarity of this anti-Gelug alliance but instead pay attention to the political interests of each ruler.

According to the *Crystal Mirror*, there was a khan in Tsang who did not pursue the Yellow Hat sect and persecute it. He and Ligdan Khan were in the same camp. When the Manchu Sure Khan (namely, Hong Taiji, b. 1592; r. 1636–1643) attacked the Chakhar, Ligdan Khan was afraid of the overwhelming power of Manchu forces and decided to flee to the west. He was planning to seize Kökenuur and place Tibet under the control of the Karma Kagyu sect.⁶⁷ Ligdan Khan might have wanted to take those areas in order to use them as his new base against the Manchu army. Hence, it is highly possible to say that Ligdan Khan was also invited by Tsangpa Khan to march to Tibet. Unfortunately, he died on the way.

This was not the end of the story. Later, Tsogtu did expand his power into Tibet and cause serious problems for the Gelug sect.

TSOGTU KHONG TAYIJI'S INVASION OF TIBET AND MILITARY INTERVENTION BY WESTERN MONGOLIAN KHOSHUD

According to the Biography of the Fifth Dalai Lama, after Tsogtu Khong Tayiji occupied Kökenuur, he first of all attacked pro-Gelug Khalkha and Yüngshiyebü Mongol forces. There were thousands of Khalkha Mongols led by Akha Dayiching and several hundreds of Tümeds entering Tibet at that time. They all supported the Gelug sect; and the Fifth Dalai Lama even gave Akhai Dayiching a secret initiation.⁶⁸ Besides, the Four *Otogs* of Yüngshiyebü in the Kökenuur region were also forced to move to Tibet because of Ligdan Khan's invasion.⁶⁹ The Four *Otogs* of Yüngshiyebü were all patrons of the Gelug sect. However, in 1634, Akhai Dayiching was cheated and killed by Arslan. Then, in the autumn of 1634, the pro-Gelug Four *Otogs* of Yüngshiyebü and the Tümed were knocked out by the army of Arslan.⁷⁰ Arslan originally was to follow the agreement between his father Tsogtu Khong Tayiji and Shamar Rabjamba (Tib.: *Zhwa dmar Rab-'byams-pa*). He planned to unite

⁶⁶ Karmay, *Illusive Play*, p. 123. *WDLZ*, p. 104. See also Sangseraima, "Refuge of the 'Enemy of the Dharma,'" p. 45.

⁶⁷ Jimbadorji, *Bolor Toli*, p. 484.

⁶⁸ Karmay, *Illusive Play*, p. 102. *WDLZ*, p. 88.

⁶⁹ Karmay, *Illusive Play*, p. 106. *WDLZ*, pp. 91–92.

⁷⁰ Karmay, *Illusive Play*, pp. 119, 122. *WDLZ*, pp. 101, 103.

with the forces of Tsangpa Khan to terminate the Gelug sect. However, what Tsogtu Khong Tayiji and Shamar Rabjamba did not expect was that Arslan's position was gradually inclining to the Gelug sect.

In the middle of the tenth lunar month of 1635, Arslan decided to join the camp of the Gelug sect and thus he attacked Tsangpa Khan. At the beginning of 1636, having been bought off with the treasure offered by the Gelug sect, Arslan violated his father's instruction, entered Lhasa, and paid homage to the Fifth Dalai Lama. In the same year, Lhunbo Tayiji and Shamar Rabjamba sent a messenger to Tsogtu Khong Tayiji to inquire how to deal with Arslan's betrayal. Tsogtu decided to set up a trap for Arslan and kill him. As a result, their strategy succeeded and Arslan was murdered by Lhunbo Tayiji and Shamar Rabjamba.⁷¹ Therefore, Tsogtu Khong Tayiji lost his eldest son and the best warrior.

In 1636, the Gelug sect decided to dispatch Injan Khutugtu Lobzang Tenzin Gyatso (Tib.: *Blo-bzang bstan-'zin rgya-mtsho*) as envoy in order to ask for help from Gūūshi (S. *Gūśri*) Khan Törö-Bayikhü (b. 1582; r. 1642–1655), the head of the Khoshud of Oirat.⁷²

Törö-Bayikhü was the fourth son of Khanai Noyan Khonggor. His ancestor was Khasar, Chinggis Khan's younger brother. During that time, Khanai was the leader of the Oirat confederation. Törö-Bayikhü had two elder brothers, Bayiba'as and Kudulun Ubasi, and two younger brothers Jasagtu Ching Ba'atur and Buyan Khadan Ba'atur, and two half-brothers, Hamug Bingtū and Khanag Tūsiyetū. When Törö-Bayikhü was thirteen, he went off to war. In 1606, at twenty-five, the Oirat were fighting against the Khalkha. Törö-Bayikhü went to Khalkha to be a negotiator. He successfully concluded a truce between the Oirat and Khalkha. Donkhor Khutugtu and Khalkha princes presented him with the title of *Gūūshi* (Imperial Preceptor). Hence, Törö-Bayikhü began to be called Gūūshi Khan.⁷³

Here arises a question: why did the Gelug sect not ask for help from the Khalkha Mongols, but did from the Oirat? Although the Oirat confederation had defeated the Khalkha invader Sholoi Ubashi Khong Tayiji around 1623, it did not mean that Khalkha Mongols had become weaker than the Oirats. Therefore, it is highly possible that during that time there was a person of Oirat background who was familiar

⁷¹ Karmay, *Illusive Play*, pp. 122, 129. *WDLZ*, pp. 103, 108.

⁷² Tuya, "Ka'er'ka chuoketu hong taiji shengping yanjiu," p. 30–31.

⁷³ Ma Ruheng 馬汝珩 and Ma Dazheng 馬大正, *Elite Menggu shi lunji* 厄魯特蒙古史論集 (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1984), pp. 2–3.

with the dignitaries of the Gelug sect in Tibet. Tuya argues that Zaya Pandita Namkhai Jamsu (1599–1662) was probably this key figure.⁷⁴ Through the following analysis of Zaya's life, that argument should become credible.

Zaya Pandita was from the Shanggas Ayimag of the Göröchin *Otog*. His father was called Babakhan, and his grandfather was Künggüi Jiyachi. They were all Oirat dignitaries. Zaya Pandita was also a foster son of Bayiba'as of Khoshud. In 1616, he made his vow to become a monk following Manjusri Khutugtu. In 1617, he arrived in Tibet and followed the Dalai Lama in the study of Buddhist philosophy. In 1639, he returned to the Oirat to preach Buddhism. Then from 1641 to 1642, he preached Buddhism to the Khalkha. In 1651, he went back to Tibet and presented fifty thousand taels of silver to the Fifth Dalai Lama. In 1662, he passed away on the way to Tibet.⁷⁵ Zaya Pandita was seen as the insider of the Gelug sect, and it is also apparent that he was a respected high lama in Oirat and Tibet. Therefore, it is possible that Zaya Pandita was the connection between the Oirat and Tibet and let the Gelug sect trust the Oirat as a reliable ally.⁷⁶

Güushi Khan and Ba'atur Khong Tayiji, the Zünghars, agreed to the Gelug sect's request and led 10,000 soldiers into Kökenuur. This Oirat joint army ultimately crushed the 30,000-strong army of Tsogtu Khong Tayiji in Ulaan-Khoshuu in 1637.⁷⁷ Tsogtu Khong Tayiji was perhaps captured, but how he met his end is not precisely known.

CONCLUSION

Tsogtu Khong Tayiji was a Khalkha Mongolian prince, a poet, a supporter of Ligdan Khan, and an opponent of the Dalai Lama's Yellow Hat sect. He left (or was forced to leave) Khalkha–Mongol territory. But he found a new base in Kökenuur and united with Tsangpa Khan to crush the Gelug sect. However, his plan ultimately failed because of his eldest son (and best warrior) Arslan's betrayal and because

⁷⁴ Tuya, "Ka'er'ka chuoketu hong taiji shengping yanjiu," p. 29.

⁷⁵ For the life of Zaya Pandita, see Hidehiro Okada 岡田英弘 and Junko Miyawaki-Okada 宮脇淳子, "The Biography of Zaya Pandita, The Greatest Oirad Monk," in Johan Elverskog, ed., *Biographies of Eminent Mongol Buddhists; PIATS 2006: Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Eleventh Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Königswinter 2006* (Halle: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 2008), pp. 29–38. Ye'erda 葉爾達 (Minggad Erdemti), *Weilate gaoseng Labujinba, Zanya Bandida yanjiu* 衛拉特高僧拉布緊巴, 咱雅班第達研究 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2012).

⁷⁶ Tuya, "Ka'er'ka Chuoketu hong Taiji shengping yanjiu," pp. 30–31.

⁷⁷ Karmay, *Illusive Play*, p. 129. *WDLZ*, p. 108.

WEI-CHIEH TSAI

of the intervention of the Khoshuds of the Oirat. After Tsogtu Khong Tayiji, there was no longer a Mongolian force from Inner Mongolia or Outer Mongolia which could compete with the Oirat domination of Tibet until the Manchu conquest of the Zünghars. Maybe Ligdan Khan planned to conquer Kökenuur and Tibet. However, he died before arriving in Kökenuur. Therefore, Tsogtu Khong Tayiji's failure marks the withdrawal of the Eastern Mongols from Tibet and the rise of Oirat supremacy in Tibet that lasted until the eighteenth century.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

WDLZ Ngag-dbang blo-bzang rgya-mtsho, *Wushi Dalai Lama zhuan*
五世達賴喇嘛傳, trans. Chen Qinying 陳慶英, Ma
Lianlong 馬連龍, and Ma Lin 馬林