

# I

## HISTORICAL PROLOGUE

### The Land and the People

Demchugdongrob, commonly known as De Wang (Prince De in Chinese), was a thirty-first generation descendant of Chinggis Khan and the last ruler of Mongolia from the *altan urag*, the Golden Clan of the Chinggisids. The only son of Prince Namjilwangchug, Demchugdongrob was born in the Sunid Right Banner of Inner Mongolia in 1902 and died in Hohhot, the capital of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, in 1966.

The Sunid was one of the tribes that initially supported Chinggis Khan (r. 1206-1227). In the sixteenth century, Dayan Khan reunified Mongolia and put this tribe under the control of his eldest son, Torubolod. Thereafter, the descendants of Torubolod became the rulers not only of the Sunid but also of the Chahar (Chakhar), Ujumuchin, and Khauchid tribes. The Chahar tribe was always under the direct control of the khan himself. During the Manchu domination, the Sunid was divided into the Right Flank and Left Flank Banners, and both were part of the group of banners placed under the Shilingol League.

During the first half of the seventeenth century, the Manchus expanded to the southern parts of Manchuria and began to compete with the Ming Chinese. Realizing the danger in the rise of the Manchus, Ligdan Khan, the last Mongolian Grand Khan, abandoned his people's traditional hostility toward the Chinese and formed an alliance with the Ming court to fight the Manchus. Although this policy was prudent, it was unacceptable to most Mongolian tribal leaders, who subsequently rebelled and joined the Manchu camp. Those who were the khan's blood relatives but hesitated to rebel against his authority migrated with their people north to Outer Mongolia, beyond the reach of the khan's power. Among the tribes that migrated were the Sunid, Ujumuchin, and Khauchid. Because of the unpopularity of this alliance with the Chinese, Ligdan Khan's struggle against the Manchus ended in failure. After the overall situation calmed down, the tribes moved back to the area south of the Gobi and surrendered to the Manchus.

In 1638, the Right Flank of the Sunid tribe, led by a man named Susai, submitted to the Manchus. In 1642, the Manchu leader, Abahai (later called Taizong by the Chinese), conferred upon Susai the hereditary title of *jasag toroyin junwang*, or second-ranking prince and ruler of the Right Flank of the Sunid tribe. In 1639, Tenggis, the nephew of Susai, also surrendered, together with the Sunid Left Flank. The next year, Abahai is said to have given Tenggis his own daughter in marriage as a gesture of good will. In 1641, Tenggis received the same rank and title as Susai, and the two Sunid banners were formed in accordance with the Manchu organizational system of leagues and banners. Also in 1641, the Ujumuchin tribe submitted to the Manchus and was divided into two banners. The ruler of the Ujumuchin Right Banner received the title of first-ranking prince, *Khoshoi Sechin Chin Wang*. The submission of the Khauchid tribe occurred in the year 1651, seven years after the Manchus occupied Beijing. In addition, the

Abaga and Abkhanar tribes of the descendants of Belgutei, a brother of Chinggis Khan, also surrendered to the Manchus. The Manchu court then divided the five tribes into ten banners and later united them to form the Shilingol League.

During the Manchu period, Shilingol was one of six leagues in Inner Mongolia; its territory was located approximately 110-120 degrees east and 43-47 degrees north, mostly on steppe lands. The eastern section was rich in water and grass, but the western section was comparatively dry due to the climate of the Gobi. The Sunid Right Banner occupied the western edge of the league. From its formation until the present, this league has been famous for having the best pastures. Ujumuchin in the east and Sunid in the west are especially famous for their excellent horses. Both banners possess salt lakes. The salt lake of Sunid is the Ere'en (Erlan)-dabsu, located along the border with Outer Mongolia. According to Manchu practice, the ten banners of the five tribes had to convene a *chigulgan*, or convention, every three years on the banks of the Shilingol River, and that river lent its name to the banners of the Shilingol League.

Initially, when a league convention was held, the emperor would dispatch an envoy to supervise it. Later, in 1751, the Manchu court stopped sending supervisors and ordered the ruling princes of the banners to elect a primary and deputy chief to preside over the conventions. Finally, in 1787, the court decided to appoint the most prestigious nobles of the leagues as *darugas* (heads) and *ded-darugas* (deputy heads) to administer the league. The positions of all nobles ruling over the banners were hereditary. The heads and deputy heads of the leagues, however, were appointed by Beijing. These positions, except in the case of resignation or dismissal, were lifelong jobs. Usually, becoming a deputy head was a necessary step toward being selected as head of a league. The posts of league head and deputy head were mostly filled by princes and other nobles.

The Mongol banners, though originally derived from traditional tribal groupings, were institutionalized by the Manchu rulers in accordance with the principle of divide and rule to prevent the unification of Mongol power. The Manchus fragmented the Mongol tribes into many banners, making each a feudalistic administrative and military unit running a piece of Mongolian territory. The feudal banner head was commonly referred to as a *noyan*, or ruling prince. But regardless of the hereditary rank and title he possessed, he had to be appointed *jasag* (ruler) of his banner by the Manchus in order to actually rule that banner. Those nobles who possessed higher ranks and titles but were not assigned as *jasags* were known in Mongolian as *sula noyad*, or nobles at leisure. Some of them possessed a personal staff of *khariyad*, or underlings, but they still had no administrative authority.

Although *jasags* had small courts in their own banners, the horizontal relationships between banners were very limited. Even the relationship between the two Sunid banners, the Right and the Left, was distant. The vertical relations between the banners and the Beijing court, however, were quite intimate. The head of a league was merely a mediator among its constituent banners. His power over the banners was much weaker than that of a governor over the districts under his jurisdiction.

The administrative units under the banner were called *sumus*. According to Manchu law, each *sumu* contained approximately one hundred and fifty families, from which fifty *khuyag*, or active duty (lit. standing) soldiers, and one hundred *ere*, or able-bodied men, were carried on the military rosters. The Shilingol League had ten banners and one hundred thirteen *sumus*: the Khauchid Right Banner had five *sumus*; the Sunid

Right Banner, thirteen; and the Sunid Left Banner, twenty. These figures indicate that the Sunid Right Banner was a banner of medium size.

Early on in the Mongol empire, a class distinction between aristocrats and commoners emerged. In later Mongolian society, most nobles or aristocrats were Chinggisids and blood relatives of the Borjigin clan. These people were called *taiji*. All those under their jurisdiction were known as *albatu*. People with duties, and personal underlings, were called *khariyatu*. The people who belonged to a banner, regardless of their status as aristocrat or commoner, belonged permanently to that banner and were forbidden to transfer to, or serve in, other banners. This feudalistic restriction prevented the unification and development of the Mongols as a united people. The pernicious practice continued to exist, especially in Inner Mongolia, until the fourth decade of this century. The Manchu rulers used these Mongolian nomadic-pastoral feudalistic institutions to their advantage and also placed geographical limitations upon the sphere of relationships among Mongolian banners. In effect, the Manchus shrewdly added an element of localism to the basic structure of Mongolian tribalism, thereby keeping the Mongols fragmented for almost three centuries.

The aristocrats were divided into two groups: lay nobles and ecclesiastical leaders. Following the development of Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia during the latter half of the sixteenth century, the high lamas gradually evolved into an aristocratic class. Some of them were even granted land as fiefdoms and people as *shabinar*, or lay disciples or underlings. Although there were many temples in the Sunid Right Banner, no ecclesiastical aristocrat was powerful enough to challenge the lay ruling prince. Nevertheless, since all of Mongolia had been thoroughly converted to Tibetan Buddhism, and the oath of the Law of Buddha was faithfully kept, the prestige and influence of the high lamas increased, even though Manchu regulations prohibited the interference of religious sects in politics. Because the ecclesiastics were exempt from taxes, military conscription, and other duties, the ratio of lamas to lay persons increased. This hindered the growth of the Mongolian population because of the celibacy required of the lamas.

Upon the submission of Tenggis, the *noyan* of the Sunid Left Flank, Abahai gave him his own daughter in marriage, as mentioned earlier. Although Tenggis's loyalty to his Manchu lord was unquestionable, he did not relinquish his Chinggisid pride. After the emperor's death, Tenggis's relations with Prince Dorgon, the Manchu regent, deteriorated. In 1646, two years after the Manchus established their court in Beijing, Tenggis took his Manchu wife and his people north to Khalkha (Outer Mongolia). Dorgon launched a military campaign against Tenggis, but his Khalkha allies shielded him. Two years later, in 1648, Tenggis returned to Beijing. To appease the Sunids and show goodwill to the Khalkhas, the Manchu court did not punish Tenggis, thereby peacefully ending what might be labeled the first Mongol rebellion against Manchu domination. Those non-Sunid Mongols who had remained absolutely loyal to the Manchu court called the Sunids *Sunid khugaichi*, or Sunid traitors. In reality, the rebellion of Tenggis and the Left Banner was an isolated incident, but even so, the Sunids of the Right Banner could not escape its consequences. Many people in the Shilingol League mocked the Sunids as *koke Sunid*, or green Sunid, ridiculing them for their stubborn, unruly nature. But much later, reflecting the high nationalistic spirit of the 1930s, slander turned into high praise for the brave Sunid people.

### Demchugdongrob's Father and His Times

Prince Namjilwangchug, the father of Demchugdongrob, inherited the rank and position of *jasag* of the Sunid Right Banner in 1863 and died in 1902. The lifetime of Namjilwangchug, the latter half of the nineteenth century, was also the era of the Western imperialist invasion of East Asia. During the Anglo-French invasion of northern China (1856-60), Emperor Wenzong (also known as the Xianfeng Emperor) fled Beijing and took refuge in Rehe, where he later died. This invasion also affected Mongolia, especially the region south of the Gobi. Taking advantage of this turmoil, the Russians began to encroach on Manchuria. The Manchu court, feeling that its northern territory was too weakly defended, encouraged people in northern China to move into Mongolia to combat the Russian infiltration.

At this time there also occurred a series of rebellions within China. The Taiping (1850-1864), the Nian (1852-1868), and various lesser insurrections severely depressed the economy, the Nian especially affecting the rural areas of northern China, where many people became vagrants. The best solution to this crisis, the Manchu court reasoned, was to send these homeless Chinese to Mongolia as well and open still more Mongolian land to agricultural cultivation. This influx had a negative impact on the pastoral economy, and severely damaged southeastern Inner Mongolia. In 1891 a bitter struggle between the local Mongols and the Chinese settlers precipitated the *Jindan dao* (The Way of the Golden Pill) rebellion. Fanatically superstitious Chinese rebels, known as *Hong maozi*, or Red Caps, indiscriminately butchered all the Mongols they encountered in the Juu Uda and Josotu Leagues.

The Mongols had been the main allies of the Manchus during the period of Manchu unification and expansion in the seventeenth century. The major policy of the Manchu leaders then was to unite with the Mongols to check the power of the Chinese. Later, following the sinicization of the Manchu ruling class, the Manchus adopted China as their main territory and came to consider Mongolia, and even their own Manchuria, as merely secondary frontier lands. Development of the borderlands was to be only for the sake of protecting China. To Chinese court officials, Mongolia was nothing but a subordinate sphere of the Middle Kingdom. The Manchus assumed that superficial gestures of appeasement would satisfy the Mongols, and that it would not be necessary to contribute to their progress or to the development of the other subordinate peoples of the north.

Before this shift in policy, Manchu domination of Mongolia had been quite successful. Feudalistic arrangements within and intermarriage with Manchu aristocrats inhibited internal conflict. These were complemented by less conciliatory policies, such as enforced limitations of movement by individuals to make the Mongolian nobles unconditionally loyal to the Manchu court. The common people were unaware that they were under alien domination because there was no direct Manchu or other non-Mongolian intervention in their banner or local governments. If some unsatisfactory situation arose, they would complain about their own Mongolian feudal lords, not the Manchus.

Even in the nineteenth century, when the Manchus were confronted with internal rebellion and foreign invasion, Prince Namjilwangchug and other Mongolian feudal lords felt they could not stand complacently by and offer them no assistance. Prince Senggerinchin of the Khorchin Mongols of eastern Inner Mongolia organized Mongolian volunteers to fight the Chinese Taiping rebels, the Anglo-French forces, and the Nian

rebels. Mongolian blood was shed and Senggerinchin himself also died in these campaigns which allowed Manchu rule to continue for another half century. As a reward to Senggerinchin for his magnificent merit, an imperial decree was issued ordering that his name tablet be erected in the Imperial Ancestral Temple.<sup>1</sup>

After these unfortunate events, the Moslem rebellion in northwest China broke out in the later half of the nineteenth century. Although this uprising did not originate in Mongolia, it affected the entire Yekejuu (or Yeke) League, the Alashan Banner, part of the Ulanabai League, and the northwestern regions of Outer Mongolia. Soldiers from Mongolian banners were drafted to fight the rebellious Moslems on horseback. Because the Sunid Right Banner of Namjilwangchug was located on the western edge of the Shilingol League, occupying the main transportation line from Kalgan to Ulaanbaatar, it was inevitable that it be involved in this struggle. The Chahar region was given the crucial assignment of supplying soldiers and horses to put down the rebellion.

The unfavorable effects of subsequent changes in Manchu policy toward Mongolia caused the Mongols to change their minds and gradually break away from unquestioned allegiance to their Manchu rulers. Furthermore, the degeneration of the Mongolian ruling class and its collaboration with corrupt Manchu officials led to open, armed rebellion among the herdsmen. These rebels attacked the Manchu and Chinese magistrates and destroyed their land cultivation offices. The Manchu authorities labeled these rebellious herdsmen *Meng-fei*, or Mongolian bandits, placing the blame for the disorder entirely on the Mongols. The Manchu government officials attempted to completely exterminate these rebel herdsmen without anticipating the political effects that such a massacre would have. In spite of these brutal tactics, the Mongolian bandits continued to exist during the period when the government was recruiting Chinese cultivators.<sup>2</sup>

With the signing of the Sino-Russian Beijing Treaty of 1860, Russian encroachment into Mongolia became more active than ever before. The new situation in Ulaanbaatar and the expansion of Russian influence forced the Manchu court to increase the power of the *amban* (envoy) stationed in Ulaanbaatar. This new situation precipitated a schism between the Mongolian authorities and the Manchu *amban*. At the same time, illegal collaboration between Chinese merchants and covetous Manchu and Chinese officials in all parts of Mongolia became more commonplace. The Chinese merchants were, however, no match for the well-organized Russian economic intrusion. Because the Sunid Right Banner was located between Ulaanbaatar and Kalgan, it suffered economically more than did the other banners in its league. The Meiji Restoration which led to the formation of modern Japan and eventually Japan's special concern for Manchuria and Mongolia, and its expansion on the Asian continent also led to new intrusions into Mongolia. Most of these events took place during the lifetime of Prince Namjilwangchug, the father of Demchugdongrob.

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<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to determine the total loss of Mongol lives during Senggerinchin's campaigns, but judging from existing evidence, the number of soldiers conscripted from the Shilingol League was not as great as those taken from the Jerim, Juu Uda, and Josotu Leagues. Nevertheless, the horses supplied by Shilingol exceeded the total from the other leagues of Inner Mongolia. This, of course, greatly influenced the economy and the livelihood of the Shilingol people.

<sup>2</sup> Such activities did not occur in the Shilingol League because there were no Chinese agricultural settlers there. Even so, these events distressed the people of this pastoral region.

Demchugdongrob never talked about his father with his friends and followers, and the officials of Sunid also rarely spoke of their deceased lord. Only anecdotal information about Prince Namjilwangchug is available. I once heard the following from Prince Sungjingwangchug (1885-1946), the last head of the Shilingol League.

Namjilwangchug, the prince said, originally was a vigorous, serious, and reasonable person. While still quite young, he became well-known and revered for his many abilities. He was appointed deputy head of the Shilingol League and was subsequently promoted to be its head. Because of his enthusiasm and his concern for political matters, he enjoyed greater prestige than other league heads.<sup>3</sup> In the court of Empress Dowager Cixi (d. 1908), Prince Namjilwangchug was well received and eventually promoted to the rank of *qinwang* (first-ranking prince). During the celebration of the sixtieth birthday of the empress in 1894, Prince Namjilwangchug, along with a few other Mongol princes, was honored with an assignment to participate in the main ceremony.

During the following year, 1895, Namjilwangchug suddenly and unaccountably petitioned for release from his position as league head. His resignation provided an opening for Yangsang, the Prince of Abaga, to be promoted from deputy head to head of the league. As a result, the relationship between the Abaga and Sunid households became even more intimate. After his resignation, Namjilwangchug became extremely pessimistic. In his later years he read many Chinese novels, including *Sanguozhi yanyi* (The Romance of the Three Kingdoms), *Shuihu zhuan* (All Men Are Brothers or Water Margin Chronicle), and others that had been translated into Mongolian and Manchu. This reading increased his suspicion of the cunning and treacherous nature of human beings. Because he himself had experienced many ruthless power struggles, he feared betrayal or assassination and refused all requests for personal visits. Documents from the outside had to be shown to him from the other side of a glass window, because he feared that the paper might be poisoned. The unhealthy feelings aroused by these symptoms of what may have been paranoia and general depression might have contributed to his untimely death.

However, Namjilwangchug's fear of being betrayed might also be attributed to the events of his day, for example the long conflict between the Empress Dowager and the Guangxu Emperor, the Japanese victory over China in 1894-5, the failure of the Hundred Days Reformation Movement in May-September 1898, and the imprisonment of the Guangxu Emperor by the Empress Dowager Cixi. These developments, along with the xenophobic bent of the Empress Dowager's court and its effects in the Hohhot area, troubled the Mongol prince. Suspicions of the foreign missionaries in the Tumed Banner (southwest of Hohhot) and the neighboring Dorben Keuked Banner of the Ulanab League also caused Namjilwangchug great anxiety. The Catholic missionaries failed to convert the local Mongols, but gathered many vagrant Chinese rice Christians and led them to settle in the heartland of western Inner Mongolia. These activities threatened Buddhism and traditional Mongolian values and hence irritated Prince Namjilwangchug. In 1900, in the wake of the Boxer Incident, the allied forces of Japan and the Western powers occupied Beijing, and both the empress dowager and the emperor fled to Xi'an.

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<sup>3</sup> Most of the league heads and deputy heads were usually drawn from the prestigious princely families of the Ujumuchin Right Banner. Abaga and Sunid often joined to balance off the superior political position of Ujumuchin, but the ten banners of Shilingol continued to maintain their internal harmony.

Under these conditions, maintaining stability and order in his own banner were pressing concerns for Namjilwangchug.<sup>4</sup>

Namjilwangchug was interested in Chinese legends and in supernatural matters in general, especially the theory of *fengshui*, or Chinese geomancy. Before his retirement, he expended a great deal of the wealth and manpower of his banner to establish a geomantically correct location and orientation for a new princely palace as symbol of his personal prestige and as the power center of his banner. As a result, he exhausted the wealth of his banner and his people. However, in the early 1930s this palace did serve as a symbolic Inner Mongolian power center during the struggle for autonomy and independence.

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<sup>4</sup> After the Boxer catastrophe, the Manchu court was compelled to pay indemnities to the Westerners. A neighboring banner, the Dorben Keuked, was forced to pay indemnities for its attacks on missionaries who occupied a large tract of good grazing land. The *jasag* prince of the place, together with some officials, resigned from their offices.