

## Abstract

In this dissertation, I would like to argue the complicated religious politics inside the Mongolian Buddhist Institution between ‘two heads’: the reincarnated lama and the appointed abbot. Quite intriguingly, the former is the traditional leader of Mongolian Buddhism, but is ethnic Tibetan, and the latter is socialism-created leader, but is an ethnic Mongolian. In the first place, it leaves no room for doubt that religious and national unit should not necessarily be congruent because we could find many cases in world religions such as Christianity and Islam. However, most Mongols think it should be because of their nationalistic atmosphere.

This complicated situation of two heads triggered off the international and domestic competition inside the Mongolian Buddhism<sup>1</sup> after the collapse of the socialist system. Within the discourse of post-socialist national identity politics and emergence of two Buddhist heads in Mongolia, the dissertation examines contemporary engagement of Mongolian Buddhism in national identity politics of Mongolia and discusses about destruction of pre-socialist Jebtsundamba institution and establishment of socialist Hamba Lama (Abbot) institution in socialist Mongolia.

Although it was expected that when socialism ends that everything associated with it will be also gone. But as this dissertation will demonstrate, the remnants of socialism remained. To put it into Caroline Humphrey’s (1998) words, ‘Marx went away, but Karl stayed behind.’ A socialism-created Hamba Lama institution remained while the position of a reincarnation of the Eighth Bogd Jebtsundamba Khutugtu (1870-1924), who re-emerged from India in 1991, as the Head of Mongolian Buddhism, was denied.

Chapter 1 focuses on why and how Mongolian Buddhism became entangled into national identity politics. In competition with Mongolian ‘indigenous’ and ‘foreign’ religions, Mongolian Buddhism has been engaging in Mongolian national identity politics for the argument of Buddhism is a national religion of Mongolia, therefore, it should be preserved and protected by the state. Mongolian Buddhists’ argument is twofold: one is a textual evidence based on Buddhist historiographies, and another is a historical evidence of Buddhism’s involvement with Mongol politics since the time of Qubilai Khan.

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<sup>1</sup> The term of Mongolian Buddhism is rather post-socialist term which can be said that it came up in the

Chapter 2 answers the questions of why and how the institution of the head of Mongolian Buddhism in the person of Bogd Jebtsundamba Khutugtu was abolished and that of Hamba Lama established in socialist Mongolia. Mongolian Buddhism headed by the Eighth Bogd Jebtsundamba Khutugtu was destroyed for the Soviet and socialist Mongolian political ends for the purpose of keeping Mongolia as a buffer zone and for building independent socialist Mongolia. After destroyed Mongolian Buddhist institution under the order of Moscow, Mongolian socialist government re-activated Buddhism and created an institution of a Hamba Lama that would not be under the influence of Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama, but instead under the direct control of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party Politburo. Again, by the order of Moscow, which also met to the interests of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar headquartered international Buddhist organisation called Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace (ABCP) was founded. Through the ABCP, Mongolian Buddhists were promoted to carry out international activities, yet, domestically, they were restricted to conduct Buddhist affairs within the walls of a monastery.

Chapters 3 and 4 examines why Hamba Lama institution, a socialist heritage, is still in power in post-socialist Mongolia and whose and what interests in vested in competition between socialist and pre-socialist religious authority. Despite the departure from socialist system, the socialist religious policy of preventing the foreign influences from interfering with Mongolian Buddhism and, at the same time, imposing its control over Buddhist institution guided post-socialist Mongolian government not to recognise the Ninth Jebtsundamba Khutugtu as the Head of Mongolian Buddhism for twenty years since the Dalai Lama recognised the Jebtsundamba Khutugtu in 1991. The government's position was that independent Mongolian state should have an independent Mongolian Buddhist institution that is headed by Hamba Lama of Gandantegchenling monastery. Behind of that, there was also nationalistic stand that resonates Mongolian Buddhism should be headed by Mongolian not by Tibetan. Also, for the government, keeping Hamba Lama under its control was much convenient than keeping the Jebtsundamba. Another major concern was not to deteriorate bilateral relations with Chinese government, which did not want the Jebtsundamba, the high influential lama not only in Mongolia but also in Inner Mongolia and Tibet, be enthroned as the Head of Mongolian Buddhism.

Nevertheless, under the same policy of preventing outside influences from interfering with Mongolian Buddhism, the Ninth Jebtsundamba Khutugtu was officially

enthroned as the Head of Mongolian Buddhism in November of 2011 and held that position until his demise in March of 2012. Except for that short period, Hamba Lama of Gandantegchenling monastery has remained in power and will remain so until, if ever, the Tenth Jebtsundamba, who is of Mongolian origin, ascends to the position of the Head of Mongolian Buddhism again.

What I have demonstrated in this dissertation is that how complicated double headed Mongolian Buddhist institution has been formed: Mongolian national, but socialist-oriented Abbot and ethnic Tibetan, but Mongolian traditional reincarnated Lama.

Bulag (1998) argued that socialist Mongolia had constructed Mongolian national culture on the basis of Halh (ethnic majority) culture. However, we should not forget the fact socialism constructed national culture itself even in the religious sphere.